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A DISCONNECTED GENERATION ?

Encouraging Young People's Political Participation in the UK

ELDIN FAHMY

Recent years have witnessed growing anxieties amongst commentators and policy analysts about young people's apparent disengagement from conventional politics. Their electoral non-participation in particular has often been viewed as symptomatic of a deeper political alienation and apathy, fuelling concerns about the emergence of an apolitical, socially disengaged generation. This paper examines these claims by drawing upon empirical research into young people's attitudes to politics and citizenship derived from initial recruitment survey data (N=202) and from more extensive qualitative interviewing with 39 young people aged 15-19 in the southwest of England. These findings suggest that the extent to which young people's political choices are constrained by the external socio-political environment is often underestimated. Encouraging young people's exercise of full political citizenship requires a far more extensive programme of democratic renewal, together with more basic structural changes in the terrain of youth transitions, than is currently envisaged in policy debates.

Disaffected Youth?

Despite the difficulties involved in accurately measuring levels of electoral turnout due to survey non-response bias and misreporting, it is evident that young people are considerably more likely to abstain, and to be missing from the electoral register than older people. For example, the most recent estimates suggest that three fifths (61%) of (registered) young people (aged 18-24) abstained in the 2001 General Election (Electoral Commission, 2001; 2002a). Although 2001 marked a low tide of electoral participation in the UK, rates of abstention and non-registration amongst young people have been consistently higher than amongst the adult population as a whole throughout the 1990s (e.g. BYC, 1995, 1996, 1998; MORI, 1997; Wring et al., 1998).

However, political participation should be about much more than voting. Taking a broader view of political participation, young people's levels of engagement with the formal political process make for even more depressing reading. Compared with older citizens, young people are considerably less likely to attend political meetings or rallies, to have contacted their MP or local councillor, to join a mainstream political party, or to have held any type of public office (Harrison and Deicke, 2000; BYC, 1998; Fahmy, 1998; Wring et al., 1998). The political and administrative elite in the UK remains almost entirely middle-aged, with for example only five MPs (less than 1%) under 30 in the 2001 Parliament, and just one Peer aged under 30 in the 2000 House of Lords (House of Commons, 2000). The situation is little

better in local government with just 3% of local councillors under 35 and the average age of councillors 54 (IDEA, 2001). Within the increasingly narrow ideological confines of the major electoral parties, characterised by ageing memberships and dwindling youth sections, young people are now a very marginal force (eg. Seyd and Whiteley, 1995; Whiteley et al., 1994; Rudig et al., 1995).

Unsurprisingly perhaps, the disengagement of large numbers of young people from conventional politics has fuelled speculation about the emergence of a politically disaffected and apathetic generation - ideas which have gained increasingly wide currency in media and policy discourse. Wilkinson and Mulgan (1995: 99) for example, refer to the historic disconnection of a whole generation of young people who have opted out of politics. This concern with the apparent disaffection of young people in contemporary Britain is also evident in much of the media's portrayal of young people as politically alienated, apathetic and self-interested. In this view declining levels of electoral participation are simply explicable in terms of young people's frivolity, cynicism and underlying moral irresponsibility.

However, concerns about the condition of young people's political consciousness are not new. In a major survey of young people's political awareness in the 1970s Stradling (1977: i) bemoaned the emergence of a distinctive youth culture which appears to encourage an apathetic, even apolitical, response to public affairs. To a large extent this perspective has informed New Labour's approach to widening participation through the long overdue introduction of citizenship education in the curriculum. Addressing the Citizenship Foundation in 1998 Lord Irvine underlined the government's aim of attacking the so-called 'don't care culture' of young people in 1990s Britain. As a result, young people's disengagement from formal politics is explained largely in terms of the shortcomings and deficiencies of young people themselves, in the process obscuring the influence of wider structural and institutional factors.

From a broader perspective anxieties about the corrosive effects of youth culture have blighted public debates about the situation of young people in the UK since at least the 1950s. Although representations of youth as a politically alienated and apathetic generation have gained widespread currency, this caricature simply reinforces moral panics around a (perennial) crisis of youth (Griffin, 1993). This is especially so in relation to specific groups of disadvantaged young people (e.g. working class youth, young Afro-Caribbean men, unemployed young people). In the process these ideas also resonate with and reinforce wider constructions of youth as anti-social and politically threatening.

In recent years a rather different interpretation of young people's non-participation in conventional politics has begun to emerge. In a variety of ways empirically-based research into young people's politics in the 1990s has challenged commonly

held assumptions that young people are politically apathetic, demonstrating rather the inherently political nature of young people's issues and concerns and social commitments (Molloy et al., 2002; Edwards, 2001; White and Bruce, 2000; Roker and Player, 1997; Bhavnani, 1994). Similarly, the implications of the erosion of young people's social citizenship for their exercise of political citizenship rights are also increasingly acknowledged (Lister et al., 2003; Kimberlee, 2002; Jones & Wallace, 1992). These findings suggest a repositioning of the debate in ways which focus upon the shortcomings of conventional representative mechanisms and policy outcomes in addressing the aspirations and concerns of many young people. Re-engaging politics for young people (and many other politically marginalised groups) involves a substantial overhaul of the processes of political representation and participation in the UK which raises difficult questions for policy makers: What is meant by participation and political engagement? Why is it desirable, and for whom? How does participation relate to democratic representation?

Sampling and Initial Findings

Participants in this study were selected via an initial recruitment survey of young people aged 15-19 in the Bristol and Bath area. The survey was administered between March and May 1999 with the co-operation of Further Education colleges and statutory youth services. In total, 455 questionnaires were distributed with an achieved sample size of 207 and a response rate of 45%¹. Nearly one third (30%) of respondents were willing to participate in follow-up focus groups to explore young people's orientations to politics in greater depth. As a result, six focus groups involving 39 young people were conducted. The survey instrument minimised response bias in the selection of focus group participants arising from the likely over-representation of young people with a high, and atypical, level of interest in politics. Focus group participants were selected to reflect the diversity of views and attitudes towards politics, and the groups were then stratified on the basis of educational trajectory (no 16+ education/16+ vocational/16+ academic) and social class background (manual/non-manual)².

As well as generating a sampling frame for subsequent qualitative research, the survey also constitutes a useful source of data in its own right. Differences in question wording, sampling procedures and definitions of young people mean that it is very difficult to reliably compare results between surveys and over time. However, overall the recruitment survey confirms the picture of relative political disengagement presented in other studies (Electoral Commission, 2002a; Edwards, 2001; Wring et al., 1998; BYC, 1998). Seventy per cent of this sample claimed to be not very or not at all interested in politics, and a similar proportion (72%) said that they did not care very much who won the 1997 General Election. Few respondents had

discussed politics with friends (39%) or with parents (49%), and less than half (47%) of the sample had ever watched a party political broadcast.

In terms of active participation these data suggest that involvement in the political process is generally a minority pursuit amongst young people in the UK. Whilst a majority (58%) of respondents reported having signed a petition, only a small minority reported ever having contacted their local councillor or MP (15%), attended a political meeting or rally (11%), or handed out union or campaign leaflets (8%).

At first sight these findings offer apparent confirmation for the popular stereotype of young people as politically apathetic and disengaged. The initial survey suggests that many young people are highly sceptical about their capacity to influence political events: a majority felt they had no say in what the government does (61%), that politicians did not care about their views (55%), and that politicians are out of touch with the general public (85%). However, it is crucial to distinguish between a general lack of interest in politics (apathy), and an underlying *cynicism* about political institutions, actors and processes. As Bhavnani (1994) and others have noted, cynicism implies some form of political analysis, and therefore some degree of engagement even if the individual decides against conventional participation. Apathy however refers to a lack of interest in politics that could also result in non-participation. Whilst the outcome is similar the underlying motivations reflect different orientations to politics, and suggest a very different prognosis for re-engaging young people with the political process.

These data suggest that most young people are very much aware of the impact of politics and government upon their own lives and prospects. Less than one third of respondents felt that it did not really make much difference which party is in power (31%) or that none of the political parties would do anything to benefit me (29%). These findings imply not a general disenchantment with politics per se, but rather an absence of confidence in their ability to influence political events. These complex issues were explored in more depth in the follow-up focus group interviews.

Focus Group Findings

Several critics refer to a fundamental repositioning of young people's political engagement towards a post-material agenda centred around single-issue campaigns and lifestyle politics (eg. Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1995). Underlying this critique are broader claims about the nature of political engagement in late modern societies, and in particular cultural shifts in values and political styles (e.g. Inglehart, 1977; 1990), and the detraditionalisation of

social relations associated with processes of individualisation (e.g. Beck, 1994; Giddens, 1991).

The disembedding of traditional structures which might facilitate the political socialisation of young people have undoubtedly had an impact upon young people's opportunities for political involvement, for example, through the decline of large-scale union organisation concomitant with the growth of insecure, service sector employment. However, notwithstanding such structural changes, the evidence from this study is not in general supportive of claims of attitudinal change in young people's underlying political values and orientations associated with processes of individualisation. These data suggest that the key loci of young people's issue concerns remain focused upon more traditional and emancipatory agendas in relation to education, health, jobs and wages, the cost of living, crime, drugs, and the environment. Many other studies have also produced broadly similar findings about young people's issue concerns (White and Bruce, 2000; Wring et al., 1998; Roker and Player, 1997; Bhavnani, 1994; Banks et al., 1992). Thus, whilst young people are typically viewed as generally dismissive of conventional politics, many of their views and concerns are both clearly political, and ostensibly close to the policy agendas of the major electoral parties in the UK. As a number of studies have shown, in many cases young people are also prepared to act on their concerns (eg. Roker et al., 1999; Roker and Player, 1997).

Such evidence of young people's social concerns and activism demonstrates the superficiality of popular stereotypes which present young people as interested only in pop culture and fashion. As an explanation for young people's disengagement from conventional politics, political apathy is an inappropriate generalisation which risks being both pejorative and condescending. How then should we more adequately explain this apparent contradiction between an evident disdain for conventional party politics on the one hand, and an at times passionate involvement with many of the issues which ostensibly preoccupy politicians on the other? Focus group participants in this study offered four main explanations for their political disengagement which are reviewed below.

Politics is not accessible

Participants were critical both of the way conventional party politics is conducted and of how politics is presented in media discourse. Despite the increased salience of virtual communications and the apparent potential of digital democracy, for most of the young people in this sample television was virtually their *only* point of contact with conventional party politics - a finding which supports earlier survey findings (eg. Harrison and Deicke, 2000). Participants' overwhelming response was simply to 'switch off' at the first mention of politics. Many expressed considerable

dissatisfaction with the way politics was presented in media discourse, especially in the focus upon personalities and scandal:

Most of the time it's just about who's more popular or who said what or...about some sex scandal or something. They never really seem to go into the issues on the news so there's probably not a lot of point watching it if it's not really explained to people properly

[female, age 19]

Participants were also highly critical of the adversarial nature of parliamentary politics itself:

They just seem to challenge each other all the time they don't seem to, like actually get anything done much [...] seems a bit pointless to me

[male, age 16]

In both these respects participants felt that conventional political discourse failed to adequately address the socio-political issues which concern young people.

These frustrations were compounded by what many saw as the overly-technical and obscure language of political discourse:

You can't understand what they're saying either. They're either arguing so you can't hear what they're saying or they're saying all these really long words that you've got to have a dictionary in front of you just to try and understand!

[female, age 16]

Participants emphasised their own ignorance of political affairs and the ways in which this constrained their political choices. Indeed, most were generally vague in their understanding of how to effectively influence public policy, and few participants appeared to have a clear understanding of the responsibilities of local and national government.

Participants' perceptions of their lack of political acumen were reflected in their attitudes to voting. Some emphasised the importance of voting by referring to the rights and responsibilities implicit in notions of political citizenship. For many others however their relative ignorance of the issues and policies which distinguish the main parties made voting meaningless:

I wouldn't vote 'cos of the fact I don't really know that much about it either. It's like you got Labour then you got the Conservatives but what they stand for I don't know.

[male, age 16]

As other studies have found (eg. Bhavnani, 1994) there is thus a tendency for young people to devalue their own political opinions on the basis of their own (perceived) ignorance of political affairs.

These findings also raise important and timely questions about the nature of young people's political consciousness given the renewed emphasis accorded to citizenship education. It was argued that if young people are to be empowered to act effectively when they reach voting age they need to be informed about politics from an earlier age:

Well it's like we said if they tried to make things clearer like with more leaflets about what's going on in politics - or if they had it in school - and not just you having to wait 'til you're eighteen or whatever to find out - that'd help a lot

[female, age 19]

This finding accords with survey evidence detailing the importance which young people attach to political education, as well as the general absence of political content within the school curriculum at the time (eg. BYC, 1998).

Politics is irrelevant

Many participants viewed politics as largely irrelevant to the hopes, concerns and interests of younger people. Participants frequently expressed the view that politics was something for older people. Thus it was argued that the greater financial and personal responsibilities of older citizens gave them more of a stake in the political process than young people:

It's not really got that great an effect on our lives 'cos if you're not working they ain't got to work your wage...It's when you get older that you've got to worry about things like that

[male, age 15]

Participants also emphasised the centrality of other more pressing life-tasks in the transition to adulthood in explaining their relative indifference to politics:

We've got other things to worry about like with our exams coming up and worrying about what we're gonna be doing next. Really politics doesn't seem that important at the minute

[male, age 18]

Politics was often viewed by participants as something which they would take more of an interest in as they grew older and acquired more of the statuses and responsibilities associated with adulthood. Although political processes shape young people's pathways to adulthood, the increasingly hostile policy climate in relation to young people during the 1980s and 1990s (eg. in relation to social

security legislation, minimum wage protection, higher education funding, criminal justice policy), and the withdrawal of the state from many of its post war social commitments, has arguably had the effect of making politics and government appear irrelevant to the needs of many young people.

Politicians cannot be trusted

Although some participants said they had insufficient information to make an informed judgement, most were quite cynical about politicians and the political process generally. Several participants drew attention to the privileged position of politicians, viewing this as a source of politicians' remoteness from the concerns and aspirations of ordinary people:

It's all right for these politicians. So they make all these laws that affect us but I mean they've got such fat salaries they can afford it.

[female, age 16]

Politicians were sometimes identified as being motivated mainly by a desire for personal enrichment. Others referred to incidents of financial and especially sexual scandal as the basis for their political distrust. Above all, participants emphasised the extent to which politicians were perceived as being willing to say or promise anything in order to secure power and votes.

They'll all say more or less anything to get in power and then once they're there they're not interested anymore...I reckon they're only interested in getting people to vote for 'em an' that's it really

[male, age 16]

Participants were particularly scathing of legislation directed principally at young people, which was viewed as undermining rather than supporting young people, in the process exacerbating feelings of political distrust and cynicism:

The [policies] that do affect us are ones that penalise us for some reason. They never think 'Right lets make a policy that's really good for young people'. They wonder why we're not interested - the only policies they make is 'Right you can pay this to us, you can have a really low minimum wage lower than other people'

[female, age 19]

Suggestions of youth apathy about politics rarely take into account the effects of the erosion of young people's social citizenship rights in the 1980s and 1990s (France, 1996; Williamson, 1993). The formative experiences of democratic politics for young people in 1990s Britain have taken place against a backdrop of legislation and policies hostile to the interests of many young people. It would be amazing if

these developments were not reflected in some way in young people's attitudes towards their own political citizenship.

Underlying these views was a perception that the views of young people were simply not taken seriously by policy makers. By far the most common explanation was that the views of young people were dismissed simply on the basis of their age with politicians viewing young people as politically irresponsible and their opinions as something they will grow out of. Others believed politicians saw young people as politically irrelevant since many are too young to vote. If young people's confidence in the representative process is to be restored it is therefore incumbent upon politicians to seek out more energetically the views of those they represent. Reconnecting politics requires that politicians demonstrate that they take the views of young citizens seriously by giving greater consideration to calls to extend the franchise to a greater section of the UK's young people.

Political action is pointless

Participants often expressed the view that voting and other forms of conventional political participation rarely had a significant effect upon the issue agendas of the political parties. Some observed that despite the adversarial nature of formal politics there was very little to separate the main parties in terms of substantive issues - that politicians were all the same. Arguably, therefore, the narrowing ideological terrain of UK party politics in recent years appears to be circumscribing citizens' opportunities for the exercise of genuine political choice. It is unsurprising therefore that participants were often deeply ambivalent about conventional political engagement.

Participants also questioned the efficacy of conventional political processes in achieving real change. Although some stressed that political change takes time to effect, parliamentary politics was more usually viewed as a talking shop which had little observable impact on the issues which mattered to young people:

They just babble on about all this stuff saying they're gonna do things for people like promising everything [...] but they never do it, they never ever do it

[female, age 16]

Politicians were typically viewed as generally unable or unwilling to deliver on their promises to the electorate, and many participants were highly sceptical of the commitment of any mainstream party to bringing about significant improvements in the circumstances which shaped their futures. The absence of tangible policy outputs perceived as having a substantial positive impact upon young people's lives renders conventional political participation ineffectual in the eyes of many young people. As a result many young people no longer believe that any politicians represent their interests.

Reconnecting Politics

The small sample size and purposive sampling strategy adopted here mean that these findings should be treated with caution. However, whilst these data are based upon research which is contextually specific to the Bristol area, there is little reason to suggest that they are atypical of young people's responses elsewhere in England, especially in urban contexts. Indeed recent local government history in the area suggests that Bristol is a good weather vane for broader changes in partisanship and political culture. In fact these findings do broadly accord with the picture presented in recent survey studies of young people's politics which reveal feelings of political powerlessness and cynicism to be quite widespread amongst young people in the UK (eg. Electoral Commission, 2002a; Wring et al., 1998; BYC, 1998) and delineate the sketchy nature of many young people's political awareness (eg. Harrison and Deicke, 2000; BYC, 1998; Park, 1996). On the whole these findings also corroborate the findings of recent qualitative research on young people's politics which emphasise the extent to which young people feel themselves to be marginalised within the political process (eg. Edwards, 2001; White and Bruce, 2000; Bentley and Oakley, 1999). The young people interviewed by White and Bruce (2000) in particular presented a similar image of politicians as generally untrustworthy, self-interested, ineffective and unrepresentative. These and other studies also show young people to lack confidence in their ability to act effectively in the political arena.

How then do these views help to explain young people's reluctance to engage in conventional political action? Participation can be more or less costly and participation can be more or less rewarding. The willingness of individuals to engage in political action is thus shaped by the extent to which they both feel themselves to be empowered to participate effectively in the political process, and perceive the political system to be responsive to their demands. These findings thus raise important questions about young people's political learning and socialisation in contemporary Britain and the ways in which politics can be made more accessible to them. Equally importantly however they also raise important questions about the nature of the political structures which shape young people's political choices and how these can be reshaped in order to afford young people greater opportunities for genuine involvement in the policy making process.

Making Politics Accessible To Young People

The professionalisation of political campaigning and the modernisation of party organisation in recent years have arguably undermined the links between political parties and the constituencies they purport to serve. The development of sophisticated media management techniques and spin, the cultivation of a more presidential model of party organisation and policy development, together with increasing ideological convergence, have all served to make electoral parties more remote from the

publics they represent (eg. Scammell, 1999; Webb, 1992). These developments represent a shift away from a participatory ethos, towards a consumerist model which places a premium upon electoral choice rather than active participation by citizens in the process of policy development.

Traditionally party activists have played a key role within local communities through their face-to-face communications with the general public. Increasing reliance upon the mass media as a vehicle for communicating party policy, or more radically as a form of political metacommunication (Esser et al., 2001), has the effect of making political parties and policy debates appear more remote, abstract and impersonal. Very few of the participants in this study had personally had any direct contact with politicians of any persuasion and, perhaps unsurprisingly, this contributed to their sense that politics was remote, inaccessible and often personally irrelevant, despite the fact that many were concerned about issues which were very clearly political in a broader sense.

Politicians were overwhelmingly viewed as being out of touch with the aspirations and fears of the young people in this study. Although this raises problems of presentation — with politicians being viewed as dull, conventional and remote — these concerns also reflected deeper problems in the relationship between publics and parties in western democracies. If young people's confidence in politicians, and in the political process generally, is to be restored politicians need to seek out more energetically the views of young people and involve them more actively in the decision-making process. Participants suggested various ways in which politicians could get more in touch with young people's views. Visiting schools, colleges and youth projects, participating in discussion groups to explain what they do, and conducting surveys of young people's opinions were all mentioned as means of improving politicians' profile in their local communities.

Participants also felt that young people's under-representation at the national level contributed to their sense that politics was not for them. Improving recruitment amongst younger people should therefore be a priority for all the major parties. Although the major parties have sought to bolster their passive membership this has largely been at the expense of bypassing those party activists who not only communicated party policy but acted as a sounding board for such policies. In the absence of such direct channels of two-way communication between politicians and publics, party leaderships have increasingly come to rely upon market research, focus groups and think-tanks in policy development, in the process arousing increasing anxiety amongst those concerned with the quality of public culture in contemporary democracies (eg. Dahlgren and Sparks, 1997). In these circumstances it is perhaps equally unsurprising that many of the participants in this study felt that their views and opinions mattered very little to political elites.

Increasing convergence in the policy stances of the main parties in recent years has also circumscribed the opportunities for the exercise of genuine political influence through conventional channels. The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a convergence of agendas and policies on social, economic and foreign policy issues between the major parties. The New Labour project involved an abandonment of many key ideological commitments which had previously guided party policy (eg. nationalisation, comprehensive education). These developments may partially explain the view of many participants that there was little to distinguish the parties and that they were essentially all the same.

Ideological convergence also has implications for the public perception of the efficacy of the political process itself in addressing the issues and problems which people face. The retreat of broadly statist social democratic projects and the ascendancy of market orientated perspectives in the face of the much-touted globalisation reinforces the notion that governments are increasingly powerless to effect substantial changes in the economic circumstances which shape people's lives. It is perhaps unsurprising that many of the participants in this study not only felt that there was little to separate the major parties in terms of policy, but were also highly sceptical of the capacity of any mainstream party to bring about significant improvements in the circumstances which shaped their futures.

These developments have gone hand in hand with changes in the media's communication of politics. The increasing reliance of the major parties upon the mass media has aroused increasing concerns about the perceived declining quality of political debate and the tabloidization (Norris et al., 1999) of political communications. Some have suggested that increasing coverage sustains the public's engagement with politics (eg. Lupia and McCubbins, 1998; Newton, 1997). Others argue that this kind of wall-to-wall coverage, and the dumbing down of political debate which is held to follow in its wake, undermine the public's interest in political affairs and hence the propensity to participate (eg. Capella and Jamieson, 1996; Putnam, 1995).

On the whole interviews with the participants in this study support the latter hypothesis. Many participants expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the way politics was presented and packaged by the news media. Discussions focused in particular upon the 1997 General Election campaign. Participants were especially concerned with the apparent sensationalism of the media's coverage in its portrayal of the election as a poll-led race largely dominated by sleaze and the clash of personalities at the expense of informed debate about policy issues. Where such issues were raised, what was perceived as the pseudo-technical language of debate served in the eyes of many participants to obscure the fundamental issues

which would inevitably shape their own futures. These views echo those of many commentators that the campaign was dull and uneventful (Harrison, 1997), and that the media was at least partly to blame for saturation coverage and ensuing public apathy (Scammell and Harrop, 1997).

Thus participants frequently emphasised that despite the at times wall-to-wall coverage of politics in the broadcast media, their portrayal of political events generally emphasised scandal and the politics of personality rather than clear discussion of the underlying policy issues. Political news often failed to communicate the centrality of politics to the social and economic circumstances shaping their own lives, and as a result most participants literally switched off from political engagement. Encouraging young people's engagement thus requires new ways of framing politics which connect more directly with their experience. Young people's suggestions for addressing these problems therefore focused on the need for a clearer, jargon-free presentation of the issues which matter to them.

Until recently efforts to encourage political understanding, skills and, thus, the potential for political action amongst young people have been largely absent in the UK education system. Where political education was explicitly encouraged this was in the form of civics which did little to foster young people's capacity to act in political settings as competent participants (Davies, 1999). Partly as a consequence of the lowering of the voting age in the UK to 18 in 1970, the 1970s witnessed a resurgence of interest in political education, of which the *Programme for Political Education* sponsored by the Hansard Society was the most obvious manifestation (Crick and Porter, 1978).

The emphasis here, and in subsequent policy development, focused on fostering a critical awareness about public affairs which might potentially facilitate young people's active political engagement. This approach represents a considerable advance upon traditional civics with its largely sterile emphasis upon constitutional procedures, and factual knowledge which neither stimulated young people's interest in politics, nor equipped them with the skills to actively participate. This new discourse of education for citizenship first found expression in the report of the Commission on Citizenship (1990) but it was not until the launch of the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship in the wake of Labour's landslide victory in 1997 that this work bore fruit. Underlying this commitment to citizenship education was a concern with the perceived political disaffection of many young people. In principle the Advisory Group aimed at a rather ambitious change in UK political culture creating an informed and empowered public capable of exercising their political rights (QCA, 1998: 4). In practice however a greater emphasis has been placed upon responsible citizenship, and upon the duties and obligations of citizenship,

than upon personal empowerment. Underlying this agenda is a more basic ambiguity in UK political culture concerning the type and extent of participation deemed desirable in liberal democracies (Frazer, 1999). Thus, whilst the government sought to encourage learning about the democratic process, the underlying agenda arguably remains one of social cohesion and integration rather than empowerment.

Notwithstanding such ambiguities, the citizenship education agenda represents a considerable and long overdue advance in the conditions of young people's formal political learning. Many studies draw attention to young people's generally sketchy understanding of politics (eg. White and Bruce, 2000; Wring et al., 1999; Park, 1996) and participants in this study frequently drew attention to their own lack of political knowledge and the ways in which this restricted their political choices. The absence of formal political education within the school curriculum was frequently cited by participants as a key reason for their lack of political engagement. Encouraging more awareness of politics amongst young people through, for example, more emphasis upon political education in the school curriculum may help nurture more positive attitudes towards electoral and other forms of participation in politics by developing a greater awareness of the impact of representative mechanisms in shaping public policy.

Widening Opportunities for Young People's Participation

However, as the above findings show, young people's political disengagement partly reflects the generally punitive policy climate towards young people in the 1980s and 1990s, and especially a widespread scepticism about the extent to which politicians are likely to deliver on their promises. Perceptions of the unresponsiveness of politicians to young people's interests and concerns reflect real deficiencies in the functioning of existing political institutions. If this is so, empowering young citizens to act effectively in political contexts, through citizenship education programmes for example, *without* addressing the more fundamental shortcomings of conventional representative politics, is unlikely to stimulate young people's political engagement. The explanations offered by young people in this study emphasise the importance of tackling institutional barriers to participation *in tandem* with initiatives aimed at fostering young people's development as political actors.

These institutional and structural barriers are more enduring and deep-rooted, and tackling these issues involves a more radical approach. At its most basic this involves a widening of opportunities for young people's participation in the conventional political process through voting and electoral reform, alongside measures to restore public confidence in the representative process. More fundamentally however, it also involves the development of new avenues for young people's political participation which bridge the gap between the types of informal involvement favoured by many young people and the formal representative process.

In the wake of increasing concern about the (apparent) rising tide of political apathy, a range of measures have been suggested which seek to make both voting and electoral registration easier and more accessible, through for example weekend voting, telephone and electronic voting, locating polling booths in shopping malls, post offices, etc., and the introduction of a rolling register of electors (eg. Electoral Commission, 2002b). Since no major changes to the UK's antiquated electoral procedures have taken place since 1918, their reform should be considered as a matter of urgency. Raising the profile of electoral participation might, for example, involve making registration and voting available in the type of places frequented by young people, such as FE colleges, universities, shopping centres and the workplace.

However one of the most obvious ways of increasing electoral participation by young people would be to lower the age of electoral eligibility. Allowing young people the opportunity to play a more active role in the representative process by voting is one means of encouraging an awareness of the links between participation, policy development and the eventual impact of policy upon young people's own circumstances in ways which can cultivate an engagement which extends well beyond the narrow confines of voting. Since many young people lack even this most basic of political rights it is perhaps unsurprising that many are also uninterested in conventional politics. Many participants emphasised the value of lowering the voting age to, say, sixteen in encouraging them to take more of an interest in politics. Participants frequently observed that politicians did not take the views of young people seriously because they were often ineligible to vote. Lowering the voting age might thus encourage politicians to give more consideration to the views of young people in the development of policy.

However removing barriers to young people's political participation also requires more fundamental institutional changes. For those registered and eligible to vote the act of voting is already relatively easy. Given the trivial costs of voting compared with other forms of political action it is unsurprising that participants' explanations for their disinclination to vote drew attention more to the apparent ineffectiveness of voting than to the barriers to electoral participation. At one level this perception is expressed in the view that the electoral system is itself unfair since in the First Past The Post system all votes do not count equally. Several participants felt that the introduction of a proportional system would encourage them to vote.

More fundamentally it is necessary not only to open up avenues for young people's participation in formal politics, but also to develop means of articulating formal politics with those informal, non-conventional forms of political engagement which most young people will continue to favour. The exercise of political citizenship should involve not simply a (periodic) right to representation via the ballot box,

but also opportunities for active participation in the policy process itself, and this requires the development of new forms of democratic participation. Recent years have seen a growing interest in new forms of public involvement in decision-making processes, especially at a local level, through for example the use of citizens juries and deliberative polling to tap the informed view of ordinary citizens (eg. Stewart, 1995; Fishkin, 1992). By grafting new forms of direct democracy and consultation mechanisms upon existing representative institutions these practices could potentially enhance democracy through greater citizen participation.

These ideas are reflected in the growth of Youth Forums and Young People's Councils which encourage dialogue and communication between young people and local authorities (see eg. Willow, 1997). However whilst these developments have broadly been welcomed by organisations keen to encourage wider involvement by young people in the decision making process, a number of issues urgently need to be addressed if such mechanisms are to become genuine vehicles for the personal empowerment of young people. In particular if these initiatives are to be more than an exercise in tokenism it is vital that they are integrated with existing formal mechanisms of representation and participation. The experience of participation in youth forums can potentially empower young people to seek an active role in the political process. However unless they are given a genuine role in local decision-making there is a danger that the expectations which such participation generates will increase participants' cynicism about politics if politicians fail to respond to the recommendations of youth forums and councils.

Too often their agenda is still set by those in authority and these innovations are often limited in scope by policy makers to youth-specific issues and are not well integrated with existing decision-making structures (eg. Fitzpatrick et al., 1998). If these innovations are to become more than an exercise in legitimising adult decisions it is therefore vital that they are fully consistent with existing mechanisms of representation. As White and Bruce (2000) note, the failure of politicians to act upon their recommendations runs the risk of deepening young people's political cynicism and apathy still further. Restructuring the processes of representation and participation is one way in which citizens, and especially politically marginalised groups such as young people, can be re-connected with the democratic process in ways which guarantee them full access to political citizenship.

Other innovations in mechanisms of public consultation, representation and involvement such as citizens juries and deliberative polling, which potentially offer important new avenues for young people's participation in the policy process raise similar issues. In recent years central government has begun to experiment with new forms of public involvement in the policy process, for example, through the

establishment in 1998 of the Peoples Panel, a representative sample of UK citizens established with the goal of making public service provision more responsive to the needs and demands of service users. So far the policy impact of these innovations has been limited and this partly reflects a concern that such groups may, in the words of Jack Cunningham, then Minister for the Cabinet Office, be able to dictate policy (Cunningham, 1999). Although these developments are to be welcomed as important means of keeping government in touch with the needs and aspirations of ordinary citizens, that is, essentially as *consultative* mechanisms, such innovations potentially could enable citizens to play a more *participatory* and deliberative role in the development of public policy. As such there is again a need to develop ways of integrating these mechanisms into the formal process of policy development alongside, and complementary to, existing representative institutions.

Finally, empowering young people to participate effectively in public life means acknowledging the interconnected nature of citizenship rights and hence the importance of tackling the social and economic exclusion of some young people. The effects of the erosion of social and economic rights for citizens exercise of genuine political citizenship have been acknowledged in relation to some politically marginalised groups (eg. Lister, 1992, 1997). The implications of these analyses are also pertinent to the investigation of young people's access to political citizenship rights (eg. Jones and Wallace, 1992; Frazer and Emler, 1997; Helve, 1997).

As a consequence of their position of dependence and subordination within the life-cycle, young people, and especially disadvantaged young people, are unlikely to benefit from the types of social and professional connections, or to participate in the types of organised civil associations, which facilitate political participation. Moreover, as a whole host of studies show, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are also less likely to be politically engaged or to possess the personal skills and competencies necessary for effective participation. Reconnecting politics for marginalised young people therefore requires the development of inclusive social and economic policies which offer greater support for young people's transitions and, in the process, create the conditions for greater equality of access to political influence. Unless young people feel themselves to be socially included they are unlikely to want to participate politically.

Conclusion

Many participants emphasised the unresponsiveness of political structures and the extent to which they felt that politicians could not be trusted to attend to their interests. Although participants did express concerns and take an interest in issues which are clearly political in a broad sense, most were also highly doubtful of the capacity of conventional political action to effectively advance their interests. These

findings thus cast some doubt upon the notion of disconnection understood in terms of political apathy. As Wring et al. (1998) argue, an engaged cynicism might thus be a more appropriate term to describe young people's dissatisfaction with conventional political processes. In many respects such an ascription may also appropriately characterise the political views and opinions of much wider segments of the UK population, especially in relation to politically marginalised groups (eg. ethnic minority groups, poor people, women). What is required therefore are new forms of political representation which facilitate the access of such groups to genuine participation in decision making. To this extent the solutions appropriate to the distinctive needs of young people are likely to involve a significantly greater emphasis upon providing early opportunities for civic engagement through real involvement in decision making processes with adequate support for and recognition of young people's involvement.

For those young people with the personal resources (skills, networks, confidence, etc.) this might encourage involvement in alternative forms of political action outside the boundaries of the formal representative process. For most however political disengagement is an altogether more likely response. Many participants emphasised the extent to which they felt they lacked the political awareness and especially the competency and skills to act effectively in political contexts. However, empowering young citizens to act effectively through for example citizenship education programmes without addressing the more fundamental perceived inadequacies of conventional representative mechanisms may have the paradoxical effect of encouraging the emergence of a politically competent yet increasingly disaffected generation of young people. Such initiatives need to be developed in tandem with initiatives which seek to open up new opportunities for young people's participation, both through the reform of existing representative processes and, equally importantly, through the development of new avenues of citizen participation in the policy making process.

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Notes

- 1 The mean age of respondents was 17.1 (sd=1.8) of which 57% were female and 43% male. Respondents current labour market status was as follows: school, 30 (15%); 16+ education, 115 (57%); employment, 8 (16%); unemployed/govt. sponsored

training, 40 (20%). On the basis of the Registrar General's Classification respondents' social class background (based upon father's current or most recent job) was as follows: professional, 44 (22%); intermediate non-manual, 81 (40%); manual, 46 (23%); not stated, 30 (15%).

- 2 Focus groups were moderated by the research team and in some instances Youth service personnel were present as non-participating observers. Further details of the interview schedule, etc. are available from the author.

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YOUNG PEOPLE, 'COMMUNITY COHESION' AND THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORK IN BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

PAUL THOMAS

The summer of 2001 saw the most serious scenes of violent disorder in British towns since the inner-city riots of 1981. Bradford, Burnley, Leeds and Oldham all witnessed rioting involving multiple arrests, damage to property and injury to both members of the public and police officers.

Two themes dominated discussions of the events, both during and since. The first theme is youth. Young people under the age of 25 were the main protagonists in all these riots (Denham, 2001; Cattle, 2001). Many were subsequently arrested and imprisoned. The second and dominant theme is race. All these disturbances involved young people of south Asian origin fighting with white young people and or the police. In Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, explicitly racist campaigning by the neo-nazi BNP was a clear factor.

This paper aims to explore both these themes, placing them within the context of 'Community Cohesion', a concept that was rapidly developed as the dominant parameter of discussion in the numerous subsequent central/local government reports. Alongside these themes of youth and race, this paper examines Putnam's (2000) concept of 'social capital', arguing that youth work can play a unique role in promoting genuine 'community cohesion' through the creation of what Putnam terms 'Bridging Social Capital'

All the evidence suggests that the disturbances were not an accident or a one-off. The Government certainly did not think so as it hurriedly commissioned a series of detailed reports (Cattle, 2001; Ritchie, 2001; CRE, 2001)), and issued its own statement (Denham, 2001). The common theme of all these reports was a perceived lack of community cohesion and the need to increase it. As a direct response and armed with new streams of funding, Community Cohesion Co-ordinators have been appointed, the Local Government Association (2002) has issued guidance as to how Local Authorities should promote Cohesion, and individual authorities have been identified as 'Pathfinders'.

So, what does community cohesion mean to the young people who were caught up in the disturbances? This paper aims to explore this through analysis of group discussions with Asian and white young people in areas of Oldham, where race continues to be a highly defining factor in young peoples experiences.

The nature of racism and community cohesion is debated here in relation to young peoples experiences. The Government's Cantle Report (Cantle, 2001:31) identified a unique and vital role for Youth Work in building Community Cohesion nationally, as did Ritchie (2001) in relation to Oldham in particular. However, the understanding of youth work, and of the ways in which young people experience their lives in areas perceived to lack 'cohesion', presented in these reports is highly questionable, in the view of the author.

This led the author to interview groups of Asian and white young people who are regular users of Youth Work provision in Oldham, as well as Asian and white youth workers who work with them. The senior officer in Oldham MBC's Youth Service was also interviewed. The aim in all cases was to investigate how all concerned view community cohesion, and their view of how youth work can contribute to increased peace, cohesion, and stronger 'social capital'.

Community Cohesion - its context and meaning

Throughout this paper Community Cohesion is in inverted commas because it is a highly contested term, raising controversial issues around race, racism and responsibility.

The Government's Denham Report, the report of the Community Cohesion Review Team (Denham, 2001) identified the key term in this way:

Community Cohesion requires that there is a shared sense of belonging based on common goals and core social values, respect for differences (ethnic, cultural and religious) and acceptance of the reciprocal rights and obligations of community members working together for the common good (Denham, 2001:18).

The Local Government Association, in its advice to member authorities (LGA, 2002), says, Community cohesion incorporates and goes beyond the concept of race equality and social inclusion (LGA, 2002:6).

The lack of such Cohesion is identified by all the numerous reports into the disturbances. The Ritchie Report of the Oldham Independent Review Panel (2001) was frank about the town: Housing segregation has led to a substantial degree of educational segregation and in turn to a very low level of contact between most white people and most Pakistanis and Bangladeshis within the town (Ritchie, sec. 3.22:10-11). The causes of this housing segregation are complex and disputed. The Commission for Racial Equality's report, *A Place for us All- Learning from Bradford, Oldham and Burnley* (CRE, 2001:22/3) highlights the CRE's own formal investigations into the discriminatory practices of Oldham estate agents in 1990, and allocations

by Oldham MBC Housing Department in 1993. National statistics and research around racial harassment have illustrated the impact on ethnic minority individuals and the resulting limitations on their housing choices.

However, there is a clear implication in the various reports that segregation has not simply been forced on one ethnic minority community by the racism of another, white, community. The CRE report acknowledges that while forced segregation is illegal, congregation or self-segregation is not. Peoples decisions are determined by economic and social circumstances, as well as racism in the case of ethnic minority communities. Together with an understandable desire to live among people of the same background, faith and language, these factors have led to ethnic clustering in some towns and cities, particularly in the North of England . (CRE, 2001:6)

This theme is more explicit in the Cattle Report s Themes and Proposals. Successful change will require a greater collective and individual effort on behalf of all sections of the community and for the minority, largely non-white community to develop a greater acceptance of, and engagement with, the principle national institutions (Rec 5.1.10:19). It goes on to state, we would expect the new values to contain statements about expectation that the use of the English language, which is already a pre-condition of citizenship, will become more vigorously pursued (Rec 5.1.11:16)

This apparent emphasis on Cultural explanations for separate Asian housing areas in Oldham and other affected Northern towns is challenged by recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the University of Leeds, which identifies racism as a key factor in limiting housing choices. Tariq Madood et al (PSI, 1997) identify Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities as particularly economically disadvantaged, suggesting class and poverty also limit the housing choices of these communities.

Anti-racism campaigners are much more explicit in their criticism of this 'community cohesion' (and the lack of it) explanation:

The popular press first blamed 'outside agitators'...then it was the inherent separatism of Islamic culture that was to blame – these people did not want to integrate, they were 'self-segregating'. A people that had been systematically cut off, shunned, dispossessed and left to rot, was now blamed for refusing to mix

(Kundnani, 2001)

The causes of this housing segregation are outside the scope of this paper but the reality of it cannot be denied. The impact of this segregation plus parental choice in school allocation on many young people is clearly identified in the Ritchie Report: Whether in school or out of school, there are too few opportunities for

young people from across the communal boundaries to mix within Oldham this has led to ignorance, misunderstanding and fear . (Ritchie, 2001:9)

John Denham, Home Office Minister, commented that ignorance of others is an obvious source of conflict. It feeds the territorial instincts of young men and makes it easier for myths and jealousies to flourish (Denham, 2001, Ch. 2,10:12). Ritchie is more explicit about the effect on Oldham Youth,

In both Asian and white communities the step to racism has been a short one. Coupled with the residential segregation in the town, it has also led to a strong sense of territoriality amongst young men: 'this is our area and I don't want to go there because it is theirs', which has exacerbated tensions. (Ritchie, 2001:14)

Apportioning responsibility for this tension, and the violence which has followed it, depends on the responsibility for the lack of Community Cohesion in the first place. To anti-racism campaigners, such as the Institute of Race Relations and CARF, this is straightforward:

In fact there are parts of Oldham which are no-go areas. If a group of Asian boys walk through the shopping centre in town, a security guard or police officer is likely to tell them to disperse. In the white areas of town you will see the words 'Pakis Out' painted on road signs. (CARF, 2001)

CARF highlight the long history of racial harassment and institutional racism which Oldham's ethnic minority communities have suffered, including the petrol bombing of the home of Riaz Ahmed, Oldham's then deputy mayor, shortly after the disturbances. The Institute of Race Relations and CARF see community cohesion, and its inherent criticism of self-segregation amongst some Asian communities as a diversion from the reality of racism.

However, the official statistics for racial harassment in Oldham tell a more complex story, and have themselves become a political battleground. The CRE report (2001) details the 1998/99 figures compiled by the Oldham division of Greater Manchester Police. Of 290 racial incidents in Oldham during that year, 142 of the victims were white; 52 of these white victims said that they were attacked by a group of a different ethnicity. A very high proportion of the racial incidents in Oldham happened in the street, perpetrated by people unknown to the victim (CRE, 2001:39/40). Since 1994, police annual reports in Oldham have shown more white people than people from ethnic minorities are reporting racist incidents (CRE, 2001:41), a fact also true for the Bradford police area in the year to March 2001.

This clearly links to the ongoing wider debate around the problematic nature of the definition of a racial incident offered by the Macpherson Enquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, and now used nationally by police forces. Given the established fact that young people are over-represented as the perpetrators and victims of racial incidents (CRE 2003), this is central to this paper's debate around young people's understanding of Community Cohesion in Oldham, and of possible youth work responses to these understandings.

In the author's view, the term community cohesion is more questionable for its lack of clarity and meaning, rather than the rejection of anti-racism that IRR see within it. In Appendix C of the Cantle Report, Dr. Rosalyn Leach of the Home Office attempts to analyse the concept: 'Community cohesion is about helping micro-communities to gel or mesh into an integrated whole. These divided communities would need to develop common goals and a shared vision' (Cantle, 2001:70). This analysis quickly moves on to bemoan the residential and school segregation in towns like Oldham, but stops short of the radical measures that would be needed to change it. As a result, the suggestions as to how to actually build community cohesion are bland in the extreme: 'Developing and promulgating an ethos which residents recognise and accept; securing harmonious social relations; promoting community interests' (Cantle, 2001:74).

This appears to be the apolitical and even-handed multiculturalism which dominated policy for so long, and whose failure to tackle the causes and results of racism has clearly been exposed (Chauhan, 1990). However, the various Community cohesion reports are explicit about the need to tackle racism, as well as fumbling towards an open dialogue about monocultural instincts within some Asian communities, and the negative reactions of some whites to those instincts. In starting to engage positively with the reality of the white backlash (Hewitt, 1996), as well as with tensions internal to Asian communities, the Community cohesion agenda seems to be edging towards what Popple (1997) describes as cultural/political approaches to tackling the root causes of racial tension. It is the contention of this paper that Youth Work has a special, and possibly unique, role to play in promoting a community cohesion that works with the cultural/political realities of racism and of young people's lives.

Methodology

To explore young people's experiences and understandings of Community Cohesion (or the lack of it), focus group interviews were held with two groups of young people. One group consisted of seven white young men and women aged 13-16. The other group consisted of six Asian young men and women aged 16-21. In each case, the young people were already known to each other, as they were

regular users of the youth work provision that provided the venue for the discussion. The young people at both venues had accepted an open invitation from their youth workers to take part in discussions with a researcher about how they saw their area after the Oldham riots. The groups were interviewed in two adjoining housing areas in Oldham, areas that are viewed as ethnically different and with tensions between them, Chadderton and Werneth. In Chadderton, the interview took place at a local authority maintained youth club; in Werneth it took place at the base of the voluntary sector Werneth and Freehold Community Development Project. The aim was to explore the young peoples' experiences and understandings of both their own area and of the adjoining ethnically different area.

This was discussed in each case via a group interview, facilitated by the author. The author is a 41 year old white man, with a professional qualification in, and experience of, youth and community work in general, and anti-racist work specifically. This has included work with white football fans, and a role as Regional Youth Policy Officer for the Commission for Racial Equality in the north of England. This professional experience was helpful in guiding conversation with young people, especially around race, but was problematic also. At a number of points, individuals within the group of white young people appeared to make provocative racist comments to 'test' the author, to see whether there would be acceptance or connivance with their views. This clearly raised difficulties, given that the research approach was a largely non-directional one, which allowed young people to lead the discussion as much as possible. What the author's ethnic background did enable with this group was some frank discussion and reflection.

Similarly, the young people within the Asian group were initially wary, and extremely guarded in their comments. Given that they were being asked, in the context described above, to discuss racial conflict, and their reaction to it, with a strange white man (with very short hair!), this wariness is hardly surprising.

For these reasons, the youth workers known to the young people concerned also took part in the group discussions. At each venue, this involved three youth workers. In both cases the young people were given the option of being interviewed on their own, or allowing their youth workers to take part as equals, and in both cases the young people asked the workers to take part, and to give their own, personal views. This was helpful to the author, as in each discussion the presence of the known workers gave the young people the confidence to share their views and experiences. With the white group in particular, the workers were able to challenge some of the wilder stories and claims which young people put forward as 'fact', something which young people also did to each other as the discussion progressed.

In carrying out group interviews, the author was well aware of the potential dangers of peer pressure and conformity, and of the possibility of exaggeration. Indeed such factors were evident at times during both group interviews. During the session with white young people, the tensions around the long and complex discussions of their experiences of race and conflict (see below) seemed to be relieved by a bout of overt racism, where several young people egged each other on to be more and more extreme. For example:

WMYP: I'd like to take a boat to Pakistan and take over their country.

WFYP: When Asians are in hospital they have to have sex every day.

However, the process of group and individual interactions that produce such views, and the more considered ones reported below, are precisely the focus of the paper. Frey and Fontana comment that 'Group interviewing will provide data on group interactions, on realities as defined in a group context, and on interpretation of events that reflect group input' (1993:20-21).

Frey and Fontana also view group or multiple respondent interviews as 'effective in settings where the relationships among respondents are complex and the views are diverse' (1993:25). They indicate that groups create their own structure and meaning, and a group interview provides access to the level of meaning in addition to clarifying argument and revealing diversity in views and opinions. (1993:25)

This group interview approach also helps to address post-modern criticisms of sociological research, which have focussed on the 'overly authoritative voice of the ethnographer, the tendency to report the subjective interpretation of the ethnographer'. (Frey and Fontana, 1993:26) Group interviews are more polyphonic, as more subjects participate and the interviewer's influence is reduced. The author would argue that this tendency was strengthened by the involvement of known and trusted youth workers in the group interviews. Additionally, the author himself is an experienced and qualified youth and community worker.

The author adopted the role Frey and Fontana identify as 'passive/non-directive'. This calls for a rather passive, non-directive approach where the interviewer/observer only asks enough questions or probes on a limited basis or offers re-enforcement to keep a discussion going (Frey and Fontana, 1993:27). It has to be acknowledged that this role, which included listening to overt and sustained articulations of racism, was far from easy to play for a researcher whose own professional practice has focussed heavily on challenging racism. However, the passive/ non-directional approach to the group interviews was strengthened by them being carried out in youth work settings familiar to and regularly used by the groups, and the involvement of their own workers.

There were clearly dangers here that Albrecht et al identify as compliance and identification (1993:55). Identification is related to the situation in which a respondent's position on an issue is similar to the position held by someone the respondent admires, or with who he or she seeks solidarity (Albrecht, 1993:55). Also, internalisation is related to the report of opinions that are deeply ingrained and personal these opinions are potentially the most valuable yet the most difficult data to obtain by researchers using a focus group methodology (Albrecht, 1993:55).

The author believes that the real dangers were overcome by both groups' experiences of youth work-based group work that explores controversial issues, and by their trust in the workers. The fact that this overcame compliance and identification is shown by the extreme, racist comments made at times by some of the white young people. These comments surprised their full time youth worker:

WFYW1: I was surprised by some of the young people because they have been involved in some of the work around inter-community conflict, and displayed very non-racist behaviour in the past.

The group was also prepared to argue with each other over their attitudes to race and difference:

FWYP1: My mate is going out with an Asian lad, so no one likes her here. X was calling her, you [FWYP2] were calling her.

FWYP2: I wasn't calling her.

FWYP1: You were calling her.

These group interviews were followed by interviews with their youth workers; to gauge their reactions and to explore the possible youth work responses to their views. This involved a one to one semi-structured interview with the full time white female youth worker at South Chadderton (WFYW1); and a semi-structured group interview with the white male full time co-ordinator (WMYW), Asian male part time youth worker (AMYW) and white female part time youth worker (WFYW2) at the Werneth and Freehold Community Project. In addition, a semi-structured, one to one interview was held with the female head of Oldham Youth Service (PYO), herself a member of an ethnic minority group.

Young Peoples' Experiences of 'Community Cohesion'

Both group interviews started with a request to hear about the areas the young people lived in and what they liked about them, as well as information about any areas the young people did not go to and why.

The racialised nature of young peoples' experiences became immediately apparent. Although the interviewer only made vague references to the trouble and making Oldham a better place for young people, both groups immediately responded in racial terms:

WFYP: It's gone a lot more violent round here...there's a lot of fighting between Asians and whites.

AMYP: Any whites come round here, they'll get no trouble.

Both groups were apparently positive about their own areas, although only in relation to the adjoining area:

AMYP: It's chilling...it's alright.

WFYP: It's not so bad round here, it's worse up towards Werneth and Oldham because more Asians are up there.

Both groups quickly emphasised that they have their own area, which is defined and limited by a universally accepted border. When the Asian group were asked where their area started, they chorused in unison, The Bridges, you know, the railway bridges.

Similarly the white group drew at the author's suggestion, a map of the local area. The border is here, said one young woman, putting a cross by the railway bridge.

WFYP: Asians don't come past the bridges really, at least they don't walk past.

WFYP: Soon as you start walking under there, all the Asians are under there.

The perception by each group of the other's area and of their safety if they ventured into it, was clear:

AMYP: It's not our turf, we'd get jumped or something.

PT: Why?

AMYP: Because they are all racist down there!

AMYP: We'd get jumped, not actually jumped because we can fight our battles, but what's the point of fighting? They'd think that we'd gone down there for a fight.

AFYP: We'd get battered by all them white people. They don't like us do they?

PT: Would the white lads go up to Werneth? What would happen?

WFYP: No, they'd get battered.

PT: Battered?

WMYP: Because we're white. They don't like white people.

WFYP: I do go up there but only on a bus!

The implications for the other group venturing into the group's area were clear:

PT: So, if Asian lads came down here, would they get jumped?

WMYP: Yeah! They'll get bricks at the cars.

WFYP: Not necessarily...if people have had a few drinks.

PT: If white lads from Chadderton walk through Werneth, will they be safe?

AMYP: If they look down, yeah, but if they are going to give us dirties (looks) and that, then no.

AMYP: Just look down and walk, that's obvious. If they are looking at you, they're looking for trouble...dirties, dirties! (Laughs)

AMYP: We wouldn't attack them, but others would!

AMYP: They'd do them man.

AMYP: This is how it goes, you be right with them, they'll be right with you, that's it, but if they are going to be bastards...

PT: Is that what white lads are to you?

AMYP: Right, yeah, it is.

Whilst racism is clearly a key factor in the creation of such a posture of defiance and active defence amongst Asian young men (Webster 1995, 1996), gender and poverty also have to be seen as factors. At what point does (to many, legitimate) self-defence become unprovoked aggression by bored young men? Should race be seen as the primary force shaping the life experience of those young men? Modood's (1997) important work stresses the interplay between racism and poverty that influences the experiences of young people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, whilst Din's (2002) large-scale survey of the experiences of Pakistani-origin young people in Bradford suggests that internal community restrictions and controls are the main factor in limiting the young peoples' engagement in mainstream society.

Those perspectives badly need to be debated more openly and honestly, as both the Cantle and Denham reports call for, but their primacy will remain fiercely contested in the face of overt white racism:

PT: Are there any Asian families in Chadderton?

WFYP: Only a shopkeeper...he's Indian.

PT: What would happen if a Pakistani family moved in?

WFYP: There used to be one. They used to get bricked all the time, every time they stepped out the door.

WMYP: They'd definitely get terrorised out.

WFYP: They don't like us, well people from Chaddy, coming up to Werneth and we don't like them, we don't like them coming down.

WFYP: It's like territories, it's been white round here for ages.

In spite of some of the bravado of some of the language, the regret and the fear stemming from these limitations was clear:

WMYP: We should be able to walk up past the bridges, it's our country.

WFYP: It scares me. You think that if one of them is racist, they all are.

WMYP: My mum has to always take me to the doctors, because I can't go on my own...it's in Werneth...I'm going to get beaten up.

(WFYP: Where x is on about, it's all white!)

The tone of some of these comments from the white young people echoes the concept of the white backlash (Back, 1993; Hewitt, 1996). Contrary to some assertions (CARF, 1997), this is characterised by an uncertainty and a growing lack of confidence, rather than a dominant triumphalism. Anoop Nayak, in his thoughtful investigation into young peoples perceptions of race, space and place (1999) quotes a study of 248 young (14-18 year old) Londoners. In that study, 92% of Black and 77% of dual heritage young people claimed to be proud of their ethnicity/colour, whilst only 34% of white young people shared this feeling. Nayak also quotes another piece of research, which claims that, The majority of young whites don't feel that they have an "ethnicity" (Nayak, 1999:185).

This supports Hewitt's research amongst young white people in Greenwich, the London Borough that saw the racist murders of Stephen Lawrence, Rolan Adams, and Rohit Duggal. In spite of the clear reality of racial harassment and violence perpetrated by whites, Hewitt's research found that it is whites that feel that they have been victimised and marginalized by recent local and national government policies of equality and inclusivity. This leads Nayak (1999) to conclude that, This needs to be remedied. As such, there is a paucity of detailed qualitative research

concerning why young white people may view their racial identities as problematic, and even less regarding the issue of what can be done about this (Nayak, 1999:185).

This suggests that youth work/ educational strategies that aim to engage with the racism of white young people need to acknowledge and work with issues of self-identity and perception, as advocated by a number of writers (Hewitt, 1996; Dadzie, 1997; CRE, 1999; Thomas, 2002).

Similarly, the Asian young people interviewed had ambivalent feelings towards cross-community contact.

AMYP: I've got a few white friends from Chadderton and they all come up here, no problem.

AMYP: I used to go to South Chadderton Youth Centre (for a music project) ...but everyone started to get really funny, so I just stopped.

PT: Funny?

AMYP: Dirty looks, that sort of thing.

AMYP: It could get better if we work on it. We're working on it, just older people aren't working on it.

The grim realities of this statement were apparent, with the Asian young people recounting conflicts with BNP leafleters and racist attacks. White young people described a local BNP activist Johnny, who had attempted to pass racist literature, which focused on figures about immigration and unfairness to whites, on to them. Such influence should probably not be overplayed:

PT: What figures?

WFYP: Wasn't really listening, he was boring me after a while!

However, the latter story prompted a number of crass racist statements. For example:

WFYP: They get all the money. We wait ages for something to be done up in Werneth. If they need something done, they get it done straight away.

The influence of family and community pressure was also apparent:

PT: Would you go out with an Asian lad?

WFYP: My mum and dad told me if I went out with an Asian, they'd batter me; I'd get kicked out.

WFYP: It's dirty, well, I think it is, but I've been brought up in a racist family all my life.

WFYP: I'd get called and bullied.

In spite of this, the above discussion included a lot of reflection and discussion of female friends who were in mixed relationships:

WFYP: Some of them are racist but some of them aren't...some of them you can get along with.

The positive viewpoints and questioning of racially defined territory within the interviews stemmed entirely from youth work activities and initiatives. The Werneth project had organised the Asian young men into a cricket team to play in the Saddleworth under-17 Cricket League.

AMYP: It was good, no problem at all.

The Asian young women described how females from the project had gone to a mixed Youth Service organised conference and enjoyed the ethnically mixed sessions but experienced tensions in the lunch break:

AMYW: When you mix people up, they are ok, but then when they go back to their own group, they are part of a group, a different group.

The Asian young men were very positive about the mixing that had taken place on a Youth Service exchange and residential in Germany, including their contact with a non-Asian group from Liverpool.

Youth work activities have had a similar, positive impact on some of the white young people. Some of the white young women had taken part in a multi-racial summer drama project, organised by Oldham Youth Service and Oldham Youth Theatre:

WFYP: We do talk to Asian people; we did drama with them. You do get a couple of nice ones.

WFYP: People I know, Asian people, are nice to me, but it's the lads...

WFYP [to WFYW1 (full time youth worker)]: We were racist before we met you, solidly racist.

WFYW1: Why have you changed?

WFYP: You've taught us to look at different ways and opinions, and to socialise with other people.

WFYP: Yeah, the drama project with the Asian girls was really good.

WFYP: They (Asian young women) were really nice, we got on along with them as well.

WFYP: They were willing to work with us and give us a chance, so we should be the same towards them just because they're a different colour, doesn't mean they haven't got the same feelings as us.

What this suggests is a potentially unique role for Youth Work in developing what Putnam (2000) calls social capital. Putnam's account of the breakdown in the USA of social capital, the social links and cohesiveness that comes from active and collective participation in organisations of all types, has rightly received praise. In charting so carefully when and why social capital declined, Putnam offers hope not only in how social capital can be rebuilt, but also why it is so vital. The concept of social capital in general offers great hope and clarity to all youth and community workers, but Putnam's stress on the different types of social capital has great relevance to community cohesion, and to the potential role of youth work.

Putnam identifies two types of social capital, bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital is the type that is familiar to most people, a term interchangeable with community, and it focuses on strengthening the links between people who live, work and play together every day. This is clearly vital, the everyday work of youth and community workers. However, Oldham is a classic study in the limitations of bonding social capital — two communities with strong internal structures and cultures, but who have little contact with, or respect for, each other. This is where bridging social capital is relevant. Putnam comments that, Bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrow selves (Putnam, 2000:23).

This concept of Bridging social capital has a strong relation to the concept of community cohesion, and the same problems — how do you build it and promote it between different ethnic groups when those communities live and, increasingly, study separately? This is where youth work can, and does, come in, as Putnam identifies. Examples of Bridging social capital include the civil rights movement, many youth service groups, and ecumenical religious organisations (Putnam, 2000:22).

The potential role of Youth Work in promoting community cohesion and social capital

The research material presented from Oldham, in relation to segregation, and mutual suspicion and aggression based on that segregation, mirrors many of the comments made in the plethora of reports. Analysing the lack of Community Cohesion is one thing, developing approaches that effectively meet the needs of the young people interviewed and others in similar positions, is less clear-cut. What is clear is that the Government's Community Cohesion agenda and the resources flowing from this, pose major opportunities and challenges to youth work.

The recommendations of the Cantle Report (Cantle, 2001:48) seem to provide a clear opening for youth work: This should include promotion of cross-cultural contact between different communities at all levels, foster understanding and respect to break down barriers. This is particularly so because of the contested nature of cross-cultural contact, and hence Community Cohesion. The reports, including Cantle, hint at the fundamental problems of mono-cultural housing and education: A significant problem is posed by existing and future mono-cultural schools, which can add significantly to the separation of communities (Cantle, 2001:33).

Cantle suggests a limit of 75% of one culture or ethnicity in every school, but any recommendations are directed at schools, not the Government which is encouraging more faith schools rather than questioning the existing ones that are acknowledged to be a problem in the context of Community Cohesion.

Asian writer and broadcaster Farrukh Dhondy is scathing of the 75% target, Enforcing it will deepen the resentments of both the white and Asian communities of Bradford, Burnley, Oldham and wherever else (2002:5). Instead, Dhondy argues for liberal, distinctly British, Islamic Schools that will counter fundamentalist Islamic messages currently attractive to young British Muslims. Memories of the 'bussing' of Asian children to Bradford schools in the 1970s are still painful. Similarly, any attempts to force, or socially engineer, ethnically mixed housing are likely to create resentful backlashes in both Asian and white communities.

So, accepting the reality that housing and schools can make little or no short-term contribution to increased peace and Cohesion, what is the nature of the lack of Cohesion amongst young people in Oldham at the moment and what can youth work do about it?

The reality of racially segregated housing and education and the effects on young peoples perceptions of space and place have been well documented (Back, 1993; Webster, 1995; Hewitt, 1996). Colin Webster (2001) could easily be discussing the Bridges border line between Werneth and Chadderton when commenting:

Racist violence and abuse is spatially patterned in ways that 'colour-code' areas racially and ethnically producing 'neighbourhood nationalism'. This means that racist attacks are most likely to take place in symbolic locations that define the boundaries or borders of 'colour-coded' areas and neighbourhoods that then become defended from perceived and real threats from without whilst reinforcing ethnic and racial identity within. Borders define for each group 'us' and 'them'. (Webster, 2001:2).

Comments from the group interviews back this up:

WFYP: When the riots were on further up here by the Bridge they (Asians) started chasing the white lads who were standing on the streets, chasing them with weapons, and white lads were jumping into gardens to get away.

Webster draws on his long-term research work in Keighley, West Yorkshire, to discuss the perception in many Northern English towns of no-go areas for both white and Asian communities, although his work clearly shows that the reality of racism produces a lack of mobility and movement for Asian young people compared to white young people (Webster, 1995). It creates what Webster terms a geography of fear .

These subjective or imaginary geographies of fear form the everyday perspectives of young people, and confirm the more objective data about concentration and segregation. (Webster, 2001:13)

Webster sees perceptions of territory as central to understandings of racial harassment and violence in towns such as Oldham. This perspective challenges what he views as the one-off, random incident nature of criminal justice responses to racially motivated crime, and furthermore, the political anti-racism movement mirrors the "official" policy view in encouraging a blanket labelling of all incidents in which the parties are from different races as well as racially motivated because all whites are essentially racist (Webster, 1996:15).

The discussion above already highlights the potentially unique role that youth work can play in Oldham, and other locations. Youth work takes place with young people who voluntarily choose to participate, in their own areas, and it works with friendship and peer groups, rather than just individuals (Smith, 2003). The various Community Cohesion reports seem to acknowledge the need for enhanced youth work.

Facilities for young people, including those provided under the Youth Service are in a parlous state in many areas...We need a much greater investment...We therefore believe that consideration should be given to placing some aspects of youth provision on a statutory basis, to a given standard

(Cantle, 2001:31).

This pledge, sought by youth work advocates since the 1944 Education Act, now seems to be being fulfilled by the Government (DfES, 2002)).

However, the nature and purpose of this enhanced youth work role is contested. Indeed the Ritchie Report (2001) seems to partially blame youth work for the disturbances in the first place:

The falling away of traditional youth activities based on youth clubs has left a particular gap. There has been a change in emphasis within youth provision over recent times. Once youth clubs were run as drop-ins where young people could go and meet informally...this was done in a way in which the young people felt comfortable with. Now the emphasis in youth clubs is on social education, the informal element has been reduced and youth workers act more as teachers giving formal lessons on serious subjects. Young people are expected to be organised and become involved in 'projects', an alienating experience for many after a full day at school
(Ritchie, 2001:47).

Ritchie could well be said to be both naïve and over-optimistic in assuming that the young people involved in the riots were attending school, college, or training provision in the first place.

The Ritchie Report's view of Youth Work is clarified further in section 9:13: In tackling the problems, we suggest that the move towards detached youth provision without adequate backup facilities has been a serious mistake (P48), and in section 9:14, where it calls for much closer links between sport and recreation. This 'open access', leisure-based vision of Youth Work is apparently unaware of the historic failings of such provision to attract and hold the 'rough', 'unclubbable' young men likely to become involved in conflict (Davies, 1999); or, the problems youth workers have encountered in effectively tackling racism in such reactive educational environments (CRE 1999, Thomas 2002).

The Principal Youth Officer (PYO), who took over as head of Oldham Youth Service after the 2001 disturbances, sees positive and negative points from the Ritchie report: In terms of recognising that as a service we are under-resourced, it was helpful. The PYO accepts some of the criticism about targeted, project work: We didn't enable young people to choose the pace and depth of their involvement a lot of the targeted work was quite formal.

In spite of that, open access work *had* already been re-introduced and was being rolled out across Oldham Youth Service, prior to the report's publication. This was not acknowledged. The PYO felt that some of the conclusions were overly simplistic, naïve and short term; particularly about the association of sport with youth work.

One positive note of the Ritchie Report and other reports was an acceptance that facilities for youth work are inadequate. Youth Work needs to be more closely linked to physical facilities and we offer support in principle to a PFI bid to develop 10 new youth and community centres (Ritchie, 2001, Rec 3.37:14).

The PYO echoes the need for buildings to be a priority in the way that new building for high schools have been over the last few years, and in the way that they were in the wake of the *Albemarle Report* (Ministry of Education, 1960).

PYO: Unless there is a massive capital investment by the Government in plant that can be specifically targeted for use by young people, we will be struggling. There isn't a shortage of facilities but young people are excluded by older people, by transport or other access issues.

The young people and the youth workers in Werneth echoed this lack of facilities:

AMYP: We need a good youth club...to keep the boys off the street...we hang out on the street, smoking, bored because there is no youth club.

WMYW: There are a lot of young people in Werneth, so there should be a certain (level of) provision for a certain number of young people. The truth is that there should be a sufficient number of facilities that the young people feel are for them.

There are also issues of access to facilities:

WFYW2: Even if there are facilities, the timings aren't always right. When you get to 18 as a white young man, you probably go out drinking but they (Asian Young Men) want youth facilities open. If they are open, they tend to close at 9 or 10 at night and that's just when they are coming out.

Ritchie sees these new youth centres as a key way of building Community Cohesion: The location of the new facilities is important. They need to be in places which are accessible and welcoming to people of all communities and great care should be taken in planning this (Ritchie, sec 9:19:49). This certainly challenges the current situation.

PYO: We have one mixed centre because of the housing. For all the other centres, young people have to cross over visible borders, boundaries and that's a problem.

History is not encouraging here. The supposedly open-access clubs of *Albemarle* were soon dominated by white young men (Popple, 1990; Davies, 1999). Ritchie is also contradicted by the reality described in other reports:

The extent to which youth facilities are segregated in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham has been drawn to our attention by the CRE. In some cases this simply reflects the locality in which the facilities exist but even centres in more racially mixed areas often serve only one community (Denham, 2001:15).

Young people in both focus groups were specifically asked if they would consider attending a new purpose built youth club, right on the border, by the Bridges:

AMYP: We want a club on our own turf! If we had our own club then we could mix with others.

WFYP: No, it should stay as it is...I don't think it would help if it were mixed.

Workers were also pessimistic:

WFYW1: The first group into it would take ownership of it, it would become a meeting place for violence, a symbol of conflict. Oldham has been segregated for too long, it's got to be small steps, maybe through small scale projects.

In fact the Werneth group have used the south Chadderton Youth Centre, visiting it in a mini-bus for pre-planned, short term project using the music and DJ equipment. This suggests ways forward in which youth work can promote real Community Cohesion; carefully planned projects that bring young people together in circumstances shaped by appropriately trained staff, would seem the most realistic and feasible way forward. The small-scale projects that WFYW1 calls for are precisely the sort of targeted, project work that the Ritchie report criticises.

The dangers of even such a carefully planned piece of work are all too real in such a racialised environment. Soon after the Werneth group had been interviewed, a group of Asian young people from another local Youth Work project had their minibus attacked outside the South Chadderton youth centre, after finishing a planned piece of project work. Only a police escort out of the area ensured their safety. The large group of white people, a mixture of adults and young people asking 'Why are Pakis using our centre?' had gathered rapidly, mobilised by British National Party activists who had recently moved into the area. This heightened tension has included overt threats to WFYW1, and damage to her property.

The PYO, head of Oldham Youth Service, comments:

Mixed access to provision is possible but requires a lot of work. Oldham is an incredibly parochial town and in a way that's nothing to do with culture, race or origin. It's about different estates and even different ends of the same village! We have to start working separately, and then move towards joint activities.

This perspective is shared by AMYW:

Overall, the town doesn't encourage mixing...for young people, the town centre is a no-go area. What's there for them? It's not just a lack of youth facilities but also a lack of leisure facilities generally.

Two points stem from this professional consensus on practical ways forward, a consensus backed up by the positive responses of both groups of young people interviewed, to carefully planned, mixed projects that they have taken part in. Firstly, there is the issue of the skills and confidence of the youth workers planning such work. The PYO echoes the findings of research (CRE, 1999; Thomas 2002) around some youth workers' lack of confidence and clarity:

PYO: Some workers don't understand what a value is or the links between what values are and how they impact on attitudes. You can change behaviour without changing attitudes. If you don't touch the value base, any change will only be short term. We need to be challenging the value base in order to formulate new attitudes that will result in self-regulation of behaviour. At present, young people simply learn not to come out with (certain) comments in front of us.

This may seem like overt social engineering but the young people themselves expressed the need for it:

WFYP: We need teaching or something because some kids grow up with their parents being really, really racist, so they take it on.

Their youth worker has a strong relationship with them and comments:

WFYW1: The majority of them are struggling. They're from a very white area. Parents have very strong opinions...people aren't embarrassed to say that they are racist. Their only positive influence is here which is limited.

The second point stems directly from the limiting impact of resources and timescales. New money is coming into Youth Work, for crime diversion and Community Cohesion but what type of money? WFYW1 comments: Bits of money have been available for holidays, not for longer term work. Workers in Werneth echo this experience:

WFYW2: There seems to be a lot of quick fix things like organising a trip to Alton Towers for different groups. I do resent that. You can't just throw young people from different areas together on to a bus. It's like you've got three days to get your bid in! There needs to be money there to do substantial work, it can't be patchy.

This frustration is shared with the head of the service.

PYO: Summer programmes have helped but it's not a short-term problem! Funding is not there for long-term relationship and trust building. We can change a lot of people a little or a few a lot. We need more intensive work with young people.

The youth workers in Oldham know what sort of long-term confidence and Community Cohesion building work they could do if the resources were there.

WFYW1: I'd like to look at centre-twinning, small activities in each centre, then outdoor activities on mutual territory, that might culminate in an international exchange. It could work; I have seen it work elsewhere.

AMYW If there's a common interest, they see things happening to benefit them all, some common benefit.

This sort of 'twinning' approach is already being used to create positive links between different Oldham primary schools under the 'Unity in the Community' scheme.

Conclusion

Community Cohesion is a highly contested term but the realities of an uncohesive community are stark. This is borne out with all the limitations of the current lives, and future ambitions, of young people in Oldham, as shown by this illustrative research data, which hopefully offers insights relevant to policy makers and practitioners in a variety of segregated areas.

Communities segregated on ethnic/social lines will be a reality in Oldham and other towns for years to come — the rose-tinted vision in the Community cohesion reports of peaceful, integrated communities will remain just that in the short term in a society lacking the political will or desire to impose integration. This will leave young people living in monocultural areas, strong in social capital, but painfully ignorant and fearful of difference. This paper argues that properly resourced and targeted youth work, can bridge those gaps. Planned programmes of youth work (CRE, 1999), based on young peoples voluntary participation, can create Bridging social capital whilst tackling the roots of racist attitudes and actions, so genuinely promoting community cohesion

The various Government reports rightly highlight the potentially unique role of youth work in promoting Community Cohesion, given the segregated realities of housing and education. However, for youth work to fulfil this potential, the superficial and contradictory conclusions of the Ritchie Report need to be challenged. What is needed is long term funding in *both* open access facilities *and* in carefully

planned and managed cross-community projects. For these projects to succeed, long term funding that trusts the skills and judgements of youth workers is vital; funding that helps to develop their anti-racist skills and competencies, rather than creating inhibiting official doctrines (CRE, 1999; Thomas, 2002). The Government is starting to trust and fund youth work generally, but will it trust youth work enough to take a vanguard role in promoting 'Community Cohesion'?

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YOUNG PEOPLE, RACE RELATIONS AND RACISM

CHERYL SIMMILL-BINNING, IAN PAYLOR AND DAVID SMITH

This article presents some of the findings of research carried out on behalf of Lancashire Constabulary in an area in which racism and inter-ethnic tensions were a major worry for the police. The theme of the research was racism among under 25 year-olds, and over a thousand young people, aged between 11 and 25, took part in the project. We explored young people's perceptions of community cohesion and race relations, and of other areas of concern identified in the research process, such as the local urban environment and their economic prospects. We also enquired to what extent and how young people accessed statutory and voluntary sector services, including the police. Early in the research we noted that discourses about race and inter-ethnic relationships were interwoven into the routine activities of young people as they attended school, met friends and spent time in leisure pursuits. In other words, the issue of race was not set apart from daily life, something that became important only in exceptional circumstances; it was a part of daily life. Our research covered a wide range of themes - community, neighbourhood and friendship networks - as a means of demonstrating the multifaceted and complex associations between experiences of race and the negotiation of the risks of everyday life. In this article we will focus specifically on one aspect of this multifaceted situation - young people's understandings and experiences of race and racism.

Methodology

Each high school, college and pupil referral unit in the district was offered the opportunity to participate in the research through a questionnaire for students. One college, two high schools and a pupil referral unit responded to our request. Nine hundred and seventy five students completed the questionnaire, of whom just under two-thirds described themselves as white and just over a third as of Asian heritage. In addition, workshops were held with 70 young people aged between 12 and 19 between November 2002 and February 2003. Participatory analysis (a highly interactive research methodology) and group discussion were the key methodologies employed¹. Some of the young people interviewed were within the youth justice system; others were members of their local Youth Council or attendees at youth and community programmes (some of which were designed to engage socially excluded and disaffected young people). Three of the groups consisted entirely of young people of Asian heritage, three were of non-Asian heritage, and two were mixed. In terms of gender distribution, two groups were male only; two groups were female only; and four groups were mixed.

Interviews were also held with local experts and practitioners including youth workers, members of the police service, Youth Offending Team officers, community workers, in-school youth workers, education experts², and staff devising and delivering programmes to school pupils. Finally, the views of local residents were also taken into account in an attempt to place the comments of the young people within an adult context.

Young people, race and racism

Within young people's accounts of their everyday lives during the group discussions, a considerable number did not see racism as a problem in their area, because, they said, there were no people from other ethnic backgrounds living in their neighbourhood, and therefore racism could not be a problem. This perception, which contradicted their reported experiences of racism, is possibly linked to the low levels of inter-ethnic socialisation amongst the young people concerned. There tended to be little ethnic mixing in primary and junior schools, since their catchment areas were geographically defined, and the area is among the most ethnically segregated in England (Rees and Phillips, 1996). Although some of the schools were mixed at higher levels of education, concern about the degree of ethnic separation among school pupils was commented upon by a number of adult interviewees. There were relatively few friendships between pupils of white and Asian heritage, and where they existed they did not extend beyond the school gates. The survey showed that only 29% of young people said they had mixed heritage friendships outside school. It was rare for pupils from different ethnic backgrounds to socialise to any extent after school by, for example, visiting each other's homes - a finding also reported by other researchers (e.g. Jacobson, 1998).

However, many young people, especially those living in mainly Asian heritage neighbourhoods, did express their concern about racism on the streets and in the district as a whole. The survey found that 65% of respondents said that they had seen racist incidents in the last 12 months, and only 28.6% said definitely that they had not. 22.6% of respondents, most of whom were male, said that they had been personally involved in such events.

A number of young people at the workshops stated that they had observed that some of the racism between young people [was] as a result of parental influence, a situation that they considered to be dangerous and destructive (cf. Sibbitt, 1997). One group of young people, not of Asian heritage, noted that at times there was an unfriendly atmosphere around certain groups of people and youths and that there was considerable peer pressure to fit in with racist attitudes and behaviour, even when they did not agree with what was being done or said. When discussing what

they would do if they saw a racist incident on the street, young people tended to say that if they told anyone about it they would tell their friends, and some said that they would become involved. These comments were supported by the findings in the survey, where the majority of respondents said that on seeing a racist incident they would be most likely to tell somebody about it (especially if they were female), get involved (particularly if they were of Asian heritage), or watch (if they were male). From the survey results it appears that relatively few of the respondents would report any such incident to the police, and those who would tended to be of Asian heritage. Most young people, especially if they were white, said that they would talk to friends and family or report it at school, despite the finding from the survey that school was considered to be the main site where racism was experienced.

These survey findings correlate with the comments made at the workshops and during interviews, when young women of Asian heritage commented on the low-level racial harassment they experienced on a daily basis in and around school (cf. Hewitt, 1996). A number of young people stated that when an incident occurred in school that they felt was race-related the teachers tended to play it down, and appeared to take little or no action. Although the type of event recalled might have seemed to teachers too trivial and too commonplace to deal with through the formal sanctioning mechanisms of the school, lack of action was perceived as trivialising race-related harassment, if not condoning outright racism, and the level of tolerance of race-related verbal abuse was considered by a number of young people to be too high. This account of the routine nature of racist language at school was supported by the results of the survey: 20% of respondents, most of whom were of Asian heritage, said that they had experienced verbal racial victimisation, and 46.6% said they had heard racist remarks being made over the last 12 months. This suggests that the number of such incidents is substantially higher than that reported in the statistics for schools in the district.

Table 1: Reported racist incidents in schools, 2000 - 2002

	Year 2000-2001	Year 2002
Area 1	25	17
Area 2	34	11
Area 3	17	1

Source: Lancashire County Council Education and Cultural Services Directorate, Monitoring and Reporting Racist Incidents in Schools reports of August 2000-July 2001 and August 2001-July 2002.

The author of the most recent Local Education Authority report notes that analysis of racist incidents is still problematic (Lancashire County Council, 2002:8) and goes on to quote the definition of a racist incident advocated by the Association of Chief Officers of Police, which originated in the Macpherson Report on the murder

of Stephen Lawrence and the police investigation of it: *A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim, or any other person.* By this definition, and considering the evidence in the survey and from the group discussions, it would seem that there is a considerable mismatch between the reported figures and events as they are experienced on the streets and in schools.

Reporting events

According to the young people interviewed, their reluctance to report racist incidents to anyone in an official position was one aspect of more general unwillingness to discuss problems with anyone other than their friends and family. This finding is also in line with research in other areas (Chakraborti and Garland, 2002). From the interviews it appeared that the young men who were deemed to be most socially excluded, of both white and Asian heritage, were the most likely to do nothing and speak to no one if they saw a crime being committed or an act of violence taking place. In contrast, young women from all backgrounds were more likely to act if they witnessed such events.

During the workshops it became clear that very careful consideration was given to each step of the decision making process, as the young people weighed the risks of reporting an incident against the benefits. They perceived the risks as considerable and as potentially having a lasting impact on their position in their community and friendship networks. Several of the examples offered in the workshops called for the exercise of moral reasoning. On the whole young people were clear about their moral obligations. For example, there was no doubt in the minds of any of the young people about what to do if a local elderly person had been ill and they were concerned that they had not been seen for some time: either call round or ask a neighbour how they were. If you got no response, said one group of young men, call the police and they can deal with it. But in other examples during the workshops, the morally reasonable solution was often modified to take into account local conditions and restrictions. For example, several young people disliked all racism but did not want to be seen to intervene in an attack by people of their own heritage as it would reduce their peers' opinion of them and could affect their relationships within the community. People who might be contacted by adults for help and advice, such as local councillors, community leaders and religious leaders, were apparently not considered relevant to the lives of young people. Some groups discussed the role of the local general medical practitioner at length with reference to health care, confidentiality and their relationship with the wider community. But the main points of contact for advice and action were friends, family, school and, when the occasion demanded it, the police.

Most young people categorised the various situations presented to them in the workshop into those that they saw as dangerous, immediate, not needing a quick response, and requiring no action at all. The example of two men fighting in the street was felt to fall into the last category, where the responses would be to watch (the fight was felt to be fair if it was one on one); to collect any money that fell out of their pockets; or to join in. In only one case was it decided that it would be best to call the police. The main reason given for not calling the police was that they would not arrive in time, or that they would not do anything when they arrived.

In the intermediate category, of events that did not need a quick response, came an example of a young girl being harassed or bullied. Few young people felt that they would intervene themselves, but they would be likely to tell friends, school-teachers and parents. In only two groups was it felt, after some deliberation, that the police should be contacted. Again the majority of participants thought that even if they did report it nothing would be done. Others did not wish to become involved with the police, and the reporting of the incident was in itself seen as constituting such an involvement. A second example given in this category involved vandalism at a youth centre. Although all of the young people who took part in the workshops valued their youth facilities, there was still a reluctance to report such events, although some participants said that they would talk about it to their youth workers.

Finally, the category that called for immediate action comprised incidents that were geographically close to home: for instance, someone in the back garden or yard or breaking into a neighbour's car. Even in these examples many young people felt they could deal with it themselves or call on the help of friends or relatives. The police were the last line of contact.

Defining the problem — speaking of race

Racism and racist attitudes were part of the wallpaper against which most of these young people led their lives. Their awareness of racism is blunted by its continual presence. In this atmosphere, Macpherson's (1999) definition, intended to be inclusive and to encourage reporting of racist incidents, is paradoxically less helpful than it was meant to be, because the majority of the young people interviewed did not consider their negative race-related experiences as racist incidents. The Macpherson definition presupposes a sensitivity to racism and a will to resist it that most young people did not feel. The experience had been normalised and slipped into the context of daily life: just something that you learnt to live with: another risk among the many negotiated each day.

Young people continually negotiate risks (Tillich, 1977; Farrington, 1996; Chapman, 2000). These risks include the relatively simple, but nevertheless dangerous, task

of crossing the road. Because this task is repeated the strategies used will be perfected over time. The same could be said about encountering racial harassment on the streets. Young people find their own strategies to deal with difficult or dangerous situations. Generally speaking, the more frequently they have had to deal with any given situation the more their strategy is perfected. Although this repetition establishes coping mechanisms, these can in effect hide the presence of risk: it becomes normalised as a part of everyday life.

Certainly terms of racist abuse appeared to be normalised within a wider range of insulting terminology relating to gender, sexual orientation, body shape, parentage etc. that was employed in the everyday discourse of some young people. This casual use of abusive language appeared to take place without any thought. As a result young people were ignorant of ways to speak of people from different cultures and heritages in positive and civil terms. The process of normalising negative attitudes towards other races and cultures appeared to be effectively maintained by erasing awareness of the unacceptability of such attitudes within the wider society. Thus events that are accepted and reported as racist tend to be extreme, beyond the already high background level. In this milieu reported racist incidents may be those that fit the classic model of hate crime, in which the parties are strangers to each other and the racist motive is clear-cut (Ray and Smith, 2001). But the vast majority of race-related incidents recalled by the young people were far from being hate crimes as understood by the classic definition, in which the (politically motivated) perpetrator and the victim are strangers to each other, and the victim is selected because of his or her perceived membership of the hated social group. The incidents the young people discussed were of abuse at a lower level, but repeated on a daily basis, and perpetrated by acquaintances, not strangers, a finding that reflects those of research in other parts of the country (Sibbitt, 1997; Chakraborti and Garland, 2002; Ray et al., 2003). The police may not classify such repeated acts of harassment as crimes, and may not record them even if they are reported (Bowling, 1998), but there is little doubt that most racist victimisation is of this kind - repeated acts of harassment and abuse that, for the young people in this research, had become part of the fabric of everyday life. Taking this account into consideration, it is questionable whether it is appropriate for a specialist unit designed to improve the policing of racism to be labelled as the hate crime unit, an issue we will return to below³.

Another feature of the events recalled by the young people relates to their willingness, or otherwise, to report any racist incident to adults. Several members in a number of groups stated that they were reluctant to tell adults, including parents, about an event as they felt they would over-react and this would make everything spiral

out of control. A reluctance to report to anyone apart from friends is also apparent in the survey results. If an event were reported to any official figure that person tended to be a teacher. However, the process of responding to that report was shaped by events within the context of the school, where such episodes could be occurring repeatedly. The effect of this was that any incident had to achieve a specific level of seriousness before it qualified as a racist incident, and this level was beyond a norm *defined by the school, not by the individual young person*. If each school set its own definition of the level of seriousness at which an incident warranted action, this could explain the difference between the official figures produced by the local education authority and the much higher figure suggested by the self-reports of the young people who took part in the research (see Troyna and Hatcher, 1995 for a general discussion of this issue).

Other sources of potential help to young people wanting to discuss their problems included a telephone help-line established by Lancashire's Youth and Community Service and the Victim Support service, which operates on a national and local level. Staff on the Youth and Community Service line explained that they would listen to the young person's problems, but unless at some point the caller defined the problem as race-related, then the background to the case would remain unknown. For example, bullying was a problem regularly reported to the help-line, but it could take some time and several calls before any racial element became apparent. Young people often consider what has been happening to them over a long period of time as normal, and, as noted above, just something that they have to live with. Contact with help-lines may assist in the realisation that it is not, and that what appears usual and normal (because others say it is or it is observed on a regular basis) is in fact inappropriate behaviour. In this environment self-definition of the situation is highly problematic. Even if it is revealed that there is a racial element in incidents of bullying or harassment, an official report is only made if the callers themselves in some way harass or intimidate a member of the help-line staff. Therefore, although the help-line is important as a channel for young people to express their problems and discover strategies to deal with them, it can generate little general data on the extent of race-related incidents in a given area.

The Victim Support help-line had similar limitations. Very few people referred themselves to Victim Support in the area; there was a shortage of local volunteers; and only one of the twenty volunteers who had been recruited had undertaken training on supporting people victimised by racially motivated crime. Victim Support has a rule that victims under the age of 18 can only be seen by a staff member or volunteer with the permission of their parents or guardian. As the majority of young people who took part in the research said that they did not wish

to involve adults, including members of the family, in responding to racist incidents, this restriction, while understandable, is problematic. Most referrals to Victim Support in the area covered by our study were through the police; few related to young people, and very few to young people from an Asian heritage background.

As noted above, contacting the police was very much a last resort for the young people in this study, and the police hoped that our research would produce ideas on how to increase the likelihood that racist incidents would be reported to them. In general, the police were seen as unlikely to respond quickly or helpfully if such incidents were reported, and reluctance to report also reflected unease on the part of many young people about the ethics of informing the police about incidents that they routinely dealt with themselves. It was clear that there was considerable support for a community-friendly police presence on the streets, and improved communications with young people could be a part of this strategy. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that an improvement in one aspect of police activity will enhance the overall perception of the police in general. This will only occur if the vast majority of police are *seen* to act in a consistently fair and professional manner, as young people base their opinions of the police, and therefore inform their decision-making processes on whether to report incidents to them, on long term, general observations rather than short term, specific encounters.

Commonalities, not differences

A significant number of young people who took part in this research expressed a desire to socialise with their counterparts in other communities. In spite of this enthusiasm it was seen as almost an impossibility; one young woman said, It would be easier to get to know someone from Japan than someone from the other side of town, because there would be no history between us.

In the areas in question relatively few people from different heritages and cultures lived together as neighbours and members of the same community networks. The area was criss-crossed by metaphorical glass walls dividing people from different cultural backgrounds. The walls defined areas where young people knew they could not go, and so they regulated their movements, friendship patterns and access to leisure facilities to take into account the presence of these invisible but highly effective barriers. Travelling to and from school was the only occasion on which many young people passed by neighbourhoods that they would not otherwise travel to or through.

The walls were made up both of fear of the known (threats and aggression towards people from a different culture or background) and of the unknown (few individuals from any cultural background personally knew people living in different heritage

areas). Others have noted the power of communities to regulate who does and does not cross into their territory (Bauman, 2001). Immigrant residents may be unwilling to move beyond their neighbourhood because they feel any expression of their homeland heritage (for example wearing traditional dress or speaking a native language) will be read as a lack of willingness to integrate with the local community. It could also be seen as a betrayal of loyalties to the host country. This in turn can lead to a situation in which people from different heritages become locked into one geographical area where people in powerful positions can maintain compliance with traditional cultural norms. As a consequence the community may experience a degree of cultural stagnation that is out of step with developments both in the original home countries and in local practices. Eventually, this could result in the community's being unable to deal with changes through its own mechanisms and sanctions, yet remaining unwilling to access services, including the police, because they remain outside the local community.

Nevertheless, in spite of the glass walls between communities there were more commonalities between the comments and experiences of the young people than there were differences. Many of these common aspects of experience emerged through the work of the many youth-orientated projects that operated in the area. These services had adapted to the needs of the young people and actively enrolled them through a variety of schemes, including a significant amount of outreach work. Many of the young people interviewed greatly valued these services and said they would like more facilities and activities such as trips, residential events and team-building events. There was considerable enthusiasm among young Asian heritage girls for more events at which to meet and socialise with young people from other cultural backgrounds. Some young people noted that they did get the occasional chance to meet and socialise, but because such opportunities were rare people tended to stay with their own friends rather than mixing. An example of this was when workers from the local Youth and Community service took a group of young women shopping. The Asian heritage girls said that although they remained with their friends when shopping, they had enjoyed the company of the other young women on the journey, and felt that if they had met regularly then cross-cultural friendships could have developed. One young woman added that she might not become best friends with someone from another cultural background, but that getting to know individuals would create an atmosphere of understanding between the girls. When asked why this did not happen at school, the young women responded that school was not the right setting for such interaction, because at school everyone was watching and judging your actions.

Although some projects had a high profile, others did not, and none of the interviewees knew where to find out about all the programmes in their area. One community worker commented that projects seemed to replicate each other and that it was difficult to keep track of everything that was happening. Another agency worker stated that she felt that at times the process of gaining funds for local projects was more to do with local political point-scoring than responding to real need. Many people expressed concerns at short-term funding, which created a here today and gone tomorrow impression of programmes and did not allow for the long-term planning and development of projects. Thus schemes such as an inter-faith programme in the area were constantly looking for funding to develop their work, in this case a scheme of school work designed to address issues of diversity and conflict relevant to the local situation. In contrast, the funding for the local football club's coaching scheme for young people was constant, and this enabled continuity of delivery across the district. The scheme was very popular with both the schools and the participants, but it could only last for a limited number of weeks. Some programmes aimed to cater for all young people but found that constraints limited the participation of some cultural groups; for example, the local Youth Theatre provided a valuable service to local teenagers but had found that theatre was not considered an appropriate medium for people from an Asian heritage. It would be unwise not to acknowledge the difficulties and challenges that young people living in the district faced on a day-to-day basis. However, underlying these were commonalities and a willingness on the part of many teenagers and project workers to promote change.

Schools

It was clear from the questionnaire response and the group discussions that schools potentially had a part to play in reducing the high level of unease felt by many young people. Teachers were among the few adults with whom pupils felt able to talk about their problems, especially those relating to bullying, harassment and race. We commented above on the difficulties of defining race-related incidents in schools. Nevertheless, schools are obviously one of the main points of contact between young people and the adult world, and many adults interviewed during the research expressed concern about the effect of having selective and segregated schools in the area. A report by a local Task Force noted the good work done by schools in the period following race-related violent disturbances in 2001, but also stated that the complex issues involved could not be considered in sufficient depth by the Task Force but [that] they need addressing as a matter of urgency (Borough Council, 2002). In May 2002 the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 came into force, placing a duty on schools to promote race equality and to have a written race equality policy for the whole school. There is also a requirement for

schools to be able to measure the impact of their policies and to monitor the impact on pupils, staff and parents. Under the Act, Lancashire County Council offered a training package on race awareness, but the uptake of such training depends on head-teachers and governing bodies at each school. Substantial work had been undertaken by the council in schools across the area to address what were seen as the many cultural issues in play in the town, within which context race relations were seen as a symptom of widespread social and economic problems. However, the local authority can only *recommend* training and courses of action. It cannot impose them.

Some schools did appear to be tackling some of the issues raised by our research. Several of the programmes and projects run by outside agencies were being invited into schools. The inter-faith scheme mentioned earlier is a good example of a project designed to address diversity, perceptions, moral actions and personal decision-making in schools, covering specifically bullying and general conflict, and was ready to expand its work both geographically and across the age range. Such projects are important, but most professional educators would acknowledge that they are not enough on their own (Bagley, 1995; Troyna, 1995; Short and Carrington, 1995). There is a need to follow up this kind of intervention with a whole school ethos that establishes a zero tolerance policy towards bullying, harassment and race-related incidents. A similar point was raised in the Task Force recommendations: That its Officers [the Local Education Authority s] identify how to address the identified need for education/training and particularly ways in which teenagers and others at the sharp end can positively tackle issues of race and culture throughout its educational and youth and community establishment (Borough Council 2002:76).

A number of schools across the area had decided to employ youth workers as members of staff. This appeared to be a successful step towards creating an extended multi-disciplinary team to address the diverse needs of young people (cf. Pritchard, 2001). Fresh approaches to long-standing problems, for example peer mentoring or peer counselling operated by youth workers, may be one key that unlocks barriers between problems and solutions.

Youth and community work

Lancashire's Youth and Community service had, like the LEA, carried out a limited amount of training on race and diversity. More was planned for later in the year. One area of concern for many youth workers interviewed was the Macpherson definition of a racist incident: they found it very difficult to differentiate between racist actions or comments and the routine exchanges, involving some degree of verbal or even physical aggression, that took place between young people on a

regular basis. While these are not mutually exclusive types of event, it is difficult to draw a hard and fast line between the two categories in order to decide that one will be reported while the other will not, and this is likely also to be a problem for teaching staff.

The youth service might also have a role in promoting constructive local responses to crime and conflict. Although Neighbourhood Watch tends to be associated with the leafy suburbs, this too could undergo adaptation to better address local issues (Laycock and Tilley, 1995). The restorative justice movement (Braithwaite, 2001) has been concerned to find means of increasing public participation in responding to crime problems, and Edwards (2002) suggests the establishment of local crime resolution meetings where the public act as mediators between victim and offender. Support for victims and witnesses in court is another important — and accessible — service in which local people might be involved. Not only does participation in practical schemes such as victim and witness support empower people to deal with local problems locally; such activity can also contribute to future participation and thus greater capacity-building in local communities.

A consideration of hate crime

We questioned above whether hate crime is the most helpful designation of the police unit dedicated to tackling racist harassment and violence. Others too have been sceptical. Recent research on hate crime and the community for the Metropolitan Police Force concludes:

...the policing of 'known' hatred does mean that the police view has to shift from an 'incident-based' perspective focusing on narrow legal definitions. Instead, the social context of the situation needs to be recognised to bring more creative thinking to prevention. There is of course a tension...Many of the so-called 'hate crime' incidents that come to the attention of the police are the 'rubbish' incidents that do not lead to criminal prosecutions. These are the operations that most often cannot be dealt with by pro-active operations and detailed targeting of individuals. A deeper understanding of the overall patterns of the 'ordinary' as well as the extremely violent or organised attacks on strangers is necessary before strategic decisions can be made about intervention and prevention

(Kielinger and Stanko, 2002:5).

The comments made by the young people during our research illustrate their experience of everyday, ordinary, race-related harassment and violence. For the most part these experiences do not accord with any aspect of the classic definition of hate crime. Indeed their accounts support the conclusions of Ray and Smith (2002:7),

who state, writing of Oldham, that the classic version of hate crime makes racist violence a unified, well-defined problem, rather than seeing its racist elements as part of a complex set of motives developing over time within cultures of violence, resentment and hostility. If this is the case, and a considerable amount of research would seem to say that it is (see also Burney and Rose, 2002), then there is a growing need to sow the seeds of conflict resolution within the communities where these cultures develop, rather than attempting to impose systems designed to regulate criminal activities onto communities from the outside.

Conclusion

The implications of the research findings are that some of the services need to consider whether they are addressing the needs of young people as they are identified in our work. There is a clear need to encourage the reporting of racist incidents and to support those who do report them. There are issues here that warrant further research, as the definition of a racist incident remains ill-understood and highly politicised in the area. Questions as to the best means of reporting incidents and of supporting victims (from within a specific community programme aiming towards conflict resolution and mediation or through the present set of services, for example) also needs to be addressed.

The evidence indicates a need for a radical review of reporting systems in schools, possibly leading to a peer mentoring approach involving youth workers working with schools. Our hope is that by raising awareness of what is and is not acceptable to the majority of young people the presently high background level of negative race relations can be reduced, without race becoming a major political issue.

Finally, there needs to be a reconsideration of the appropriateness of using hate crime as a model to address the kind of racist incidents noted by the young people during our research. Very few of the events recalled by the participants accorded with the classic hate crime profile, but they did have a racist element. There is a need to signal that racism of any kind will not be tolerated in the area and to that end a re-naming by the police of a part of the hate crime unit as the anti-racism unit (or something similar) could be an appropriate step in the right direction.

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Notes

1 The method of participatory analysis was developed specifically for the research. It was based on one author's (CS-B's) long experience of observing community group decision-making processes and evaluating youth education schemes. At each session participants took part in three structured exercises. The process at each group session is summarised below:

- a Participants were asked to write down on two large posters everything they did and did not like about their neighbourhood. All the issues were then discussed among the group and with the researchers.

- b A second exercise required participants to allocate monopoly money to a selection of services, including neighbourhood renewal schemes, education, health services, community facilities and religious organisations.
- c Participants were asked to draw lines between a list of problem situations (e.g. a fight on the street; the selling of drugs to children, vandalism at the local community centre) and local services (parents, police, community workers) to show whom they would contact about each problem.

At each stage participants justified their decisions and courses of actions to each other and to the researchers. Slight adaptations were made to accommodate the differing sizes of the groups. Each session lasted between two and two and a half hours.

- 2 These particular experts included LEA officers, teachers, in-service trainers and staff working in teacher education facilities.
- 3 The categorisation of racist incidents as hate crimes appears to have become universal practice in police forces in the past two years, reflecting the influence of the Macpherson report on the murder of Stephen Lawrence (which was certainly a hate crime).

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RECONFIGURING YOUTH WORK:

*Some findings from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Detached and Outreach Research Project.*

JEAN SPENCE, CAROLE PUGH AND PENNY TURNER

Social Exclusion, Connexions and Youth Work

Young people who are not in touch with mainstream services and who are difficult to contact have been variously labelled 'Generation X'; 'Status Zero' or just simply lumped together as 'the excluded' in recent years (Williamson, 1997). These young people pose a particular challenge for policy makers engrossed with the delivery of the recently implemented Connexions service for young people (DfEE, 2000). Connexions was originally conceived as a comprehensive statutory approach to all young people between the ages of 13 and 19. Each young person within the age range is allocated a Personal Advisor (PA) whose function is to connect that individual into a network of services appropriate to their needs. The overall aim of the advice and guidance accessed in this context is to improve the educational, training and employment outcomes for all young people. The ideal is that at any given time it will be possible to assess a young person's progress and development, possible to 'track' them through a system of services and to prevent them from disappearing from view. The Connexions Service is delivered by a partnership of relevant agencies associated with young people, with separately employed co-ordinators and with PAs who are representative of a range of associated services and specialisms, each carrying a specified case-load of young people.

If Connexions, which has been promoted by the Government as a key policy initiative in its efforts to address social exclusion amongst young people, is to be seen to succeed in offering a comprehensive service, and maintaining contact with all those in the age range, then it is vital that it addresses the question of making and sustaining contact with those who are institutionally disengaged. This is no easy task. By definition, such young people are isolated and invisible; they are difficult to contact in the first place, difficult to motivate and engage in any meaningful sense, and difficult to follow in their complex and sometimes labyrinthine lives. Many of these young people have complex needs and difficulties requiring sophisticated multi-agency interventions if they are to be addressed adequately (Bentley and Gurumurthy, 1999; Britton et al, 2002; Johnston et al, 2000; SEU, 2000; Madden, 2003). In addition, there are some young people who are resistant to institutional contact insofar as they have constructed alternative, and usually deviant lifestyles (Williamson, 1997). Including the excluded is not a problem to be answered by quick fix solutions and few existing services possess the infrastructure, the resources or indeed, the personnel skills necessary to undertake the task.

It is in this context that renewed attention has been given to the methods and skills of youth workers, a group of professionals who have for many years worked within a loosely knit, insecure and underfunded Youth Service (CYWU, 2003). Frequently operating on the margins of the people-professions, lacking a firm statutory footing, and often denigrated as a Cinderella Service, (eg. YPN, 9-15 April, 2003), youth work has nevertheless developed distinctive methods which have enabled it to include within its orbit a range of young people who are not in contact with other services. In its quest for a solution to the problems posed by those young people, who are socially disengaged and alienated from civic institutions, the government has therefore taken steps through the *Transforming Youth Work* initiative (DfEE, 2001; DfES 2002), to place the Youth Service on a more secure footing than has been the case for many years. Because the relationship between the Youth Service and the Connexions Service has been seen as, key to the delivery of Connexions (CSNU, 2001), *Transforming Youth Work* promises an improved statutory base, and increased funding for youth work in return for improvements in the quality of the service and more rigorous targeting of the work towards young people now categorised as 'NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training).

Within youth work, the methods of detached and outreach work appear to offer a model which is ideally suited for approaching and working constructively with those young people who do not access other services. Even when the structure and content of Connexions was in its infancy, a clear role had been identified for detached and outreach youth work in ensuring the effectiveness of the Service. *Connexions: The best start in life for every young person* (DfEE, 2000:52) stated that Local Authority youth services would be expected to incorporate their outreach and detached youth workers into Personal Adviser teams. Detached and outreach youth work has therefore become of particular interest to those concerned with the effectiveness of Connexions (DfES, 2002:13).

The Research

In the wake of the launch of Connexions, with the intention of assessing the potential of detached and outreach youth work to meet the ambitions of Government policy regarding those young people who are socially excluded, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation funded an 18 month research project to investigate the current extent and nature of detached and outreach youth work in England and Wales. The research project, undertaken by a team from Luton, Lincoln and Durham Universities, began in January 2002, and coincided with the period of the introduction of Connexions¹.

The data were gathered in three stages. Stage one involved a national survey with the purpose of generating information which could provide a broad picture in which the range and extent of provision could be mapped. This was effected with

the co-operation of a number of voluntary and statutory youth organisations including the Federation of Detached Youth Workers. It was possible through the survey to identify 1,453 projects in England and Wales. Of these, some 564 agencies undertaking detached and outreach work, returned completed questionnaires. The questionnaires asked for information about the content of the work, funding, the young people targeted and level of service offered. Stage two involved taking a stratified sample which identified 31 projects indicative of the range in the survey. Managers or co-ordinators of these projects participated in a telephone interview designed to elicit a more in-depth understanding of the perceptions informing detached youth work and to identify the issues and problems encountered in the work. The final stage involved the selection of a sample of 11 drawn from the 31, again with the aim of being as representative as possible, and undertaking in-depth participant observation and case-study analysis of the projects at work. This involved two visits by members of the research team to each agency during which a variety of practice situations were observed and discussions held with managers, workers, young people and representatives from related organisations. As a supplement to the case studies, two workers from each of these projects were invited to a developmental weekend workshop to discuss the research findings to date and to interrogate dilemmas and issues arising from practice.

The findings discussed in this paper are drawn from all parts of the research and relate particularly to the question of how far detached and outreach work as it is currently practised and understood, can be expected to meet the desire of policy makers to make contact with and to engage excluded young people. The article considers the tensions between the expectations of policy and the realities of youth work practice and argues that there is enormous potential within such work to address the ideals of Government policy. However, in the short term, the data from the research also suggests that the conditions under which youth workers carry out their duties militate against the fulfilment of this potential. Further, in the long term, there are significant questions to raise about the terms in which achievement is measured in outreach and detached youth work which ultimately must have an impact upon the manner in which relationships with the Connexions service are constructed.

Detached and Outreach Youth Work

Whilst outreach work with young people and adults has always been used within welfare services as a means of making contact and drawing people into service provision, detached work named as such, has a more recent provenance. Its philosophy and methodology has been developing in Britain particularly since the early 1960s following the *Albemarle Report* (Ministry of Education, 1960) which not only

encouraged funding for the expansion of Youth Centre facilities, but also for the development of 'experimental approaches' to youth work. At this time, the excluded, or disengaged were labelled the unattached and were considered to be a problematic group of young people. A number of studies of social work and youth work experiments aimed at reaching these groups following *Albemarle*, gave a certain fashionable and mythological status to this type of youth work (Evans, 1974), a status enhanced by the fact that the early projects, being experimental usually included research within their brief. As a consequence a number of subsequent publications consider their experiences and their findings. Mary Morse's classic text *The Unattached*, (1965), which reported on a three-year National Association of Youth Services project funded by the new Youth Service Development Council (YSDC), was closely followed by another classic of detached youth work, *Working With Unattached Youth* (1967) in which George Goetschius and Joan Tash reported the findings of a three year project in an inner London Borough, sponsored by the YWCA and again, funded by the YSDC. Meanwhile research into the work of the Wincroft Project (1964-1968), a social services experiment focusing upon those who might now be labelled disaffected young people, was published by Smith, Farrant and Marchant in 1972. The fashionable development of experimental approaches to the unattached gave added glamour to youth work in a period when youth subcultures were in their heyday and when some of the more traditional approaches to youth work, particularly within the uniformed sector, were experiencing a noticeable decline in popularity. However, the development of such work under the rubric experimental set a pattern of short-termism which continues to haunt the work into the present. For whilst the classic experiments demonstrated what could be achieved in a short, concentrated period of time by dedicated workers, in doing so, they also set the grounds for the possibility of using detached youth work as a means of maximising the impact of youth work in a climate of austerity.

After the first cuts in public spending began to affect youth work provision in the mid 1970s, detached youth work came to be seen increasingly as a short term, flexible and 'cheap option' for reaching those who were unattached. This development was not necessarily informed by circumstance or conviction, but by virtue of the fact that the Youth Service was unable to afford to continue to provide the facilities to which young people might attach themselves. In this climate, corresponding with the collapse of the youth labour market and the rise of free market economics, detached youth work lost something of its glamorous edge. Even though, as the Joseph Rowntree research findings demonstrate, detached and outreach youth work remains probably the best method available for reaching those defined as socially excluded, the work is no longer conceived entirely in these terms. Rather

than being conceptualised as experimental, detached and outreach work has been increasingly embraced as an aspect of mainstream youth work practice, complementing, supplementing and replacing other building based approaches, offering flexible solutions to the dilemmas of local agencies dealing with the complex requirements of politicians and funding agencies as much as to the self-identified needs of young people themselves. The findings of the research survey that most detached and outreach projects operate in small towns (27%), and not necessarily in those areas with high indices of social exclusion, can be understood in these terms. So too can be understood the fact that a substantial number (24%) operate in rural areas where agencies are attempting to maximise provision over extensive geographical areas.

There have been a number of recent publications which focus upon detached youth work, including Benetello's short study (1996) which considered issues around detached work with girls and young women and Dadzie's (1997) account of the work of a three year anti-racist detached project, *Blood, Sweat and Tears*. Most publications, including those of the classical post-*Albemarle* period, tend to be case-study based, focusing upon one project in one locality. The exception is Marks (1977) who at the moment in which youth work was about to suffer a significant loss of finance and status, attempted to evaluate the extent and range of detached work during the 1970s. Not since then has there been any study of a similar nature. The Joseph Rowntree research has attempted to make good that absence. Whilst recognising the value of the case-study approach in terms of the richness of data and the realistic assessment of practice it generates, it has also sought to provide quantitative information as the basis for some general observations about the condition of the work.

The conditions of practice

Staffing

Some of the information emerging from the research confirms what perhaps has been long understood from experience, observation and anecdote within outreach and detached youth work. For instance, in the context of continuing cuts in resources since the mid 1970s, it can be no surprise to learn from the survey data that the majority (50%) of face-to-face detached and outreach youth work is carried out by part time workers. What might be more surprising is that volunteers (27%) outnumber full time workers (23%). There is nothing new in the information that youth work is dependent for its face-to-face practice upon the efforts of part time and voluntary workers. This has always been the case, even during the brief flowering of the full time statutory service which followed *Albemarle*. However, this is not to say that it is, or ever has been a satisfactory situation. Part time and voluntary workers might bring with them enthusiasm for the work, local knowledge and a wide

range of different interests and skills which they can put in the service of young people. However, by its very nature, such work throws up problems such as co-ordination and consistency which have specific implications within the outreach and detached setting and particularly with reference to the achievement of satisfactory interventions with socially excluded young people. The research data suggests a number of problems in the contemporary situation.

Firstly, successful detached and outreach work requires a consideration of, and ability to operate in an extended social and institutional context. Over-reliance upon part time and voluntary work inevitably fragments the work across a major fault line dividing face to face practice from contextual and follow-up work. In one of the case studies considered within the research, Rob aged fifteen was in contact with part time detached workers who were unable to effectively follow through their work with him when he became homeless. They were able to provide him with the phone number of the only full time youth worker in the area, who subsequently, and unsuccessfully because of the extent of the demand, attempted to connect him with the new Connexions PA. At the time of the research, Rob was not attending his educational support unit and the detached youth workers had not seen him for two weeks. (Crimmens et al, 2003 forthcoming). Yet Rob is exactly the sort of young man that the new reconfigured services for youth would hope to be able to reach and track through outreach and detached work. Sustained support for such a young person through a period of crisis is exceptionally difficult when the immediate face to face work is structurally divided from opportunities for follow-up.

It is virtually impossible for part time workers either to engage in formal partnership relationships with complementary organisations or to make referrals to other agencies. In a separate research study considering the work of a part time detached team in the NE of England, it was discovered that all partnership work depended upon the single full time building based youth worker. Meanwhile, the part time detached workers who worked only in the evening, had little contact with collaborating services and seldom, if ever, made referrals to agencies outside the youth service. Moreover, they did not see this as part of their job, understanding their work only to be concerned with face to face practice (Spence and Harley 2001). The Joseph Rowntree research confirms that part time and voluntary workers are engaged primarily in the delivery of the face to face work on the ground and mostly in the evenings when other services are unavailable:

Most of the workers are part time sessional workers so they aren't able to give support to young people during the day...it's also harder to make referrals to other agencies if you only work during the evening.²

In the case of Rob cited above, it is indicative that the detached workers referred him to the full time youth worker and not directly to any other service. It is the full time youth worker, who often acts as co-ordinator or manager for the detached team, who is their main point of reference. This expresses the division of labour and responsibility between part time and full time youth work, but is suggestive of the changing balance towards managerialism in the role of full time youth workers who in recent years have found themselves increasingly responsible for effective partnership work in which they might be the sole youth work representative, the development and maintenance of organisational procedures and systems and the co-ordination, follow up and management of part time practice (Millar, 1995). When full time youth workers are responsible for a range of part time and voluntary practice this inevitably removes them from fieldwork. The dependence of part time and voluntary teams upon a single full time worker, who has no time to undertake intensive face to face work with young people, inevitably risks the possibility of young people like Rob slipping through the net even if that worker has managed to create useful formal and informal partnerships with complementary agencies. This suggests that a strategic increase in the numbers of full time youth workers is essential if the partnership approach is to be mobilised to its fullest potential.

Although full time youth workers have been increasingly removed from face to face practice, it remains the case that it is the full time workforce which is most fully trained and professional. The displacement of the skills of full time workers by those of part time and voluntary workers whose training is inevitably less systematic, less sustained and operating at a lower qualification level than that of the full time workers, suggests an imbalance between the level of service offered to the employing organisation and that offered directly to young people. Training in youth work for part time and voluntary workers has at best always been a localised and to some degree *ad hoc* affair. Although there are currently efforts underway to standardise and improve part time training nationally (DfES, 2003), nevertheless, there is little which is explicitly directed towards detached and outreach work (Spence and Harley, 2001). That training which is offered, as noted by one of the interview respondents, has to take place in the evening or at the weekend, which is a problem as it cuts into peoples free time. Quite often the organisation and even the delivery of such training is the responsibility of the relevant full time youth worker. Undertaking successful generic detached and outreach youth work is an activity which requires not only a great deal of skill in the establishment of relationships with young people, but also in mobilising those relationships in an organisational and community context:

what I've found is the three forces is that you've got young people, you've got community and obviously the people in it, and you've got the kind of, as they would see it, the power, which is the council or professionals or, you know, people that are holding the money to do, you know the re-housing or whatever it is, they're the kind of three areas. ...so it's about managing all that.

The present climate for training part time and voluntary workers is not adequate for dealing with this range of practice although within the Connexions framework, not only face to face work, but also organisational and community liaison are understood as integral to the activities of Connexions personnel (Oliver, 2002). Of course these are concerns which cannot be dealt with simply within the question of training. For they raise larger issues regarding terms and conditions of employment and structural questions regarding the part-time, volunteer, full time balance in the workforce (CYWU, 2003).

Finally, the inherent instability of a part time and volunteer workforce is problematic particularly if the work is to be directed primarily towards socially excluded young people. Successful detached and outreach work with individuals and small groups who are in need of a service beyond leisure facilities, is based upon the youth work method of building relations of trust with the young people concerned. These take time, patience and commitment. Within the research, the long term investment of time necessary was frequently mentioned by respondents (Crimmens et al, 2003). If the main workforce engaged in the task of encouraging the social engagement of those who are presently defined as excluded is vulnerable to constant change because workers find different outlets for their interests, experience pay and conditions unequal to their level of responsibility, take alternative full time work or go on to full time education and training, then much investment in relationship building, and thus the opportunity to work systematically in the long term with some vulnerable young people will be wasted. Whilst the stability of any part time and voluntary workforce can be increased by improvement in terms and conditions of service, by organisational stability and by opportunities for career progression, again, the potential of the work is more likely to be maximised by an improvement in the ratio of full time to part time and volunteer staff.

Funding

At the root of the difficulties with the staffing situation is the question of funding. The survey revealed only 47% of respondents to have secure funding.

The main issues around funding? Well the most obvious one is getting it! That's the difficult one.

Most of those with long term and relatively secure funding were operating within the Statutory Sector which was the most frequently identified sponsor of detached and outreach youth work. Smaller projects within the voluntary sector were particularly vulnerable to short term and multiple funding streams which cost a disproportionate amount of time and energy in relation to administration, management and evaluation. Meanwhile, securing funding to cover these additional costs was identified by respondents as the most difficult. Charitable funding bodies prefer to concentrate upon causes : it is much more newsworthy to fund the face to face practice than to fund the background costs for such practice:

The main issue would be (gaining) the infrastructure funding, you know, there are little pots of money around for say health and well-being, pregnancy, and all of this, but if you haven't got the infrastructure funding in place, then obviously your projects can't really run without that

A range of difficulties impeding the progress of the work can be traced to inadequate funding. Most obviously, insecure funding compounds the difficulties associated with staffing. Not only is it partly responsible for over- dependence upon part time and volunteer staff but it is the source of a general malaise in the recruitment and retention of qualified and skilled staff within the youth work sector (Warwick conference, 2002; CYWU, 2003). The search for funding and the accountability to different funding agencies deflects attention away from the considerable issues to be addressed on the ground in face to face work, towards organisational and bureaucratic concerns.

It has an impact on the project manager and myself as team leader, in the sense that you start to worry whether, by the end of a particular year, we are going to be looking at staff redundancies or losing our own jobs, or the project may be folding totally. That can dominate your thinking, over what you're there for, which is a service for young people.

The research survey discovered that only 47% of projects had secure funding which suggests significant insecurity in the majority. Despite the poverty of the Service in general, Local Authority Youth Service remains the most secure source of funding and 59.7% of respondents had finance from this source. The average project is funded from 2.3 sources. Some respondents indicated that they were funded from 5 or more different sources. It appears that a significant source of finance is available only to fund special or targeted projects. This is not unusual in youth work in general (eg. See YPN, 19-25th March, 2003). Multiple funding sources for a variety of schemes can only complicate bureaucracy, increase instability and militate against long term planning and strategic development. Moreover, it is most likely that it will be the smaller and poorer projects which are dependent upon such arrangements. This can seriously affect the long term survival of projects:

It's the begging bowl feeling ... I'd much rather have the money and know where I stand and plan it out over 3 or 4 years as a deliberate strategy, rather than annually.

Detached and outreach projects are vulnerable to a short life span or to redirection, re-focusing and reinvention depending upon the source and purposes of the funding available. One of the significant findings of the research is that a large number of the projects - nearly 40% of those who responded to the survey, are less than two years old. It could be the case of course that new projects are more likely to participate enthusiastically in research. A number of older projects did reply - including one which has been running for 50 years - but overall there were only 18 which had been operative for more than 15 years. The average age of projects was 4.75 years. This suggests a short life span for detached and outreach schemes which does not correspond well with the determination within Connexions to maintain contact with young people for the whole of their teenage years. Even if a project seems relatively short-lived simply as a consequence of redirection, this has implications for consistency and for the possibility of achieving significant positive outcomes for the young people contacted by workers.

It is apparent from the interviews and the case studies that most workers considered a longterm view to be necessary if detached youth work was to achieve its potential. By its nature, detached work involves operating in a community environment, where young people do not simply exist as 'youth' or as isolated individuals, but as integral members of that community - even if they are involved in conflict or are regarded as threatening or as a 'nuisance'. Detached and outreach workers are most successful when they are in touch with extended networks of young people and are known within the communities in which they are operating. It may be that the indigenous part time worker or volunteer can play a significant role here in helping to establish the credentials and the acceptability of a detached youth work team, but of much more significance in the efforts to effect change, is the possibility of workers establishing a consistent presence over time in which they come to be known for their work, trusted by adults and young people alike and through which the effects of their interventions become apparent over time. A number of workers observed that their work should not be seen as fire-fighting. For example:

Sometimes we will get a phone 'there's young people out here causing problems and come and sort them out. Move them on', and that's what they want, they want to move them from A to B. We do it, but it's not a way I think you can work successfully with young people and their communities, because it doesn't really get you anywhere. And I do stress that we are not the fire brigade, you know, you can't call us out and we put out the fire. So

I think more and more often communities become aware of that, when you have substantial input, and, luckily, we've had seven years to get to know the community, to work with adults, to work with young people, and we've offered a mixture of all that.

One of the most positive and useful aspects of detached and outreach work is its flexibility and its ability to be responsive to the changing needs and interests of young people. Project managers expressed strong views in the research about the value of this approach and were concerned to maintain the ethos of voluntary association between young people and workers. However, secure and long term funding was seen to be essential in order to build upon the contacts and sustain a constructive programme of work with those who by definition are difficult to motivate and engage. Although 47% of respondents indicated that they thought that their funding was secure, this does not signify that they believed their funding to be adequate. Moreover, 12% said that they didn't know and 41% replied that their funding was not secure. This suggests a seriously volatile working environment. One manager highlighted the discrepancy between 'long term needs and short term funding'. Another suggested that it was necessary to 'adjust the work for a year' but that in the next year 'you have to find another way of slightly adjusting it' in order to meet the requirements of funders. In such situations there is a tension between accountability to the young people and accountability to the requirements of funding agencies and this undermines the very flexibility and responsiveness to young people which those involved believe to be the hallmark of successful detached and outreach work.

Although both Connexions and *Transforming Youth Work* (see DfES, 2002: 14-15) promise increased and more secure funding for youth services, this is hardly likely to be of a sufficient depth and scope to ensure that the detached and outreach arm of the partnership will be able to fulfil the expectations placed upon it. For what has emerged very forcefully from the research data is that, despite the low capital expenditure required for detached and outreach work, this style of provision is not and can never be a cheap option. It has been possible to calculate from the information provided that for every staff hour available, it is possible to contact two young people. This figure is of course an estimate, and does not indicate anything about the quality of that contact. However, it does suggest that in terms of reaching and maintaining a professional standard of youth work in the long term with large numbers of excluded young people, significant and long term investment in infrastructure, training, and wages will be necessary. Without this, the level of service promised by Connexions will be a chimera (CYWU, 2003).

Moreover, although the Government is demanding that the extra funding granted to Local authorities for investment in Youth Services should be channelled directly

into on the ground youth work (DfES, 2002), there are few guarantees that this will translate into significantly improved resources for detached and outreach work, or indeed, into a significantly improved supporting infrastructure able to invest in staffing at the levels appropriate to a truly professional service. Certainly if the case of the extra funding given to schools is a model for this, there are few grounds for optimism that the funding will reach its appropriate targets. Already there is evidence that some Local Authority Youth Services are simply so weak and chronically underfunded that any extra finance will simply help to lower their overspend (YPN, 15-21 January 2003; YPN, 26 March-1 April 2003).

Face to face practice

If structural problems of funding and staffing can be solved, there is much to be gained from a mobilisation of detached and outreach youth work as key participants in partnerships directed towards the welfare of young people. It is evident that all youth workers deal with problems associated with social exclusion, and despite the Youth Service being nominally a universal service, it has for many years recognised that limited funding implies prioritising and targeting. Within detached and outreach work this has been both towards those who do not have access to other youth service provision and towards those who seem most alienated from social institutions (Evans, 1974). The survey returns suggest that it is the outreach workers rather than the purely detached workers who are working with young people experiencing the most serious difficulties. This is probably associated with the more specific targeting of outreach workers to particular problems and issues associated with their organisational brief. For example - housing projects of necessity target the young homeless with the purpose of linking them with housing agencies and related services. Such projects tend to operate within the voluntary rather than the statutory sector which is much more likely to sponsor generic detached youth work approaches and be responsive to lack of alternative leisure based provision for young people. Yet, as noted, it is within the voluntary sector that there are the greatest problems of instability of purpose and funding.

The lack of appropriate opportunities for 'leisure' was the most often cited difficulty relating to young people (60%). 'Lack of leisure provision' is an important issue for young people whose visibility on the streets and apparent aimlessness or anti-social behaviour must surely be interpreted in this context.

Every time we see them they're drinking and we say to them 'What's happened this week?' and the most exciting thing that's happened to them is they're sitting there drinking a bottle of cider. So even that's getting boring for them now.

'Lack of leisure provision' signifies the importance of 'having fun' in young people's lives and if detached and outreach workers are to address this, the implication is that some activities need to be organised without any ulterior 'worthy' motive. In itself, this must be taken seriously as it implies that youth work retains an important place in its ability to offer a range of low cost, organised leisure activities which are otherwise outside the range of many young people. The informal educational opportunities offered to the youth worker in the organisation of such activity offers an additional benefit and targeted services which did not support such activity would be missing a significant opportunity to contribute to the well-being of the young people concerned (Spence, 2001), not least insofar as boredom easily leads to anti social behaviour. It is therefore a mistake to think only in terms of individual problem-solving when considering the mobilisation of youth work skills. For much that is achieved happens within group work and is educational in the broadest sense. Such informal educational work does not sit easily with ideas about accreditation and certification as outcomes of intervention (Smith, 2003).

It is often within the context of leisure based activity that youth workers find that they are able to build positive and trusting relationships with young people and it is in the context of such relationships that many individual problems are addressed. After leisure, the most frequently cited difficulties relate to alcohol and drugs (40%), family relationships (39%), poverty (38%) and crime (37%). Yet one project manager commented that 'adults like to think it is all drugs, sex and rock and roll, but the issues young people talk about most are school, work, relationships, family and friends'. Mostly this is not the stuff of newspaper headlines but it can be important for the young person to have found a sympathetic listener.

The pattern of working for detached and outreach workers is often to contact groups of young people in the first instance, to move out from there developing networks and to base their work upon an understanding of the group and the network. Only over time might this move into more intense one-to-one work with some individuals who might need particular attention. Mostly the groups comprise white males. In the survey returns, on average, 62% of those young people in contact with detached and outreach workers were male; only 32% claimed to have any relationships with Asian young people, and only 44% with any Black young people. This bias tends to be justified in traditional terms. For instance, one project manager indicated that 'girls tend to have to go home earlier' and that 'they don't tend to come out on their own, they tend to be nearby boys, so little work is done solely with girls'. Meanwhile, most projects (76%) claimed that the ethnic distribution of their work is representative of the area in which their project operates. These claims undoubtedly reflect the reality of the work but raise questions about how detached and outreach work is conceived. It may be that the purist model of

street-based intervention is too narrow, that problem-orientated targeting inevitably leads to attention being given to those who are creating problems in public space or it may be simply that white young men are the most vocal contenders for the attentions of the workers. If young women and all Black and Asian young people are to be reached through these methods of work, perhaps a broader conceptualisation of the work is required on the one hand, or more specific targeting on the other.

Implications for Policy

Can the methods of detached and outreach youth work usefully contribute to the Connexions partnerships? Undoubtedly, there are elements of the work which are transferable in reaching those whom Connexions wish to include and there is evidence of some enthusiasm amongst some workers, though not all, for co-operating with the new service. However, there are indications that some aspects of youth work methodology do not sit easily alongside the focus of Connexions towards individual youth transitions. There is much about the ethos of detached and outreach youth work which is inextricably related to its methodology - the two cannot be easily separated. Central to this is the voluntary nature of young people's association with the worker. Because of this, priority must be given to the agenda of the young people, at least in the initial stages of relationship-building with them, and the possibility of flexibility is crucial within this. Working with groups is also crucial to the approach taken. It is within the context of the group that individuals with problems are identified and provided with opportunities to relate to a professional without stigma or labelling and it is perhaps this which so many young people who experience personal difficulties find so attractive about the youth work relationship.

With the current ratio of part time to full time staff, there are inevitably structural problems relating to referral. These structural problems are exacerbated by differences in philosophy and culture between services. Much of the responsiveness to problems within youth work is spontaneous and conceived as an aspect of a more holistic educational approach to individuals and groups. To move from this to isolating individual problems, focusing upon them and making relevant referrals involves risk to the trusting relationship which has been carefully constructed, sometimes over a long period of time by the youth workers. If partner services are not sensitive to this, and if facilities within partner agencies do not meet expectations, then the whole edifice becomes problematic for the youth worker. The comment from a professional in a partner organisation that they found it necessary to spend time building up trust with the youth workers, is probably indicative of this insecurity about the ability of other services to respect the relationships created within youth work. The power and status relationships with other services must be addressed and a more coherent voice given to the realities of youth work methods and practices if there is to be progress in this area.

This implies that if for no other reason, the current state of detached and outreach work in relation to stability of funding and staffing needs considerable improvement if it is to be allocated a key role in reaching socially excluded young people. Moreover, this needs to be understood as a longterm commitment in order to provide the stability necessary for long term planning, for moving carefully from group work towards individual work, and broadening the remit of the work in order to reach those who do not fit the stereotype of the young man on the street. Part of this broader remit must include more systematic partnership work with other relevant agencies. The Transforming Youth Work strategy has begun to address some of these needs, but whilst the focus remains with the relationship with Connexions rather than simply with the needs and aspirations of youth work itself in terms of its group work and informal educational agenda, then there is likely to remain some tension and distrust between youth work and other services.

Detached and Outreach work is currently working with thousands of young people (65,065 were in touch with the projects in this survey), and offers much that cannot be found elsewhere. Given appropriate organisational conditions, the work in itself has a great deal to offer young people who are not easily reached by other services. It is the work in itself, rather than as a means to an end, which must be valued by Connexions if detached and outreach work is to be enabled to make a full contribution to the well-being of young people, which, after all, is the object of the exercise.

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Notes

- 1 This article is based upon data generated by the whole research team. In addition to the authors, the team included Dave Crimmens, Fiona Factor and John Pitts.
- 2 Unless otherwise stated all quotations are from the thirty one telephone interviews with project managers, coordinators and key workers.

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YOUTH WORK WITH YOUNG MEN IN NORTHERN IRELAND:

An 'Advocacy' approach

KEN HARLAND AND SUSAN MORGAN

Despite various attempts to articulate youth work with young men (e.g. Tett, 1996/7; Lloyd, 1997; YouthAction Northern Ireland, 1996, 1997; Harland, 2001), there still appears to be considerable confusion as to the focus of the work and how it should be delivered. What also appears to be missing is a clear theoretical understanding of the work and the context in which it has evolved. Drawing upon evidence from empirical research carried out by Harland (1997; 2000; 2001) with young men in inner city Belfast; YouthAction Northern Ireland's developing practice with young men that has evolved since 1995, and learning from developmental work with young women, this article presents an Advocacy model approach to youth work with young men. The model is underpinned by an appreciation of the issues that impinge on young men's lives and the importance of appropriate learning methods.

The context of young men's lives in Northern Ireland

In order to provide a context for exploring masculinity, four key areas that have impacted upon male development in inner city areas of Northern Ireland are discussed - the troubles in Northern Ireland, de-industrialisation, the changing role of men in society, local interpretations of masculinity and the impact of prolonged and uncertain youth transitions to employment.

'The troubles'

Reflection on any aspect of life in Northern Ireland must be considered in the context of the recent conflict that has been prevalent for almost 35 years. Since 1969, Northern Ireland has witnessed widespread social, economic and political upheaval through what is commonly known as the troubles. Throughout this period cultural and political identity has been fiercely disputed with young people developing their sense of ethnic identity in the midst of political crisis and sectarian confrontation (Bell, 1990:1). Sectarianism and the effects of the troubles have been shown to have a significant influence upon young people growing up in Northern Ireland (Bell, 1990; Smyth, 1998). Connolly and Maginn (1999:97) found that sectarianism amongst children in Northern Ireland was rooted in their day to day experiences and by the age of three, children had not only developed an understanding of the categories of Protestant and Catholic, but were able to apply negative characteristics each to the other.

As young men grow up these negative perceptions not only increase but are also exacerbated by other important factors. For example, in Harland's (2000) inner

city Belfast study with young men aged 14-16 from working class Protestant and Catholic communities, the young men perceived schools and local communities as hostile environments where they increasingly felt alienated, powerless and disillusioned. The young men were wary of other young men within their community whilst fearful of young men from different communities. Paramilitary influence was a constant threat that resulted in the young men feeling suspicious and confused, particularly regarding issues surrounding law and order. The study revealed conflicting attitudes ranging from passionate support to absolute rejection of involvement in paramilitary activity. Common to all young men were the perceived dangers associated with paramilitaries policing local areas, manifesting itself through punishment beatings, community violence and random paramilitary shootings. The reality in Northern Ireland is that the primary perpetrators and victims of sectarian and community violence are young men. During the troubles nine out of ten of those killed were male, with half between the age of fifteen and twenty-nine (Smyth, 1998).

Within Northern Ireland violence consistently permeates young men's experiences. A recent study with 135 young men aged 16-25 from working class communities throughout Northern Ireland carried out by YouthAction Northern Ireland (2002:3), revealed that violence was perceived as part of everyday life and a key concern within male youth culture. Whilst the young men would have liked their communities to be less violent, they did not consider this to be a realistic possibility.

Deindustrialisation

The way in which young men experience violence and the perceived threat to their personal safety has impacted upon their employment opportunities as it makes them reluctant to travel outside their own community for training or work. Employment routes are further restricted as the industrial base in Northern Ireland is unrecognisable to what it was a generation ago when young men from working class communities were almost guaranteed employment or access to a trade through an apprenticeship. Then, the number of young men without academic or vocational qualifications was less important as they were much more likely to progress easily into a job. In Northern Ireland, like many other western countries, de-industrialisation has weakened the organisational strength of working class communities and eroded the vitality of community life (Gorz, 1982). An example of this in Northern Ireland is the decline in shipbuilding at Harland and Wolff over the past 25 years, where there were once 35,000 jobs in comparison to the 134 in 2003 (Morton, 2003:3). Despite increasingly high levels of unemployment and uncertain employment prospects, Harland's study (2000:92) revealed that having a job and being the breadwinner was identified by young men as being the most important characteristic of being a man.

Youth Transitions

Over recent years there has been increased interest and academic debate in relation to the notion of youth transitions (Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Rudd and Evans, 1998; Wyn and Dwyer, 1999; Mizen, 2003). In Harland's (2000) study, extended and uncertain transitions from school to employment exposed the vulnerability of young men who lived in the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland. The young men had all underperformed at school and displayed feelings of anxiety as they reflected on the harsh reality that they would find it difficult to gain employment without qualifications. Longitudinal research (Northern Ireland Economic Research Centre, 1996; 2001) identified a sub-group of young people aged sixteen and seventeen, consisting primarily of working class young males, who were not in education, training or employment. The study revealed that young people in this position for a long period of time tended to become de-motivated and discouraged in respect of their chances of success in the labour market and subsequently found it difficult to get out of this position. This finding is reinforced by other economic research (e.g. Narendranathan and Ellis, 1993) which revealed that those who experience unemployment as young people were significantly more likely to experience unemployment as adults. Whilst it could be argued that the majority of young men in Northern Ireland have displayed resilience and made successful transitions into adulthood (e.g. Muldoon, et al, 2000), there are undoubtedly many working class young men whose needs remain unmet, or are simply ignored. This concurs with previous studies in working class areas in other parts of the UK (e.g. Cohen, 1972; Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Willis, 1977; Jenkins, 1982, 1983; Bell, 1990; Gillespie et al, 1992).

Patriarchy

The construction of masculine identities in working class areas of inner city Belfast has reflected the extent to which young men's lives are complex, paradoxical and full of contradictions underpinned by unrealistic patriarchal expectations (Harland, 1997; 2000; 2001). In Harland's study (2000:89-90) as young men discussed their lives it was evident that they had been bombarded with powerful lessons about what it meant to be a man. Many of these messages emanated from the legacy of a patriarchal age whereby men were ascribed status, privilege and power solely because they were born male. Through their patriarchal association with local traditions of masculinity and femininity, these working class young men grow up adhering to narrow and restrictive stereotypical interpretations of what it means to be a man. Whilst social and economic trends have changed considerably over the past 35 years, for example, women's increased access to and achievements in education and employment, and greater visibility in public and political life (e.g. Gilloway, 2001), the young men's attitudes and expectations had not changed. For example, they believed that it was natural for men to be dominant and a man's primary role

was to work in order to provide for, and protect, his family, community and cultural traditions. Under patriarchy, men have traditionally been exalted and women demeaned. Therefore, these young men had grown up believing that by virtue of being male they were the rightful leaders of society, while women were natural subordinates - an inner city Belfast trend that has been prominent for many generations (Harland 2000:172).

Contemporary masculine identity in inner city Belfast

In Northern Ireland, significant socio-economic changes brought about as a result of de-industrialisation, uncertain youth to adult transitions and the perceived threat of violence, are contributory factors in regard to how young men demonstrate their masculinity. Other factors such as the changing position of women in society have challenged outdated patriarchal notions, and resulted in young men living lives that are full of contradictions and paradoxes around masculine myths and realities (Harland, 2000:196). The impact of the masculine contradictions that these young men experienced are further discussed in this article through young men and risk taking behaviour, masculinity and emotional miseducation and the male experience of power and powerlessness.

Young men and risk taking behaviour

Living up to local traditions of masculinity has placed immense pressure on young men. One outcome of the contradictions that young men have experienced is that they feel ambivalent about their masculinity and therefore they have felt the need to prove themselves (Tolson, 1988). A key finding of Harland's (2000:211) study was that young men felt enormous pressure to demonstrate their masculinity to others which impacted significantly upon their behaviour. Taking risks was simply part of the price that they were prepared to pay in the pursuit of demonstrating their manhood and to compensate for the adult status young men no longer acquire through work. The notion of risk is a recurring theme in young men's health statistics (Men's Health Forum in Ireland, 2000). This was evidenced by risk-taking behaviours such as driving without a seat belt, joy-riding, eating snack foods, fighting, street violence, not attending GPs, alcohol abuse and internalising their problems (Lloyd, 1997; Banks, 1997; Henry, 1999; Brady, 2000). Whilst the young men in Harland's study (2001: 197) were often aware of the dangers, they perceived risk-taking as a necessary aspect of male youth culture.

Masculinity and 'emotional miseducation'

The complex and contradictory nature of local traditional notions of masculinity, with its links with risk-taking behaviour, was a key reason why the young men in Harland's (2000:100) study refused to seek emotional support. By withholding certain feelings and emotions these young men believed they were demonstrating an

important aspect of their masculinity — namely, that men do not need the support of others. They believed that men are supposed to be rational and in control and that by displaying certain feelings they feared losing their self respect and masculine dignity. Male socialisation has meant that many men find it difficult to express their feelings and emotions (Biddulph, 1999). Within traditional notions of masculinity, men asking for support has been scorned and associated negatively with their interpretations of the feminine stereotype (Seidler, 1997). Whilst some of the young men in Harland's (2000:111) study spoke of needing emotional support at certain times, they mocked at the idea of males actually asking for support. To quote one young man: men don't go around asking for support. It's only girls need it, which demonstrates the negative perceptions they associate with femininity and their sense of male superiority. The suppression and rejection of certain emotions by young men left them feeling isolated and reluctant to speak to others about how they truly feel. Such emotional miseducation caused the suppression of emotions such as pain, fear, hurt, anger and frustration which can be detrimental to positive mental health and well being (Seidler, 1997; Biddulph, 1998; 1999). By needing support, or admitting to having emotional needs, the young men in Harland's (2000) study feared they would be exposed as inadequate, or powerless, which was threatening and contradictory to their preferred personal image and their stereotypical assumptions about men's power.

Whilst acknowledging that patriarchal power has privileged men and stigmatised, penalised and oppressed women, Brod and Kaufman (1994) identified a key relationship between power and pain in men's lives.

Men's contradictory experience of power and pain

Brod and Kaufman (1994:142) claim that whilst men have held power and reaped the privileges associated with being male, the power they have experienced has been tainted through a strange combination of power and powerlessness, privilege and pain, which they have termed men's contradictory experience of power. The way in which men have experienced power has come at a price as it has caused immense pain, isolation and alienation, not only for women, but also for men. Contradictions between young men's perceived power and their sense of powerlessness capture what Connell (1995) calls protest masculinity, whereby boys make claims to power when there are no real resources for doing so. In Harland's (2000) study, the young men's perceptions of masculinity resulted in them being ignorant of their pain and separated from their feelings and emotions — often to the extent that they appeared unemotional.

Young men's risk-taking behaviour, their unwillingness to seek emotional support and the way their contradictory experience of power and powerlessness has set the

context within which work with young men has developed in Northern Ireland since the mid 1990s.

Traditional Youth Service provision with young men

In order to appreciate the development of work with young men, it is necessary to provide a brief background to ways in which youth work has been developed with young men and young women in Northern Ireland.

Work with young men

Traditional youth work with young men in Northern Ireland has tended to focus on their recreational needs or has adopted a problem-centred approach to addressing aggressive and anti-social behaviour (Harland, 1997; Lloyd, 1996; 1997). Therefore it did not challenge ways in which local traditions of masculinity impacted upon male behaviour and development (Harland, 1997). The need to develop a more holistic and relevant approach to work with young men is not a recent phenomenon. As far back as 1981, Moore was suggesting the need for change when he called for a re-evaluation of youth work with young men by posing the question what does the Youth Service do for boys? Since 1981 there has been an ever-increasing deluge of literature identifying the need for more effective approaches to work with young men which has had a direct influence on the thinking and development of work within Northern Ireland. Writers such as Moore, 1981; Davidson, 1988; Cousins, 1988; Salisbury and Jackson 1996; Harland, 1997; 2001; Lloyd, 1996; 1997 have argued that it was imperative that work with boys and young men had to be developed outside the boundaries set by traditional interpretations of masculinity.

In Northern Ireland, youth workers have reported difficulties maintaining conversations with young men or getting them to talk about themselves (Harland, 1997). They report being deflected from thinking about young men's issues whilst having to respond to behaviour that can be disruptive and difficult to manage (YouthAction Male Workers Training Forum, 2001). The Work with Young Men Evaluation Report (2000) revealed that youth workers who tried to embrace a more effective approach to work with young men in inner city and rural areas often felt helpless, demoralised, and under-resourced, despairingly feeling left to their own devices to respond to the challenges that working with young men can present. In response to these concerns YouthAction Northern Ireland initiated specific training support programmes for youth workers to develop more creative and innovative ways of working with young men in their own communities, to reflect on their current practice, and to explore possible new approaches. The role of the agency in supporting workers was not to teach but to facilitate workers' needs and concerns. This training created a supportive and useful environment through which workers were able to share experiences and develop skills to give them increased confidence to target specific young men. One aspect of the training was the use of role-plays to help

workers think through ways in which they could respond to real life situations arising from their practice. This enabled workers to explore and discuss alternative approaches and suggest new methods of responding and experimenting in a safe and supportive environment.

Work with young women

Developmental youth work approaches with young women initially emerged in Northern Ireland during the 1970s and early 80s (Markin, et al 1984). During the 70s the women's liberation movement both in the United Kingdom and Ireland was gaining strength. As a result many female workers, with an increasing awareness of gender inequality began to question the impact that sexism was having on girls and young women within the Youth Service. Alongside this was the recognition that sexism impacted not only on all young people but also youth workers and managers (Carpenter and Young 1986; Spence 1990).

In Northern Ireland work with young women was also developing within the context of a Youth Service that was being further resourced in reaction to the political conflict that had been prevalent since 1969 (Geraghty, 1998; Trimble, 1990). For example, a major increase in funding designed to redress the conflict resourced a service that largely focused on sport and recreation, thereby responding to assumed needs and interests of young men. The Youth Service aimed to encourage/remove young people (essentially young men) off the streets and away from violent confrontations with each other and the security forces. One outcome of this was to render young women invisible due to the fact that they did not pose the same threat. The needs of young women were often secondary to the assumed needs of young men, resulting in young women dropping out of Youth Service from the age of thirteen as they perceived the Youth Service as irrelevant to them (Trimble, 1990). In Northern Ireland, the marginalisation and isolation of young women within society has been reflected within traditional Youth Service provision.

In response to this youth work with young women in Northern Ireland developed in the voluntary sector in agencies such as YouthAction Northern Ireland, where the environment was more open and encouraging to the development of practice. A number of strategies were developed in both the UK and Ireland to address the inequalities faced by female workers and young women within the Youth Service. The work was underpinned by feminist principles in their broadest sense focusing on participation, empowerment and challenging as opposed to conforming to wider society. Examples of approaches have included; providing female only time and space for young women to challenge stereotypes and inequalities, develop confidence, skills and potential, providing opportunities for young women to get involved in a wide variety of activities not necessarily linked to their femininity, challenges regarding the inadequacy of the Youth Service provision in relation to

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young women, development of workers skills to access resources for the young women s work, space for workers to consider their own experience of femininity and masculinity and challenge and improve upon their own practice and finally finding ways for young women and workers to impact upon the policy and decision making towards more equity for young women (Nava, 1984, Parmar, 1985, Carpenter and Young, 1986, Spence, 1990; 1996).

Addressing the needs of young women in Northern Ireland is no longer restricted only to the Youth Service but crosses into the vibrant women s sector, health and growing community sector. However despite these progressions, there is evidence that over thirty years later gender inequalities remain within the Youth Service and wider society (Campbell, 1996; Harland and Morgan 2001; Spence 2001). Nevertheless, structures have been developed within Youth Services that better facilitate the needs of girls and young women (Gray 1999; Geraghty et al, 1998). Developmental work with young women is continuing to grow and shape Youth Service provision. It is also important to acknowledge that the practice base of work with young women in Northern Ireland has helped inform and influence non-traditional approaches to work with young men. For example, work with young women had demonstrated the benefits of single sex approaches to providing space and safe environments for young women free from the dominance and disruptive behaviour of young men. The work also revealed the importance of research, the training of workers, exploration of gender and the need for a policy focus.

An Advocacy model for youth work with young men

The nature and pace of social, economic and political change in Northern Ireland has created complex paradoxes and masculine contradictions in the lives of working class young men. It was in response to these factors and evidence from empirical research that the need for a more creative and relevant youth work approach emerged.

Youth work with young men in Northern Ireland emanated from within YouthAction when the agency secured funding through Peace and Reconciliation to employ the first full-time youth worker in Northern Ireland to pilot single gender work with young men. This work was set up to build upon, and complement the agency s well established single gender work with young women. In 2000, further funding was secured to set up a Young Men s Unit aimed specifically at informing policy and developing programmes for young men in partnership with local communities and to provide training for youth workers who were experiencing difficulty in developing relationships with young men.

The following section presents some of the key learning from the Advocacy model, adopted by YouthAction Northern Ireland. This is a supportive approach

where the voice, needs and interests of young men are central to the process. The Advocacy model is not meant to be a definitive response to work with young men, but to present insights from the learning in Northern Ireland that may be useful to those who have struggled in their work with young men, or to help those who may be considering new approaches to their work. The model incorporates two key elements: An appreciation of factors impinging on young men's lives and the importance of appropriate learning methods.

The appreciation of factors impinging on young men's lives

It has been increasingly recognised that youth workers possess a unique blend of skills, knowledge and experience that is particularly effective in building meaningful relationships with young people (Youth Council for Northern Ireland, 2003). In work with men in Northern Ireland, the nature of the relationship between the worker and young men has been paramount to young men engaging in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Working with young men can bring to the surface a range of powerful emotions and feelings that many men may have previously suppressed (Harland, 1997; Seidler, 1997). The Evaluation Report produced on behalf of YouthAction Northern Ireland's Young Men's Development project (Lloyd, 2000), found that through reflecting upon their own experience of growing up male, youth workers increased their understanding of the factors that influenced their own development and the issues that impacted upon them as young men. Through this increased personal awareness, workers also became better at sharing their feelings and emotions, which challenged many of their own stereotypical perceptions such as men cannot communicate on an emotional level. Workers also reported that reflection upon their own lives had increased their empathy towards the contemporary lives of young men. In addition, workers reported that self-reflection and their increased willingness to comfortably express their own emotions improved their relationships with young men and increased their potential to be better role models through ways in which they challenged the potentially damaging aspects of local traditions of masculinity.

Learning Methods

Young men learn to use public settings as opportunities to perform and prove themselves to others, which can manifest itself through the use of slagging and banter (Lloyd, 1997). Fear of being put down and or shamed amongst their peers can seriously inhibit young men's ability to talk openly about what they think and feel (Harland, 1997). Creating environments where young men can think, reflect, talk openly and honestly and consider other viewpoints crucially depends on ensuring young men feel valued, respected, safe from threat and judgemental attitudes

(YouthAction Northern Ireland's Young Men's Evaluation Report, 2000). Skilled engagement through which workers hear not only what young men say, but also attempt to understand their non-verbal behaviour, has encouraged young men on YouthAction programmes to talk in a more purposeful way about what is important to them. These young men have used such environments as opportunities to reflect upon, and better appreciate, the masculine contradictions they experience and the impact of wider social, political and economic developments that have impacted impact upon their lives.

The combination of reflection alongside activities such as teambuilding exercises, interactive games and role playing, has harnessed young men's energy and helped recognise their potential (Morgan and McMullan, 2000; YouthAction Northern Ireland 2000). These methods also encouraged movement and released creativity, whilst at the same time enabling reflection on male behaviour and attitudes. Such active approaches allow young men to engage in risk-taking activities within a climate of trust and safety. The combination of risk-taking and reflection has helped lay a solid foundation for more demanding and challenging work around specific personal attitudes and behaviour. Crucially, it has also led to further exploration around more controversial and challenging issues such as sexism, sexuality and sexual health, fatherhood, risk-taking, sectarianism and violence (YouthAction Northern Ireland's Young Men's Evaluation Report, 2000).

Concluding remarks

Over the past 35 years in Northern Ireland, the troubles, de-industrialisation, prolonged and uncertain youth transitions to employment and the restrictive nature of local traditions of masculinity, have created complex contradictions and paradoxes in the lives of working class young men. The impact of these contradictions and paradoxes are crucial issues that future youth provision in Northern Ireland must respond to more effectively. Whilst to date there is disparity and no overall Youth Service strategy to work with young men in Northern Ireland, the Advocacy model presented in this article helps lay a foundation to build upon. Whilst the model is not meant to be definitive, we believe it offers a more effective, relevant, realistic and empathetic approach to supporting young men and addressing their issues.

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Classic Texts Revisited

Marie Paneth

Branch Street: A Sociological Study

London: George Allen and Unwin 1944

TONY JEFFS

An unusual book which reveals the almost savage conditions in which some London children are growing up. George Orwell, Tribune 4th August 1944

The blitz on London began on September 7th 1940 and lasted until 11th May 1941. At its height it continued unbroken for 57 nights. Property damage was colossal. 100,000 homes destroyed and over 1,500,000 damaged. Large numbers of public buildings, such as hospitals and schools were destroyed and damaged, including 90 youth centres 'put out of action'. Around 15,000 fatalities occurred in those eight months, 1,500 on the last night alone. Many more would have perished had not tens of thousands of children been evacuated to rural areas and overseas. During this period, young and old spent nights huddled in shelters and tube stations 'in discomfort and enforced idleness with nothing to do but wait, listen, gossip, knit and gamble' (Gosden 1976: 221). Youth workers and adult educators trailed them into the tube stations and larger shelters providing educational classes and youth activities. Amongst those who volunteered to work in the deep shelters was an artist Marie Paneth. Austrian by birth, she was a 'registered alien', albeit one blessed with an independent income that permitted her to paint and undertake voluntary work. Paneth developed a unique way of working in the shelters. She would

bring the children paints, pencils, brushes, chalks, paper of different kinds, and crayons. These things I spread out near the entrance of the play room in a sort of buffet and left them to make their own choice of the material, to find themselves a space where they could work and to draw or paint or smudge whatever they liked. I never interfered with their work, except that I met every attempt to produce anything at all with approval. The only thing which was not permitted was the destruction of any work but one's own. Disturbances in the room in the way of fights, rowdiness or shouting I never tried to cope with. This made for very noisy working conditions at the beginning of each session, but in the course of an evening the children settled down astonishingly well. It is quite possible in this way for one person to deal with large numbers (50 to 60) in an absolutely free atmosphere. (p. 10)

Word spread concerning the success of her methods and in the autumn of 1941 Paneth was invited to work with the young people living in 'Branch Street', who one official described as 'the most rude, unruly and exceptionally difficult group we have met so far among our forty Play Centres' (p. 9).

Branch Street

Paneth's account of her work judiciously avoids furnishing Branch Street's location¹. However Spinley (1953), who undertook research in the area, says it is in Paddington, the locale later selected by Goetschius and Tash (1967; see also Pugh 2003) for their action research on detached youth work. This unwraps the tantalising possibility that some individuals may have been in Paneth's group, then members of the 'senior' youth club Spinley interviewed and 'observed', before eventually joining the 'unattached' groups of Goetschius and Tash.

What drew Paneth and the others to 'Branch Street' which also featured prominently in Klein's study *Samples From English Culture* (1965)? Close physical proximity to the University departments the authors were linked to played a part. However this was not the prime impetus. Crucially they were drawn by the opportunity to observe and work in an area which social scientists characterised as 'residual'; an enclave from which all who could do so fled, and from which those assessed by housing authorities as being 'capable of doing better in more favourable circumstances' (Klein 1965: 3) were offered alternative domiciles. The type of location Damer (1989) dubbed a 'dreadful enclosure' - a grotesque stigmatising pocket of acute and ghastly deprivation. Spinley tells us it had the highest population density within London's most densely populated borough, while the Probation Service judged it London's worst area for juvenile delinquency and the local Medical Officer found only three children out of 400 in the top nutritional standard.

In Branch Street 'all the housing was condemned' (p. 7). Few, if any, were occupied by a single household so families usually had only a single, or at best two rooms, one bed sufficing for the parents and youngest child, another for the rest. Water had to be transported from a shared tap on the stairs. With one toilet per building, often out of order, families used buckets at night, and frequently during the day. This coupled with endemic damp and stale air manufactured a smell that guaranteed few making their first visit lingered 'longer than five minutes' (Spinley 1953: 40).

Yet at one extremity the area stood within hailing distance of the West End. Elsewhere it appeared to seamlessly merge with the homes of the moderately wealthy and respectable working class. Closeness to the West End and major railway stations was a mixed blessing. For nearby streets comprised a 'big prostitute area' containing numerous brothels catering for revellers and travellers. Historically many prostitutes drifted into Branch Street when age and family responsibilities obliged them 'to leave the brothels' (p. 7). To the untutored eye this 'enclosure' may have appeared to possess a cohesion born of shared suffering and stigma. Certainly it was an area under siege. Strict boundaries were maintained by the inhabitants and those living in the borderlands alike, boundaries the residents sustained to keep at bay 'a merciless world full of danger and ill-will' (p. 123). Social workers and teachers seemed to have despaired of the inhabitants whom they overwhelmingly categorised as 'ignorant and shiftless'. However as Paneth found, it was riven by fierce internal territorial conflicts. Levels of mutual animosity between young people from different streets obliged her to designate separate evenings for each. *Branch Street* is a chronicle of her experiences of working with 69 out of the 100 or so young people living in one of those streets over approximately two years.

Getting going

Paneth was employed to run a centre in a surface shelter. Designed to cater for a hundred people it stood on waste ground in Branch Street. Full of bunks, but no longer in regular use since large-scale raids ended, it was dimly lit and divided into three compartments. Young people had taken possession and used it 'as a playground'. Paneth arrived with a car load of materials for drawing and painting to find young people cascading in and out 'howling, shouting and pushing'. Waiting to assist her were some Conscientious Objectors and a 'voluntary girl worker'. Pushing her way in, Paneth spread out her materials amid this chaotic tumult. Soon all had taken what they wanted. As the evening progressed a terrifying conflict unfolded. The older ones

climbed on to the top of the bunks and shot at us with all sorts of things, and at the few small ones who still sat at their tables, trying to paint in the turmoil. Dirty, wet canvas was slung into our faces when we passed them, they spat at us and tried to hurt us and showered gross indecencies at us with wild laughter. There was no stopping them. Some of the grown-ups tried but it was no use.
(p. 12)

The riot only ceased when the exhausted combatants drifted homewards. All was not lost. Paneth tells us she took home a collection of pictures, drawings and scribbles produced by over 50 youngsters. The next evening was no different.

These sessions troubled Paneth, prompting intense musing upon the reasons for the exceptionally aggressive and lewd behaviour, for the unhappiness and poverty. They also generated a sustained analysis of her methods and motives. Paneth concluded that the experiences of the children of Branch Street had given them 'all the reasons in the world to distrust everyone' (p. 14). The world had let them down and she, along with everyone else, must acknowledge a responsibility 'for the harm and misery they suffer' (op. cit.). They were victims of a 'merciless world full of danger and ill-will, barring them from every chance' (p. 123). But they remained 'part of a future world'. A world others were struggling to make a better place. These young people, Paneth concluded, were of great consequence and ways must be unearthed to enable them to play a creative role in society. They could not be left to become criminals, outsiders or the potential cat's-paw of the Fascism that had driven Paneth from her homeland. Therefore she told herself 'to help the individual means helping Democracy as well' (p. 120) - but how?

Paneth opined it was futile offering them more of the same. Teachers and social workers had let them down. Many viewed the young people as feral creatures 'ignorant and shiftless' (Klein 1965: 4) - irredeemable 'residuals'. Paneth resolved to keep faith with an educational method based on integrity and hope, concluding something could be achieved if the young people came to trust her. But this would happen 'only if I am really trustworthy' (p. 14). Once trust was cultivated perhaps the relationship could 'provide them with as many of the missing good experiences as we could manage' (p. 124).

Paneth convened a meeting with the workers where it was collectively agreed to proceed in ways that might cultivate trust between themselves and the young people. All agreed to take responsibility for an activity - carpentry, painting and drawing, sewing and drama. To foster continuity each activity was offered every session by the same person, in the same part of the shelter. Each evening was to be preceded by a planning meeting. Afterwards they resolved to retire to the local settlement, analyse how the evening had gone and build up 'new courage for another evening' (p. 34). Following this staff would walk together to the

nearest underground station. Significantly the only time this rule was subverted, a young woman volunteer was sexually accosted by two of the young people. Also when Paneth opened on her own some young men waited outside and

threw stones and pieces of wood at me. They surrounded me and lifted my skirts. I managed to get to the main road before I was badly hurt. When the children saw a policeman coming along they dispersed and were gone in a second. (p. 56)

Finally the staff agreed those unwilling to enlist in an activity would be left free to run wild. Leaders decided to not interfere but

be completely passive and to take everything as if it were the most natural thing in the world. If they should continue breaking up everything we should show them that we did not mind.... They really behaved like angry people. They destroyed what belonged to others. They tore up and ruined what others achieved. They did not obey orders. On the contrary, they deliberately acted against law and order. Such was our experience of them. They did not know us. Nevertheless they did not expect anything good to come from us. We decided to try to win them over and if possible to make them trust us, by showing as much patience as would be needed for that job, by never getting angry with them, and by calmly repairing all the damage which they would do.... If we started to try and impose discipline and order on them by force (supposing that we could), quite a few of them, and the worst ones at that, would drop out of the group and not attend We would consequently have a smaller though nicer community, but those who needed us most we should have lost. (p. 15-16)

Paneth narrates critical episodes that helped cultivate an aura of trust. One was composing, rehearsing and staging a play. At the second session an older 'member' suggested doing a play. Paneth awaited her opportunity then reminded the member when she was with her friends. The idea appealed and space was made for rehearsing what eventually became *Christmas Day in the Mortuary*, performed to much acclaim before an audience of members. A second was her response to pointed questioning from the boys regarding 'how babies are made'. Although aware some were seeking an opportunity 'to behave indecently' (p. 20) she sensed most desired 'full, simple, matter-of fact information, given in a dignified

way' (op. cit.). The challenge was accepted and Paneth engaged in an audacious exchange she recounts in detail. Reflecting on the conversation Paneth unambiguously concluded she made the right decision

if one stands tests like these, one gains very much with the children. The knowledge of the basic facts of life and the readiness to share this knowledge with them gives the children confidence. When they learn that they cannot shock you, this sport loses its interest. (op. cit.)

A conscientious objector overheard the conversation and was mortified. The others agreed and insisted management must be informed. Paneth, despite being warned that her alien status heightened the risk of dismissal stood her ground. Believing she had

one point in her favour: I was absolutely free. I had no position, name or reputation to look after. Luckily also, I did not have to live on what I earned with my work. I had no responsibility towards the material in the shelter. I had only to keep in mind what was the right thing to do for these children I believed my methods to be right ones and therefore I could not change them, but had to go on with them until I was either dismissed or had proved successful and achieved my aims. (p. 24-25)

Paneth did not yield and the others eventually came around. So when some girls asked her to tell them 'what you told the boys' (op. cit.) she did.

Testing times

Mayhem appears to have prevailed for much of the time within the confines of the shelter. Fighting and destruction were commonplace, theft rampant. Yet gradually good evenings outnumbered bad, items stolen one night were usually returned the next. However it was always problematic, workers could never delude themselves they were 'in control'. For youngsters who flung 'themselves on us with a rush of enthusiasm when they saw us approaching might minutes later turn and use the most insulting and vile language towards staff' if kept waiting whilst doors were unlocked (p. 27).

It operated on the cusp of danger. New adults arriving or the imposition of demands upon members habitually spawned outbursts or threatened an orgy of destruction. For example one evening the young people had been hollering 'indecent' songs until they exhausted themselves. Slowly the cry went up for Paneth to sing to them. She knew no English songs

CLASSIC TEXTS REVISITED

so sang a French one. Up went the clamour for an encore, she obliged with an Italian number. They wanted more but her repertoire ran dry. In desperation she offered a German carol, they sang along in English. Then someone asked, are you German? She told them she was Austrian, whereupon the interrogator said Hitler was an Austrian and she was Hitler's friend. Then the crowd who had delighted in her singing attacked her

more and more violently every moment. My hair was pulled, my hat torn off, they pulled at my coat and pushed me off the bunk and tried to throw me to the floor... When the struggle had lasted for a few seconds, I said: 'Come over into the bay, boys, and let's have it out there. We shall have more room there.' I wanted to change the situation as quickly as possible, feeling they were stronger than I was. The boys tore along with me in their midst.The troupe moved along, shouting and screaming wildly. When we entered the next bay, they pressed on towards me, ready for the next attack. At that moment one of the bigger boys raised his voice above the general shouts. He was not the leader, but another one, who had been bodily most aggressive in the fight, and while the atmosphere had still been friendly, had tried to come embarrassingly near me. Now he shouted: 'Nobody can help where he's born She can't help where she's born. Let's all stick up for her. I'll stick up for her.' And he raised his hands. The next second all hands were in the air, everyone shouting: 'Let's stick up for her. We'll stick up for you, Miss.' And when I answered (very much relieved), 'thank you boys,' they wanted to shake hands with me. (p.31-32)

Another time a girls only session was arranged. This coincided with a visit from officials. Young men broke into the shelter, waited for the staff to arrive then pelted them with missiles. The girls joined an attack that grew 'more and more excited, violent and rude' (p.44). Prudently the staff retreated to the settlement. The officials arrived later to find the young people demolishing the bunks. They too fled when a raiding party left the shelter, launched themselves at the car and began trying to unhinge its doors.

In February 1942 the shelter was re-furbished and returned to its original purpose. Homeless, Paneth moved into a tiny shelter without bunks but clean, well lit and with an oil stove. The young people, she reports, responded to the ambience and became

more friendly, normal and natural. We did nothing special but sat around the fire, did a bit of knitting and played charades. (p. 54)

Eventually the workers secured an 'ordinary slum house'. Three storeys, with a staircase too narrow for two adults to pass, a basement for carpentry, one large and five small rooms, nevertheless it was anticipated it would serve as a centre catering for 200 youngsters drawn from three streets. The workers cleaned, decorated and begged equipment. Within days of opening, true to form, it was broken into and stripped of its contents. Paneth dreamt of a 'house' run by the young people that would:

provide the roof under which this little group of gangsters could find their own community life, by starting from scratch and developing their own rules ... I hoped that owning a condemned house would give them the privilege of making an experiment, interesting and perhaps sociologically important, full of the promise of a certain healing quality, a rare chance which cannot be had so easily. (p. 59)

But along with the new property came a management board. The young people had their ideas but the new staff and managers had others - they wanted a Branch Street youth club. To be 'run like any other club, according to the ideas of grown-up people' (p.58). During the months that followed changes in the constitution of the board and staff turnover led to Paneth being 'put in charge'. Grasping the opportunity she made the decision to travel in the direction she originally intended. To break with the 'club tradition' and move towards a 'children's house'. Against the wishes of many colleagues an open door policy was initiated. This Paneth argues worked well until a colleague tried to clear the house between sessions. This action incited a conflagration. Youngsters rushed to join an orgy of destruction. Furniture, windows, everything was smashed. Yet Paneth noted it was a colossal fight, but unlike the early days they were not rude, lewd or nasty. Without irony she intimated 'this was great progress. I had the feeling of having been present at a drama and not an outbreak of hooliganism' (p. 105).

Some staff gloated over the destruction seeing it as a vindication of their opposition to Paneth's 'open door' policy. Once more she set about finding a new venue, without success. Small groups were still invited to her house for tea parties. Likewise the outings continued. They also met on Saturday afternoons in the street and retreated to the rear of the shelter

and sat talking around a fire built by the youngsters from wood gathered from bombed-out houses. In that setting she mused

They had never been so friendly, nor so easy and co-operative before. Now I came to them as somebody who tried to share what they did. It was something very different from their coming to us, to the strange house and into a new situation. Their attitude changed completely. (p. 111)

Details of how the programme ended are not supplied. A first edition of the book appeared in July 1944 so we can assume it was late 1943 or early 1944. Paneth tells us a new organisation intended re-opening the house as a centre to be used exclusively by five to eight year olds. We know that when Spinley arrived the local settlement provided a range of well-established youth clubs.

Post-war, Paneth lived in the United States before returning to Britain. Although it has not been possible to trace the details, apparently a number of exhibitions of her paintings were held. She seems to have written nothing else that was published.

Something better

Branch Street garnered enthusiastic reviews and was re-printed within three months. Subsequently it faded from view, a forgotten youth work text. Sixty years on it is perhaps more widely cited by art therapists than youth workers. For Paneth justifiably attained recognition as a pioneer in that field (Hogan, 2001). Such indifference is a tragedy as Paneth serves up a dazzling exposition of the dynamics of youth work practice. You can feel the cogs meshing as she builds theory in practice, agonisingly reflects upon what has happened, incessantly seeks to contextualise and comprehend the lives of the young people, tries to elucidate the dynamics of the social milieu the families occupy. Yet she is no rudderless pragmatist driven by events and the whims of policy-makers, seeking to survive at any cost, a valet to management. For Paneth disembarked in Branch Street fully equipped with an educational philosophy and political ideology that brooked no compromises regarding its core beliefs. She came to serve in equal measure the young people and democracy. The challenge was to do both without compromising either. Achieving that balance remains a perpetual trial. Paneth worked in extreme circumstances that thankfully few of us will encounter - at a historical juncture fraught with danger. However the central issues raised within Branch Street callously arise to test anew every generation of educators. This is about whether

education serves liberty or domestication, whether art emancipates or fetters our imagination. Paneth leaves the reader in no doubt, whatever her frailties and insecurities, which side she seeks to serve. The lady knew that in *Branch Street* all she and her colleagues could hope for were small victories. But of course the enchantment of education is that we never know for certain that they remain small victories. For like the renowned butterfly of 'chaos theory' a tantalisingly brief educational input may reverberate beyond our wildest imaginings. However, the ever practical Paneth warns against unrealistic expectations for if you expect too much the young people 'will feel our disappointment and impatience. Rather they must sense our patience and confidence' (p. 49).

In a bravura passage Paneth argues that workers, if they do nothing else for young people who have little or nothing bequeathed them by society, must seek to contribute to their 'store of happy memories'. To try and give 'them enough small change of friendly experiences with which to build up a reserve of trust; a trust that they might draw upon when confronted with something new' (p. 86). Conversation can do that but so can books. Not least for those trying to understand where they are heading professionally and unsure what tributary to follow. For youth workers this is just such a book, chock-full with the small change that replenishes our reserves of trust in the inherent value of informal education and youth work.

Tony Jeffs teaches in the Centre for Applied Social and Community Studies, University of Durham.

Note

- 1 Mark Smith organises walking tours that visit significant localities in London linked to the historical development of youth work, social policy and community work. He has tried to pinpoint 'Branch Street' from the available evidence and believes it is close to Marylebone Station and off the Edgware Road. A website giving details of this walk can be found at <www.infed.org/walking>.

N.B. All quotes unless expressly identified are from Paneth (1944).

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Marcia Cohen and Audrey Mullender

Gender and Group Work

Routledge, 2003

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pp 212

Billie Oliver

This book sets out to analyse the contemporary status of gendered group work in Britain and the United States, achieving in the process a re-examination and re-framing of feminist group work. This is not a criticism as I found this a useful and timely book for re-focusing attention on the analysis and definition of feminist and empowering group work. I also found it encouraging to encounter within the text so many readable, engaging and inspiring examples of feminist group work at a time when it feels increasingly as though such work has gone out of fashion.

What also makes this book helpful is that it has taken a trans-Atlantic approach to analysing the current status of gender-based group work, and in so doing, draws attention to differences in theoretical outlook between the social sciences in the UK and US. According to the editors, British social theory has been influenced to a far greater extent than that of the US, by an outpouring of postmodernist and poststructuralist ideas from France and this has made the development and practice of group work a difficult construct to work with, without encountering strident accusations of essentialism, modernism or universalism. This, they argue is why there has been a decline in practising, teaching and writing about group work, and most particularly women's groups, in the UK. In the USA, on the other hand empowerment practice has, apparently, continued to be explored, examined and expanded. Certainly, the emphasis in this book is more on examples of American group work practice than of British.

The discussion is set within an exploration of the impact of post-modernism on gendered group work. As the authors explain feminism and group work have always found a natural home together in empowerment agendas, and this has made them sitting targets for post-modernist charges of essentialism (p. 9). There are apparently two aspects to this challenge: the need to see diversity and multiple subjectivities within any social grouping; and the need for a more contemporary analysis of power that does not see oppression simply as a top-down notion. This book therefore sets itself the challenge of exploring, whether, within such a framework,

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it is still possible for women and girls to gain from being in single-sex groups something that is otherwise not available to them; whether groups can challenge abusive men to change their behaviour and attitudes towards women; and whether mixed-sex groups can meet the needs of both women and men, boys and girls, rather than those of one sex at the expense of the other?

One of the book's strengths is the rich variety of case examples presented in its contributing chapters. These include groups for older women, women with learning difficulties, women facing inequalities in health care, group work with homeless women and with lesbian and gay young people. There is a strong emphasis on group work with survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence, and one of the chapters I found to have a wider application than that presented was that on group work with child witnesses of woman abuse. This chapter, based on work in Canada, offered a useful model of group work around gender issues and violence, with young people. I do, however, remain disappointed, that a disproportionately small number of chapters were drawn from examples of group work in the UK. The underlying argument presented is that workers in Britain have found the concept of gender-based group work too problematic to champion for some years, and presumably this is one reason why the editors found so few UK examples of practice to draw on.

Another chapter that especially interested me was the one by Linda Schiller — again, however, an American example — in which she sets out her Relational Model of group development. In Schiller's experience, women's groups frequently seem to develop differently from traditional (male) models of group development, such as that proposed by Tuckman. Most particularly, she noticed that women in groups appear to have a greater need for connection and affiliation and a sense of safety and that this leads to conflict occurring much later in the development of women's groups than traditional models suggest. When it does occur, the challenge and change stage is often a crucial aspect of the developmental learning that takes place for women: how to engage in and negotiate conflict without sacrificing the bonds of connection and empathy. This framework was developed through work with vulnerable populations which might explain their greater need for establishing a sense of safety before embarking on more challenging roles. However the important point from this analysis is that groups of people do not necessarily follow prescribed patterns of development and as group facilitators we need to be able to respond to the presenting needs of whichever group we are working with.

This principle of starting where people are at is an important one that has informed feminist group work practice for many years and which has more recently been claimed as the preferred methodology by those proclaiming empowering group work and social action group work. It is a model strongly supported in these chapters.

The conclusion reached by the editors, on reviewing all the case examples, is that there is an argument for regarding gender as relevant in every group work context. I did not find this a very startling conclusion, having worked from this perspective myself for many years. However, the book caused me to reflect that maybe such a perspective does continuously need re-stating. Gender issues do arise in all groups and group workers need to be sufficiently aware and skilled to deal with them.

One editorial omission which disappointed me was that there are no biographical notes on any of the contributors. I found the strength of this book to be in the richness of the descriptions from examples of practice and whilst the style of most of the contributing authors was to place themselves within their discourse, I found that I wanted to know something more about them, particularly relating to their background, work they may be involved in and details of other writings.

Billie Oliver *School of Health, Community and Policy Studies, University of the West of England Bristol.*

Kathryn Geldard and David Geldard

Counselling Skills in Everyday Life

Palgrave Macmillan, 2003

ISBN 1-4039-0313-1

pp 208

Heather Smith

The authors are clear about the function of the book. It is not a do-it-yourself guide to counselling and they highlight a key difference between structured counselling and the use of counselling skills. Geldard and Geldard are counsellors who run their own practice as well as writing and training others. The suggestion is that it is their experience and practice that will inform the issues tackled and provide the basis for a clear and practical text.

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An initial discussion is centred on identifying what is meant by the term counselling skills and how these skills manifest themselves. This is useful because it focuses the discussion that follows making it clear what the authors deem the use of counselling skills to be. What follows is the presentation and discussion of several concepts relating to the notion of a Carl Rogers client centred approach and conversational skills as helping tools. In itself this provides a useful theoretical framework from which people can identify how their ways of communicating may be considered counselling skills and therefore how the relationships they have may feature helping.

Issues such as role, timing and relationship are highlighted with regard to the appropriate use of counselling skills. Although on the face of it these are important to take into consideration when looking at boundaries, what begins to emerge is a structured view of relating to one another. The naturalness of the way in which people relate to each other is not recognised, and the idea of a helping relationship is differentiated from that of everyday interaction. Instead of focusing on everyday interaction and how counselling skills may be present and being used, a structure of how we may purposefully intervene is being presented.

Attention is paid to the area of conversational skills such as active listening, invitations to talk, reflecting and summarising. As a practitioner these skills are key in communicating with others and are high on a list of desirable abilities. Yet the necessity for naturalness within this is partially negated by the authors as a consequence of their use of example and practice conversations. The conversations presented depict a very neutral helper who sits on the fence, simply reflecting back what the person being helped has said, with no opinion or emotion on the part of the helper being expressed. Although in a professional counselling relationship this may be the structure, it is unrealistic to expect this to happen in everyday life, because the very reason that we may be in a position to help someone is that we already have a mutual relationship. Being in a relationship with someone, where there is scope for them to seek or be offered counsel, will incorporate some level of emotion, this is something that the authors seem not to take into account. Although they highlight issues of appropriateness, role and the inequality that may exist in some relationships, they seem not to work from a basis that relationships are a minefield of emotion and there is little acknowledgment that the neutrality they promote is nigh on impossible to achieve.

Throughout the text the authors actively promote the idea that the individual seek out professional counselling if at anytime they feel uncomfortable with any issues being brought up. There is also a recommendation to point the person being helped towards professional counselling should the helper think it necessary. Although this recommendation may be necessary and an important one to highlight, in conjunction with the space given in the text for the reader to reflect on and write down their feelings, the text begins to lean toward a counselling self help book. Something the authors clearly indicated it was not their intention to write.

The text sways from interesting useful theoretical discussion about conversational skills and life stages and the issues therein, to an ABC of how to have a conversation with someone. The blurb on the back cover presents the idea that the text is written in a user friendly way. Yet I found that in their attempt to put across their point Geldard and Geldard over explain and simplify what they have to say, and in all this the point gets lost. The concepts being presented are interesting and useful, yet it is the presentation of them that lets it down. Each chapter closes with a summary bringing together the key concepts, this is often more helpful than the actual discussion that previously took place.

In conclusion, this book has its merits and offers key thoughts such as 'If we remember to walk alongside the person wherever they wish to walk we are more likely to help them than if we take them on the journey which is directed by us' (p.113). An idea welcomed and promoted within the field of informal education. Yet these key issues are overshadowed by their attempt to make the text accessible, the promotion of professional counselling and the failure to acknowledge that emotion is what informs relationships and creates the scope for helping.

Heather Smith currently works as a Residential Child Care Officer at a boarding school for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties and as a part-time tutor with the YMCA George Williams College, London.

Roland Meighan

John Holt: Personalised learning instead of uninvited teaching

Educational Heretics Press, 2002

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Chris Shute

Bertrand Russell: Education as the power of independent thought

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pp 72

Tony Jeffs

Meighan's *John Holt: personalised learning instead of uninvited teaching* is a revised edition of *John Holt: Personalised Education and the Reconstruction of Schooling* published in 1995. As the author explains it has been revised because it gave the reader a misleading impression. For it held out a promise that mainstream schooling could be reformed. A judgement that by the end of his life Holt no longer subscribed too. Meighan meticulously trawls the writings of John Holt and produces a highly credible distillation of the key ideas of this distinguished educator. Holt produced 10 books. The first was *How Children Fail* published in 1964. It was a diary of Holt's experiences as a schoolteacher. A moving account of his attempts to understand why what he was doing met with minimal success and left him feeling profoundly dissatisfied. Holt abandoned school teaching, but not education. The two, Holt believed, have a lot less in common than most people imagine.

Meighan describes how he first encountered Holt when his partner, a primary teacher, was, along with her colleagues, presented with a copy of Holt's *How Children Fail* by her Head, who hoped the staff would read the book and engage in a staff room discussion of its implications for their collective practice. It is almost inconceivable that nowadays any Head would encourage their minions to read such a radical 'subversive' text. Or for that matter seek to foster reflection upon the fundamentals of educational practice. Reading Holt after all holds out little promise of helping to secure an improved league table position or elevated SAT scores. Quite the reverse, it threatens to raise serious doubts in the minds of the reader regarding the value and efficacy of both those and the National Curriculum.

Meighan, one is certain, would argue that reading this book is no substitute to visiting and constantly re-visiting the originals. However his book deservedly earns a place on the shelf alongside those originals. For it both conveys in abbreviated form the key ideas that Holt promoted and offers this in tandem with a sympathetic commentary. Informal educators, with an affinity for the work of Holt, once na vely believed his strictures only really applied to the school sector. A sector dominated by 'uninvited teaching' and compulsion. As one amongst their number I can now only confess to na vete and admit how wrong we were. The harsh and justified criticisms that Holt directed at schooling increasingly apply to outcome driven Adult Education, Youth Work and HE with equal validity. Holt believed education requires not yet more testing and accreditation but '*faith and courage - faith that children want to make sense out of life and will work hard at it, courage to let them do it without continually poking, prying, prodding, and meddling.*' Yes, indeed. As youth work slavishly follows the school and FE sectors by embracing accreditation and certification to curry favour with funders and bureaucrats fearful of any educational experience they cannot control and direct, so the ideas of Holt become more not less pertinent to youth workers. At a time when *Transforming Youth Work* seeks to impose even more worthless and demeaning 'tests' on young people perhaps we should be handing out free copies of this book to youth workers, if only to remind them and ourselves that what these Awards and Tests say to young people is:

Your experience, your concern, your hopes, your fears, your desires, your interests, they count for nothing. What counts is what we are interested in, what we care about, and what we have decided you are to learn. (Holt 1971: 161)

Intellectually Bertrand Russell had much in common with Holt. Each would place themselves on the libertarian wings of both educational and political theory. Each was a doughty opponent of 'common sense', unquestioning obedience to authority and servitude to tradition. However whereas Holt was a teacher who wrote books on education that touched upon wider political and philosophical debates; Russell was a philosopher who devoted a small part of his immense output to matters educational. However it must not be overlooked that Russell in addition to teaching in the university sector taught children. For with his wife Dora he set up and ran Beacon Hill School. They did so because they rejected the narrow and oppressive education offered in state and Public Schools alike.

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Russell lived through two major wars and became convinced that both were, in no small part, the product of an educational system, here and elsewhere, that bred an irrational hatred of foreigners and love of competition, rather than sympathy for strangers and a desire to foster co-operation. A structure that cultivated the herd instinct and obedience to authority, in its many guises, rather than a faith in reason and love of a free mental life. That operated to serve the needs not of the young person but the requirements of military or industrial machines. One that today is finely tuned to dance attendance to an enterprise culture that craves a docile workforce and malleable consumers. Therefore we have an education system that today, as much as when Russell was alive, deliberately, or from habit, sets *'to work to kill in the young .. imagination. Because imagination is lawless, undisciplined, individual, and neither correct nor incorrect; in all these respects it is inconvenient to the teacher, especially when competition requires a rigid order of merit. (Russell 1932: 95)*

Shute is right to remind us that Russell never fails to surprise his readers. And the author does not dull the challenges Russell delights in setting us. Nor does he avoid the discomfort of presenting to the reader those aspects of Russell's work that he is less comfortable with. For example the author is a christian whilst Russell had little sympathy for those who 'lived their life enveloped in a creed'. Shute does a highly commendable job of providing a short text that manages to convey the iconoclastic tenor of Russell's thinking. One capable of providing an introduction for those unfamiliar with the original texts and for those who have long held them in affectionate regard a prompt to once again re-visit them. Skilfully woven into the narrative is a discussion of Shute's own experiences as a teacher. In less expert hands this might have been distracting but not so in this instance. Rather one feels a measure of gratitude at being invited to listen in on a dialogue between the author and the texts he is addressing.

This is another worthy addition to a marvellous series of books. One hopes the editor of the series is going to keep the flow alive. During a period when the educational shelves of our bookshops are chock-a-block with smug and predictable research reports and crass how-to books we need all the heretics we can get.

Tony Jeffs *University of Durham.*

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John Pitts

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Young people's changing routes to independence

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pp 84

Tony Jeffs

The books by Pitts and Hendrick are old friends. *New Politics of Youth Crime* was given a thoroughly upbeat review in *Youth and Policy* (77) by John Muncie. It has now been re-issued by a new publisher at almost a third of the original price. Excellent news for this lively and combative text deserves a wider readership. Offering an overview and critique of current policy it manages to provide both an introduction to developments and a commentary that highlights trends and continuities. Besides being essential reading for practitioners anxious to learn what is happening in this policy area it makes an admirable student text for all those burgeoning criminology and youth justice courses.

Child Welfare, then called *Child Welfare: England 1872-1989*, when first reviewed in *Youth and Policy* (47) was described as a 'standard text: unlikely to be bettered for a long time'. The new edition does nothing to set that judgement aside. As with the Pitts the price has plummeted which will hopefully extend the readership. Hendrick provides a scholarly overview of the role played by state and voluntary agencies in the management of childhood. This new edition contains additional chapters bringing the narrative up-to-date. These chapters provide a sharp and wide-ranging critique of post-1997 policy relating to children and young people. Recommended without any caveats whatsoever.

Missing Connexions is a research report that fully deserves the widest possible readership. It draws upon interviews undertaken with 64 young people, half residents of South London, the others of an unnamed northern town. Two-thirds of these were drawn from ethnic minority groups. This

was an attempt to gather up the experiences and views of young people who fall within what is termed the NEET category (Not in Employment, Education and Training). An acronym, it must be stressed, formulated by government advisors not the authors. Researchers consciously sought out young people who potentially are likely to prove the most difficult for the Connexions Service to sustain contact with. The study does not provide a model of practice for Connexions to follow in order to circumvent what will clearly be an intractable problem for the Service. It does however provide a collection of fascinating, often painful, accounts of the ways in which young people come to 'slip through' the net. This book allows them to explain how they deal with, and in many cases overcome, the problems that led to their 'social exclusion' and it therefore avoids becoming merely a collection of 'tales of woe'. As the authors rightly note their research 'illustrates just how easy it is for young people to "disappear"' (p. 45) from the gaze of welfare professionals. However it also carefully encourages the reader to examine how this might be avoided. How practitioners in organisations, big and small, can help. This short but authoritative text will repay careful study for anyone interested in youth policy and youth work.

Emergent citizens? does not sit comfortably besides *Missing Connexions*. It is based upon diaries kept by and interviews undertaken with 79 African-Caribbean and Pakistani young people living in Birmingham and Bradford. Basically the publication comprises a brief introduction giving details of how the research was organised and the localities where it was undertaken. The remainder of the text, apart from the list of policy recommendations at the end, is material mined from the interviews and diaries. Extracts are strung together - some profound, some insightful, some bland and some predictable. What should have been fascinating reading, unfortunately due to the unimaginative and fixed format, makes for rather dull reading. Given the enormous resource of research material that surely must have been gathered by the team of authors this is a very disappointing output. One can only hope that either the authors or someone else will use the data to greater effect elsewhere.

In 1999 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published *Young men, the job market and gendered work*. As a follow-up to this study a course was developed to enable young men to more successfully manage the transition from school to the world of work. The first 26 pages provide an acritical account of the implementation of that course in three London schools. The rest of the text provides a copy of the 'package'. We are told it was a

REVIEWS

great success. It actually looks excruciatingly boring. The sort of 'fast food' experience that sends shivers down the spine of anyone with even a passing affection for education. It says so much about the damage wrought by the national curriculum on the capacity of young people to apply their critical faculties that those delivering this sort of pap escape from the classroom physically intact. Yet another nail in the coffin of creative pedagogy, yet another package for managers to hand out to their training operatives in schools and colleges.

Jones has produced a most welcome and useful booklet. *The Youth divide* summarises 26 research studies funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. These looked at aspects in young people's experience of the transition to adulthood. The reports, the overwhelming majority of which have been reviewed in *Youth and Policy*, are highly varied but almost invariably helpful. This review is a useful starting point for those unfamiliar with this programme. It is however more than a 'literature review' for it delivers a narrative conveying the core debates and draws together key threads that link the studies. For those seeking a snapshot of the changing trends in the life experiences of young people approaching adulthood at this point of time this will prove an invaluable publication.

The study by Bynner and his colleagues is part of the programme reviewed by Jones. The authors examined data collected by the National Child Development Study that 'mapped' the life experiences of 10,000 individuals born in 1958 and the British Births Cohort Study that is monitoring a similar number born in 1970. The magnitude of the research data accumulated by both offer a remarkable opportunity to explore how the experience of 'being a young person' has changed within a span of just over a decade. In particular the authors focus not only on employment, educational outcomes and family formation but as the narrative unfolds numerous other topics and issues. This booklet will be an extremely helpful resource for those seeking statistical evidence relating to the experience of young people.

Tony Jeffs *University of Durham.*

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