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The National Youth Agency

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The National Youth Agency
supports those involved in young people's personal and social development and works to enable all young people to fulfil their potential as individuals and citizens within a socially just society.

We achieve this by:
- informing, advising and helping those who work with young people in a variety of settings;
- influencing and shaping youth policy and improving youth services nationally and locally; and
- promoting young people's participation, influence and place in society.

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To mark the publication of the 100th edition of *Youth and Policy* the Editors invited thirty individuals to reflect on aspects of youth policy and youth work practice during the last 25 years. It says much for the kindness and support of these individuals that eventually we have been able to produce this special issue containing 25 articles to celebrate our 25 years. The Editors would like to thank not only those who have contributed to this issue but to the hundreds of authors and reviewers who have generously supported the journal in the past.

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Reflections of youth policy; twenty-five years of Youth & Policy

Bernard Davies

Based on a survey of the contributions to the first 98 issues of *Youth & Policy*, this article traces some changing perspectives and priorities in youth policies since the early 1980s and in particular how, in the construction of these policies, structural explanations of 'youth problems' have been further marginalised. After examining broader underpinning Thatcherite and New Labour values, it focuses on how class, race and gender have been addressed in the journal since it first appeared.

Plus ça change...?

In one of the rare editorials it imposed on its readers, the *Youth & Policy* editorial group committed itself in its first issue to creating 'a serious journal of analysis and review'. This, it hoped, would provide 'a forum for the exchange of ideas on wider social, political and cultural questions that relate to the position and status of young people in our society'. Already three years into the reign of Thatcher and with an unemployment crisis depriving young people of a key affirming marker of their identity, such a declaration of intent could have hardly have been more timely, more prescient – or more needed.

At first sight much seems to have remained the same since that summer of '82. Here, for example, is John Pitts, writing in the first issue on 'Policy, delinquency and the practice of youth control 1964 – 1981':

> *... social workers and probation officers ... are being required to engage in and emphasise the controlling aspects of their roles ... to become mere adjuncts of a broader Law and Order strategy.* (1.1: 7-13)

Here too, in that same issue, is Keith Popple (1/1: 14-16) noting that, even though the Scarman report recognised that causes of the 1981 Brixton riots were 'deeply embedded in fundamental economic and social conditions', it still had nothing to say about institutional racism. And here is Tony Jeffs (1/1: 19-25) ascribing cuts in the Youth and Community Service to the 'new right's' determination to restructure a 'middle-aged and bureaucratic' Welfare State seen as 'undermining the free market by denying choice'.

As well as being descriptions of what then was, however, these judgements, prefiguring recurring *Youth & Policy* debates, were also portents of major shifts to come. Looking back, this was strikingly marked by the lead article in that first issue (1/1:1-4). Offering an explicitly Marxist defence of 'social democratic youth work', this was written by the same Paul Corrigan who, two decades later, was being identified as the special advisor to two New Labour health secretaries who had 'made foundation hospitals a reality' (Carvel, 2005).

By embedding notions of 'individual', 'family' and 'community' and their perceived pathologies even more firmly in state definitions of social problems, the Thatcherite and New Labour recasting of the Welfare State's historic values has had fundamental and enduring consequences. One has been to evacuate still further from youth policy formation more critical forms of structural analysis – that is, in the words of John Baldock in the second issue of *Youth & Policy*, how, 'young people are overwhelmingly affected ... by the constellations of economic and social policy with which the state attempts (to) rule' (1/2: 1-4).

In all this, 'absences' – what didn't happen or wasn't done – are as telling as 'presences'. One particularly striking absence from the early *Youth & Policy* issues is the work of the Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). From the later 1960s and throughout the 1970s this had prompted new if often contentious thinking on 'youth'. Indeed, as late as May 1991, Robert MacDonald was still describing it in *Youth & Policy* (33: 17-26) as having made 'the most influential and vital contribution to the study of youth culture in the past twenty years'.

By 1992, however, the *Youth & Policy* editorial group was acknowledging that the Centre's 'cultural studies approach to youth' was 'largely dormant' (40: 1-9). As well as pointing to the Centre's fading profile, this 'absence' was also a marker of the shifting 1980s' perspectives on 'youth' and youth policies. As Mark Smith noted three years later, having 'supposedly sabotaged the concept of adolescence' CCCS's decline co-incided with 'a very substantial swing by researchers back to the discussion of youth and of transitions' (48: 110-112).

These changing perspectives were also signalled by some strong 'presences'. One of the most telling, in early 1983, was a riposte to the Jeffs article on the future of the Youth Service by David Marsland, a Thatcherite-leaning academic (1.4: 25-31). One of the arguments which, he claimed, 'we cannot afford to ignore' was that 'the economic state of the nation makes financial stringency unavoidable'. Another was that 'the Welfare State is a threat to liberty and to economic well-being'. All this, he concluded, offered 'the opportunity to rethink our purposes, policies, structures and methods'.

Over the next two decades *Youth & Policy* contributors tracked how deeply this new right 'rethinking' penetrated youth policy-making. Within three years, I myself was arguing that a 'distinctive overall youth strategy' was being constructed characterised by a 'growing coherence and harshness' (18: 1-3). Nearly a decade later, Tony Jeffs and Mark Smith pointed to 'a new authoritarianism ... often based upon the corruption of earlier forms of intervention as much as new initiatives' (46: 17-32) – something which was in effect illustrated the following year by Louise Morely when she talked of the 'usurpation' by the new right of that previously radical and politicised concept, 'empowerment' (51: 1-10).

By then (in Spring 1993) Howard Williamson had already offered an overall perspective on what was happening:

> *All social policy development in the United Kingdom throughout the 1980s has been dominated by three central political objectives: the reduction of public expenditure*

(economy); *the releasing of market forces* (efficiency); *and the enhancement of consumer choice* (effectiveness). (40: 33-48 – emphasis in the original).

Subsequently *Youth & Policy* highlighted how New Labour, far from challenging such positions, was further entrenching them. In two successive issues for example, in the Summer and Autumn of 2001, Andy Gibson and Dave Price (72: 50-62) examined the privatisation of youth and educational services and David Pye and John Muncie explored 'market value and the construction of youth identities' (73: 20-34). Eighteen months later Phil Mizen, though judging as 'mistaken' my own suggestion twenty years before that a coherent youth policy was emerging, concluded that a similar New Labour scenario was unfolding in the 2000s. One of his conclusions was that the Government:

> *... appeared to move beyond limiting itself to the more familiar (and jumbled) policy pronouncements on education, youth crime, unemployment and training, towards a more coherent and clearly articulated strategy ... centred around the co-ordination of policy.* (79: 1-18).

By the end of 2007, *Youth & Policy* was also recording both the shortcomings and the effects of such policies and of the analysis (such as it was) on which they rested. Annette Fitzsimmons began her article on the contradictions within New Labour's social exclusion policies (94: 51-59) by referring to:

> *... mounting evidence that New Labour strategies to combat social exclusion ... are having a minimal impact on socially excluded young people. It has been suggested that this is due to the Government's lack of attention to the structural constraints experienced by young people ...*

She went on to point to 'the political focus on agency over structure', to the individualisation of the problems faced by young people and to the structural inequalities which continued to limit their lives.

As other *Youth & Policy* contributors repeatedly demonstrated, these ideological shifts had considerable impact on how services were provided, on practitioners, and on those 'targeted'. The effects on the criminal justice system were particularly vividly captured by John Pitts in an article in the Spring of 2007 (95: 5-24). Two of his starting propositions were that 'the responsibility of the state to its citizens is (now) de-emphasised in favour of the duties owed by citizens to the state and society'; and that: '... what matters to modern electorates is the technical and managerial competence of governments rather than ideological commitments'. All this had lead, he suggested, to the need for '... prescribed interventions ... of a kind that can be micro-managed, measured and audited to establish whether government has "delivered"'. And this in turn meant that:

> *... the relationship between professional workers and their knowledge base is changed from that of critical protagonists in a robust debate about policy means and policy ends, to one of uncritical operatives in a milieu where the ideas informing practice are 'owned' by senior managers and the scholars and researchers whose work they commission.*

From ideology to policy – and practice

As well as dealing critically with these overall value shifts in their own right, past *Youth & Policy* issues also provide sharp insights into how they have reshaped priorities in specific areas of provision. Into how, for example the 'welfare versus justice' debate on dealing with young offenders – in full swing in the early 1980s – has been overwhelmed by law-and order impulses masked as 'community safety'. How, as an extension of a century-long state effort to incorporate post-school 'youth' into the labour market, the 1970s resort to 'youth training' had been reformulated by the 2000s as 'NEET'-hunting. And indeed how, with all its flaws, recreation-based forms of youth work – as described for example by Zoe Hilton in the Spring 2005 issue (85: 15-28) – has been re-badged as what in the same issue (85: 57-64) detached worker Pete Harris called 'curriculum-based practice' – adult 'structured', tightly targeted, future-oriented and accreditation-heavy.

Illuminating though they are of New Right-New Labour rewriting of youth policy, these developments are left unexplored in what follows. So too are others to which *Youth & Policy* has given attention: 'the youth question' itself; responses to lesbian and gay and rural young people; housing and homelessness; health and mental health; drugs; developments beyond the UK, developments in their historical context.

For 'grounding' the broader analysis sketched out above, the rest of this article will concentrate on how *Youth & Policy* has both reflected and contributed to debates on class, race and gender. This, it has to be acknowledged, will give only passing recognition to how overlapping each of these are. It will also largely ignore the debates and indeed sometimes very sharp conflicts which occurred amongst those seeking to apply these perspectives to their policy analysis and in their practice.

Some dedicated focus on class, race and gender seems justified, however. Each in its own way provides a powerful if by no means exclusive indicator of how, within a capitalist society, 'structures' and their institutional expressions – that is, factors beyond simplistic notions of personal 'choice' and 'responsibility' — shape and constrain individual and even micro-collective possibilities and achievements. Within the pages of *Youth & Policy*, they have certainly prompted penetrating analysis and comment.

Class

As was in part demonstrated by CCCS's 'dormancy', long before the first issue of *Youth & Policy* appeared class had fallen out of favour amongst policy-makers. Particularly in early issues, *Youth & Policy* sought to fill this gap. Though Corrigan's was one of the few articles to offer a full frontal class analysis, in 1984 Glynis Cousins provided a penetrating critique of Paul Willis's influential study *Learning to Labour*(10: 37-40) which, as well as examining its class dimensions, also considered the specifically gender dimensions of his research. Five years later Andy Nelson sought 'to sketch how a view had emerged amongst the "new urban left" of a hierarchy of oppressions in which the white working class male was held to be relatively privileged' (28: 12 – 15) – a theme to which he returned in September 1992. (38: 24-27).

Robert MacDonald, in refocusing on the CCCS in May 1991, also re-emphasised class as

a key variable in the lives of young people in rural areas. In the same issue Andrew West's extended review of Jeffs and Smith's *Young People, Inequality and Youth Work* (33: 42-46) concluded that 'brooding' over all the papers in the book was 'the issue of class, economic power and its consequent powerlessness'. And, in a special issue on 'Youth and the riots' – those in 1991 on overwhelmingly 'white' estates – contributors placed class at the centre of their analysis, with Dick Hobbs' vividly sub-titling his piece on Meadowell in Tyneside: 'The Sound of Breaking Class?' (37: 2- 3).

However, examples of the 'new urban left' perspectives identified by Nelson are not hard to find. In his article on youth policy and the Labour Party, quoted earlier, David Smith listed 'young women, Black groups and minority groups' as (self-evidently, it seemed) the ones particularly in need of 'positive discrimination' and 'special provision'. Indeed, on occasions – as when Keith Popple reviewed 'a welcome spate of publications' on race (2/3:13-15) – race seemed to be identified as 'a crude form of class division'. The ways in which young people – male or female, black or white – experience their class position as structurally constraining have in later issues merited little attention in their own right.

Even when class was lurking close to the surface, some writers, as Tony Taylor (2007) has pointed out elsewhere, seemed reluctant to speak its name. In the May 1991 issue, for example, Debra Roker and Lindsey Mean, though concluding that a two-tier youth policy was being developed by the then Conservative government, largely explained this in terms of a differentiation between 'the rich' and 'the poor' (33: 31-37). In an editorial for the tenth anniversary issue (40: 1-9), the *Youth & Policy* editorial group itself made only glancing reference to class as a key continuing feature of youth policies.

By the time we reach the New Labour period, what had largely swamped this perspective was that slippery concept, 'social exclusion'. Mary Issitt quoted Blair's own definition of this in her editorial introduction to a special Health Issue of *Youth & Policy* in Spring 2001 (71: 1-4): '... those people who do not have the means, material or otherwise, to participate in social, economic, political and cultural life'. As Annette Fitzsimmons's Winter 2007 article made clear (94: 51-59), such a notion did little to address the structural constraints faced by young people. Moreover, the contradictions which, as she pointed out, ran through it were deepened by New Labour's confusion of what, in the actual experience of 'exclusion', was cause and what effect, as well as by their resistance to consider how much of it was economic in its origins rather than merely 'social'.

Race

The economic factors affecting Black young people's experience have often been given strong emphasis in contributions to *Youth & Policy*. In searching for what sparked the Handsworth 'riots' in Birmingham in 1985 for example, Alph Hutchinson not only homed in on their high levels of unemployment ('around 80%'). He also saw the attacks on Asian property in the area in class rather than racial terms – as primarily 'action by the deprived against a business community' most obviously represented by Asian shopkeepers' (15: 1-4).

Nonetheless, *Youth & Policy* contributors have been unambiguous in seeing race – what Popple called in the review article quoted earlier 'one of the most complex and contentious issues in Britain ... highly emotive and charged with all kinds of prejudices and myths' –

as, in its own right, a crucial dimension of policy-analysis. In Autumn 1986 for example, John Solmos, though recognising the role of economic factors in 'inner city disturbances', highlighted 'the increasing politicisation of "race" and (the) institutionalisation of racism'. (18: 12–24). He went on to trace how events from the earliest (April 1980) 'riots' in Bristol were immediately 'racialised' in the media even though, unlike Handsworth, Brixton and Moss Side, their locations had never previously been seen as ones at risk of racial confrontation.

Moreover, as Paul Stubbs pointed out two years later (23: 43-44), behind the rhetoric of 'equal opportunities' black communities and groups were increasingly being seen 'in ways which distort and dehumanise their experiences'. This further involved stress being placed on the '"pathologies" of black culture rather than ... (on) structures of racism'. Given such pressures it was hardly surprising that, for defensive as well as positive reasons, these communities began to seek their own Black and Asian ('multi-cultural') solutions to the problems they faced.

The impact of race and racism was also at the heart of Phil Cohen's piece 'Popular racism, unpopular education' in 1988 (24: 8-12); and of Tim Warren's examination the following year of how youth and community workers could develop appropriate anti-racist strategies in white working class areas (29: 4-10). Though seeing the 1991 Meadow Well disturbances in class terms (see above), Dick Hobbs, too, made clear that, though talking about overwhelmingly 'white' areas, 'local politicians and police officers (had) explained the lack of rioting in the North east during the 1980s purely in terms of race', on the blatantly racist assumption that 'blacks equal trouble' (37: 4-5).

Until the early 2000s such perspectives continued to be strongly reflected in the pages of *Youth & Policy*. In their introduction to the 1994 special issue on 'Black Perspectives', for example, the Black editorial group started from the proposition that 'racism and racial discrimination remain an everyday reality for Black communities in the 1990s' (49: 1-4). Early in 1997 – that is, nearly a decade after Tim Warren had written on the same theme – Sonia Thompson and Julia Betts were still struggling with how to practice anti-racist youth work (55: 41-55), while as late as 2003 Cheryl Simmill-Benning, Ian Paylor and David Smith were reporting on their research into racism and inter-ethnic tensions in an area of Lancashire (81: 44-56).

Given this repeating focus on the impact of racism on Black and Asian young people, one striking *Youth & Policy* 'absence' in this period was substantive treatment of the Macpherson report on the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence. Published in February 1999, this – perhaps for the first time in a major state paper – explicitly named *institutional* racism as a crucial factor in how key state agencies were operating. In doing this, however, it represented a high water mark in any kind of state acknowledgment of the endemic nature of racism in public policy making and implementation. For, within two years, official attention was shifted decisively away from such a threateningly and at least implicitly *self*-critical concept, first by the violent confrontations between white and Asian communities in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in the summer of 2001, and then in 2005 by the London tube and bus bombings. In its place the government suddenly and enthusiastically grasped the much cosier notion of 'community cohesion' with its implicit and indeed often explicit

critique of 'ethnic minority communities' as the cause of their own difficulties.

Long before their perceived 'terror' potential had helped to thrust 'community cohesion' into the official discourse, Asian young people had begun to get *Youth & Policy* attention in their own right. In the summer of 1994, for example, Paviter Sanghera focused on their 'identity politics' (45: 39-45); in 1996 Colin Webster discussed their often violent relations with white young people in an area in the north of England and the consequences of their defensive vigilante responses (53: 15 – 27); and in 2006 Sangeeta Soni explained the importance of 'izzat' in sustaining an Asian family's good name and standing and its implications for youth work practice (90: 5-17).

Over and above content which gave dedicated attention to a range of innovative forms of practice, a special issue on Muslim youth work (Summer 2006, number 92) had an additional significance. Its origins lay in two 250-strong national conferences – part of a series of conferences which the *Youth & Policy* collective had sponsored or co-sponsored over the years. Together, these provided a mandate for establishing a Muslim Youth Work Foundation committed to promoting positive perspectives on Muslim young people and – within the realities of a, still, racist society – responding to them in developmental ways.

By then, however, not only were Muslim young people being increasingly defined by their presumed dangerousness. Policies directed at them, when not merely knee-jerk and fear-driven, were being formulated within the newly dominant 'strategy' of 'community cohesion'. This was already attracting critical attention within *Youth & Policy* – in two contributions by Paul Thomas for example, in 2003 and 2006 (81: 21–42 and 93: 41-60), and in 2005 in Mary Green and Rebecca Pinto's investigation into the divide between rhetoric and reality in 'youth related community cohesion policy and practice' (88: 45-61).

Racism did remain a *Youth & Policy* focus: in 2005 for example Green and Pinto identified it as 'increasingly featuring in the everyday lives of young people'. Other later contributions however – as with class – addressed it less directly and indeed sometimes by another name. Thus, Helen Sender, Brian Littlechild and Nick Smith looked in 2006 at 'the significant impact of ethnicity on the progress of young people through the youth justice system' (93: 61-76); and in 2007 Ross Fergusson adopted similar terminology when, in refuting official claims that discrimination was disappearing, he examined 'the New Deal, ethnicity and policy evaluation' (96: 65-85).

Most significantly however, though it has now had incisive treatment elsewhere –for example by Kalbir Shukra (2007) – the question which still awaits dedicated *Youth & Policy* treatment is: how far has the rise and rise of 'community cohesion' further marginalised racism as an explicit target for state policy-making and for practice with young people – white as well as Black.

Gender, sexism and the 'problem' of young men

In the first issue of *Youth & Policy* Jean Spence acknowledged that achieving even the 'simple aim' of providing separate space for girls remained a struggle. Nonetheless, she approached a review of *Feminism for Girls* as if it had a taken-for-granted place in the youth work discourse as she did two issues later when reviewing *Girls are Powerful: Young*

women's writings from Spare Rib (1/3; 42). Two issues after that (2/2: 5-13) Annie Hudson adopted a similar starting point when describing much of the welfare state's understanding of girls' needs as 'individualistic and sexist'. Anticipating criticisms of a later New Labour obsession, she particularly focused on the recently revealed attitudes to teenage pregnancy and young single mothers of that guru of Thatcherism, Keith Joseph, seeing them as a powerful indicator of state policy-makers' perceptions of young women generally.

Who now, however, remembers the two, at the time, striking texts Spence was reviewing? Or even *Spare Rib* itself? Yet in the early 1980s, interspersed with reviews of books on policy and practice as they affected women generally (15: 22-25; 25: 37—8), *Youth & Policy* carried such feminist-inspired articles on average about twice a year. This reflected what a decade later Jean Spence was to recall as a period (1980 to 1986) characterised by 'documentation ... (which) reveals an active, enthusiastic and lively feminist subculture operating through work with girls and young women' (52: 38-54).

Thus, in its Spring 1984 issue *Youth & Policy* carried Alison Little's 'Feminism and youth work practice' (2/4: 9-12). Sarah Marshall and Carol Borrill's 'Understanding the invisibility of young women' followed in the next issue (9: 36-39) and Lorraine Gelsthorpe's 'Girls and juvenile justice' in the issue after that (11: 1-5). A year later, in Spring 1986, Sue Lees, in 'A new approach to the study of girls', presented her findings on how the use of language affected young women (16: 20-27). The same issue (16: 49) also carried a review of an Anti-sexist Resources Guide published by the ILEA (reminder: Inner London Education Authority); and the next one a review of Val Carpenter and Kerry Young's pioneering *Coming in from the Margins: Youth work with girls and young women* (17: 41-2). Three issues later, in Spring 1987, another highly regarded feminist researcher, Cynthia Cockburn, argued for positive action for young women within the Youth Training Scheme – brainchild of another 'disappeared' powerful state institution, the Manpower Services Commission (20: 35-43).

From that point, however, feminist contributions became much rarer. Apart from a 'Working Space' piece on a young mothers' group and a research report by Sue Hutson on young women in South Wales, the next such substantive piece to appear – in August 1989, two and a half years after the Cockburn article – was Sue Holden's 'On whose terms? Young women's experiences of mixed provision' (27: 19-26). Other than an occasional book review, there is then a long feminist silence until, in Autumn 1995, Jennifer Pearce reflected on 'The woman in the worker: Youth social work with young women' (50: 22-34).

Two issues later, in Spring 1996, *Youth & Policy* – perhaps in an attempt to recover lost ground? – produced a special issue (52) on young women. Though only three of the five main feature articles could be said to be rooted in an unambiguously feminist analysis, Jean Spence's 'Feminism in work with girls and women' (52: 38-53) threw a sharp light on just why this was at best becoming sotto voce in *Youth & Policy*. All 21 of the white women community education workers she interviewed confirmed one of her starting assumptions: that their work with girls and young women was 'to some extent influenced by feminist ideas'. However, her research also revealed that 'being a feminist is not straightforward'. Though for these workers this did indeed act 'as a positive and motivating force', nonetheless:

> *... they are ... constantly assailed by negative stereotyping around the image of feminism – that is, in effect, being 'accused' (accused being the operative word) of being a feminist.*

In response, Spence found, they were adopting one of two stances:

> *Either they stop using the term feminism altogether because 'it's not useful', or they justify their feminism in terms of what it is not: '(it's not) about women having power over men'.*

As seemed already to be happening in the pages of *Youth & Policy*, 'feminism (was) noticeable by its absence'.

In some detail, Spence lists the consequences for women workers. These included 'pessimism and low morale', 'little if any organisational recognition for their achievements', 'struggles ... to sustain conditions which they thought had been won', 'problems of exclusion particularly in relation to Black women and lesbian women' – and concentration on what Cockburn had called a 'short agenda' of 'improved access and raising confidence'. Overall therefore Spence's research confirmed another of her starting premises: that:

> *after twenty years of an apparent 'feminist' presence in youth and community education work ... and much positive and exciting work .... community education organisations continue to operate with structures, methods and procedures which leave masculine agendas intact and dominant.*

Not that contributions relying on some degree of feminist analysis disappeared completely from *Youth & Policy*. Indeed, the Spring 2000 issue carried two such articles. One, by Jenny Pearce and E. Stanko, argued that as a result of 'gender blind policy and practice' young women were being 'excluded from or misrepresented by community safety audits and their resulting interventions' (66: 1-18). The second, by Annmarie Turnbull, celebrated Pearl Jephcott's early pioneering work with girls and young women (66: 88-100). Much more recently, in the Winter 2006 issue, Janet Batsleer's 'Every Girl Matters! Young Women Matter! A Feminist Comment' provided a forceful critique of Government policy (90: 59-63).

However, feminist analyses of and prescriptions for youth policies within *Youth & Policy* have at best become much more muted, demonstrated in 1999 and 2000 by articles on teenage mothers by Joan Aarvold and Carol Buswell 64: 1-14) and Sharon Tabberer (67: 41-54). Though both reminded readers that under New Labour these young women were seen as no less an 'official "problem"' than they had been for Keith Joseph, feminist analysis was by no means at the forefront of their treatment of their material.

Moreover, during the period in which such perspectives became less visible, an alternative – albeit, it has to be said long overdue – gender focus began to emerge: on young men, masculinity and male identities. Tony Taylor had tackled these themes as far back as 1984 in a piece on 'Anti-sexist work with young males' (9: 8-16). In the next issue (10: 37-40), Glynis Cousin complemented some of his arguments in her critical commentary on Willis's *Learning to Labour*, quoted earlier. Within Andy Nelson's late 1989 article on class in the

Youth Service curriculum a similar gender (as well indeed as race) perspective was also lurking, as evidenced by his comment on white working class males being seen as 'relatively privileged' (28: 12 – 15).

We had to wait for over a decade, however, for *Youth & Policy* to pick up on Taylor's focus in any substantive way. This came first in a book review by Tim Warren (50: 74-5) and was followed by a small surge of articles and book reviews, some looking specifically at Black young men. These included, in 1997, 'Changing masculinities' by Lyn Tett (55: 14-27); in 1998 'The making and breaking of young men: Suicide and the adolescent male' by Simon Bradford and Kathy Urquhart (61: 28-41); and in 1999 two articles on 'disaffected' young men in the labour market (63: 13-25) and young male sex workers (63: 26-37). Since then however even this gender focus has largely disappeared.

Youth & Policy in context

With the wisdom of hindsight it is possible to discern some gaps in the journal's coverage of some key 'youth issues'. In maintaining its UK focus, for example, specific attention to individual countries has been intermittent. Though getting some searching examination through book reviews, so too has consideration of the area of provision which still dominates young people's lives – schooling. Much the same could be said of counselling and other one-to-one therapeutic approaches.

Such retrospection, however, particularly reveals how the journal has mirrored the ebb and flow of dedicated attention to young people's class position, their race and their gender in discussions on youth policy-making and practice. In both reflecting and penetrating key developments in the youth policy field, it has also, more broadly, kept open opportunities for exposing how embedded structural features of our society and economy continue to shape and constrain young people's lives. By doing this it has provided a rare public platform for those struggling to respond to young people's situation in critical ways.

Such historical enquiries do not of course provide any blueprints for future action. They can however help re-inject some adrenalin into these struggles and act as reminders of core priorities and of important areas of cumulative collective knowledge and insights. For those of us for whom young people and youth policy have been a primary focus of our working lives over the last 25 years, one inescapable conclusion to be draw from this return to the journal's origins is therefore: if those upstarts from the North East hadn't thought up *Youth & Policy*, then others elsewhere would surely have had to invent it or something like it.

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Young people's rights: children's rights or adults' rights?

Priscilla Alderson

To which rights are young people entitled? Should they have full adult rights, or those of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989) for everyone aged under 18-years? The UNCRC enshrines more than adults' rights (extra provisions and protections) but also qualifies and modifies full adult autonomy rights. This article reviews how adult and child rights relate to young people, and then reviews how, and possibly why, everyone's rights are being restricted by current policies.

> *The young people I work with make demands and choices and say, 'It's my right', so that I have to give into them, even when I think it is not in their best interests.*

This kind of comment is often made. However, it misunderstands 'rights' and confuses them with wants and demands. Rights are both much more basic and also more complex than the quoted view assumes, as the first section reviews.

The nature of human and children's rights

All rights are *limited*, and minors' rights have extra qualifications. As legal concepts, rights concern freedoms, entitlements and obligations, which can be deliberately honoured – or withheld. Parents cannot be taken to court, for example, for not loving their child. Love and happiness and health cannot be willed or enforced so they cannot be rights. Yet adults can be prosecuted for obvious neglect or abuse, and children do have the right to be protected from these. The UNCRC sets possible standards, which can be enforced to help parents to give loving care, and the UNCRC's preamble states the importance of every child living 'in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding'. The UNCRC enshrines minimum standards, which may rise in future as the world's children come to be more respected.

- Some rights are *aspirational*, not yet fully realisable, but only 'to the maximum extent of [each nation's] available resources' (4).[1] Richer nations are expected to help poorer ones to respect children's economic rights (24:4).
- Rights are not *absolute* but conditional, affected by the 'evolving capacities of the child', the 'responsibilities, rights and duties of parents' (5), 'the primary responsibility of the parents' (18), and the national law. 'The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration' (3). Rights cannot be exercised in ways that would harm other people and, with children's rights, the child concerned. In exercising their rights, people must 'respect the rights and reputations of others', as well as 'national security and public order, health and morals' (13).
- Rights are *shared*, being about solidarity, equality in social justice and fair distribution, 'our' rights not 'my' rights. The UNCRC is not about selfish individualism. To claim a right acknowledges that everyone has an equal claim to it and so reaffirms the worth and dignity of every person.

The UNCRC Preamble states that the child 'needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection.'

- Children's rights are part of promoting 'social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom'. The UNCRC recognises 'the inherent dignity and...equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family [as] the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world' (Preamble).
- Rights are about *necessities* not luxuries – clean safe water, freedom to play.

One argument against children's rights is that rights cannot be bestowed. They can only apply to groups, which understand and claim and exercise rights for themselves, as some, though far from all, women, black and disabled people have struggled to do. Yet the provision and protection rights involve *duties*, which adults owe to children, who are partially dependent. With the participation rights, although children and young people may not use rights language, they repeatedly say they want adults to listen to them and take heed of their views.

It is also said that rights go with *obligations* and *responsibilities*, and that children are irresponsible or pre-responsible. Adults are responsible for ensuring that many children's rights are respected. Yet children and young people often want more participation rights so that they can share more responsibility with adults.

The UNCRC is about broad *principles*, which can be interpreted and applied in different ways according to local values and traditions. There is therefore at times confusion and *disagreement* about how best to honour certain children's rights. For example, what does poverty mean, and how is it best relieved?

The UNCRC's articles combine all children's rights. They are not separate but complementary. A coherent overall view can inform ways to apply them, in order that children, young people and adults can enjoy more equal, respectful and mutually-rewarding lives and relationships.

Adults' rights and young people

This article will assume that everyone aged 18 and over is entitled to full adult rights including the right to vote, to work and to found a family. And yet there are blurred adult-child boundaries below 18-years, when children and young people share adults' rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) affirmed in the Human Rights Act (Home Office 1998). For example, although the right to work in Britain is denied to those aged under 13-years, despite evidence that estimates half of all young workers are aged under 13. As illegal workers they have none of the legal protections that adult workers and their Trades Unions have fought for. Right up to 18-years, there is no set minimum wage. Around the world, millions of children have to do paid work in order to survive and, for many, to earn their school fees. Policies to end child labour ignore this reality. The UNCRC protects children from 'hazardous' labour but does not seek to ban child work.

Regarding the right to vote, there are calls in Britain to lower the minimum age from 18 to 16. With the right to found a family, teenage pregnancy is common, and young adults can marry in Scotland at 16 and in England and Wales at 16 with parents' consent. There are many child soldiers around the world. At 15 years 9 months, young people can join the British forces, which run promotions in many schools, bringing young people into the 'adult' world of warfare and away from the protections of childhood.

Social and economic rights

The UNCRC includes social and economic rights. Arguably these make the exercise of other rights possible for children and adults alike: education, an adequate standard of living, support for family and parental care, the best attainable health care, which is to be enabled with help and information from richer to poorer countries. This article is mainly about the UNCRC and the government policy *Every Child Matters* (ECM) (HM Treasury 2003) in order to point out difference between the rights and status of people aged over or under 18-years. ECM affects everyone aged up to 19, and schooling will soon be compulsory until 18 years. The Government argues that ECM can duplicate and replace the UNCRC. However, ECM's five rather vague intended outcomes (being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being) have little connection with the detailed legally worded and ratified UNCRC (for comparisons see www.crae.org.uk, www.arch-ed.org.uk). Primarily authored by HM Treasury, ECM aims to promote parental employment and increase children's future adult skills and earning potential, also to reduce the risks that children will become criminal, fail to realise their (economic) potential, and be neglected or abused.

ECM involves extended schools from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm five days a week and most weeks of the year for all children from the early months up to 14-years. They are deemed in need of constant adult protection and control. In contrast, many children and young people in some European countries and in other continents are more independent, able to move quite freely around their neighbourhood and meet their friends as they choose (rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly UNCRC article 15). Thinking about young people's rights and status reminds me of when I was training to be a teacher in a boy's school on the North Yorkshire coast in 1966. For music lessons we had only one book of folk songs called 'Hearts of Oak', which the eighty 15-year olds found very dull, so instead we sang Beatle songs. As far as I remember they were large strong tolerant confident young men, looking forward to joining their fathers, brothers and uncles on the fishing trawlers in a few weeks time. For better or worse, there was a much more common national culture then, from music to careers. Fishing was a highly respected, challenging, dangerous, fulfilling career, with a proud culture, in close communities. These young men could expect decades of a benign double identity: of being a respected worker and of having life-long family securities and inter-generational inter-dependent friendships. This often meant the dignity of reciprocal, informal, intimate, practical support instead of, as now, often one-way, paid, impersonal services by strangers, which risk being demeaning, and therefore partly counterproductive in their supportiveness. Within an impersonal system with payment, and with ulterior ends and public records often set by distant policy makers, however genuinely concerned and skilled the individual worker may be, there can be a clash of trusting support

versus policing surveillance and potential betrayal. Today, on the English and Scottish coasts the fishing and processing communities have gone. A few huge trawlers, owned by absent millionaires, sail away for weeks with a small crew (Tudge 2007). Respect for fishing is now qualified by concern about mile-wide dragnets destroying ecosystems, about throwing so many dead fish back into sea, about the intensive farms that now supply half the fish sold, massive problems of global competition and waste, and about fragmented families and communities, which people leave in search of work. So life, biological and social, is being squeezed out of the oceans, fisheries, and coastal communities alike, to profit a few remote wealthy people. In Britain, young people now seldom face an early adulthood of respected reasonably paid work, freedom from debt, and the right to afford necessities such as reasonable housing.

These dramatic and quite rapid changes are likely to have affected the confidence, wellbeing and mental health of many young people, and to make it harder for them to tolerate or endure school, if it feels like a boring, irrelevant, humiliating series of failures that close down hopes. In the 1960s, the prospect of decades of reasonably paid and respected work, at least for many men, depended much less on school achievements. Today, 40 per cent of young people leave school with no qualifications, and even highly qualified ones may face years of insecure, intermittent, unfulfilling and poorly paid employment. This is not to say that everyone was happily employed at work or home decades ago, but that today's awareness and promotion of choices and unrealistic expectations present different problems for the adults who seek to counsel, mentor and support young people – or to help them to comply within possibly hostile systems. For example, education is being commodified: schooling is being reduced to the eventual outcome of future earning power; learning is less for fun, interest, fulfilment, or for its intrinsic worth than for utility; young people are assumed to be motivated not by love of learning for its own sake but by a token economy of ulterior rewards – praise, stickers and grades – or coercions, penalties and shame. The government and numerous 'experts' blame current employment problems on the lack of skilled workers and on the personal deficiencies of young people, whereas the problem is really the *political* lack of reasonable employment conditions and opportunities (Wolf 2002). Any resistance by young people tends to be seen as deviant, requiring control through punishment and reform. Yet is some of their resistance being out of step with a just benign society, *anomie*, when they need to be supported, guided, restored 'rehabilitated' back into their rightful place or, alternatively, is it sometimes the protest of *alienation* when they feel out of touch with their authentic self? Then their social and moral health depends also on changing society towards greater equity, justice and respect for basic social and economic rights.

The three Ps

The UNCRC is loosely divided into three overlapping types of rights, the three Ps: *provision* of education with support for play and recreation, healthcare, adequate standard of living; *protection* from neglect, abuse, discrimination; *participation* or modified adult autonomy rights. The many participation projects and reports over the past 18 years owe much to the UNCRC and Article 12, the child's right 'to form and express views on all matters affecting the child' and for 'due weight' to be given to those views by the adults concerned. The

UNCRC, which took ten years to write, is the most widely agreed international treaty of all, ratified by 192 governments. It is a tool for change in its 54 articles, in that governments have to report regularly to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on their progress in implementing the UNCRC, including how they consult children and young people. Governments tend to present glowing reports (see www.dcsf.gov.uk) and the voluntary organisations for children and young people tend to present critical reports of their country's progress (see www.crae.org.uk).

The three Ps involve powerful dyads: the providing adult and the needy child; the protecting adult and the victim child; the more mutual equal partnership of participation between adults and children or young people. However, the following models suggest that young people's formal 'participation' is often more about protection or provision.

In participation model 1 provision, staff and researchers in education, play, community and youth services might say to young people:

> *I am going to consult you so that we adults can see how to provide better services for you all. You will learn about cooperating, listening, speaking, sharing, collecting and discussing different views and choices and, more broadly, about democracy, citizenship and social inclusion. You will gain new skills, self-esteem and consideration for others.*

Here, the main aims may be to teach young people, to improve their trust, compliance and involvement, and to provide better services. The adults are primarily accountable, for their effectiveness, to systems that manage, evaluate and fund the services, rather than to the young people.

In participation model 2 protection the social workers' view might be:

> *I will listen to the young person as part of supportive, semi-therapeutic, expert, good practice, to learn about any problems and possible ways I can help. I must balance my decisions about the young person's best interests with those of the family, and within available resources. I will inform and support in order to help the young person to trust me and accept my decision. This may mean avoiding very painful areas where I may not be able to help, to save the young person (and myself) from unnecessary distress and false hopes. I may need to hold back some information and perhaps over-emphasise certain hopes or dangers to persuade the family to comply.*

Here, the aims include protecting the young person's safety and welfare. Social workers risk being ultimately accountable, for making the correct decision, not to the young person but to the courts and the mass media, balancing costly over-intrusion into family life against the risk of fatal injury to the child.

The aims, topics, methods, processes, values and outcomes, relationships and 'participation' itself are structured, framed and organised mainly around provision in model one, and protection in model two. Growing tiers of management and inspection allow less autonomy to most professionals and thereby restrict young people even more. The two models involve realistic and valuable activities, but too often they evade real 'participation', its origins,

meaning and purpose, context and grounding, which are adult autonomy rights. These include:

- freedoms of information and expression, thought, conscience and religion, association and peaceful assembly (Articles 12-17);
- rights to life and survival, to privacy and family life, to a legal identity, to cultural life and the arts, and due legal process (Articles 6-8, 12-17, 31, 37, 40);
- freedoms from discrimination, violence, torture, cruel or degrading treatment, exploitation, and arbitrary punishment, arrest, detention or interference (Articles 1-3, 5-11, 18-19, 22-23, 30, 32-40).

The whole UNCRC is imbued with respect for every person's worth and dignity, and with the social, economic and political means of promoting these.

This article mainly reviews public relationships between professionals and young people, rather than private family and friendship relationships, but I will briefly mention how young people tend to report more genuine experiences of participation within informal private relationships (Mayall 2007), when there tends to be more time and freedom for people to listen, understand and encourage one another, inhabit the present without pressing future goals, and respect one another as ends in themselves, instead of means towards the ends of the school, the service concerned or the government. Criticisms of government policy regret the move from informal, more personal and private youth worker-young people relations to more public, regulated, and impersonal relations (Jeffs and Smith 2002).

In participation model 3, which uniquely illustrates respect for autonomy, doctors in effect say to young people and usually their parents too:

> *'This is the intervention I recommend to treat this problem (provides details). Treatment involves these hoped-for benefits, these methods and processes, risks and discomforts, and these alternatives, including the likely effects of the continuing problem if it is not treated. I must warn you of all the potential difficulties, and not put any pressure on you, so that you can give your informed, voluntary, autonomous consent, or refusal.' Here, the aims, topics, methods, processes, values and outcomes, youth-adult relationships and the 'participation' itself are all structured, framed and organised mainly around the young people's and/or parents' autonomy, qualified by concern for the young person's 'best interests' and 'evolving capacities.'*

Why and how is model 3 so different from the other two? The emphasis is on honesty about risk, caution about benefit, deference to the patient's and/or parents' decision, and concern with direct specific intended actions, rather than with young people's learning or other ulterior benefits. Trust is based on honesty not on protective paternalism. Medical decisions affect the individual young person most directly and potentially dangerously. Frequently, he or she knows most about the bodily problems to be treated, and the desired balance between the need and hoped-for benefits of treatment against the harms and costs. For example, surgeons may operate to straighten a minor spinal curve and leave a more obvious curve partly depending on the boy's or girl's view (Alderson 1993). Surgeons warn even children aged from around 6-years of the risks that spinal surgery might paralyse

them and cause double incontinence, saying it would be so dreadful if this happened and the child was not prepared. In one-to-one discussions about planned (not emergency) major treatment, many healthcare professionals have the time, opportunity and expertise to recognise and enhance young people's informed, competent decision making. If young people disagree with the decision, there are usually great efforts to inform and involve them, sort out fears and misunderstandings, negotiate as much as possible, and avoid imposing a decision against fearful resistance. Most of the research, analysis and guidance on young people's competence, autonomy and consent stem from practical medico-legal concerns.

If the doctor and family disagree, unlike the earlier professionals the doctor cannot simply overrule the family. Only the courts can resolve the dispute and, further, not the family courts but the adversarial crown courts that defend human rights. Young patients share the status and long history of adult patients. This includes the trials about Nazi medical experiments, which produced the definitive statement on autonomous voluntary consent: 'Free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, overreaching, or any ulterior form of constraint or coercion'. And the person should also have sufficient information to be able to make 'an understanding and enlightened decision' (Nuremberg 1947). Human rights gradually emerged through resistance against oppression; patients' autonomy rights developed from scandals about abusive research and treatment (Alderson and Morrow 2004:25-34).

Uniquely among the professions, the doctor is ultimately accountable to the courts and the mass media, *not for making a correct decision, but for ensuring that the patient/parent was able to make an informed voluntary decision.* The doctor cannot claim that the young person or parents were all incompetent to decide, whereas teachers and social workers may validate their decisions by presenting parents as lacking the expertise or capacity to decide correctly. The doctor, however, who acted without consent would be tried for negligence (for not informing patients sufficiently) or assault (for touching the person without valid consent), that is a significant difference. Consent involves the transfer of responsibility for accepting risk from the doctor to the competent patient or parent. Over past decades, doctors have gradually accepted that codes of ethics and consent protect not only patients, but also doctors, researchers and high standards of treatment and research. Doctors accept that they can do immense harm as well as good, whereas other professionals tend not to acknowledge this – another reason why they favour 'participation' over serious respect for autonomy. The next two sections review how, and possibly why, adults' and young people's rights are being restricted.

How systems are reforming

The example cited earlier of the 15-year olds in the Yorkshire school in the 1960s points out the marked changes that have taken place within family life, education and employment over four decades. There is now unprecedented government intrusion into family life, styles of parenting, home-school contracts, holding parents responsible for many educational and social aspects of their child's life, but also much less direct financial support for the poorest families. Concerns with social justice have transferred towards criminal justice,

with anti-social behaviour being reframed as crime. Billions of pounds are being spent on extended school buildings, staff training, advisory and regulation agencies, rather than on redistributing wealth towards the poorest families. Education and youth services and employment are being reshaped into micro-managed accounting systems with measurable targets and fixed outcomes, which can lessen more personal, spontaneous, responsive and flexible initiatives and personal autonomy for adults and young people.

Sennett (2008) analyses how complex and diverse activities are broken up into simplistic measures, so that work loses its intrinsic worth. He considers that workers most highly value the years spent refining their skills, respect for their expertise, and good relationships with their colleagues. But Sennett considers that today's systems reinforce opposing values: speed, rapid alterations, superficial skills, constantly changing teams and impersonal conditions of work, all driven by 'impatient capital'. This involves constant take-overs of firms, stripped assets, and reduced staffing on lower pay. The few highly paid top managers do not own the business or the profits. Instead their wealth depends mainly on increasing the price of the shares they hold, which they do by public relations, spin, 'imaginative' accounting and constant much publicised flux, until they move quickly on like chameleons to the next firm, selling their shares before prices fall. No one knows what the firm is really worth.

To secure new posts and promotion on the carousel of industry, banks, government quangos and auditors, they have constantly to network and promote themselves. This ruthless competitive short-termism wreaks havoc for everyone except the successful wealthy. Managers who move on quickly, do not know their staff personally, and so they rely on assessing impersonal fixed targets and outcomes, based on systems they are constantly changing and which may be irrelevant to the real work of the firm or service. Such targets erode the personal ties, obligations, respect and trust, judgement, loyalty, security and recognition, which workers most value. Workers are assessed for their adaptability, not for their accumulated knowledge and expertise. Penalties and rewards become mechanical and often unjust routines (like the tyranny of testing in schools) which, Sennett considers, stop curiosity and reflection. He concludes that work is being gutted of its content, humanity, dignity, morality and meaning, its values, creativity, solidarity, its potential for personal narrative and agency and, in sum, workers' human rights.

Why systems are reforming

Sennett describes the rapid global changes, but this does not explain why impatient capitalism is so endemic despite harming the great majority whether in schools or colleges, in paid work or not. In debates and research about structure and agency, the structural power over individual agents is often missed, and so also are the agents who help to shape the structures. It would be implausible to write the history of the twentieth century without mentioning leading individuals: Stalin, Hitler, Churchill, Eisenhower, Ghandi, Mao, Thatcher, Pinochet, Mandela. Yet rapid twenty-first century changes tend to be ascribed to blind impersonal market forces. Surely these immense and powerful global movements involve some human intention and agency. Mirowski (2008; also Mirowski and Plehwe 2008) has traced the history of the 'neo-liberals', which was the title they gave themselves, until they

dropped it in order to seem to be traditionalist inheritors of classical liberalism. Hayek at London University set up the Mont Pelerin Society in 1946, linked to Chicago University, to Milton Friedman, and other leading economists. From 39 centres in 1947, by 1991 there were 500 linked centres, think tanks and university departments around the world. Some slowly develop policies. Others provide rapid response reports and media comments, all with massive funding from industry and with staff alternating between the centres, government, civil service and business. Mirowski identified key differences between liberalism and neo-liberalism, summarised in the table. It is vital to know about the differences in order to be able to understand and predict the apparent contradictions when governments and other authorities, which claim to be liberal, are actually neo-liberal.

Liberal philosophy, aims and methods	**Neo-liberal philosophy, aims and methods**
Positive freedoms, human rights, equality and wellbeing of the people	Profit the ultra-rich, promote inequality, over-rule human rights
Adam Smith version of free market, with hidden hand (of Providence) Market complemented by state support\Free and fair trade Adequate benefits/social security/pensions	'Fake' history of Adam Smith Managed market Low taxes, no state intervention Protections for rich countries, none for poor ones Low benefits/social security
Reasonable work conditions Trades Unions, workers' rights Beginning of concern for environment	Strip assets and work force Destroy Unions Plunder planet
People as citizens	People as consumers
Rights to freedom of expression and information	Managed mass media, PR, biased advertising Trace everything including knowledge
Government works with private sphere to promote employment	Government leaves employment to markets (except for state services) then blames lack of jobs on lack of skills. In USA, huge 'slave' industries (Microsoft) inside prisons lead to dearth of jobs outside, to unemployment, theft and re-imprisonment
Education, health and welfare services provided/assisted by state	Education, health and welfare services privatised, outsourced, standards micro-managed by state, 'end cancer of socialism'
Practical material support for families, benefits, housing, redistributive tax	Withdraw material support, increase state surveillance and punitive control of family, blame the poor

Consultation/participation, a means to an end Democratic involvement and influence	Consultation/participation, an end in itself 'Let them express their views and have minor choices but do not let them have 'rights'
Socialism: people and states know enough to plan and allocate Many problems are not scientific or economic but moral and political	Humans are 'sloppy organisers', the Market 'knows' Narrow amoral economics explains everything, influences game theory (psychology), neo-Darwinism (biology) and all disciplines Privatise the markets of ideas. Trade in intellectural property Find costly technical 'fix' for all problems (ecology, mental illness, crime)
Work and wait for things to get better Enlightenment faith in progress	Every crisis an opportunity to intervene and impose neo-liberalism (Klein 2007)
Ironically, liberal-left believe in central organisation yet they are themselves disorganised and fragmented.	Neo-liberals believe in small state and deregulated individualism yet they are a tightly organised, lavishly funded global network controlling all academic economics (as arcane maths) with agents at all levels of national and international government, civil service, mass media, academia, science, medicine, and industry.

Conclusion

In order to respect young people's rights, it is necessary to understand what rights mean, by reading the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), the UNCRC (1989) and the Human Rights Act (1998), by seeing how the rights can be implemented on the local, individual, personal and small group level, and also how human rights are supported or restricted by local, national and international policies and economics.

Note

1 Numbers in brackets denote UNCRC Articles.

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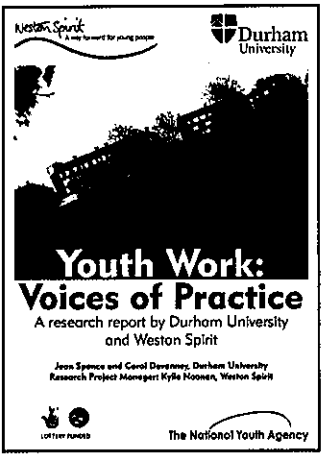

Youth Work: Voices of Practice

A research report by Durham University and Weston Spirit

This research is the culmination of two years work and has been undertaken during a period in which the tension between policy and key youth work principles is beginning to impact upon the practice environment.

With some urgency, it makes a move towards articulating the voice of practice in order to draw attention to those aspects of youth work which youth workers and young people most value and which make it 'work'.

In doing this, the research considers how the multi-faceted and complex nature of youth work practice can thrive in the context of its responsibilities towards externally defined objectives.

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'The End of Certainty': Policy Regime Change and Australian Youth Policy – 1983-2008

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Like many western countries, Australia lacks a discrete or well-defined corpus of youth policy. And while youth policy can be treated in a narrow and technical way as the product of youth specific agencies like a government Office for Youth Affairs, there is value in defining it more generally. In ways that parallel 'women's policy' or 'indigenous policy', youth policy is as frequently found in the context of other policy domains like education, health, housing, welfare and justice as in narrowly defined youth agencies. And while youth policy sometimes specifies the 12 to 15 age group, we more often see the merging of children's and youth policy – particularly in areas such as child protection and education. This complexity is compounded by Australia's tripartite constitutional division of powers and resources. For Australia has three levels of government: a national government, six state governments, (and two territory governments) and hundreds of local governments with complex interlocking constitutional and fiscal relationships.

In what follows I suggest that one way of trying to understand the last 25 years is to identify some of the key aspects of youth policy that emerged as part of more general health, education, labour market and welfare policy at the national level.

Since 1983 Australia, at a national level, was dominated politically in almost equal measure by two governments, the Labor governments of Hawke (1983-1992) and Keating (ALP) (1992-1996) and then by the Howard Coalition government (1996-2007). Given its federal character however, and acknowledging the role of state governments in delivering the majority of health, education and community service programs, it is important to note that with exceptions (like Victoria's Kennett government -1991-99 – and NSW until 1994) that Labor governments also dominated state politics for most of this period. It is a context where the major parties were steadily gravitating towards the middle ground where Australians confronted what Unger (2006) called a 'dictatorship of no alternatives'. The policy framework that emerged in this period was oriented at a generic policy level to dismantling the old collective and protectionist character of what Kelly (1992) referred to as the 'Australian settlement' (1901-1975).

In the context of the major changes that characterised the last 25 years one thing can be said with some certainty – that is, no Australian government at any level has moved to adopt a consistent or coherent approach to, or co-ordinated their actions over the last 25 years in respect to youth policy. Given the absence of a discrete, well defined and coherent national youth policy, one way of appreciating youth policy, understood as policies that impact directly or indirectly on young people, is to observe them generally as they operate in various portfolios and in the wider policy and political context. In this way something of the scale and complexity of the transformative process that took place in respect to young people can be revealed. As I argue here, youth policy took on a distinctly neo-liberal

cast, leading to a withdrawal of long-standing collectively provided services for young people. This was also accompanied by moves to adopt a more authoritarian and punitive policy framework for dealing with young people. If we are to adequately characterise the emergent policy framework some of the contradictory elements that operated need to be acknowledged.

Economic liberal themes, motives and vocabulary resurfaced vigorously in the political and policy-making communities in the 1980s (Pusey 1991), and as many critics observed this had a devastating impact on the capacity and willingness to provide civic staples such as decent and publicly available education, health and welfare systems – and a healthy labour market and a relatively secure distribution of income. This is to say nothing of the social impact of changing value frameworks expressed for example in privileging the right of ownership or the value of competition which reinforced an individualistic cultural focus on 'the self' – as a dominant factor in identity formation. The resurgence of neo-liberalism also eroded, or in some cases destroyed, a number of the civic staples which had once provided a basic framework of support for young Australians. Old ideas about individual responsibility resurfaced with significant implications for young people most of whom have comparatively limited resources to practice self-responsibility and who typically require support to develop in all the ways they can while becoming adult.

The emergent policy consensus hosted a rapid increase in the number of new agencies and institutions with a brief to mimic private sector practices and to promote the 'new' values like the 'user pays' principle. It was a policy shift that failed to equip or support young people to respond effectively to the larger transformations taking place in the labour market, the economy and globally. It was a policy consensus that also failed to equip young people and their families to 'manage' or 'negotiate' as 'individuals' other significant seismic transformations taking place like changes in family structures and the labour market. In short, at precisely a time in Australian history when young people required policies and social institutions that supported and protected them from the negative effect of the major socio-economic changes taking place, those resources were steadily withdrawn. It is also worth noting how this had a compounding effect given that Australians aged 12 to 25, (like young people globally), are also disproportionately affected by poverty, housing crisis (homelessness) and poor health (ABS, 2008; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007).

In parallel with this resurgent neo-liberal framework we saw the energizing and strengthening of a mixture of sentimental and authoritarian prejudices directed toward young people. This was evident in the revival of a vocabulary which drew on, and exacerbated, highly ambivalent and injurious accounts of the alleged 'deficiencies' of young people. On the one hand commentators expressed concern about the 'victim' status of young people expressed by reference to their status as, unemployed, homeless, drug taking, suicidally inclined casualties of 'globalisation'. On the other they were portrayed as 'anti-social elements' who were predatory, dangerous and violent and for which nothing would suffice except the most stringent policy responses – like mandatory sentencing and curfews. The effect has been a peculiar mix of discriminatory and regulatory interventions expressed in a wide range of economic, labour market, education, health and law and order policies.

In what follows I use elements of what Kelly (1992) described as the 'Australian settlement' to outline aspects of the paradoxical nature of policies which mixed neo-liberal impulses with more punitive and even deeply authoritarian policies targeting young people.

Finale of the Australian settlement

Kelly's (1992) history of Australian public policy in the twentieth century refers to a long-standing bi-partisan policy consensus that he calls 'the Australian settlement' which provided a persistent yet flexible national policy between 1901 and 1975. Kelly observes how after Australian Federation (1901) the Labor and Conservative parties agreed on the value of strong state intervention designed to preserve some element of social equality to prevent destitution and more generally to protect the 'Australian way of life'. It was a bi-partisan agreement that entailed a mix of labourist and social-liberal ideas about the role of the state and white racist ideas about national identity.

This policy consensus rested on four key policy planks. First there was the 75 year long commitment to a White Australia (1901) which legislated for the exclusion of non British – or non-European – people and which until the early 1950s promoted British immigration. Second successive governments until the mid 1970s used very high tariff barriers to protect secondary industry while extensively regulating work place conditions and using industry wide agreements to develop from 1907 onwards a needs-based basic wage administered by the Commonwealth Industrial Arbitration and Conciliation Court. Third a system of income support for families was progressively introduced beginning with old age pensions in 1909 augmented by child endowment, single mother, unemployment and sickness benefits by the 1940s. Finally in May 1945 the Labor government formally committed itself to support the doctrine of full (male) employment which was only formally abandoned in 1979. These policy elements played a major and long lasting role in shaping a pattern of distinctive institutional arrangements that proved surprisingly persistent.

This national policy consensus was radically revised in a process that the Fraser Coalition government (1975-1983) initiated and that was subsequently ramped-up by the Hawke-Keating Labor government. Using a formal social contract framework, negotiated between the new Labor government and the union movement in early 1983, the Hawke-Keating government promoted what it called an 'economic modernisation' project that integrated economic liberal, conservative and laborist themes. By the 1990s it was conventional to talk in terms of state policy as a product of global 'structural forces' which according to Catley had made 'globalisation' 'inevitable, necessary and desirable' (1996, p.vii, – for a critique of this see Watts (2000) and Weiss 1998). The Howard Coalition government (1996-2007) simply consolidated and extended its predecessor's accomplishments.

The dismantling of the 'Australian settlement' provides a useful starting point for explaining how Australian youth policy was reshaped after 1983. A commitment to a 'White Australia' was among the first elements of the 'Australian settlement' to be dismantled. Formally initiated in 1901 it entailed a programme of tightly restricted immigration that used racial criteria to determine who could enter the country as immigrants. Integral to the White Australia policy were a parallel set of racist policies directed at indigenous Australians

requiring the majority of them to live on mission stations or reserves with few if any citizenship rights or entitlements. This was accompanied by a 'welfare' policy involving the forced removal of tens of thousands of indigenous children from their families and communities (Morrisey, 2007; Haebich and Delroy, 1999).

The dismantling of the 'White Australia policy' began in the early 1970s as the Whitlam Labor government provided refugees from neighbouring Asian countries with entry to Australia as part of a new 'multicultural policy (Lopez 2000). In the late 1970s the Fraser Coalition government endorsed the settlement of 70,000 Vietnamese in Australia. By 2008 Australia had become home to people from every continent. What was once primarily a closed Anglo-Celtic community became a society in which a third of the population came from a non Anglo-Celtic background. This far-reaching policy shift grew out of a long standing history of xenophobia and the resurgence of heated 'race debates' fuelled by conservative academics like Geoffrey Blainey and neo-conservatives politicians like John Howard (and after 1996 Pauline Hanson) who argued that the numbers of non-European migrants entering Australia was excessive and threatened 'Australian values' and 'the Australian way of life'. Partly in response to this the Hawke Labor government – with bipartisan support – introduced the practice of mandatory detention of asylum seekers. It was a policy that by 2000 meant that some 600 asylum seeking children were being held in medium security detention camps for indeterminate periods. A neo-liberal impulse saw the Australian government 'contract out' the operation of these camps to the Group Four security corporation which housed these children and young people along with many more adult asylum seekers deemed to be unlawful entrants. It was a policy which also put Australia outside the framework of international conventions and principles. The government's position was buttressed by a series of High Court decisions in the 1990s which suspended the rule of law in these camps. In 1998 Australia's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission was moved to hold a formal inquiry into the mandatory detention of these children (HREOC 1998). As that inquiry found, it was a policy that clearly placed at risk the welfare of the young people held in detention centres (Flood, 2001; UNICEF, 2002). The case was made that the Australian government was in breach of its own laws and guidelines used to determine whether a child was in 'need of protection' and that the children in these camps ought to be brought under relevant child protection legislation (Bessant, 2002: 165-170).

As Marr and Wilkinson (2004) demonstrated the Howard government sank to a new low in its handling of the *Tampa* matter in August-September 2001. This involved claims by senior Federal Ministers that asylum-seekers were throwing their children into the ocean as a strategy to gain entry to Australia. A Senate Inquiry later found such claims to be untrue, that no children were thrown overboard and that senior Ministers knew the claims to be false at the time they made them. While the detention of asylum seekers did not specifically target young people, it reflected a growing animus towards young people who were 'different' – like Muslims or young indigenous people. In July 2008 the Rudd Labor government, elected to office in 2007, softened its policy in immigration detention centres. Rather than imprisonment, 'illegal entrants' (asylum seekers and those who over stay their visa) will only be incarcerated if they are seen to present a threat to the community.

The mobilization of fear and hostility toward the young and particularly indigenous young

people was a striking feature of policies adopted in the 1990s by one state and one territory government namely Western Australia and the Northern Territory where in particular 'Mandatory sentencing' legislation – or '3 strikes and you're in policy', was designed in response to a get-tough approach to 'law and order' policy. In 1992 the West Australian Parliament passed the *Crime (Serious and Repeat Offenders) Act*, to be followed by the *Young Offenders Act* in 1994 which provided for the mandatory sentencing of juveniles (section 126). The 1992 legislation was passed following a series of high profile car chases in which police pursued young Aboriginal people in charge of stolen vehicles. In a number of cases these high speed chases resulted in the deaths of some of these young offenders and/or other white drivers. This provoked a media campaign run by Howard Sattler a radio personality involving a well-attended 'Rally for Justice' outside the Western Australian Parliament in 1992. The Western Australian Labor Government headed by the first woman Premier in Australia, Carmen Lawrence, decided to enact a tough 'law 'n order' policy. And even though it was immediately and widely condemned by many as offensive to a number of long-established legal principles, and even to the very idea of justice itself, it remained in force. The lives of mostly Aboriginal people often under the age of 25 were affected by this legislation that simply added to an already serious problem of racist law enforcement. In 1997 the Northern Territory parliament passed similar legislation ensuring young offenders aged between 15 and 16 years received a mandatory 28 day sentence for a second offence, while people convicted of a third offence were to receive a 12 months sentence (Bessant, 2001: 369-384).

It was no secret that young Aboriginal men and boys were the primary target of this legislation. Here too we see the complexity and contradictory nature of policy as such legislation gets passed at a time when all governments had officially accepted the idea of 'multiculturalism' and moved to outlaw 'racially-based discrimination' and 'racial vilification'. The fact that a disproportionate percentage of petty crimes in Northern Territory and Western Australia were committed by indigenous people and that a disproportionate proportion of Aboriginal people are already being dealt with by the criminal justice system (Drabsch, 2004; ABS, 2008) further highlighted the discriminatory nature of mandatory sentencing. Added to this are a series of policies that have failed to secure the well being of young indigenous people by allowing child and youth poverty, substance abuse, sexual abuse and neglect and incarceration to remain at high levels. In 2007 the Howard government opted to send armed troops and police personnel into remote outback aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory in response to the finding of a Report commissioned by the Northern Territory government of sexual abuse of children in those communities (Northern Territory Board of Inquiry, 2007). The intervention plan included alcohol restrictions, health checks of children under the age of 16 to detect sexual abuse and 'welfare reforms'. This came in the form of new conditional payment arrangements, in respect to social security income support or family tax benefits to parents, on proviso they do certain things -like ensuring their children attend school.

A second element of the dismantled 'Australian settlement' was a long standing commitment to full-employment (see 1945 *White Paper on Full Employment*). Between 1945 and 1979 a combination of fiscal and industrial policy was used to secure high levels of consistent economic growth that would provide jobs for all who wanted them. This bi-partisan policy framework was substantially amended and replaced with increasingly radical

neo-liberal industrial relations and market-oriented employment policies. As Kelly argues the Hawke-Keating Labor governments (1983-1996) predominately adopted a de-regulated approach to wage setting while leaving employment growth in the hands of the market (Sweet, 1991). This involved successive waves of market reforms including significant de-regulation of the Australian dollar in 1983 followed by financial sector de-regulation in the 1980s. Both the Labor and Coalition governments promoted an end to the old protectionist policy, reliant on high tariffs designed to protect Australian manufacturing industries from competition by cheap imports notably secondary industries such as automobiles, steel, textiles and footwear. This resulted in Australia de-industrialising and becoming primarily a service-based economy. Commitment to the liberalization of trade culminated in a free trade agreement with the USA signed off in 2004. Undoing protection directly sponsored some of the unemployment that characterised the 1980s and 1990s as well as the growth of part-time work: by 2006 Australia led the developed world in terms of the proportion of part-time jobs.

Rather than explain the youth unemployment problem as a consequence of a decline in the supply of jobs and its own policies, the Labor government at the time argued it was a problem arising out of deficits found in young people and the education system. Thus the solution was framed in terms of investment in 'human capital' (like education and training programmes) that would remedy those deficits (i.e. illiteracy and poor work ethic). The focus on building human capital rather than job creation schemes was presented as the answer to unemployment and would lead inevitably to economic recovery (Hawke, 1988). These polices were paralleled by corporate policies especially in the finance, services and secondary industries to downsize or move production 'offshore' in the 1980s that had a marked effect: namely the near complete disappearance of the full-time youth labour market.

In place of the old order marked by the movement of the majority of 16 year olds into full time employment, the new order saw increasing school retention and a major increase in part-time employment primarily in a small range of low skill, low pay service industries like fast food and hospitality. Accompanying this transformative process in the 1980s and 1990s was a significant level of popular anxiety vested in successive 'moral panics' about youth unemployment, youth homelessness and the emergence of a juvenile underclass. Long standing age based prejudices and myth making were dusted off and sent into action. Many experts and media workers gathered evidence that too many young people were either inclined towards 'inactivity' and/or too ill-educated for employment in the new 'global economy' (Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training, 1979; Dawkins, 1984: Messel, 1978; Blackburn, 1985; Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1984).

Commentators argued that the economic crises Australia was experiencing in the 1980s and 1990s were due in large part to the failure of formal education systems to provide graduates/workers equipped with the skills and up-to-date knowledge necessary to compete effectively in the international market place. Causal connections were said to exist between increased education retention rates and increased Gross Domestic Product as a standard economic measure of economic well-being (Department of Employment, Education and Training Economic Analysis Division, l989). One simple extrapolation of this reasoning was that increased education retention or participation rates would sponsor economic recovery (Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Labour Market Programmes, 1985; DEET, 1991).

More generally it became part of the economic policy orthodoxy of the 1980s and 1990s that economic recovery and full employment were complementary objectives and that various policies designed to restructure national education, training and the labour market would assist with that economic recovery while improving the general well-being of young Australians (Finn, 1991).

Access to the full-time wage labour market, along with leaving the parental home and finishing education, traditionally functioned as markers of adult status. Waged work promoted a relatively stable 'adult' identity via an occupational status and offered a steady source of income so that other economic activities became possible thus leading to a more independent life style. Where once the majority of 16-25 year olds had achieved adult status by virtue of access to waged work, the near complete collapse of the full-time youth labour market, combined with the emergence of more precarious employment patterns, ensured that a new and considerably extended 'dependency' phase for increasing numbers of 16-25 year olds became the norm (Hartley, 1988). Thus what we were seeing in the late twentieth century were major changes to both the status and experience of becoming adult influenced by a mix of major socio-economic and cultural events that affected the course of national and international history. This, combined with associated government policies, resulted in profound shifts in the lived experience of young people. Changes to the labour market itself, in conjunction with reform of the industrial relations, education and welfare systems, had a major impact on key social institutions and subsequently on the lives of many young people. The significance of all this for young Australians in the latter part of the twentieth century was that modern institutions like 'the family', education and the labour market that had long provided critical institutional support as they moved toward adulthood, underwent major transformation at precisely the time an increasing number of young people needed their support for a longer period of time.

In this context of late modernity a plethora of new youth problems were 'discovered' and represented via use of a discourse about 'risk'. Indeed by the 1980s the idea of 'youth at risk' was used to problematise what was hitherto normative – e.g. leaving school before final year, which was said also to place youth 'at risk' of other social ills such as unemployment, psychological depression, juvenile crime, suicide, homelessness and drug abuse. Beck's analysis of 'manufactured uncertainty' is useful here in observing how these new forms of scientific knowledge about 'youth at risk' was transferred on to youth related policies and practices in which the solutions' were prescribed, and that typically were irrelevant to the experiences of those deemed to be the problem (Beck, 1992; Spierings, 1999; McDonald, 1999). Under the umbrella of the all encompassing 'science of youth at risk' new youth problems like 'early school leaving' came to the fore (Finn, 1991). In this policy context it became common to hear policy problem-setting talk couched in terms of a 'generation in crisis' whilst 'law and order' campaigns characterised 'young Australians' as more disagreeable and worse off than ever before (Eckersley, 1988, 1993).

Accompanying this transformation in the economy was a long running exercise in 'welfare reform' as from the 1980s through into the early 2000s successive governments instigated major reviews of the Australian social security system. What was now called the welfare system was increasingly being described as a destructive policy corroding moral character and the will to work or be socially active. Neo-liberals and neo-conservatives

alike claimed that 'excessive public spending' in the 1960s and 1970s had promoted indolence, permissiveness and welfare dependency as well as an inefficient duplication of overly bureaucratic and moribund services (Kemp, 1996a, 1996b; JBC Consultancy, 1993; Municipal Association of Victoria, 1989). Accordingly, state support for public services like education and social security, it was argued, accentuated problems such as reliance on the state, unemployment and laziness, with the 'generosity' of the state apparently rewarding inactivity, immorality, anti-social behaviour and eroding individual responsibility and the work ethic – something seen as particularly bad for 'character building' in an individual's formative years. For neo-liberals, the state did citizens a disservice by failing to encourage activity, enterprise, self-care and individual responsibility and by encouraging dependency and unemployment (Newman, 1999).

The Cass (1988) review of Australia's 'welfare system' recommended a fundamental reform of income support in Australia and proposed that an 'active' system of income support should incorporate a restructured income and activity test that would encourage greater labour force attachment. In response to this Review (and OECD policy guidelines) the Hawke Labor government established a new 'Active Employment Strategy' (AES) or as it later became known Newstart (OECD, 1988). In July 1991 a new system replaced the original unemployment benefit system that had been in place since 1944. This has sponsored a wave of reforms under both the Keating Labor and subsequent Conservative Howard governments that increasingly required jobless people and other recipients of social security income to become more 'active' and responsible. Those qualities were to be demonstrated through various tests and other new requirements that proved willingness to actively seek employment. The Newstart project, born from the urge to create an 'active society' was partly an attempt to ensure that jobless young people be in active pursuit of employment or in some form of training – but within a context where the actual prospects for full-time employment had dramatically receded (Cass, 1988: 159). In this way, training came to replace employment as a primary activity for significant numbers of young citizens previously deemed to be of working age.

This neo-liberal world view was used to sanction waves of 'welfare reforms' designed to establish a punitive and intrusive system of surveillance and reporting on the part of income recipients as well as a requirement to be 'active' by participating in the labour market and civic society. Paralleling this we saw the formation of 'partnerships' between governments, private companies and community organizations -exemplified in the 'Job Network' linked to 'CenterLink' that provided services to 'the unemployed' (McMahon et al, 2000: 248-262). Alongside these policy shifts was an increasing preference on the part of government towards the 'user pay principle'. This required young people paying for services – and goods- that had hitherto been available as part of a collective provision. The re-introduction of university fees was made possible via the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) introduced by the Labor government in 1987-8. While the Hawke government did not contemplate substituting HECS revenue for government expenditure on universities the subsequent Howard government showed no such reluctance. This 'reform' provides an example of the complexity of Australian policy over the last quarter of a century. For while devising a way of raising revenue was clearly an objective, the re-introduction of university fees was also justified by labourist arguments that 'the working class' through their taxes were subsidizing 'middle class' students who went to university (Anderson and Vervoorn, 1983).

The introduction of the Common Youth Allowance (CYA) scheme in mid-1998 also bought major changes to income support for young people including reducing eligibility for Austudy (student allowance) by raising the age of eligibility from 22 to 25 (Birrell, Dobson and Smith, 1999; Chapman, 1992). The new arrangements were accompanied by tighter parental means testing that assumed parents would, and indeed could, transfer part of the household income to 'their' 'student-child'. In addition income support for those under 18 was severely restricted as the youth unemployment category was abolished and receipt of income support became conditional on enrolment in some form of training or education. Along with this came a policy push towards privatisation. In setting the new policy agenda new economic deficiencies were identified in public administration and the argument made that the state ought to withdraw from direct delivery of activities such as education, social security support, and health. Privatisation and 'contracting out' of services – such as youth services- became the order of the day. It was a move that also involved selling off the majority of state-owned enterprises relating to energy, transport and tele-communications. Through the 1990s capital intensive and profitable industries were sold, often for less than their value, alongside a parallel move to hand over infrastructure development (e.g. bridges and freeways) to private investors and developers. While there were important differences between the more conservative Liberal National governments and Labor governments in Australia, both operated within a bi-partisan neo-liberal paradigm. The Hawke-Keating Labor government (1983-96) relied on a neo-liberal/social democratic policy frame, while the subsequent Howard Coalition government (1996-2007) developed policy largely from a neo-liberal/neo-conservative mindset.

As the Hawke-Keating Labor government's version of neo-liberalism emphasised a need to 'modernize' Australia by 'freeing up market forces' from state, the Howard government's policy agenda linked its neo-liberal goals to a neo-conservative commitment expressed in terms of 'tough' 'border security' polices, and rhetoric about traditional community and 'Australian values' in a context of fundamental and far-reaching social and economic transformation. Over time different population cohorts were caught in the cross-fire of what were often contradictory policy exercises – and none more so than young Australians. From the late 1970s on, government policy at all levels can best be described as a hybrid form of governance characterised by a complex mix of neo-liberal, neo-conservative and social-democratic demand management in which conservative and neo-liberal world views came to dominate. It was (and remains) a context in which young people were subject to many novel neo-liberal policies that re-fashioned the economy, labour market, education and youth services. Young people were also at the forefront of these shifts in terms of spearheading policy changes, like the introduction of 'work for the dole', which initially only applied to young people but were subsequently extended, once some level of public familiarity with the idea had been achieved, to the rest of the population. Similarly moves to manage 'welfare' payments were initiated by the Howard government first focused on indigenous young people and were then extended to other sections of the populace under the subsequent Rudd Labor government elected in 2007.

When set against a general policy backdrop it becomes clear how young people ceased to be a collective concern seen to warrant public investment, and instead became a private interest with attention, and support, focused on their 'transition to adulthood' – a private matter and thereby the responsibility of parents or 'the family'. In that context opportunities

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for young Australians to be supported so as to thrive increasingly became a matter of luck, dependent on the family or social milieu one was born into. For young people from affluent families this may not have made too much of a difference, for middle class families it placed additional stresses on the household income and in some instances family relations. And for young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, or those whose families were absent from their lives, this policy shift combined with the historical events mentioned above made a major difference in respect to the level of support and opportunities for choice they could realistically expect.

All this took place during a time when a shift in thinking saw other issues like poverty, unemployment, education and health framed as individual rather than social or shared civic concerns. Publicly funded services like health, youth services, transport, education and welfare were no longer deemed to be the responsibility of the state (Sawer, 2000 67-90). Moreover, in a context of 'uncertainty', represented variously as a 'crisis of the welfare state', a 'cash crisis', and 'crisis of public debt', we witnessed the enthusiastic creation of new categories of young people, stereotypes and youth/social problems like 'the welfare dependent', 'a generation of teenagers in limbo' and the apolitical youth as cultural agents of decline (Eckersley, 1992, 1988; Newman, 1999; Kelly, 1998; Rutter, Giller and Hagill, 1998). We also saw new descriptions come into being while others became extinct. New and recycled categories of 'youth' and new youth problems changed policy and professional practices, how we know young people as well as the very experience of being young (see also Queensland Criminal Justice Commission, 1992; National Crime Prevention,1999). Here too science, and particularly medical models, came to the fore as producers of knowledge and the justification for policy initiatives by re-defining normal behavior as risky. While certain aspects of the neo-conservativism sat uneasily with economic liberalism, there remained significant common ground, evident in debates about 'youth' and their role and proper place in the national and global transformations taking place. Not least in relation to the willingness of both to embrace an authoritarian approach towards young people. Indeed what sometimes appeared as diametrically opposite descriptions of 'youth' or even contradictory policy imperatives often complimented each other as well as animating long standing authoritarian ideas and age based prejudices about 'the young'. This is encountered for example in the mixed messages that characterise so much youth policy talk. Not least policy discussions about 'youth participation' which occurred in a context characterised by major obstacles that actively worked to inhibit attempts on the part of young people to participate in democratic practices or the labour market (Bessant, 2002: 387- 404; Edward, 2008: 11-17). Such contradictory, and indeed confusing, messages were also evident in policies like those intended to increase the mandatory school leaving age in some jurisdictions to 18 against a background of a collapsed full-time youth labour market, hikes in the cost of education, student debt and diminished government or collective support for young people (James, Bexley, Devlin and Marginson, 2007; Kerr and Savelsberg, 2003). Evidence of how young people were unduly affected can be seen in policy outcomes like the near complete disappearance of youth unemployment as a policy or social category. It is worth observing how that disappearance was not the result of a well designed and implemented policy that saw government and the private sector working to invest in the labour market so 'unemployed youth' became gainfully employed, rather it was the result of policy initiatives that saw the abolition of income support (unemployment benefits) for under 18 year olds along with the requirement that those under 18 be required to be in

some form of formal training, education or work if they were to be eligible for government income support.

In the last 25 years young people in Australia have become routinely discriminated against on the basis of their age and frequently this has been codified into policy and law. This happened for example when the Federal government suspended the operation of anti-discrimination legislation in 2000 rendering it lawful for employers to discriminate against young people enabling employers to pay young employees a youth specific wage. The historical parallels with the treatment of indigenous people, women and property-less workers likewise deemed to lack the fundamental criteria rendering them eligible as citizens are obvious (Sawyer, 2008; Attwood, 2005).

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Youth Work and Youth Policy in the Republic of Ireland 1983-2008: 'Still Haven't Found What We're Looking For ...?'

Maurice Devlin

Twenty five years ago, in the summer of 1983, the up-and-coming rock star Bono was one of 24 people appointed by the Irish Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald to a National Youth Policy Committee (NYPC), to be chaired by a High Court judge and former parliamentarian Declan Costello (himself the son of a Taoiseach). The NYPC was required to prepare, within a year, 'recommendations for a National Youth Policy which would be aimed at assisting all young people to become self-reliant, responsible and active participants in society' (Department of Labour 1983: 33).[1] It was regarded as highly significant that the NYPC's remit extended beyond youth work and into a range of areas of policy and provision. The fact that NYPC was appointed directly by the Taoiseach (rather than a government minister, as was the case with other youth-related commissions and committees before and since), and that it was chaired by an eminent public figure, meant much was expected from the committee (in terms of the quality of its deliberations and proposals) and furthermore that much would flow from its final report (in terms of the government response, and subsequent funding and other support for youth work, youth services and the development of youth policy). Twenty-five years later, what progress has been made, and what remains to be done?

NYPC – context and conclusions

The NYPC, or 'Costello Committee', as it became known, was appointed (by a coalition government of the Fine Gael and Labour parties) at a time when almost half the population was under 25 and when the combination of a recently and rapidly urbanised society, an economy in stagnation and a high rate of youth unemployment had led to heightened political concern regarding 'apathy, disillusionment [and] active forms of anti-social behaviour' among young people (Govt. of Ireland 1985: 13). The increasing popularity of Sinn Féin amongst urban youth was also a factor in prompting the government to act decisively (or so it seemed at the time) to develop a national youth policy. It was then long before a paramilitary ceasefire and the official view was unequivocal:

> *In this period of flux, certain national values and attitudes are in some instances being perverted. This is being attempted by organised groups who seek to harness the energies and enthusiasms of young people and involve them with organisations which have as their aim the overthrow of democracy and the imposition of a tyranny based on false principles of nationhood and cultural identity. That this sinister manipulation touches only a small proportion of our young population at present does not detract from the urgency of developing adequate policies and strategies to contain the damage it causes to the future of our democratic society.* (Govt. of Ireland 1985: 13)

This was certainly not the first time, or place, in which a youth policy initiative was characterised by a sense of urgency bordering on crisis. The Costello Committee, whose members were appointed on the basis of their individual expertise or direct experience of youth services or (as in Bono's case) youth culture – fulfilled its terms of reference and reported in September 1984. Before doing so it conducted a comprehensive study (probably the most comprehensive undertaken until then) of young people and existing youth-related policy and provision in Ireland. It had been asked among other things to make proposals on:

- the development of a comprehensive youth service meeting the varied needs of young people and linking youth work services effectively to the other services to youth;
- the social and political education of young people with a view to raising the level and quality of participation by young people in their communities and in social, economic and political institutions, both locally and nationally; ...
- the improvement of the range and quality of the services available to disadvantaged young people and effective linkage of child care, welfare, educational, juvenile justice and health services (Department of Labour 1983: 33-34).

In formulating proposals for a 'comprehensive youth service' the NYPC decided to uphold the primacy of the voluntary (non-governmental) youth organisations as the direct providers of youth work programmes and services. This was a reflection of existing practice, and was in keeping with the social policy principle of *subsidiarity* which has historically been an important part of Catholic social teaching and which shaped the emergence and development of social services in Ireland both before and after independence, although it was most explicitly and systematically developed by Catholic intellectuals in Germany (Kennedy 2001: 188; see also Geoghegan and Powell 2006: 33-34). According to this principle the state should have a secondary ('subsidiary') role in the provision of social services while families, communities and associations (which historically often had religious affiliations) should take precedence.

One significant exception to the historical dominance of the voluntary sector in Irish youth work is the City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB), established as a sub-committee of the (statutory) City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee in 1942. This was a response to an earlier 'crisis' of urban youth unemployment, perceived as being so serious the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin had urged the state to act (Devlin 1989; Lalor et al 2007: 271). The CDYSB continues to carry out its functions in the Dublin city area, and a number of other Vocational Education Committees (VECs) around the country have used their discretion, under the relevant legislation, to become actively involved in youth services over the years, but generally the national pattern has been one of voluntary organisations receiving financial support from the state to enable them to provide a range of services through clubs, groups and project work and increasingly (from the 1980s on) through the employment of full-time paid workers (Lalor et al 2007: 373-74).

The Costello Committee proposed this arrangement should continue, but significantly added that statutory support for voluntary providers should no longer be discretionary. It called for new legislation that would impose a Ministerial responsibility at national level, and a corresponding responsibility at local level, 'as is for example imposed in Northern Ireland on the Education and Library Boards' (NYPC 1984: 128). The Committee expressed its views on this matter strongly:

> *We are convinced that until a clear and unambiguous statutory duty is imposed on some agency to ensure supply of the services which young people need [...], development will be spasmodic, muddled and inadequate. We feel that we must make this point. At the same time we want to make it clear that we are not suggesting a service managed and run by a statutory agency to the detriment of voluntary groups or the exclusion of agencies assisted from public funds. It should be made clear that the statutory agencies will support, not supplant, the voluntary organisations.* (ibid)

The NYPC outlined what it believed would be an 'effective voluntary/statutory partnership' (1984: 128), in the form of Local Youth Service Committees which would be independent and autonomous bodies with administrative links with the VECs, referred to above. The ten to 16 members of each Committee, appointed by the Minister, would be drawn on a 50:50 basis from statutory and voluntary interests, the former including personnel from services such as formal education, social services, local authorities, health services, educational welfare and youth justice; the latter substantially nominated by a Local Council of Voluntary Youth Organisations (to be established by each Local Youth Service Committee) with functions which would include: providing a forum for voluntary groups to exchange views and develop policy, encouraging good practice, developing an active role for young people 'within the youth service and in youth affairs more generally' and of course nominating a proportion of committee members (NYPC 1984: 132).

The Costello Committee gave careful consideration to the range or remit (what it called the 'contents') of a comprehensive youth service. It concluded that the main concerns of the Local Youth Service Committees should be twofold. At their core should be what Costello called 'mainline youth work services', defined as 'those providing out-of school education, recreational and leisure facilities mainly operated by voluntary youth organisations' (although the committee did recognised youth work can take place in schools) (NYPC 1984: 101). An additional 'important and significant' focus would be 'special services to youth', referring to projects 'mainly for those who are disadvantaged, socially and/or educationally' (ibid). Broadly, the target age-group should be 12 to 21 years, with priority given to older teenagers: 'Participation of this age-group is vital to the purpose of the Youth Service we have in mind and we see the large drop off of this group as a major weakness of the present provision' (ibid: 117). Other services for young people, including formal education and training services, health and social and justice services would not strictly be part of the local youth service 'but would of course be co-ordinated with it' (ibid: 127). A co-ordinated approach would be facilitated by the presence on the Youth Service Committees of representatives from these various sectors: the Committees should be required by law 'to assist in such coordination to the extent that local conditions require and permit' (ibid: 139).

A further important consideration was the location – in terms of the designated government minister and department – of the statutory responsibility to ensure 'an adequate youth service is developed and maintained' (NYPC 1984: 137). Although the principal concern of the youth service, envisaged by the Costello Committee, was 'out-of-school education', and although the Youth Affairs Section (the main civil service support unit for youth work and related matters) had initially been established within the Department of Education, it had been moved shortly before the NYPC's establishment to the Department of Labour, reflecting current policy concerns regarding youth unemployment. While opinion within the

Committee varied, the 'majority' recommendation in the Final Report was that the Youth Affairs Section be relocated to the Department of Education with the Minister for Education being given statutory responsibility for the youth service (NYPC 1984: 137).

The NYPC laid considerable emphasis on the need for co-ordination of all youth-related policy and provision:

> *It is imperative that the range of services to youth operates within an overall context of agreed policy – a context which facilitates regular planning for the future and review of performance and coordination of all services to youth.* (NYPC 1984: 104)

Locally this was to be achieved through the membership of the Youth Service Committees, as we have seen. At national level, the NYPC recommended legislation should require regular meetings between the Ministers responsible for the various aspects of youth provision 'so as to avoid overlapping and undesirable competition and to rationalise the allocation of resources between them' (ibid: 139).

Two further recommendations were intended to facilitate and support coordination but were also concerned with transparency, accountability and the provision of expert advice. The NYPC proposed an Oireachtas [Parliamentary] Committee on Youth Affairs, to ensure 'the services available to young people would be subject to public scrutiny and debate' (NYPC, 1984: 137). The other was for a National Youth Advisory Committee, whose composition should be '50:50 as between statutory and non-statutory personnel' and whose membership would include young people themselves 'as well as people experienced in the field' (ibid: 138-9). Significantly, the NYPC referred back to the recommendations of a committee appointed several years earlier by the Minister of State [junior minister] for Youth and Sport at the Department of Education:

> *The O'Sullivan Committee [Dept. of Education 1980] recommended the establishment of a Youth Work Advisory Committee* but our recommendation *is for a Committee to advise the Minister on both the operation of the Youth Service and on Youth Policy generally and to be entitled the National Youth Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee, like the Oireachtas Committee, should have functions in relation to Youth Affairs generally and should be required to publish an annual report.* (NYPC 1984: 138, emphasis in original).

Several other proposals of the NYPC merit mention. A system for 'assessing and monitoring services and ensuring that value is got for the public money involved' was recommended and it was thought this function could best be undertaken by a team of professional advisors, who would also have a role in relation to 'programme development and supportive services to voluntary organisations' (NYPC 1984: 120, 138). Curriculum development, in-service training of both paid and volunteer staff and research into 'youth needs and how such research relates to the development of youth services' should be promoted through a Department of Youth and Community Studies in a third-level institution; while a validating panel or Board was recommended to 'approve training courses and to set guidelines' (ibid: 121). While there was some ambivalence (and there may remain some today) in the voluntary youth sector about the contribution of paid workers and their perceived role in

'undermining' the traditional primacy of the volunteer (Devlin 1989), the NYPC adopted a clear position about the need for such paid workers and the importance of adequate remuneration and appropriate conditions of employment.

> *We recognise that the maintenance of existing youth work services, together with the further development we propose, requires the professional contribution of full-time youth workers whether administrative, managerial, training or face-to-face youth work functions are involved. We feel that we must make the point here that the salary support system currently operating is inadequate...Accordingly we recommend the introduction of basic salary scales and other emoluments related to appropriate grades in the public service ...* (NYPC 1984: 122).

Lastly – but not least – the NYPC emphasised the importance of the participation of young people and their involvement in decision-making at all levels within youth groups and organisations and the youth service, both for their own benefit and for society as a whole:

> *In summary, then, we believe that youth work must be addressed to the developmental needs of the individual; through social education, it must be concerned with enabling the individual to develop his/her own vision of the future and the social skills needed to play an active role in society. If youth work is to have any impact on the problems facing young people today then it must concern itself with social change...[It must] have a key role both in enabling young people to analyse society and in motivating and helping them to develop the skills and capacity to become involved in effecting change.* (NYPC 1984: 116)

The 'long march' towards youth work legislation

Following publication of the NYPC report expectations were high that significant action would quickly follow. After all at the launch of the Committee, the Taoiseach said he would 'personally pursue the implementation of key recommendations in the eventual report' (*The Irish Times*, 16 September 1983). The fact that 1985 was UN International Year of Youth had explicitly been referred to as a factor in the Government's planning, and the timely delivery of the NYPC's Final Report seemed to promise the Year could be marked in a meaningful way by some substantial progress being made on implementation. However, disillusionment set in as the months of 1985 slipped past and no formal response was forthcoming. Then, in the very last week of the International Year of Youth senior figures in the youth sector were summoned to a hastily convened launch of the White Paper *In Partnership with Youth: The National Youth Policy* (Govt. of Ireland 1985).

It was not the first time the launch of a youth policy document took place in circumstances suggesting little enthusiasm on the part of policy makers. An earlier White Paper, *A Policy for Youth and Sport* (Govt. of Ireland 1977) had lain completed but unpublished in the Department of Education for more than a year until a partial leak by the education correspondent of a national newspaper precipitated a full release. Subsequently an election and change of government consigned the document to history. Something similar was to happen to *In Partnership with Youth*. The Fine Gael-Labour government broadly accepted

the Costello Committee's recommendations: there was to be a National Youth Service, upholding the fundamentally educational and voluntary nature of youth work and based on a partnership of statutory and voluntary interests (but with the voluntary organisations as the main direct providers); and it was agreed that without a clear statutory responsibility allocated at local and national levels to ensure the provision of the service, it was 'bound to be erratic, confused and inadequate' (Govt. of Ireland 1985: 17). This responsibility would be placed on the Minister for Education and on Local Youth Service Boards (not 'Committees').

These Boards would not be independent and autonomous as the NYPC had recommended. Instead, ad hoc Boards would be set up under the terms of the existing (1930) Vocational Education Act as sub-committees of the VECs. It was envisaged that if the proposals in the 1985 Green Paper Partners in Education (Department of Education 1985) were adopted (thereby abolishing the 34 VECs and replacing them with 13 more broadly-based Local Education Councils), the Local Youth Service Boards would be linked to the new LECs. A number of ad hoc Boards were established, and in fact the name of the City of Dublin Youth Service Board dates from this time; hitherto it had been known by its Irish name of Comhairle le Leas Óige ('Council for the Welfare of Youth'). Comhairle le Leas Óige was deemed to be a Local Youth Service Board provided its membership was adjusted to reflect fully the voluntary-statutory partnership enshrined in the new policy. Apart from the few ad hoc Boards, no other progress had been made in implementing In *Partnership with Youth* when a general election led to a change of government early in 1987.

The incoming minority Fianna Fáil administration (with Charles Haughey as Taoiseach) benefited from the recent creation of the National Lottery and the opportunity it gave for allocating substantially increased funds to voluntary youth organisations and others in the sporting, cultural and community sectors (Corry 1991;1992). In this context, there was little objection from the voluntary sector when the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Frank Fahey, made it clear he was not interested in youth service legislation or in new statutory structures (whether 'Committees' or 'Boards') and instead proposed the establishment of Local Voluntary Youth Service Councils, made up almost exclusively of existing voluntary organisations at local level plus the Chief Executive Officer of the VEC or his/her nominee. The administrative costs of these Councils were to be 'borne by existing structures wherever possible' (Fahey 1988: 9).

While it was suggested the Councils could assess the level of provision locally and collectively submit costed programmes to the Department of Education (through the VEC) with a view to addressing deficiencies or filling gaps, there was no legislative or statutory responsibility to ensure a comprehensive or coordinated local youth service, and the arrangement always appeared likely to reinforce the status quo whereby voluntary organisations were most concerned with their own funding needs. In effect, the Costello Committee recommendation for 'local voluntary youth councils' was adopted, but entirely in isolation from the broader policy and legislative framework within which it was intended to play a specific role. Eleven voluntary youth councils were established on a 'pilot' basis in the late 1980s, constituted in differing ways but each receiving a small annual grant from the Department of Education, largely with a view to running joint activities or facilities. While their 'pilot' phase was a protracted one – even overlapping with the introduction of

'voluntary youth councils' under the terms of the current youth work legislation – they could never in themselves have been expected to lead to a significant lasting improvement in the quality or structure of local youth work services.

Consideration of youth work policy in the following years largely dovetailed with and received an impetus from the debates about broader education policy and provision. The early to mid 1990s saw a comprehensive review of the entire national system of education spanning the terms of two (opposing) governments. It included the publication of the Green Paper *Education for a Changing World* (Govt. of Ireland 1992) and the White Paper *Charting our Education Future* (Govt. of Ireland, 1995). There was an extensive national consultation exercise with major education 'partners' (National Education Convention Secretariat 1994); and, in parallel, the Department of Education instigated a consultative process with youth organisations and the VECs about a framework for the development of youth work, which led to agreement on most, but not all, of the major structural issues (Consultative Group on the Development of Youth Work 1993). Both the Green and White Papers had sections on youth work, the latter but not the former expressing a commitment to the introduction of youth work legislation. This is unsurprising given the former was published during a Fianna Fáil-led administration and Fianna Fáil had baulked at the idea of legislation in 1987; while the White Paper was published by a Fine Gael-Labour (and Democratic Left) coalition and it was under the 'watch' of these parties that youth work legislation had first been proposed by the NYPC.

The legislation was passed in the form of the Youth Work Act 1997. As a statute however the legislation was somewhat anomalous since it was framed as 'an Act to extend the powers of education boards in relation to youth work' and yet the much larger and more contentious Education Bill 1997 – which provided for the establishment of those boards in the first place and would have resulted ultimately in the abolition of the VECs – had not in fact been passed when there was a further change of government in 1997. At least two patterns will have become clear to the reader by now. One is the tendency of general elections to interrupt the smooth development of youth work policy. The other is the fact that Fianna Fáil has historically taken a benign view of the VECs while the other main parties have, at least in the past, been quite explicit about their intention to abolish them. The reason is fairly straightforward: Fianna Fáil, the largest of the parties, renowned for its strength in local political organisation, has tended to have a dominant position on the VECs around the country, since the VECs are structurally linked to the system of local government. Not surprisingly, therefore, the incoming government in 1997 (led by Fianna Fáil) deemed the Youth Work Act 'inoperable', and stated its intention to introduce amended youth work legislation. Possibly it would not have seen the need for legislation in this area, (certainly Fianna Fáil had hitherto shown no interest in youth work legislation) but its options were somewhat limited by the fact that in their final days in office the outgoing Minister for Education and Minister of State for Youth Affairs had implemented one important element of the Youth Work Act 1997 by appointing the National Youth Work Advisory Committee (NYWAC). This had at least two consequences. First it made it difficult for the new government to ignore the Act; and second, in securing Ministerial approval after a relatively short time to prepare proposals for a National Youth Work Development Plan, NYWAC established itself as having a long term contribution to make.

Youth Work Act 2001

The revised (and current) legislation, the Youth Work Act 2001, was introduced after further consultation with the relevant voluntary and statutory organisations. The crucial difference from earlier legislation was that, far from undermining the VECs, it made them responsible for co-ordination of youth work within their areas. However, apart from the appointment of a (slightly reconstituted) NYWAC, its main provisions remained inactive for several years, partly for reasons of cost but also because agreement needed to be reached between the parties involved (the Department, the VECs, the voluntary organisations) about the precise shape of some elements of the legislation. NYWAC, on which all of these parties and others are represented, took a leading role (in keeping with its own statutory functions) in preparing detailed guidelines for the implementation of key components of the Act. In 2006, funding was finally provided by the Department of Education and Science to enable the VECs (or at least those which did not already have specialist youth work staff in place, who were the majority) to recruit Youth Officers and thereby to begin fulfilling their functions under the legislation.

The Youth Work Act 2001 (s. 3) defines youth work as follows:

> *A planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary involvement...which is:*
> *(a) complementary to their formal, academic and vocational education and training; and*
> *(b) provided primarily by voluntary organisations.*

Two elements of this definition echo the formulation in the 1997 legislation, and both are in keeping with the position taken in Irish youth work policy documents at least since the 1970s. These are the voluntary participation of young people and the fundamentally educational nature of the work. A third element – the idea that youth work is 'primarily provided by voluntary organisations' – was added to the amending legislation after lobbying by the voluntary organisations themselves, but again it is in keeping with longstanding traditions and assumptions in Irish youth work. The definition has recently been criticised for being 'determinedly structured' and for relying on concepts which are themselves 'all contestable' (Spence 2007: 6-7), but it might equally be argued that enshrining the educational and voluntary dimensions of youth work in law is a significant step forward and that the contestability of certain concepts allows some 'room for manoeuvre' in practice.

The Act defines a young person as someone 'who has not attained the age of 25 years'; but specifies that 'particular regard will be had' to the youth work requirements of young people between the ages of 10 and 20 (inclusive), and of those who are socially or economically disadvantaged. The age-band specified is similar to that drawn elsewhere between youth and children's services, although some Irish youth organisations argue this distinction is artificial and hinders the ability of youth work to engage in valuable developmental and preventative work with younger children. Despite adopting a broad definition of 'young person' the Act certainly does not place the emphasis on work with older young people' as had the NYPC. It highlights the issue of access and participation by young women and men alike, as well as their information needs, and the youth work

requirements of Irish speakers. Under the 2001 Act, as in its 1997 predecessor and in line with recommendations going back to the NYPC, the Minister for Education has statutory responsibility for ensuring the development and co-ordination of policies relating to youth work programmes and services. The Minister must also ensure co-ordination of youth work with other services for young people, a point to which we will return.

As stated already the VECs, originally charged with responsibility for vocational and 'continuation' education under the Vocational Education Act of 1930, and operating predominantly at county and city level, are given responsibility under the Youth Work Act for ensuring the provision of youth work programmes and services in their areas. This involves: providing assistance, including financial assistance, to voluntary youth work organisations; preparing and implementing three-yearly Youth Work Development Plans, while ensuring co-ordination with other local services for young people; drafting annual youth work budgets and reporting on youth work services to the Minister for Education. Importantly from their own point of view and that of voluntary youth organisations, they have a responsibility to 'monitor and assess youth work programmes and services' and evaluate the expenditure incurred. To support the carrying out of its functions and in keeping with the principle of statutory-voluntary partnership, the Act requires each VEC to establish a Youth Work Committee and Voluntary Youth Council.

The role of the Youth Work Committee is to advise and make recommendations to the VEC on the performance of its youth work functions. It has a membership of 16-20 members comprising, in equal proportion, (a) persons nominated by the relevant local statutory agencies (for example local authorities, health services, FÁS [the national training authority], the Gardaí [police]); and (b) nominees of the Voluntary Youth Council for the area. Generally this means that when the Act is fully implemented every VEC will have a committee similar to that established in the City of Dublin VEC in 1942 – now called the City of Dublin Youth Service Board – and such as was recommended for every local area in the country by the Costello Report. The Voluntary Youth Council's role is to advise the VEC on matters related to the Youth Work Development Plan and to act as a forum for voluntary youth work organisations in the VEC area, including nomination of members to the Youth Work Committee. The Voluntary Youth Council has 10-20 members of whom, 'as far as practicable', at least one-fifth should be under 25 years old, and at least three-quarters should be volunteers. This latter provision is significant, and might be interpreted as a sign of the official ambivalence already mentioned towards the role and contribution of paid professional youth workers.

NYWAC, first established by the Youth Work Act of 1997 and expanded in size following the 2001 legislation, currently has between 31 and 33 members. Apart from the one to three Ministerial nominees it comprises:

(a) nominees of the various Government Ministers and statutory organisations with an involvement in the provision of services for young people, including four nominees of the Irish Vocational Education Association (the VEC representative body),and
(b) nominees of the 'prescribed national representative organisation' for the voluntary sector.

The National Youth Council of Ireland was explicitly named in the Act as having this 'prescribed' status for the first three years, and at the expiry of that period the status was renewed. The Act provides that the voluntary sector representatives will equal in number the total of all other members excluding the chairperson, making the Committee's constitution an almost equal partnership of voluntary and statutory interests.

NYWAC's role is to advise the Minister in relation to the provision of youth work programmes and services, the development and implementation of youth work policies, the coordination of youth work with other services for young people, the equitable treatment of young men and women in youth work, and the implementation of the detailed provisions of the Youth Work Act at national and VEC level. The first NYWAC, acting on a recommendation from the National Youth Council of Ireland, prepared proposals for the Minister for a series of actions and developments to address aspects of youth work not covered by a legislative framework, and these were (eventually) adopted by government and published in 2003 as the *National Youth Work Development Plan* (Department of Education and Science, 2003). One of the suggested actions which has come to fruition is an endorsement framework for youth work training, established on an all-Ireland basis as the North South Education and Training Standards Committee (NSETS), which is working closely with partners in Britain through the Joint ETS Forum. Such a body was included in NYPC's proposals in 1984. However, the fact that NYWAC's brief is limited to youth work, rather than wider 'youth affairs', runs counter to the NYPC's thinking and recommendations, a point to which we will return.

Briefly in the early 1990s the Youth Affairs Section of the Department of Education employed a professional Youth Work Assessor, whose work resulted among other things in the publication of a review of youth work practice in community-based projects (Treacy 1992) and fed into the youth work consultative process mentioned above. When the incumbent left the post it was left unfilled. The Youth Work Act 1997 provided for the formal assessment of youth work programmes and services and the 2001 Act went further by establishing the statutory position of Assessor of Youth Work, analogous to the formal educational inspectorate. The Assessor has two principal functions in law: the assessment and monitoring of youth work programmes and services, and the review of various aspects of the Minister's and VECs' functions. Some commentators in the youth work sector suggest there may be a potential conflict of interest between these two intended functions, and significantly the relevant section of the legislation has not been formally 'commenced'. An Assessor was appointed to the Youth Affairs Section in 2006, but not strictly to the statutory post as provided for in the legislation. The new Assessor made quality standards in youth work practice his priority on taking up office, and the pilot phase of a national Quality Standards Framework (QSF) was launched in March 2008. Again, this development was in line with a recommendation of the NYPC – almost a quarter of a century earlier..

'A lot done, a lot more to do?'

The campaign slogan of the Fianna Fáil party (the lead party in both the outgoing and – as it turned out – incoming coalition governments) during the 2002 general election was: *Go Leor Déanta, Go Leor Fós le Déanamh* ('A Lot Done, A Lot More to Do'). It is not an

inappropriate way of describing the current state of play in the development of youth work services in Ireland, specifically in relation to the proposals of the Costello Committee.

On the positive side, the achievements are significant. The legislation imposing a statutory responsibility at national and local levels to ensure the provision and co-ordination of youth work services is overdue and welcome For this author its definition of youth work neither prescribes nor proscribes too much, and is certainly an improvement on the definition in the earlier (1997) version of the legislation, which began by saying youth work was a 'programme of activity...designed for the purpose of providing developmental and educational training...'.[1]

Also valuable has been the creation of NYWAC which, although strictly speaking limited to an advisory function, has interpreted its role in a proactive way to include supporting the officials in the Youth Affairs Section of the Department of Education and Science in developing and implementing significant new initiatives and generally exercising leadership in the sector as a whole. For example NYWAC was pivotal in the emergence of the *National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-07* (Department of Education and Science 2003), which has led to the introduction (jointly with partners in Northern Ireland) of an all-island endorsement framework for professional youth work training and education, mentioned above. *The Development Plan* has also led to a diminution in the number of 'single worker projects'; improvements in child protection and welfare and other related aspects of good youth work practice; the preparation of an 'intercultural strategy' for the youth work sector which is under consideration at the time of writing; and a focus on assuring and raising standards through the introduction of the QSF. A further area in which improvement in the last two decades has been obvious is the large increase in youth work funding. The budget of the Youth Affairs Section alone has increased since 1988 by approximately 1000 per cent.[2]

However, there is 'more to be done'. Most significantly, the *National Youth Work Development Plan* (Department of Education and Science 2003: 24) included 'as a priority action.....and one on which the implementation of much of the rest of the Plan depends' the establishment of a *National Youth Work Development Unit* (NYWDU) staffed by a small team of specialist personnel with the functions of managing and co-ordinating research relevant to the sector's needs, piloting innovation and generally supporting the development of good practice – a grouping similar to the 'professional advisers' recommended by the Costello Committee to offer 'programme development and supportive services' to youth organisations (National Youth Policy Committee 1984: 120). So far the NYWDU has not been established, although the official position remains that there is a commitment to do so.

Other infrastructural developments for which the Costello Committee saw a need – and no one has since mounted a coherent contrary argument – were for an Oireachtas [Parliamentary] Committee on Youth Affairs and a committee of ministers with responsibility for services to young people, provided for in law. Neither has been established. This is not because there are fewer ministers carrying such responsibilities than in the 1980s. Quite the contrary – the field of 'youth services' has become infinitely more complex in recent years, new 'interests', perspectives and practices have emerged, and there has been a shift in

both the budgetary balance and the 'balance of power' in provision for young people. For instance as already stated the budget of the Youth Affairs Section has increased enormously in the last two decades. However, as a proportion of all public funding targeted at young people it has decreased significantly, as youth justice services, health service provision for young people, drugs initiatives and other developments focusing on disadvantaged (mostly urban) areas such as the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF) have grown and transformed the landscape of 'work with young people'. In the city of Dublin, where the bulk of the YPFSF funds have been disbursed, the scheme led to a five-fold increase in project funding and staff between 1998 and 2003 (Lalor et al 2007: 273). Meanwhile the partially overlapping field of 'services for children', defined as those under 18 years of age, has undergone institutional consolidation since the publication of the National Children's Strategy (Department of Health and Children 2000) through the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC), attached primarily to the Department of Health and Children but also with responsibilities relating to the Department of Education and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.[3] These are not developments which have gone on entirely separately from, or parallel to, the youth work sector. Rather youth workers and youth organisations have to varying degrees been involved or implicated in all of them, even though this has given rise to tensions and challenges relating to such matters as conflicting ethos or principle (as in the case of youth justice services and the question of 'voluntary participation') or the issue of what age-group of 'young people' youth work should concern itself with.

Conclusion

Overall youth work today finds itself in a somewhat paradoxical position. On the one hand there is the relative clarity, security and 'status enhancement' associated with having a dedicated piece of legislation setting out what it is meant to be and who is responsible for ensuring that it happens. On the other, it is increasingly just one of a proliferation of types of policy and provision aimed at young people, and it often struggles to maintain key principles in a climate where substantial funding is available to support 'work with young people' and where youth organisations must compete to secure it, whether it is strictly 'youth work' or not. Meanwhile at national level there is probably a greater need now than 25 years ago for 'an overall context of agreed policy – a context which facilitates regular planning for the future and review of performance and co-ordination of all services to youth' (NYPC 1984: 104). However, not only is there no committee of ministers or parliamentary committee on youth affairs; but the one existing statutory national committee (NYWAC) has purely advisory functions. Representatives of the diverse government departments and statutory agencies with an interest in young people are members of NYWAC, but given the way its functions are defined it may be difficult for them to see its relevance for their own work. Certainly in the absence of any other inter-departmental or inter-ministerial mechanism to ensure coordination the current system relies rather too much on the level of interest and goodwill of individual civil servants.

At local level the Youth Work Committees of the VECs will bring together representatives of relevant statutory agencies (along with voluntary sector representatives) allowing for the possibility of a planned, coherent and coordinated approach to cross-sectoral youth

provision. However, this will require commitment, compromise and concessions on all sides. Otherwise, a 'minimalist' interpretation of the Act will prevail, whereby the VEC interprets its responsibility to 'ensure coordination' simply to mean that none of the youth work programmes or services in its own development plan duplicates any of the other youth provisions locally, but these latter continue as before without any overall co-ordination. This would, from the point of view of those individuals and organisations who have been calling for comprehensive youth work legislation for many years, be an opportunity missed.

There are challenges and opportunities in these emerging structures for youth work and youth workers. A central challenge will be to retain a core sense of vision and purpose regarding the relational, educational and associative mission of youth work, in a climate of increasing managerialism and outcome-focused accountability. Looked at positively, and without underestimating the obstacles and pitfalls that lie ahead, the opportunity may exist at local level to use youth work's new institutional foothold as a way of building fresh relationships with other 'youth interests' and with young people themselves; or to re-mould existing relationships from a position of greater strength.

Notes

1 The author of this article was himself the researcher for the National Youth Policy Committee.
2 From 4m punts in 1988 to around 50m Euro in 2008, although further significant increases are unlikely for the foreseeable future.
3 While this article was in preparation Bertie Ahern resigned as Taoiseach. His replacement, Brian Cowen, in 're-shuffling' the Cabinet and the Ministers of State, announced that the Youth Affairs Section of the Department of Education was to be 'integrated' within the Office of the Minister for Children, to be re-named the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). This development – entirely unanticipated within the sector – is likely to prove as significant as any documented in this article but the full implications are as yet unclear.

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Youth Policy in Wales

John Rose

Until 1999, the Youth Service[1] in Wales was linked to the Youth Service in England (Ministry of Education 1960; Welsh Office 1984; NAW 2000a). The main exceptions to this were the development of a specific Curriculum Statement for Youth Work in Wales (WYA 1992,) and the setting up of an independent Education and Training Standards Committee for Wales in 1994. As a result of the link to England, a number of opportunities were missed to examine variances cultivated by distinctive social, political, and economic differences between the two countries and the effects these have had on the Youth Service in Wales (Jones and Rose 2001). This is not to claim that each of these differences had an equitable effect on the development of the Youth Service in Wales, but to recognise that each has had an influence that has, to some degree, shaped practice in a way that can be described as specifically Welsh (ibid). These differences were recognised by the National Assembly for Wales following its formation in 1999, which claimed that the 'building blocks' were in place across Wales for the introduction of a strategic approach leading to the development of 'a specific Welsh system for the support of young people' (Michael 2000:1). It can be claimed that it was from this point in time that the Youth Service in Wales became part of a wider process concerned to develop an approach independent from what was happening elsewhere.

There was significant support for self-determining action and from its very beginning the National Assembly was keen to promote a new way of operating, described as *Team Wales*. This was an approach designed to maximise the relationship between the private, public, and voluntary sectors as a means of delivering its three major themes of sustainable development, social inclusion, and equal opportunities (NAW 2000b). These themes would be linked to new education and training initiatives with their ability to liberate talent, extend opportunity, empower communities, and help create wealth (Davidson 2001a:1). This 'Team Wales' concept was further reinforced by the claim 'we aim to do things differently in Wales – through our 'Made in Wales' approach...as a means to create unique Welsh solutions to Welsh problems' (Davidson 2001b:1). The theme was continued throughout the strategic plan of the Assembly (NAW 2001a) with the claim the 'Team Wales' approach would be used to tackle the particular economic and social conditions through greater investment in knowledge generation and exploitation.

Within this environment the First Minister of the new National Assembly brought together a group identified as experts (including Youth Service specialists) to produce a document that took a strategic view of how the particular needs of young people in Wales would be both identified and responded to. The initial document – of what became a trilogy of publications – *Extending Entitlement: supporting young people in Wales* (NAW 2000a), attempted to define the principles underpinning future policies and determine the interface and level of effectiveness between existing policies. It also identified its purpose which was

to ensure that young people are able to:

- Participate effectively in education and training;
- Take advantage of opportunities for employment;
- Participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.

These would be achieved through a multi-disciplinary approach, involving a wide range of organisations working with young people, co-ordinated through Chief Executives of Local Authorities for the purpose of 'reviewing and developing services for the entire cohort of young people in their area' (ibid:75). This approach was driven by the statutory base included within the Youth Support Services Directions and Guidance (Wales) 2002 under Section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (HMSO 2000) which directed local authorities to set up Young People's Partnerships (YPP's) as the primary vehicle for co-ordinating multi-agency activity to deliver 10 entitlements (WAG 2002). These new partnerships would not have a significant budget to carry out their co-ordinating role but were expected by the National Assembly for Wales to influence and co-ordinate the spending of individual partners and to commission activities so that services would become more focused on the priorities of the *Extending Entitlement* initiative (NAW 2000a; NAW 2001b; WAG 2002). As well as developing the entitlement concept for young people, the Welsh Assembly Government also adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis of all of its work with children and young people (NAW 2000a).These rights were translated into seven core aims which were used as the basis for the *Strategy for Children and Young People* (WAG 2004) and also for the establishment of an independent Children's Commissioner for Wales in 2001, who became the first holder of such a post in the UK.

Despite this positive approach, the process of turning policy related to young people (in the context of *Extending Entitlement*) into practice was often perceived by those working in the Youth Service as being too concerned with developing and centralising the importance of the Young People's Partnership as an organisation in its own right. It was a perception fuelled to some extent by the Connexions Service adopted in England, with its drive towards centralising services for young people (DfEE 2000). This was a process with some contradiction to that promoted by the *Extending Entitlement* experts group who stated that 'new structures are not needed – rather a local network of quality services guided by a clear vision of how young people's needs will be met' (NAW 2000a). However, for the Youth Service to become a quality service and an effective member of the Partnership, after years of chronic under funding (Michael 2000) it was estimated it would require £100 million of new money in addition to the £20 million it was estimated as receiving at that time (NAW 2000c). This new budget would, it was proposed, be spent on employing 300 additional qualified workers, and refurbishing the buildings used by the Youth Service (ibid). Following some discussion and debate within the National Assembly, the Youth Service in Wales was allocated an additional £2million in 2001-02, £3.7million in 2002-03 and £4.75 million in 2003-04 (NAW 2000c).

As a result of this disappointing level of funding, the Youth Service continued to be significantly under resourced and in many instances easily persuaded by relatively small amounts of additional money – not always related to a form of work linked to its core purpose, principles and values – to become involved in new, primarily government-inspired

developments related to young people. The extent of this reliance on external funding was identified by the 2003-04 audit of the maintained Youth Service which identified the total budget of the Youth Service as £29.6 million with £9.6 million (34 per cent) coming from external sources (WYA 2005). By the 2006-07 audit the percentage of budget provided by external sources was 39.2 per cent (WAG 2008). As a result, the Youth Service continues to be too often directed, through financial control, to become involved in forms of practice underpinned by a number of different priorities, many of which are driven by enhanced levels of accountability. This approach was interpreted by many managers and practitioners to be overly linked to the measurement of outcomes for young people as these were determined by formal accreditation methods. Little corporate attention appears to be given by the Youth Service to either delivering programmes underpinned by a non-formal education approach or providing evidence – linked to its particular style of education – of the importance of the outcomes for young people through their involvement in such programmes.

Overarching policy in Wales

As the Youth Service in Wales attempted to re-energise itself following the publication of *Extending Entitlement*, a broad policy direction was emerging described in a range of documents related to the strategic direction of the new Assembly and more specific policies related to economic development, education and lifelong learning (see www.Wales.gov.uk). These were all policies with the potential to affect in some way the strategic importance of the Youth Service within the emerging social and economic agenda of the Welsh Assembly Government. However, despite the promotion of the 'Made in Wales' concept many of these documents were influenced to a greater or lesser extent by the 'Third Way' philosophy of New Labour (Blair 1996). This was an approach that committed New Labour to a style of politics underpinned by three core concepts: *'equal opportunity, civic responsibility and community'* (White 2001:4). Adherence to these concepts would result, it was claimed, in the development of a society with all individuals having an equal opportunity to access strategic goods such as education, jobs, income and wealth (ibid:8). Pivotal to the New Labour approach was a political commitment to radical reform aimed at ending welfare dependency and encouraging self-reliance and the work habit, resulting in welfare-to-work initiatives for groups like single mothers and the young unemployed. It was also an approach concerned to reduce public expenditure on state-supported programmes to ensure competitive ability in the context of an economy increasingly affected by industrialised globalisation. Central to the achievement of the New Labour vision were the ideas of social interdependence, mutual obligation and social responsibility promoted as the stakeholder society, within which autonomous citizens would possess rights, assets and opportunities. In return, they would be expected to fulfil certain responsibilities and obligations driven by government policies on welfare, work and education.

The policy direction of the National Assembly was also reflective of New Labour's position on young people including *Bridging the Gap* (SEU 1999) and PAT 12 (SEU 2000) publications which promoted the New Labour concept of social integration with its emphasis on paid work and the education/training qualifications necessary to gain access to the labour market. Those working class young people outside of this framework were

stigmatised and the emphasis for those working with them became a social inclusion agenda to bring all young people into the education, employment or training framework. This agenda influenced key National Assembly policies which were concerned to eradicate the negative economic and social conditions specific to Wales existing at the time of its formation. These, it was recognised, were responsible for: 'the persistent and substantial gap between the levels of prosperity in Wales compared with the UK and the rest of Europe, Welsh per capita GDP is now only 82 per cent of the EU average' (European Task Force 1999:5).

The reasons for this prosperity deficit included low employment activity rates, low economic output, low investment in innovation and entrepreneurship and low levels of education, training and investment (Higgins and Morgan 1999). The European Task Force (1999) claimed the problems associated with poor economic activity in Wales included the lowest household income in the UK as well as disproportionately high levels of dependency on social security benefit. Those affected by these circumstances were also often identified with poverty, crime and family instability and by their isolation from mainstream society (Blair 1996).

This interconnection of negative factors affecting the lives of people in Wales was further highlighted by the claim that social exclusion becomes an outcome and describes a way of life where opportunities are few, services are difficult to access and people lose hope (NAW 1999). Young people were it was claimed also disproportionately affected by social exclusion, with 37 per cent[2] living in poverty in that they lived in households with less than 50 per cent of the average income of households with dependent children, 18 per cent did not have anyone earning money, and in some areas the figure approached 60 per cent. 3,400 children were looked after by local authorities and 2,500 children were on the Child Protection Register. Over 5 per cent of young people left school with no qualifications and one in seven 16 to 17 year olds were not in education, training or work. Unemployment and low pay was also seen as a contributor to the economic and social position of Wales with the Assembly claiming that in 1996-1997, 25 per cent of households and nearly half a million people in Wales received income support or family credit (ibid). A more recent report (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2005), concerned with monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Wales, identified little improvement resulting in a child poverty rate in Wales stalling at around 28 per cent. The report also identified the unemployment rate among young adults at around 10 per cent, more than twice that for those aged over 25. It also claimed that a quarter of 19-year-olds lack NVQ2 or equivalent qualifications, a proportion unchanged this decade, that around 10 per cent of 16- to 18-year-olds are not in employment, education or training and up to 1 per cent of children are in situations where they are almost certain to be very seriously disadvantaged (for example, in care or becoming homeless). The report further claimed that more than 15 per cent of children live in workless households and more than 20 per cent live with a disabled parent.

Within this framework the Youth Service in Wales often remains outside any direct front line education involvement in its own right designed to eradicate these social and economic conditions. The role of the Youth Service is in many instances relegated to an involvement concerned with 're-entry' of young people into education, training and employment as part of its social inclusion agenda (Welsh Office 1998; SEU 1999). This position reflected

the findings of the Education and Employment Committee of the House of Commons, who claimed that to combat disaffection, 'all interventions should have the aim of reintegrating young people into mainstream education' (HMSO 1998: iv). Within the new policy framework, educational and social programmes of the sort delivered within the Youth Service, negotiated by young people without the influence of either government-led employment agendas or appropriate and quantifiable outcomes remained as marginalised as it has ever been.

For many youth workers what was missing from the economic and social policy agenda of the Assembly was recognition and support for a particular kind of learning delivered outside of school with the voluntary participation of young people. A style of learning driven by the belief that 'knowledge is assumed to be actively constructed by the learner, not passively received from the environment; and second, learning is an interactive process of interpretation, integration and transformation of one's experiential world' (Pratt 1993: 17). Underpinning an effective Youth Service approach to learning are those who challenge the effectiveness of formal education by offering a broader perspective about the values of non-formal learning which occur, they argue, 'in' and 'out' of community. They also argue that formal learning systems offer a certain type of arrangement for learning which may not suit the needs of many in society, implying that the formal context for learning offers some an opportunity for learning but not all. In the opinion of non-formal educators what is required to overcome this is a complementary system designed to 'provide the learner with new links to the world instead of continuing to funnel all educational programmes through the teacher' (Illich 1971:73). It can be argued that by adopting this position the Youth Service is enabling young people to successfully navigate their routes to adult life, to take more control over their lives, and to achieve their aspirations. However, instead of using its potential strengths to achieve this the Youth Service was directed to maintain what could be described as a secondary role within both the government's employability agenda linked to the achievement of hard outcomes and a social care role linked into children and young people's rights.

Within this environment, in 2006 an opportunity presented itself for the Youth Service that allowed arguments to be made to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee of the Welsh Assembly Government. Rob Edwards, Chair of the Principal Youth Officer's Group and Veronica Wilson, Chair of the Council for Voluntary Youth Services in Wales, made powerful presentations to elected members on the potential of the Youth Service and identified capacity reasons and political neglect as the explanations for why its potential was not being fulfilled (WAG 2006). During the subsequent debate the Minister, Jane Davidson, announced there would be a strategy developed for the Youth Service in Wales which would provide a vision for the Youth Service and an action plan to ensure it made an effective contribution to the Welsh Assembly Government's policy agendas.

The *Youth Service Strategy for Wales* (WAG 2007a) developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including young people, was launched by the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in March 2007.The strategy clearly identified the Youth Service in Wales as being underpinned by the following characteristics:

- the voluntary involvement by young people who have chosen to engage in the process;

- being age specific. Focused on 11-25 year olds;
- a non-formal education approach;
- being driven by a young people first approach;
- a universal approach.

The document also described a range of outcomes for young people as a result of their involvement with the Youth Service within three themes of active participation, wider skills development and enhanced emotional competence. Central to the ongoing delivery of the strategy was an audit of existing provision with the outcomes of the audit providing the basis for additional resources during the 2008-09 financial year (WAG 2008a).

In addition to these developments, young people and the Youth Service were also receiving some attention during the early part of 2007 from all the major political parties in Wales in preparation for the Welsh Assembly Government election taking place in early May 2007. Liberal Democrat policy was to improve the provision of all Youth Services by putting them on a statutory basis as a means of ensuring local authorities met the demand amongst young people for leisure and education-based facilities that could get them off the streets and into constructive engagement with each other and with their communities. They also promised to encourage greater use of specially trained youth workers to help pupils identified as needing extra targeted behavioural support. The Conservative Party generally ignored the Youth Service as a discrete organisation with the potential to contribute to its agenda; Plaid Cymru promised professional support to young people aged 16 to 19 not in employment, education and training, to encourage them re-engage in education, training or in some form of volunteering. They also promised to invest in the appointment of specially trained outreach youth workers to work with young people not in education or training. The Labour Party, in comparison to the other major parties, made more positive comments about both young people and the Youth Service underpinned by what they described as a commitment to provide education and training opportunities as good as any in the world. In order to achieve this they promised to increase investment in every area of education, lifelong learning and skills and improve standards. Teachers, lecturers, youth workers and other practitioners were all identified as having crucial roles in providing ever better education and training. Labour promised to invest £20 million in the Youth Service to support the delivery of the Youth Service Strategy. In addition they promised to invest in the appointment of specially trained outreach youth workers to work with young people not in education or training. The 2007 election resulted in a coalition government between Labour and Plaid Cymru. With two manifestos to prioritise and cost, the £20 million promised to the Youth Service by Labour became £10 million over three years from 2008-2011 for capital projects, with an additional £380,000 allocated for revenue in 2009-09 (WAG 2008b).

Despite the production of the strategy and the additional resources the Youth Service in Wales continues to be affected by a small number of interconnected challenges which maintain its inability to maximise its potential. First it has been unable to provide cogent arguments for the importance of its non-formal community based educational role that convince politicians, both within the Welsh Assembly Government and local authorities, to give it sufficient levels of funding. It can also be argued that on some occasions it has failed to convince itself of the importance of its particular education role. Second specific Youth Service policy continues to be subordinate to other policies related to children and

young people, particularly around formal education and social care. This will assume greater importance if the financial position of government becomes less positive. Third the Youth Service continues being squeezed between competing government priorities related to, for example, the social inclusion agenda, the crime reduction agenda and the social care agenda. Fourth the promotion – or perhaps Youth Service interpretation – of an approach to take those working with young people out of what has been described as their 'professional silo' into more integrated children and young people approaches. This last challenge is as a result of a developing policy framework which includes the Children Act 2004 (HMSO 2004) that places a legal requirement on local authorities to have Children and Young People's Partnerships in place by 2008. This partnership will be driven by an overarching children and young people's plan covering all services for those aged 0-25; this includes an integrated workforce development plan which causes some unease in the Youth Service concerning a reduction in its distinctiveness. The status of the Young People's Partnerships – the driver of *Extending Entitlement* within which the Youth Service is located – will be determined within individual local authorities who will be allowed flexibility as to how the statutory requirement is achieved. Within this arrangement local authorities and their partners, including the Young People's Partnership, can decide whether they wish to retain separate age-based partnerships or not.

Conclusion

The Youth Service at all levels should be aware that it is the intent of the current Welsh Assembly Government to make Wales a learning country, where high quality, lifelong learning liberates talent, extends opportunities, empowers communities, provides the better jobs and skills that people need to prosper in the new economy and creates a sustainable future (WAG 2007b). If the Youth Service in Wales wants to become an integral part of this ambition it will need to convince the Welsh Assembly of the potential of its non-formal education approach undertaken with the voluntary involvement of young people. To achieve this it will need to consider a number of issues. First it needs to collectively adopt the purpose, principles and values of the Youth Service as these are identified within the National Youth Service strategy. There should be a resistance to redefining its roles to meet particular funding streams as there should be a resistance by those training staff for the Youth Service to creating generic 'workers with young people'. The strategic purpose of the Youth Service in Wales is to create a discrete organisation capable of meeting the outcomes for young people in the way identified within the National Youth Service strategy (WAG 2007a). Second the Youth Service needs to recognise and understand the aspirations of government and have knowledge of how these aspirations are translated into government policy. Third the Youth Service needs to effectively match its purpose, principles and values to strategic government policy initiatives. Fourth it needs to collect evidence on a regular basis which links the outcomes for young people of their involvement in Youth Service programmes to appropriate elements of Welsh Assembly Government policy. Fifth it needs to be more active in contributing to the development of Welsh Assembly Government policy rather than reacting or avoiding it after it has been written. Only by doing this can those working within the Youth Service help create an environment within which it can deliver a range of programmes appropriate to its purpose, principles and values and meet some of the requirements of government policy.

Notes

1 In Wales, the term 'Youth Service' refers to the collective of the local authority Youth Service, national voluntary youth work organisations and local voluntary youth work organisations.
2 In 2001the total population of Wales was 2,903.085, the total population of young people between the age of 11-25 was 551,600.

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History of Youth and Community Work Study Conference

6 to 8 March 2009
Ushaw College, Durham

Interest in the historical development of youth and community work has grown considerably in recent years. Yet there still remain few opportunities for those interested in this topic to get together to share their knowledge, ideas and research. *Youth and Policy*, with the Department of Youth Development, University of Minnesota, is therefore sponsoring this eighth study conference.

The weekend will comprise an eclectic mix of plenary talks, workshops and happenings.

Speakers will include Gabriel Eichsteller on the history of social pedagogy and Catriona Kelly, author of two major books on the Pioneers and growing up in Soviet Russia. Workshops on the 50th anniversary of the Albemarle Report, youth work as social medicine revisited, youth work with girls and young women and the history of the CYWU are promised.

For more details and to book a place contact Tracey Hodgson (Y & P), 24 Harle Street, Browney, Co Durham DH7 8HX or e-mail: cyw.conference@googlemail.com

European Youth Policy

Howard Williamson

In my contribution on 'European Youth Policy' to *Youth and Policy* 95 (Williamson 2007), I discussed the increasing convergence on this front between the two main European institutions: the European Commission and the Council of Europe. It had been a difficult and complex journey, I argued, but the range of both formal and less formal partnerships between these two institutions in the youth field has at last produced some coherence in thinking and development. That article focused especially on the structural and chronological development; though there will be some repetition (reinforcement?), this article will be more concerned with conceptual and content issues, particularly in relation to the Council of Europe's international reviews of national youth policy. Fifteen such reviews have been completed since 1997 and each has generated at least one distinctive question or challenge for youth policy. That question has been embedded within subsequent debates at the European level and has usually come to represent an additional piece in the mosaic or jigsaw that is often referred to as European youth policy. We have, however, to be rather cautious about the use of the term. This is because, first there are few issues that can confidently and legitimately be described as youth policy at a European level. Second, to try to claim more ground would be a hostage to fortune for political reasons: matters of 'competence' and 'subsidiarity' would quickly take over the debate. Third, it would anyway be inappropriate to do so, for it is quite impossible to think of some kind of overarching European blueprint that would fit the historical and cultural specificities of all the member countries: whether the 27 of the European Union or the 49 of the Council of Europe. Nevertheless, the questions generated through scrutiny of 'youth policy' at a European level and from a European perspective are relevant both to feed a 'bottom-up' European youth agenda and to contribute to the development of national thinking about youth policy. Like so many popular board games, one can accept, consider or reject the questions, for they will have a different resonance in different contexts, but they are nevertheless questions that need to be raised as some idea of 'youth policy' across Europe moves into the 21st century.

Exactly 40 years ago, Europe (both west and east) experienced a range of political protests and upheavals, and just under 20 years ago, the Berlin Wall came down. Each of those moments heralded a key step in the incremental development of 'European youth policy'. On the first occasion, *youth participation* (involving young people in decision-making at all levels of policy) became the opening mantra for an embryonic youth policy within the Council of Europe. On the second occasion the concern within an enlarging Europe was with the promotion of *intercultural tolerance and understanding* and the combating of racism, intolerance and xenophobia. The third key moment may, arguably, be attached – though less directly connected – to the attacks on the twin towers in New York. This generated further, and deeper, issues around inter-religious (or inter-faith) dialogue. Such issues became more acute in Europe after the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London. *Faith*, in my view, is one of a trilogy of additional themes, alongside *mobility* and *generation*, that needs to inform the shaping of European youth policy over the *next* two decades.

These themes are, however, just component parts of the much longer checklist that is now reflected in a variety of statements around and within European youth policy. The European Commission in its 2001 White Paper on youth identified four priority themes on which member states should develop common objectives: participation; information; voluntary activities; and a greater understanding of youth (European Commission 2002). These were supplemented in the 2004 European Youth Pact by concerns around education, employment and family life. More recently, the Commission has identified three further 'transversal' issues in employment (once more) and unemployment, lifestyles and social exclusion. The same rather predictable themes can be found repetitively in numerous resolutions and declarations by youth ministers and others: the rhetoric is easy to produce, real development and action is rather more elusive.

Nevertheless, it is not all hot air, even if the capacity at a European level to drill through the politics, economics and culture means that brick walls are still too frequently encountered. The European Commission has made use of its Open Method of Co-ordination to advance the agenda of the White Paper. Within its formal 'Youth Partnership' arrangements with the Council of Europe, it has established the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYP) that is seeking to build up a body of comparable youth knowledge across the member states. There is now a European Portfolio for the Recognition of Youth Workers. And a human rights training manual, Kompass, that has now been translated into more languages than can be imagined, and a companion volume for children, Kompasito, was recently produced. These are but three examples. The point here is that, at the European level, there is not only a plethora of aspirational announcements on youth policy, and not only a more limited (for many reasons) repertoire of policy platforms, but there are some concrete tools that have emerged from this process. These connect with both the overarching political and economic agendas of the European Commission (economy, education, social issues) and the more legal and cultural concerns of the Council of Europe (human rights, democracy and the rule of law).

An apparent absence of significant progress should not be deplored. No more than 15 years ago, there was little or no talk of 'youth policy' at national, let alone European, levels. Youth policy did exist, of course, in various forms, but it was not debated or constructed through any rational, reflective, transversal or coherent mechanisms. In different countries, it worked in different ways and its elements (for example, education or youth justice) operated, usually through chance, with different levels of friction and harmony. Youth policy is still a contested idea, with some arguing that a distinctive age (or category) based approach is unworkable and others suggesting that there need to be firm and close connections with childhood and family policy. Others maintain, however, that the specific challenges facing young people around transition, opportunity and support demand a dedicated policy focus, whether or not there may be overlap or 'leakage' into broader policy domains or other policy areas. Even if this point is agreed, there remains a striking lack of consensus about what this 'youth policy' should be: its principles, coverage, goals and foundations. There are different, sometimes opposing voices seeking to influence this agenda: some, for example, calling for the greater autonomy of young people, others suggesting the need for greater support. Many such apparently oppositional forces can in fact be quite easily reconciled – different groups of young people need quite different balances of intervention, engagement and direction. Youth, as commentators always point out, is not an homogenous group, a

point that sometimes appear to be forgotten as politicians cluster them all together either as demons to be regulated or angels to be involved.

To assist the development of a skeletal framework for moving forward on this debate – *without*, quite intentionally, being prescriptive on the detail and approach – a synthesis report was produced on the first seven Council of Europe international reviews of national youth policy (Williamson 2002). This entailed exploring both the national and the international reports on seven very different countries, reviewed between 1997 and 2001, discovering both common and divergent threads, and advancing a model that might assist future reviews.

A framework for considering youth policy in Europe
Concepts: 'youth' and 'youth policy'
Structures: legislation and finance / budgets
Delivery: regional and local mechanisms; youth organisations
Domains: education, employment, health, justice (and more)
Cross-cutting issues: youth information, social inclusion, mobility (and more)
Support measures: research, training, dissemination of good practice

The model has held reasonably strong over the past six years, though it is now time for further reflection and refinement (see Williamson 2008).

The remainder of this article will move beyond the formal statements and structures that have been developed at a European level in the youth field. These are readily accessible and have already been well documented. Instead, some key questions that have emerged as a result of the European youth policy debate will be presented, for they are generally questions that – at a national level – often get passed over or ignored. They are certainly issues that do not immediately spring to mind in dialogue about youth policy, yet – at least within some of the countries of the European Commission and the Council of Europe – they are a central influence on, if not an integral feature of, youth policy. For this reason, they merit serious consideration at the level of European youth policy and, arguably, within national youth policy debates as well.

Education, education, education?

Few contest the notion that, for Europe to remain competitive with other regional trading blocs across the world, it will need a successful 'knowledge-based economy'. This is the basis of the EU's Lisbon strategy and was an aspiration of one of the first youth policy reviews. That country wanted 95 per cent of its young people to have a university degree shortly after the turn of the Millennium. It was not seen as acceptable to ask the question 'so who will clean the hotels?' though, when asked, the whispered response was 'immigrants'. Since that review, despite the political exhortations around lifelong learning and educational participation and achievement, and despite the research evidence that more education is broadly a protective factor against social and labour market exclusion, youth policy dialogue has constantly raised the problematic of the relationship between education and the labour market. It is well known that there is no longer an immediate, direct and proportionate link but, if that is the case, what exactly is the connection? This is something that youth policy will have to grapple with in the future, rather than simply

exhorting young people to study harder and longer, if it is to retain the credibility and belief of the young people at whom it is directed.

Childhood policy? Family policy?

The most tedious aspect of any youth policy debate is returning to the question of definition – what is 'youth'? The most useful answer is that we do not know (if we ever did). It is conceived in very different ways in different countries and indeed across the European institutions. The United Nations, through its Convention on the Rights of the *Child*, sees children as up to the age of 18, but 'youth policy' usually starts earlier and ends later, sometimes somewhere in the mid to late 20s. Furthermore, though research points to children growing up more quickly than ever, it also reports young adults remaining dependent on their families for longer – and therefore family policy clearly impinges on the lives of the young. It may not even matter what the label is, but there is certainly an imperative to make sure that the links between 'childhood' and 'youth' policy – and their relation to family policy are properly made, relevant and understood.

Supporting transition?

Routinely the rationale for 'youth policy' is depicted as being about helping young people to become adult, in other words about supporting transitions to adulthood. Yet in one European country there is a complementary rationale: youth policy is also about helping young people to be young. It is about 'being' as well as 'becoming'; it is about the quality of the present as well as about preparing for the future. This seems to be a very reasonable and relevant question for youth policy, yet it is largely conspicuous only by its absence at both national and European levels.

Unsettled?

A bleak combination of diminishing access to regular and secure employment and the increasing cost of housing (whether to be rented or purchased) means young people are remaining, when they can, in the parental home well into their adult life. The average age of leaving home in one particular European country is now 32. There, the age of leaving home has become the barometer for defining 'youth', though in many other places housing remains a neglected aspect of youth policy. There are some initiatives concerned with the provision of affordable accommodation for young adults with children but otherwise young people are largely overlooked. Housing will, however, demand an increasing focus within the lens of youth policy in the relatively near future.

Delivery?

One key youth policy lesson learned over the past decade is how easy it is to produce documentation, yet how hard it is to deliver what appears to be pledged. One country with a laudable youth strategy covering all conceivable angles (domains, issues, groups) evidently had no credible mechanisms for its delivery. The infrastructure for taking the aspirations of central government through regional and local administrations – or alternatively through civil society youth organisations – simply did not exist. Even if it did, there were no practitioners to provide the final link in the chain of delivery. Thus we have to beware a Europe riddled with admirable youth policy intentions but little possibility for implementation. There was a time when youth practice demanded some strategic joining up but now, in some countries at least, it is grounded services that need attention, investment

and development.

Minorities?

The youth policy approach to young people from the phenomenally diverse 'minorities' across Europe is itself strikingly diverse and has produced very different impacts and implications. There are, of course, different perspectives and definitions concerning minorities: from indigenous peoples and national minorities to various generations of 'immigrants' and on to arguably more recent asylum-seekers and refugees. Not all are disadvantaged or discriminated against in the same way, if at all. Indeed, there is one country where political discrimination does not equate with any striking social or economic disadvantage. This is not to defend the proclaimed abuse of human rights but it is to indicate that youth policy has to think hard about how to calibrate its practice to ensure parity of treatment and opportunity for *different* minorities within the borders and boundaries of both national and European youth policy competence.

Maintaining perspective?

Beyond explicit attention to (ethnic, religious, sexual or other) minorities, there is a recurrent risk of over-stating the negative 'social condition' of young people at the expense of other groups. By no means are all young people oppressed or disadvantaged; indeed, the new Europe has heightened opportunities for more privileged young people and those determined to take advantage of them. Advancing sweeping generalisations about the difficulties faced by young people does not, therefore, assist the youth policy process. There are huge disparities and inequalities both between *and within* the member countries of both the smaller and the larger Europe – it was noted in one policy review that, by comparison with the countries that had previously been reviewed, one could in that case argue that all young people were 'socially excluded', yet it was equally apparent that there was a strata of young people even in that country who were doing reasonably well. It is important that classifications and categorisations of young people are kept in a proper perspective.

Co-management?

The work programme of the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe is itself 'co-managed' by representatives of both governments and youth organisations. The model is one that was, for a time at least, adopted by one European country: its youth policy was developed during the 1990s and into the Millennium though a state funded arms-length youth agency and a council of civil society (voluntary sector) youth organisations. Regrettably, that arrangement has now ceased, but it was apparently an effective and valued form of *governance* of national youth policy. Partnership arrangements of a similar kind do exist elsewhere but they do not guarantee the same sustainability of youth policy, especially in countries where political stability is still relatively unpredictable.

Religion?

In modern secular Europe, the continuing impact of religion on youth policy in some countries has largely been overlooked. Yet it can be hugely significant, as one particular youth policy review testified. There it was almost impossible to develop youth policy without reference to the (catholic) church, which set the parameters for acceptable thought and action. In other European countries it has been equally impossible to establish – under a youth policy framework – programmes such as sexual health education in schools, or

attention to homophobia through non-formal education or broader campaigns. It has been the direct or indirect influence of religious authority within the political sphere that has produced either passive acquiescence or active proscription amongst those responsible for youth policy and practice.

Justice and welfare?

There have, for many years, been robust debates across the broad terrain of youth policy about the balance to be struck between voluntarism and compulsion, between welfare and justice, and between what Davies (1986) long ago portrayed as 'winning consent' or 'coercing compliance'. Beyond ideological posturing, there are concrete policy dilemmas reflecting the changing nature of modern European societies. Nowhere is this more prominent than in relation to the age of criminal responsibility. Though many protagonists in the youth policy field would advocate higher thresholds of criminal responsibility with younger offenders dealt with through child welfare systems, there is a reality that current child welfare systems in some countries are often ill-equipped to work with young people engaged in new (and more serious) forms of youth offending. Unless that sector of youth policy is strengthened significantly (and all signs are that this does not happen), those below the age of criminal responsibility can therefore break the law with impunity. This poses new youth policy challenges for countries that, in different times, sought to divert their children and young people, at least until the mid-teenage years, away from the formal criminal justice system.

The military?

Some European countries have only recently emerged from military conflict and others remain on hostile terms with their immediate neighbours. In such places, arguably, the military is the largest and most significant 'youth organisation'. This has a host of implications for youth policy, not least what else may be provided for those young people during their period of compulsory military service. In one country, for example, there is a commitment to providing courses in computing, in order to equip young soldiers with skills in new technology relevant to the civilian labour market. And though army cadet forces may be explicitly about familiarisation with, and possibly preparation for, military discipline, their activity – if not their philosophy and organisation – arguably resonates to some extent at least with the activity of other youth organisations, such as the Scouts. In times of scarce resources and particular political priorities, the place of military arrangements within the framework of youth policy should not be overlooked. Conversely, where the military is a dominant presence within the youth policy debate, there are also youth policy questions about those young people who, in such circumstances, elect for alternative forms of service and may face protracted prejudice and discrimination for having done so.

Mobility?

Early international reviews of national youth policy pointed to mobility in almost exclusively favourable terms. It was about opportunities to study abroad, to receive students from overseas, and to InterRail round Europe. Ten years later, the picture is very different, with a voluntary drift of more able and qualified young people, the movement through economic necessity of young carers and workers, and an enforced transportation of (usually young) illegal labour and sex workers – all from east to west. Such migration and mobility was not that envisioned during the enlargement of 'Europe' and has produced huge youth policy

challenges – though in different ways, for different reasons -in all constituent countries. There have been dramatic net population losses in many central and eastern European countries, which are desperately seeking to hold on to their young people or encourage them to return – through programmes of enterprise incentives and the regeneration of social infrastructure. Meanwhile, the social infrastructure of western Europe is creaking under an unexpected demographic pressure as well as a variety of tensions between host communities and their new populations. The new populations are weighted heavily in favour of younger people, suggesting the need to reflect on the suitability of a range of youth policy in such changing circumstances, especially on agendas such as inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue.

Non-formal learning?

The European institutions responsible for youth policy are especially vocal on the value of non-formal education – as a learning tool and as a methodology. Formal education, after all, is not officially within the competence of the youth field but lies elsewhere within the structures of both the European Commission and the Council of Europe. This not only produces a distorted picture about the importance of non-formal education from a 'youth' perspective – though an increasingly important supplement, it is certainly not yet a substitute for formal educational qualification and achievement – but leads all member states to celebrate that importance within their youth policy, even when they often have no real idea what it means! It trips off the tongue as a central ingredient in youth policy development, yet its practice is often ill-defined and refers to everything that is organised beyond the boundaries of formal schooling. Even what is sometimes rather facetiously referred to as the high priesthood of non-formal education at the European level needs to be clearer about its role and purpose, and what distinguishes it from (as well as what it shares with) its formal counterpart. Otherwise, it will continue to be used as a 'catch-all' for every kind of after-school provision.

New wine in old bottles?

On a related front, many central and eastern European countries, especially the Baltic states, still have variants of the old Soviet 'hobby education'. The style of instruction and indeed the kinds of activities provided (needlework, traditional dance, pottery) may appear as 'old-fashioned' as many of the instructors (for finding new blood in such poorly paid work is extremely difficult), but the buildings available and the local political commitment remain important. These are locations out of which new forms of youth practice at the local level – youth participation, youth information, a more modernised leisure time and learning agenda – may be developed. If they disappear, they are unlikely to be replaced. The same may be said of former Soviet culture and community centres, in which young people were also significantly involved. 'Places to go' is once more a familiar mantra to British youth policy observers; where they do exist, they need to be protected for young people, and modernised and developed to meet their contemporary needs.

Funding regimes?

The final issue relates to 'who pays?' for youth policy? Clearly, many areas of youth policy have discrete budgets for major domains such as education or health. Yet increasingly, across Europe, many aspects of youth policy are being 'sub-contracted' or commissioned to dedicated providers. These arrangements differ enormously from one country to the next.

In terms of expressed concerns about youth policy throughout Europe, the mechanisms for funding allocation are second only to the overall size of the funding pot. These mechanisms are often subject to tight and dubious political control (where certain recipients receive favourable treatment and other quality applications are overlooked) and even more often squeezed by obsessive bureaucratic administration. In some cases even very small resources can only be secured through convoluted tender procedures. Moreover, funding is rarely committed for any reasonable length of time, making the possibility of project and service development even more challenging and difficult. Little can be done at a European level save to draw attention to some of the absurdities and inefficiencies that derive from such processes – and to sympathise with those NGOs that have to engage with those processes to survive – and to offer models for more effective financial administration.

Conclusion

Here, then, are fifteen thoughts from a brief European tour, from the Nordic countries to the Mediterranean and from western Europe to the Caucasus. I have not named the countries explicitly for, I hope, very obvious reasons. It would be invidious to 'tag' them with a single theme when other countries display very similar approaches, for better and for worse. But each of the countries reviewed by the Council of Europe has contributed an important issue. They are just some of the issues that are exercising the minds of those involved in youth policy across this territory and at different levels of governance within it. They will have different application and implications for different actors but rarely can, or should, they be ignored, for they are all still helping to shape the thinking and direction of a 'European' youth policy.

The future for that European youth policy is not exactly clear, except insofar as it will be constructed on a politically and professionally complex web of dialogue and networks between governmental institutions, youth researchers and youth organisations (see Milmeister and Williamson 2006). The 'structured dialogue' (or, more accurately, trialogue) between these three sides of what is sometimes referred to as the magic triangle for youth policy development is now enshrined in the emergent practice of the European Commission. The Council of Europe is preparing a fresh and refreshed approach to its youth agenda through its *Agenda 2020* document, to be launched by European youth ministers at the bi-ennial ministerial conference in Kiev, Ukraine in October 2008. Yet there is a disturbing parallel trend for quite separate youth policy thinking on the part of various European (and, indeed, United Nations) institutions. Despite the rhetoric of transversality and coherence, communication often remains weak and the direction of travel apart. Even in the context of the central European institutions, where there is a formal Partnership on the youth agenda and numerous less formal networks and channels for dialogue and practice, there are still also separate tracks being forged by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Thus it is still premature to think of a 'European youth policy', though it is quite reasonable now to talk of a youth policy debate at the European level, something that one could not have spoken of less than two decades ago.

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The Search for Youth Policy in the United States

Joyce A. Walker and Dale A. Blyth

The United States has no comprehensive national youth policy. Absent a shared vision, widely embraced at the federal, state and local level, a disconnected patchwork of policies frustrate efforts to guide supports, investments and priorities for young people in the second decade of life. Absent a common and articulated set of core principles, values and approaches across systems and communities, there is no conceptual framework upon which to build positive action for youth participation or youth rights relative to community life, social responsibility or civic engagement. Instead the U.S. has a multiplicity of programmes, special interest advocates and system silos that make wise and effective use of public resources difficult if not impossible. In this chapter the authors seek to: (1) identify the role that an integrated national youth policy could play in promoting positive youth development; (2) review recent efforts to forge new youth policy initiatives and the reasons for their failure; (3) explore how youth matters are handled in the absence of an articulated youth policy framework; (4) examine efforts to move a state level youth policy framework forward around non-formal learning in the out-of-school time; and (5) offer observations of what it will take to succeed. In this chapter, *out-of-school time*, *after-school* and *non-school hours* are proxy terms for *youth work* and refer to intentional, most often voluntary, non-formal teaching and learning with young people in community settings – otherwise called *youth development programs* or just *youth programs* in the U.S.

Role of a comprehensive youth policy

A comprehensive youth policy for a nation or state is an articulated social contract anchored in the conditions and aspirations of its young people and in the political objectives set by the respective public authorities (Siurala, 2007). Ideally this policy is proactive and opportunity focused as opposed to reactive and problem oriented. While a fix-it response to crises is common most thoughtful discussions of youth policy frameworks emphasize working toward a vision of the desired rather than working to punish, contain or curtail fear, violence and negative behaviours (Pittman, Irby and Ferber, 2001; Hahn, 2002; Pittman, Diversi and Ferber, 2002; Siurala, 2007; Youth Act of Finland (72/2006)). The purpose of youth policy is to articulate a vision of the social contract, guide the identification of needs and goals pertinent to the social contract, assure a co-ordinated approach to tackling the issues, and report periodically on progress toward the goals. To be successful, the policy is accompanied by a youth policy plan, a body for cross-sector coordination, a youth representation strategy, and a research mechanism to chart progress toward policy goals.

Recent attention to the new challenges facing young people in the 21st century (Brown, Larson and Saraswathi, 2002) underscores the importance of framing appropriate social policy visions congruent with the culture, conditions and aspirations of different nations and states. Authors note that many governments have recognized the importance of young

people in their nation's progress and have articulated youth policies to address priorities like education, vocational training and health care as well as basic human rights to live free of hunger and poverty. They point out that young people are impacted by global events and local experiences of such complexity that only a comprehensive, multi-layered response of policy and institutional reform can address them adequately. Whether the issue is the family capacity to nurture youth, changing trends in marriage and work life, discrimination, access to basic health care, opportunities for employment or myriad other issues; policy work that impacts the lives of young people 10 to 25 must actively involve the views and contributions of the young people themselves in order to be effective.

No single youth policy addresses all these issues, but a youth policy framework can establish priorities and commitments that have influence across systems and governmental jurisdictions. For example Siurala (2007: 16) notes that the purpose of the European Union's youth policy framework is to create conditions for learning, opportunity and experience that will both ensure and enable young people to be actors of democracy and to integrate into society, in particular playing an active part in both civil society and the labour market. This policy challenge is the result of 25 years of hard work and consensus building which began in 1982 and was advanced by six major ministerial conferences between 1985 and 2002 in what appears to be a remarkably intentional, sophisticated and visionary process carried out beyond the scope of daily domestic political changes in priorities and key players. It offers member nations a set of constructive possibilities upon which to base national youth policy. This example underscores the importance of taking adequate time to build consensus around the vision and core values as well as to reflect and make changes as the youth policy framework is implemented. Hopefully, the journey in the U.S. for the last 25 years has begun this process even if the end is not yet in sight.

Recent youth policy proposals

> *The United States has a myriad of youth policies, but it lacks a coherent policy agenda for young people making the transition from childhood to adulthood. And it certainly does not have a policy agenda that has young people's development, as opposed to their detention, at its core. Few would argue this point. The question is what should and could be done to improve the situation?* (Pittman, Irby and Ferber, 2001: 3)

During the 1980s, there was little movement toward youth policy integration or articulation at the federal level. President Reagan's basic focus on anti-communism, small government and economic restraint spoke little to youth issues and in fact, urged intervention largely in matters of public safety. In the 1990s there were four major attempts to move forward broad-based federal youth policy initiatives. Each effort aimed to shape a different piece of the policy framework beginning with efforts to tackle youth policy by addressing effective government roles and administrative co-ordination for systems change. The President's Crime Prevention Council was created under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (1994) to co-ordinate federal crime prevention programmes and encourage community crime prevention. It aimed to strengthen local programmes and systems through administrative co-ordination of existing opportunities and resources. In 1995 it published a handbook of strategies and programmes across all sectors of

government that could be mixed, matched and blended to help communities help their youth. The Council was disbanded in 1996. The Youth Development Community Block Grants Act of 1995 proposed to affect programmes and systems at the local level by creating a more integrated funding flow of federal dollars to states. This legislation did not pass into law.

The Younger Americans Act (2001) was a bold call for a national youth policy based on a youth bill of rights. It included authorisation for a national youth policy and a Council on National Youth Policy, as well as a flexible funding stream for youth programmes, training, research and evaluation. This bill also did not pass into law. The Younger Americans Act, along with an Omnibus Act to Leave No Child Behind, represented 'an unprecedented opportunity to create a solid legislative and administrative platform for children and youth in the U.S.' (Pittman, Irby and Ferber, 2001:6). Other attempts to consolidate funding streams, co-ordinate federal agencies operating youth programmes and provide advocacy for communities to package various programme resources for success made little headway.

The Federal Youth Coordination Act that passed in 2006 created a federal youth development council to address the issue of twelve federal agencies funding overlapping services to youth with minimal communication among agencies or providers. *Youth Today* reported (Kelly, 2008) that the act signed in October 2006 had a budget authorisation of $1 million that was never included in the 2007 or 2008 budgets. Instead an executive order established a working group from the twelve agencies to create a federal website on youth issues – a far cry from the intended legislation. Nonetheless, in the last 25 years, there has been a quiet movement in support of a positive youth development philosophy and a growing interest in promoting safety and preparation for college, work and life as themes foundational to work with young people. The question remains: What will it take to motivate the many diverse youth movements and competing advocacy groups to join together, even in good budget times, in support of a policy proposal at the national level?

Roadblocks to consensus on youth policy framework

Addressing youth issues in 'bits and pieces' keeps the system going but without the benefits and possibilities for larger success inherent in approaching youth issues from a more comprehensive framework and perspective. The process of coming to a policy consensus in the U.S. on almost anything is very complicated. It involves the ability to mobilise people across party lines and constituent groups to develop and move a vision or solve a problem amid the complex layers of national, state and local governments with overlapping powers and mandates as well as confusing jurisdictional boundaries – all in times of budget deficits. It is worth reflecting on the roadblocks that challenge national and state efforts to create a coherent vision and integrated policy framework for young people in the U.S. These reflections are informed by the authors' own experiences as well as consultations and informal conversations with a half dozen academics and policy enthusiasts. Below we consider three of these factors.

Opposing Forces

Tense situations, competing interests and contrary philosophical beliefs individually and

collectively mitigate against the creation of a consensus for a youth policy. For the last 25 years, which were politically dominated by a conservative philosophy, there has been no philosophical consensus about the role of government in matters relating to young people. Arguably, that philosophy is driven by themes of small and limited government in human and social capital arenas, reduction of tax burdens, family rights over youth or state rights, and individual independence and short term gain over community building and long term investment. Another area of public policy tension is universal access versus targeted services (Hahn, 2002).

Universal entitlements, even for our young people, tend to be resisted, and there is no strong acceptance of, or agreement on, fundamental rights for young people let alone a vision of how to promote them. Radio and television talk shows devote many hours to the constitutional right to bear arms while the issue of the rights of young people too often turns into a discussion of parental rights to access the confidential medical records of their children. The conversation shifts from a discussion of youth rights to a debate about the role of government in relation to family life. In large part, child, youth and family policy decisions are predominately based on a custodial not rights philosophy. Because parents are viewed as custodians of youth, it is assumed policy considerations should not diminish the right of parents except in unusual circumstances. The positive impact of family and community factors on successful child and youth outcomes is widely known in research but too often ignored by policy, leaving the potential positive roles of government at many levels unclear at best and avoided at worst.

There is a shortage of effective systems mechanisms at the national level to convene consensus-building conversations. The past quarter century has been characterised politically by ideological division rather than negotiated compromise. These factors are readily illustrated in the area of sexual health. While one group espouses abstinence in all things sexual, another promotes adolescent sexual health, another safe sex, and another school-based sex education. There is no forum to bring it all together and no mandate to encourage a single, well-crafted policy statement that carries weight and can garner wide national support.

Boundary disputes

Overlapping jurisdictions, disputed authority and lack of agreement on funding responsibility play a role as well. No consistent precedent exists to determine who sets the policy and who pays the bills. City and county government units are involved as are regional districts, cross-jurisdictional councils and independent units with special authority. A historical desire for local control and a local aversion to unfunded federal mandates limit the ability to impact local policies and to shape the public response to many youth issues. In the state of Minnesota, public education is a local control issue; translate that into 340 independent school districts and 150 independent charter schools making independent decisions about what is taught, who graduates, who teaches and other essential questions. The national associations of state governors, of mayors of cities and towns, of state legislators, of chief-state-school officers and others who deal with policy on a regular basis do not see young people as a major constituency.

Competing Priorities

It could be argued that the unwritten child and youth policy in the United States is

embedded in policies related to parental rights and responsibilities as well as family economic support mechanisms. Overall the country seems willing to accept discrepancies like the achievement and poverty gaps that arise from not harnessing a broad array of resources effectively. There appears to be a reluctance to take on tough issues like educational success or civic engagement in ways that involve all the players from young people themselves to families, community youth organisations, faith institutions, schools and community members themselves. The principal players in a youth policy conversation have been described as education, family security/welfare and 10,000 people arguing for small individual exceptions. This complexity is amplified by the abundance of advocacy groups for children and young people that demonstrate little inclination to set aside special interests and join together to support a common agenda. Instead of pushing support for experiences that promote a positive life trajectory for the first two decades, special interests rally around early childhood, kindergarten readiness, special education, community programmes, middle school success, crime prevention, substance abuse prevention and myriad other particulars. Without a larger agreed upon vision and a strong coalition of support, youth policy issues cannot compete with priorities like national defence, environmental protection, national health, renewable energy and food policy.

The U.S. has had no Albemarle Report -- no Fairbairn-Milson or Thompson -- to both spur and guide action in the area of youth work. That is not to say there have not been major reports in the area of education. For example, the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk* published by the U.S. Department of Education's National Commission on Excellence in Education concluded:

> *If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge. Moreover, we have dismantled essential support systems which helped make those gains possible. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.* (1983:5)

This report identified a list of thoughtful policies and strategies to reduce national 'at-riskness' but to date few have been acted upon or funded sufficiently to make more than a small difference.

Because the U.S. Constitution stipulates that responsibilities not specifically assigned to the federal government (including education) are reserved to the states, for over 100 years the federal government largely left schooling to the states. In 1958, following the Soviet launch of Sputnik, the 1958 National Defense Education Act authorised aid to education at all levels public and private as a stimulus for advancing science, mathematics and modern foreign languages (while specifically prohibiting any federal direction regarding supervision, control over curriculum, administration or teaching). In 1965 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) authorised federal funds to help ensure that disadvantaged students have access to a quality public education. If schools accept the money, they must meet federal criteria for funding professional development, instructional materials, resources to support educational programmes, and stimulus for parental involvement. The 2001 ESEA

Congressional reauthorisation, titled *No Child Left Behind*, added provisions to improve school performance by raising standards of accountability and giving parents more flexibility to choose their child's school. Thus the federal government shapes educational policy in the states indirectly by offering categorical incentive funds under the banners of national defence, equal opportunity, and quality improvement.

At the same time, education receives a high percentage of any state's budget. For example in Minnesota's 2003 budget priorities (with general education funding included) 84.8 per cent of funding goes to public education while 0.4 per cent is channelled to youth development work which supports opportunities for children and youth in time beyond the school day. This is significant when 42 per cent of the waking hours of young people (9-14 years old) are spent in discretionary activity apart from school, personal maintenance, chores, homework and employment (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1992). The focus on schooling to the virtual exclusion of learning supports and opportunities provided by vast numbers of community-based programmes and organisations dedicated to non-formal learning agendas, has created a dramatic imbalance. No wonder schools are described as the 'elephant in the room' whenever state policy conversation turns to young people, youth rights or learning beyond the classroom. The Finnish model of conceptualising education as both schooling and support for youth, recreation and sport acknowledges the national interest in deep investments in a holistic approach to the education and development of children and youth.

Strategies employed in the absence of a youth policy

Absent comprehensive youth policy frames in education and youth work, and absent a deeply shared value set about young people and their rights, youth legislation and proposals since the early 1980s in the United States have been largely sporadic, disconnected, and dominated by real or perceived youth problems in select sectors of government (education, health, public safety). The resulting patchwork of underfunded, inconsistent, even contradictory, directives at the federal and state levels has created frustration and confusion for people working to turn policy into practical action for the benefit of young people. Programme providers and local service agencies are forced to respond to funding processes that create a competitive rather than co-operative environment which proliferates but does not sustain programmes. The current funding environment requires short term juggling of disconnected parts rather than a deliberate weaving of the essentials required to make a difference. The youth sector overall is driven by a competition for scarce public funds and a dramatic reliance on local and national philanthropic foundations to provide funds for youth programmes. Resources are not effectively linked to an integrated plan or comprehensive policy framework resulting in an overly programmatic approach to problem solving rather than a community or nationwide approach. Along with inequities and gaps in success, this fragmentation creates different programmes trying to solve basic problems in different ways in different places. The focus on advocacy and problem solving around special issues trumps working together to attack underlying common causes. Utilising best practices or evidence-based approaches are called for but are seldom systematically and effectively implemented. Even the funder's incorporation of assessment and accountability standards can become a weapon rather than a tool for improvement. Partisan debate continues over the role of youth policy in the context of family values.

Given this situation, what do youth workers and non-profit organisations do to accommodate this absence of deeply shared values, of a vision for action and of committed funding? They play connect the dots! (Blyth and Walker, 2008). Indeed connecting the existing funding dots is a fall back strategy designed to piece together the patchwork of specific policies, legislative mandates and funding streams into a workable budget. Public officials, communities and programme people do this in several ways. For some issues, government bundles funding into block grants to allow the next level of government more freedom to find ways to address issues. Some states convene a Children's Cabinet or authorise state agencies to come to a common table to look at the big picture before recommending new plans or investments. Creating children's budgets is another approach that looks across the programmes. Because so many of the pieces do exist, state and local governments try connecting the dots together to address issues in a more holistic way. Private philanthropic organizations like the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation have taken the lead and begun to provide incentives for collaboration and policy formulation among the many agencies and organizations who are players in the 21st Century Learning Center movement to bring after-school learning and programming to school sites during the non-school hours. Their funded statewide networks have become powerful voices for youth development programming in the out-of-school time in many states. The task of packaging often incompatible resources and funding for programme support is complicated and time-consuming, but people at every level are doing it in a pragmatic attempt to make the most of what they have. Some recognise the need to slow down the creation of new programmes and to create a space where good youth policy work can begin to pro-actively weave a different reality.

Another strategy is to invest in metrics to establish measures of whether, and to what extent, what is done is making a difference. Instead of developing consensus around the vision and the principles, a group works to generate support of the drivers behind success (assuming there is an accepted definition of success). By establishing measures to document outcomes, a coalition or collaborative group might begin to build policy based solid measures. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of this approach is significantly reduced when the system is playing connect the dots mode rather than working from a broad consensus and a solid policy framework. Furthermore, when the things that are measured are too far down the stream from the programmes, or are the result of multiple causes largely beyond the reach of the programmes being held accountable, they can become weapons for destroying efforts rather than tools for constructively guiding efforts. In summary, far too often the metrics developed are not based on a shared vision, are measured at the wrong level, and are used in accountability efforts that are not aligned with either funding or reality.

Yet another strategy to build consensus for a policy imperative is to seek evidence-based solutions by leveraging the involvement of national foundations and public/private commissions which study issues and weigh in on policy options and directions. Over the last 15 years, reports on the field of positive youth development have stimulated national, state and local conversations and elevated the acceptance of the importance of learning and development in the non-school hours. Notable amongst these have been – *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunities in the Nonschool Hours* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992), *The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America* (W.T. Grant Foundation, 1988), *Youth Policy Development: What American Foundations Can Do to*

Promote Policy in Support of the Emerging Field of Youth Development (Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 2002), *When School Is Out* (David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 1999), and *A New Day for Learning* (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2007). These reports can be very effective at raising issues and awareness, but they are only the first step in moving toward a youth policy framework especially when they are placed into the context of complexity and lack of consensus characteristic of the U.S. over the last 25 years.

Finally, while intentional work to build the field of youth development has gained momentum, there remains much ambiguity about the meaning of the term *youth development* for those not intimately engaged in the work. Hamilton and Hamilton (2004) note that the term *youth development* is used in three different and related ways, referring to a natural process of development by young people; to a philosophical set of principles that guide practice with youth; and to a descriptive term applied as an adjective to organisations, programmes and initiatives that apply the philosophy and principles to their work. While many organisations and youth programmes have adopted the term *youth development* in the last 20 years, there is still great ambiguity and ambivalence around the term that interferes with using it as a premise for a future youth development policy (Hahn, 2002).

Forging state-level youth policy frameworks

> *The Forum for Youth Investment (FYI), a national leader in youth policy, asserts that policy action will increasingly happen at state and local levels. Policies may be laws, public or private regulations, formal or informal procedures or accepted patterns of behavior that function as norms or guidelines. The need for policies becomes evident when individuals recognize organizing principles that unite them in striving to reach commonly shared goals ... The devolution of policy responsibility from federal to state and local jurisdictions has provided a new opportunity for states to think about how current youth policy structures serve the needs of their youth.* (In Search of Youth Policy, 2004: 1)

Leaders at the Forum for Youth Investment (Pittman et al, 2001) have suggested four strategies, not mutually exclusive, for progress in developing a youth policy. A number of states are beginning to take different actions to build foundational support for a youth policy framework to guide youth development work in non-formal learning in out-of-school time. Minnesota, the case study in this instance, is moving ahead in all four areas recommended:

1. Step up non-federal capacity and system-building;
2. Package and move a coherent policy framework that embodies what is meant by youth development;
3. Create a set of lenses through which any and all policies that affect young people are assessed;
4. Create a structure and a process for defining and implementing a youth policy that emerges from and adheres to a set of beliefs about young people's rights, needs, goals and capacities.

The effort to generate advocacy and policy for out-of-school time youth efforts grew out of a funding crisis that occurred abruptly and went virtually unprotested at the time by those people and programmes most severely impacted. In February 2003, the Governor eliminated funding for the state's After School Enrichment Grant programme, along with other state programmes, as he addressed that year's budget shortfall. Subsequently, the entire programme budget allocation was removed for the 2004-2005 biennium, resulting in a loss of $11 million for After School Enrichment Grant-funded programmes statewide. Because the unallotment took place in February 2003, 44 grant recipients across the state and over 200 after-school programmes had only a few weeks to prepare for the sudden loss of resources. One year later, research indicated that 22 per cent of the grant recipients no longer existed; 64 per cent existed with significant reductions, and 14 per cent exist with slight reductions. All report being uncertain about the future with 50 per cent describing themselves in a crisis mode and the other 50 per cent believing they will survive at least one more year (Sustainability of Out-of-School Time Programs, 2004). Suddenly at the state level there was momentum to bring together a non-partisan group of leaders from the community, non-profit and state agencies, private foundations, universities and advocacy groups to forge and advocate for a state-level youth policy framework specifically around community learning opportunities in the non-school hours.

The state-level capacity building work began by creating a common policy table and a statewide after-school network modelled on the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation's national strategy to strengthen school-based and out-of-school time learning opportunities through the creation of community-based, federally funded 21st Century Learning Centers. (Nationally Mott's efforts have been deliberate in their design, cumulative and synergistic in their impact, and dynamic in adapting to changing circumstances nationally and within each state). An informal group of youth programme providers, academics and government agency leaders sketched out a plan, applied for multi-year funding and became one of the Mott Foundation's statewide networks. This network aimed for solidarity, consensus and advocacy to unite the people, organisations and constituents who work with and on behalf of learning opportunities for youth in the non-school hours. The network built on the ethos, philosophy and principles of positive youth development as this movement has become known and practiced in the United States over the last 25 years. The focus has been on policy issues such as access to programmes, funding, impact and quality which promote positive development as well as reduce problem behaviour. By 2006, this statewide network had grown into an advocacy coalition called Youth Community Connections (YCC) which is resourced by both public and private money. YCC now hosts advocacy and policy discussions where state leaders, legislators, business leaders, mayors and agency heads come into conversation about youth policy matters. YCC is seen as the vehicle for generating youth policy discussions around out-of-school time and eventually moving a framework forward. While this work does not represent a comprehensive approach to youth policy, it provides insights into the reality of public policy development around youth issues.

The convening strategy was also used to engage key leaders in the creation of a vision and recommendations to guide the budding youth policy agenda for youth work in the non-school hours. Given the divisive political environment in the state and the relative invisibility of these youth issues among state legislators, the President of the public land-grant university created the Commission on Out of School Time (MNCOST). The Commission

legitimatised a panel of community leaders who worked for over a year to study the benefits and policy implications of learning in the non-school hours and issued a report with recommendations for action at the local and state level (http://www.mncost.org). The Commission vision and recommendations have shaped the work of YCC as well as the University's Extension Center for Youth Development where the authors provide leadership. While useful, the report did not have some of the desired immediate effect due to a lack of necessary pre-work with important stakeholders, particularly those in the business community and legislature.

The Commission raised many important issues among them the necessity of building the public will so that average Minnesotans appreciate the value and impact of community-based non-formal learning opportunities on young people, families and communities. FrameWorks Institute of Washington D.C. (http://www.frameworksinstitute.org) was enlisted to research the attitudes of citizens and parents around young people, the need for opportunities and their willingness to offer public funding support. The findings support observations that the public perception of youth programmes for older youth is vague and people are often unclear about the need, the benefits and the purpose of these programmes (Lochner and Bales, 2006). In response to the public's negative frames of youth, the framing research offered three more positive ways of thinking about supports and learning for young people. First, an inter-connection between youth opportunities and the wellbeing of families and communities is made explicit. Second, an architectural metaphor of building over time is applied to the new research on brain development which emphasises practice and application as major tasks of adolescence. Third, the community is cited as the place where opportunities for growth and exploration can be put to work in ways that contribute. A public awareness strategy was designed to reframe youth programmes as positive learning experiences for all young people that benefit them and their communities. The first target for the awareness was youth workers, the people most often asked to describe and defend the work. A full scale public campaign may be part of future work.

Another important convening that helped to shine the light on a policy framework was a Governor's Summit on Extended Day Learning in 2008 involving over 200 citizens from the government, business and non-profit world in policy discussions about the importance of 24/7 support for the learning and development of young people. In the process of preparing for the Summit, staff made the decision to expand the frame for this work beyond out-of-school time to the larger youth policy agenda question of what it will take to have young people ready for work, college and life by age 21. This effort expanded again the variety of stakeholders at the policy table who are getting involved in policy conversations and recommendations.

It is important to begin to package a coherent policy agenda built around a sound policy framework. One expert described a typical legislative bill as half a page of vision, three quarters of a page of structure and 18 pages of funding detail (Blyth and Walker, 2008). No one takes the time to put it all together. One champion for a Minnesota youth policy put it succinctly when he said, 'Our essential task is to come up with one page of principles everyone can agree to' (Blyth and Walker, 2008). In an effort to identify a simple framework to introduce the idea of youth policy into the public conversation, a working

party comprising an academic (Byron Schneider) and a group of graduate students drafted a planning framework that lays out in simple terms a beginning place for a state to set priorities, engage people and monitor progress. First, focus on the vision and identify a priority short list of rights of young people to be secured. Aim to be less comprehensive, less complicated and less confusing. Second, establish a barometer of success to measure the progress being made. Third, forge a social compact of joint responsibility that spells out what young people will do and what older people will do to see that, over time, the vision is accomplished.

While the specific structures and processes to put a youth policy framework in place are still out in the distance, the statewide network continues to provide a large table to invite people into the broader conversation about what will be required to create and maintain a state-level youth policy based on a youth development philosophy and vision. To advance work on creating lenses for policy assessment as well as policy implementation structures and processes anchored in shared beliefs about youth rights, needs, goals and capacities, working agendas include applied research and field building as well as a legislative agenda. The statewide quality initiative is conducting research to learn more about programme quality at the point of service as well as the essential steps for assuring a quality workforce for the field of youth development. Survey research is providing a clearer understanding of the preparation, satisfaction and work conditions for youth workers with an eye to professional development needs and interests as well as examining parent and youth attitudes and perceptions of community learning opportunities in the state. Field research and literature reviews have generated a typology of youth engagement in an attempt to better understand terms like civic engagement, service learning and youth and adult partnerships in order to expand conversations about youth rights and responsibilities in the context of youth policy. Another effort involves reaching out to the state legislature with an eye to creating a bipartisan Youth Caucus so that the legislature is positioned to take a broad look at youth issues that are proposed.

Reflections on what it will take to succeed

The state investments described in Minnesota resemble what other states are doing to move toward a co-ordinated youth policy framework. There is little or no co-ordination of these policy efforts although the Mott Foundation's statewide networks initiative promotes strategy sharing. Local emphasis depends on the configuration of players as well as on the influence of organizations like the National Governor's Association (NGA) or the National League of Cities (NLC) on the local leadership. This review of a quarter century of youth policy and the state case study suggest that efforts to create a comprehensive youth policy framework will probably arise from organized constituencies in states and major metropolitan areas. Four things that could move this work ahead are: (1) a larger conceptual framework; (2) a de-emphasis on the role of government in isolation from the role of others; (3) a model for aligning financial, programme and outcome/impact accountability; and (4) an intentional effort to build public and political will.

Currently on the national level two organizations are articulating and advocating for a larger youth policy framework. The Forum for Youth Investment in partnership with many

organizations has forged an initiative called *Ready by 21* which advocates 'All youth ready for college, work and life' (www.forumforyouthinvestment.org). The initiative challenges people to think in terms of changing the odds so that youth will succeed and bringing in multiple partners from the public as well as private sectors. While much remains to be seen as to how this can and will play out in geographic jurisdictions and with large constituent organizations like NGA or NLC, the response to its ideas and the way it creates a need for a comprehensive youth policy is beginning to get some traction. The Forum is known for its stance on valuing young people and promoting their rights and active participation in all aspects of their learning and development. The Forum's website contains details of a massive campaign to educate all sorts of groups of people on behalf of the policy commitment for all youth to be ready for college, work and life. Likewise the National Collaborative for Youth, a 40 year old affinity group of youth organizations and advocates, has just announced a national children and youth policy agenda called *Toward a Brighter Future: An Essential Agenda for America's Young People* (www.collab4youth.org/ncy/index.htm). The policy agenda contains an overarching set of recommendations for federal policy changes and investments designed to move this nation toward a brighter future and invest in the needs of our children and youth. The agenda incorporates all aspects of child development and focuses on three core elements that form a unifying strategy for how the federal government works on issues facing young people. These three core elements are: a focus on the whole child; a fundamental premise that all young people should be treated with dignity and equality; and a positive youth development approach that builds not from the deficits in young people's lives, but from assets. This new document is circulating widely and provides an example of how a few principles can be shaped into policy stances for the whole range of youth matters including health, after-school, education, juvenile justice and family. Emphasis is placed on the agenda's shared vision, comprehensive and integrated supports and national potential; additionally, it's a great model for states and urban communities looking for examples of language and strategies to advance the success and well-being of young people. The National Collaboration's website (www.collab4youth.org)notes quotes from national partner organizations – 'A shared vision and strategy, comprehensive and integrated supports, and needed improvements in key programs, together these elements will change the odds for our kids' said Don Floyd, CEO of the National 4-H Council and Chair of the National Collaboration for Youth. Irv Katz, President and CEO of the National Human Services Assembly says, '... we are advising the Presidential campaigns and Congress not to pick and choose from these recommendations but to build upon the complete agenda, so that every child has the opportunity to excel'.

The case study and the national examples highlight the need for partnerships between governmental roles, private business and philanthropic roles, and the personal roles of the family and youth themselves. While a government role is critical, it must be understood in the context of other sectors and carried out in a way that supports the roles of other partners. Youth policy is not solely the work of government or legislative bodies, but the reflection of a larger social contract that calls for solid and adequate investments in our young people.

Clearly the accountability models and systems put in place must be responsive to both public and private investments. Effective youth policy must find a way to both encourage the measurement of what matters and the alignment of the levels and types of

accountability needed to succeed. If we remain unable to reach consensus on the outcomes we seek from the investments we make in youth during the first two decades of life we will never be able to create or implement a youth policy that will help us get there. That said an even more challenging task is to find ways to align accountability in appropriate and functional ways. For example, we have come to believe that communities of geography (cities, counties, states) should be accountable for the measurement of and change in positive as well as negative outcomes for youth. If a community's youth are failing then it is a community, county, state responsibility to change that condition. Systems, including funders, ought to be held accountable for the strategies they choose to reach the goals. This is where evidence-based approaches ought to be encouraged and efforts to assure effective versus popular choices are made. Finally, programmes that engage youth ought to be held accountable for the quality of what they deliver. The dimensions of quality should come from research that links the outcomes we seek and the strategies used to specific and observable aspects of quality. When accountability types and levels are aligned in this way, it reduces the likelihood that accountability is used as a weapon and encourages cooperation because success at one level is not possible without wisdom at the other levels.

Basic to all this conversation is the reality of a public will and a political will that seeks to build strength and not simply patch up problems and destructive behaviours. The growing strength of the youth development movement in the state and nation serve to undergird the kind of positive vision and policy framework envisioned here. Peter Benson of Search Institute noted in legislative testimony:

> *Nothing of long-term significance will happen unless the public and its will are mobilized. The private sector and legislators will not stay the course unless a critical mass of our citizens comes to see children's well-being as inextricably linked to everything we hold dear. . . The best way to create this citizen movement is by activating and supporting the core principles of community-based youth development. For example, we know there is a set of supports and opportunities that can put all kids on a path to a hopeful future. I call them developmental assets. We could also call them developmental investments, promises of building blocks. They improve life chances for youth in all income brackets.* (2008:24)

The growing momentum behind the youth development movement is the closest that the United States has come to inserting a platform of youth rights into the public conversation. The call for supports and opportunities available to all young people also moves away from a deficit concept of youth policy. While Hahn (2002) argues that youth development is an ambiguous and ambivalent term that interferes with the future of a comprehensive youth development policy, it is possible to imagine a youth policy framework based on the principles of positive youth development but writ larger and more widely applicable than just the field of youth development or the field of youth work.

In the end, youth policy is simply a statement of what a nation wants for its youth and how it seeks to ensure they have the supports and opportunities it takes for them to succeed. This is perhaps reflected most clearly in the following quote from an international look at adolescent development:

The nation that neglects to provide for its youth will see the costs of that neglect in the years that follow. The nation that equips and energizes its youth is likely to reap compounded benefits as these youth enter adulthood and take over the reins of society as parents, workers and leaders. (Brown, Larson and Saraswathi, 2002: 344)

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Youth Act (72/2006) of Finland. Finnish youth policy is designed to improve the conditions in which young Finns live and grow. The government adopts a development programme every four years with the aim of stepping up cross-sector youth policy action. For pdf of Youth Act (72/2006) see www.minedu.fi/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisopolitiikka/?lang=en.

The New Labour Years

A History of the Youth Service in England

Volume 3 1997–2007

Bernard Davies

Bernard Davies' magisterial history of the youth service is brought bang up to date with the publication of The New Labour Years. Coming nine years after the first two volumes of A History of the Youth Service in England set a benchmark for historical analysis of the development of youth work, this new publication picks the story up from the election of the first Blair Government and sweeps forward to the arrival of Gordon Brown and his announcement of Aiming High, the Government's ten year strategy for youth.

The account covers a period when, says Davies, "youth" has often been demonised and in which those demons have come to dictate policy. Over the same period, he charts the way the Youth Service has increasingly been subsumed into wider integrated services.

This book offers the first major historical account of events such as the birth and development of Connexions and the arrival of the powerful policy drivers of Transforming Youth Work, Every Child Matters and Youth Matters. But it also maintains a strong focus on the practice of youth work itself, looking at how political pressures have shaped and sometimes constrained and distorted the way this distinctive approach has been organised and carried out.

With its approach of "chronology with attitude" and Davies' unrivalled breadth of vision in the field of work with young people, this piece of contemporary history is a vitally relevant intervention in a still unfolding story.

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The National Youth Agency
Getting it right for young people

Young People, Central Government and Youth Work

Tom Wylie

This chapter endeavours to capture the development of policy towards youth work over the past 25 years.

Two convenient bookends frame the place of youth work in England during this period: *Experience and Participation* (Thompson Report,1982) and *Aiming High – the government's strategy for young people* (2007). But first, a definition of 'youth work'. For this author, it is the application in work with adolescents of a form of practice which has three defining characteristics – their personal and social development (as distinct, say, from their academic learning); the deliberate use of experiential learning and transformative relationships; and adherence to a set of values (which, inter alia, puts the interests of young people first). For much of the period it was 'hosted' in an ill-defined set of structural arrangements – 'The Youth Service' – which lacked a clear legal basis but were usually seen as a partnership between local authorities and voluntary organisations. In the course of the period, the use of the terms 'youth work' and 'Youth Service' increasingly ceased to be synonymous as youth work practice was taken up in a range of other settings and services. This chapter focuses on work in England; policy elsewhere in the UK increasingly diverged in its structures if not in its intentions.

Youth work had little national policy direction for most of the 1970s. The Milson-Fairbairn Report (1969) had lacked the authority of the preceding Albemarle Report (1960). It was, moreover, an uneasy and often contradictory, compromise document. Pushed along by Denis Howell, Labour's Minister of Youth, the report landed on the desk of the incoming Conservative Secretary of State for Education, Margaret Thatcher, and was eventually rejected by her. Her decision, long delayed, had not prevented a number of local authorities and HE institutions from anticipating its implementation. They accepted the Milson-Fairbairn philosophy, vague as it was, and retitled their services or courses accordingly. Such local, idiosyncratic, decision-making intensified the difficulty of sustaining effective youth work.

Although there was little strategic direction, national policy interest in work with young people never disappeared. Renewed interest in youth service provision reflected a number of public concerns about what was happening to young people. Such concerns ebbed and flowed often in a set of moral panics, and found particular expression in the early 1980s in the context of urban disturbances in Brixton, Liverpool and elsewhere, and in the sharp increase in youth unemployment which led to a set of government initiatives, notably the Youth Opportunities Programme.

Reviewing the Youth Service

Various parliamentary attempts to clarify the role of youth work eventually smoked out of the Department for Education and Science a commitment to review the Youth Service

and it established a review group, chaired by Alan Thompson. In 1982, this review group produced a thoughtful and humane document in the best traditions of liberal social democracy. It appeared at the low tide of early Thatcherism but the Falklands War helped to restore her government's fortunes and the prospect of much of the Thompson Report being implemented soon receded. The Department opted to cherry-pick its recommendations leading to a number of useful initiatives being set in train. The most important Youth Service needs identified by Thompson – notably for a clearer statutory basis – were not addressed and, in due course, the agenda of the formal education bureaucracy re-asserted itself and youth work returned to the shadows of policy-making.

For the wider educational world the arrival of Keith Joseph as Secretary of State for Education in 1981 marked an important change of gear in matters other than his curt dismissal of the key elements in the Thompson Report. He sought to reduce public expenditure and favoured the establishment of a greater market place in education with informed consumers (i.e. parents) choosing between different providers. One way, he believed, of creating such informed consumers was by publishing reports by HM Inspectors of educational provision, notably on schools. An unexpected consequence was public reporting by HM Inspectors of youth work in both the maintained and voluntary sectors. These publications placed in the public domain for the first time a useful evidence-base of what was happening to youth work from the 1980s onwards (though they diminished on the creation of Ofsted in 1992, they returned later in the decade).

The national HMI youth team decided it was not worthwhile to report on individual youth centres or projects. Instead it deployed its limited resources on reporting on overall youth service provision made by an LEA or a National Voluntary Youth Organisation or on specific forms of youth work practice. Such reports – over 50 by the end of the 1980s – based their judgements on the work observed by HMI in individual youth clubs or projects but drew them together into thematic overviews. A seminal report *Effective Youth Work* (1987), in HMI's *Education Observed* series, sought to characterise the distinctive values and educational methodology of youth work. It emphasised personal and social development as the principal *raison d'être* of youth work and exemplified how various activities could be used as the means to this end. The Thompson Report had legitimated a wider role for youth work across the terrain of social policy affecting young people and HMI reports reflected the growing diversification and targeting of youth work across the country – *Youth work on urban housing estates (1988); Unemployment* (1982) and, more controversially, ... *to the needs of girls and young women* (1988) and *Responsive Youth Work* (1990). This diversification of youth work and its engagement with social issues and disadvantaged or oppressed groups often provoked tensions within the youth work sector where a disparate profession was held together by a variety of field-based networks and national bodies such as the National Youth Bureau and the Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work. In the absence of specific direction from central government, such loose arrangements often helped to sustain, however imperfectly, a sense of agreed purpose in a diverse sector and contributed to the development of a youth work profession whose members were often isolated, structurally and temperamentally, within LEA departments or distributed across a burgeoning voluntary and community sector.

The smack of firm government?

Policy command of youth work remained with the Department of Education and Science (and its various retitled successors). Here it was anchored in the shifting sands of ministerial and official interest. Some initiatives captured political support. One such was a youth work apprenticeship scheme designed to bring a new, younger cohort of peer educators into youth work practice. The Thompson Report, too, had identified various possibilities for action – including the creation of the Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work and of a National Advisory Council for Youth Service (NACYS). Departmental officials generally disliked such bodies as a competing voice for the ministerial ear. The time needed to build consensus in such a diverse field offered a good excuse to terminate them at a convenient moment. Moreover, if they were genuinely representative of the youth work field, they could be relied upon to be critical of government policy towards young people and youth services. So it proved again with NACYS: departmental officials bundled it into touch in 1989 just when it was getting into its stride with a series of useful reports.

The DES now had other ambitions for the governance of the Youth Service and the development of youth work. The grant scheme for National Voluntary Youth Organisations was recast to tie funding to specific programmes which would be closer to governmental priorities. Secondly, in 1990, the Department decided to withdraw its funding from the National Youth Bureau (NYB), the Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work (CETYCW), the British Youth Council (BYC) and the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS). Instead, it created a National Youth Agency (NYA) as the central focus for youth work in England. In its grand design this was a far-sighted proposal but the details and implementation were flawed. At the heart of the difficulty was the decision to create the NYA as a non-departmental public body (a 'quango') with the membership of its governing body appointed by the Secretary of State and its activities largely decided by the DES on pain of withdrawing the grant on which NYA would depend for its existence. The NYA was created but both BYC and NCVYS, determined to maintain an independent voice for their respective constituencies, sought funds from elsewhere and survived as independent bodies to await a turning DES tide.

The most ambitious of the Department's activities was an attempt to identify a 'core curriculum' for the Youth Service. This had echoes of the National Curriculum for schools set out in the Education Reform Act of 1988. As with the creation of the NYA, the Department's goals were not wholly misguided. The cold climate for public expenditure was requiring services of all kinds to be clearer about their outcomes and benefits and a sprawling Youth Service was particularly vulnerable. The attempt to produce a consensus across such a wide field of endeavour – both LEA and voluntary sector – and in a form which would be genuinely useful was doomed from the start. The Department's project was also handicapped by the hamfisted management of a tortuous series of Ministerial Conferences by an alliance of DES officials and the newly-formed, and still mistrusted, NYA. The result pleased no-one. The Department blamed the youth work field for its failure to answer the questions correctly and an incoming official ordered 'full speed astern' and changed the compass bearing from *dirigisme* to laissez-faire. Youth work languished.

New Labour arrives and looks for the Holy Grail

Most youth workers in England had a spring in their steps in May 1997. A New Labour government took office with some apparent commitment to the needs of young people. In opposition the Labour Party had used a task force to study youth issues in preparation for being in government and the Party's spokesman, Peter Kilfoyle, was himself a former youth worker. Surely the sun was about to shine on youth work after long years in the shadows?

Regrettably not: the New Deal on employment was launched in 1998 and the youth justice system reformed. But Labour never published its internal task force paper on youth issues and Kilfoyle was not given the youth brief in government but was despatched to other ministerial duties. The youth (in Education) post was taken instead by Kim Howells, MP for Pontypridd, and a man with no discernible knowledge of current youth issues. He was followed by a succession of 'Youth' ministers but few of these showed much interest in youth work. Instead they were beguiled into attempting the pursuit of the holy grail of youth policy – the joining up of services.

It was evident that any political impetus to strengthen youth work had leached from New Labour's immediate agenda. In September *England's Youth Service: the 1998 Audit* was published (NYA, 1998). It achieved a 100% return from local authorities and could be described as a 'Doomsday Book' of the scale of provision in this part of the youth sector. Its commentary underlined the longstanding wide variations on provision across the land, reflecting the different funding and other commitments of local authorities. It showed that the very fabric of the Youth Services – and hence of youth work – was so weak in many areas that it found it hard to sustain either innovation or its continuing work.

Meanwhile, a new player in the machinery of government was making its presence felt. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) had been created to deal with those 'wicked issues' which often spanned Whitehall departments and were not sufficiently central to the policy concerns of any one. Its direct reporting line to the Prime Minister gave it authority to knock heads together. A stream of influential studies and reports followed, ranging across teenage pregnancy, truancy and neighbourhood renewal. It would have been well-placed to create a better approach to youth services in general and to have found a suitable niche for youth work within this.

At this point disjunctures occurred in the policy-making process. The Department for Education and Skills was pursuing an educational reform agenda. The SEU had studied the position of those 16 – 18 year olds not in education, training or employment ('the NEETS') and had produced *Bridging the Gap* which sketched how a solution might be constructed (SEU, 1999). A time lag occurred between publishing the *Bridging the Gap* report and that of a separate SEU analysis of the position of young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods carried out by its Policy Action Team 12 (SEU-PAT 12, 2000). The latter study was both broader and richer in its analysis than *Bridging the Gap* and had much more pertinent proposals on how to construct effective local and national arrangements to co-ordinate services and funding for the young (SEU, 2000). But it arrived too late. The DfES had already seized on *Bridging the Gap* with its narrower emphasis on education and training matters. In this process little consideration was given to the needs and potential of

youth work although there were a few references and a particular commendation of the role of detached and outreach work. The policy agenda moved elsewhere, back to the holy grail of connecting services for the young through a vehicle named 'Connexions'.

The Connexions Strategy can be seen as the apotheosis in youth policy of the two complementary mantra that dominated contemporary discourse on policy-making – 'joined-up government' and 'partnership working'. The first expressed the need to break down the departmental silos in central and local government; the second the desirability of drawing together a range of organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors to achieve common goals. Both concepts have an obvious resonance for youth policy – even if their power has rather diminished with excessive use.

From the outset, few dissented from the goals sought for Connexions. The difficulty was in the operational detail. Three elements posed particular problems for those in youth work. First, the Connexions represented a form of producer capture both in the scope of its functions and in its construction. Having shed the concept of introducing an over-arching strategy, it quickly became a service in which too much reliance was placed on the anticipated benefits of using individual guidance as the key method and on the existing careers service as the principal organisational machinery. The latter was chosen because, for contracting reasons, it was readily available to the DfES which had, by then though only for a time, lost a Whitehall battle to bring in other services e.g. Youth Offending Teams, or take over Local Authority Youth Services. It also fitted the Department's relatively narrow focus on advice to students about their educational and training choices. But it was well short of the Holy Grail.

Many in the field had accepted that there needed to be a radical re-configuration of local services for which the Social Exclusion Unit's PAT 12 report had provided such a compelling case. But they saw limits to the capacity of information and advice to produce changes in individuals, never mind in their peer groups and communities; they argued that it needed the full range of youth work – including detached work and work with small groups – to be deployed.

The second major doubt was the impression that Connexions was based on only one big idea – the role of the Professional Adviser (PA). Mentoring had become fashionable across several policy areas. Associated with this idea was heady talk about the creation of 'a new profession' – that of Connexions PA. This was later amended to the more realistic 'a new professional role' though the idea did not fully disappear. Many features of the recruitment and training of such personnel were unclear and it was not evident how any new training would build on existing professional foundations, especially in respect of youth work. Compounding this was a good deal of reckless talk of the Youth Service being 'subsumed' in the new arrangements.

None of these characteristics was likely to win the hearts and minds of youth work which was concerned with the development of young people as well as their guidance; which valued work in groups as much as work with individuals; and which had a longstanding system of professional training with robust independent validation of its higher education providers. No doubt, a certain measure of professional defensiveness and organisational protectionism was also present in a service which could trace its origins at least to the

formation of the YMCA in the mid-nineteenth century.

In any event, after several years in the doldrums, the Youth Service itself had re-emerged into the policy spotlight. This was partly prompted by the growing recognition that Connexions would need all the friends it could get if it was to deliver. New DfES officials and a new Minister, Ivan Lewis, were open to The NYA's arguments that an effective Connexions strategy required a wider infrastructure of youth support and development. They now sought to develop the Youth Service in its own right and as a partner to Connexions as it began to take local operational shape. The strengths and competences of different partners began to be given their proper place, though some major structural and financial issues were not satisfactorily resolved; nor were the approaches of youth work necessarily fully comprehended or accepted.

Transforming Youth Work?

Nevertheless, youth work benefited from a whole set of governmental interventions designed to build its capacity, reform its organisational arrangements and specify standards for local provision. Government began to advance its *Transforming Youth Work* agenda in March 2001 (DfES, 2001). In due course, a policy document – *Resourcing Excellent Youth Services* emerged (DfES, 2002). While these interventions began with propositions about youth work contributing to the achievement of Connexions' agenda, as the process unfolded it increasingly took on a momentum of its own.

This suite of policy developments, closely based on various NYA propositions (NYA, 1999, 2001) provided a clear specification of the range of Youth Service provision which should be secured by local authorities; a common planning system, targets and performance indicators; a pattern of management training; and an ambitious set of proposals for workforce development. Not least, there was additional ring-fenced funding and an indicative budget figure for every local authority. Ofsted would step up its inspections and the Secretary of State had taken stronger intervention powers for use when local authorities failed to deliver. All this represented a bold new architecture for youth work with a national framework establishing the basis for local co-ordination and delivery.

It was not, however, a universally popular framework in youth work circles. In particular, the focus on targets for young people's participation and their achievement; renewed talk of a 'curriculum', albeit one concerned with personal and social development; and a general tightening of management practice some saw as challenging. Their views would later find expression in a study which noted that the provision of new resource 'was compromised by the related requirement to fulfil requirements which did not seem to capture, and might even contradict the principles of youth work'. Indeed, the report's authors argued that:

> *to fit with government agendas for a coherent policy approach to young people..... youth workers would be required to target their work specifically defined as NEET or who would be categorised as socially excluded or as 'at risk'. Increasingly their energies were being directed towards meeting numerical targets for recorded and accredited outcomes.* (Spence, Devanney and Noonan 2006: 33)

Doubts expressed in this way increasingly diverged from the views of some policy-makers, including Ministers. The latter were given added power by a damaging research report from the London Institute of Education (Feinstein et al 2007). This study was based on an analysis of the 1970 youth cohort study and purported to show that the association of young people in unstructured youth clubs during the 1980s – the classic, if not the only, youth work method – had negative outcomes later in life. The researchers were much more tentative in their conclusions than DfES Ministers and officials and, although critics pointed out the flaws in the research, this critique of youth work endured. It was re-inforced by negative Ofsted reports on local authority Youth Services and by a new set of moral panics about anti-social behaviour by young people. Even before the *Transforming Youth Work* agenda could be fully implemented, the process of continuous revolution – and the pursuit of the Holy Grail – had taken a new turn. Within two years the government had embarked on a further re-construction of local services for young people. The origins were two-fold: another in the long line of child protection failures and the first strategic plan by the Children and Young People's Unit, one of the few tangible outcomes of the Social Exclusion Unit's report from its PAT12. The availability of the latter enabled a broader picture to be taken of the needs of all children and young people and not simply a response to the inability of social work professionals and others to prevent another horrific murder of a child similar to that of Victoria Climbié. The two strands came together in a White Paper *Every Child Matters* and legislation, the Children Act (2005). The legislation not only identified a set of five outcomes for young people which all public services would seek, it also created an entirely new structure for local authorities, requiring them to bring together their education and children's welfare functions under a single, 'Director of Children's Services' and to produce a single 'Children and Young People's Plan'.

Given the origins it was not surprising that the needs of children dominated thinking and it required determined lobbying to have national policy-makers focus on the specific needs of adolescents. The outcome was *Youth Matters*: long delayed in production it eventually emerged in 2005 (HM Government, 2005). While some saw it as measured and positive, many regarded it as naïve and shallow and it was denounced by one academic as showing 'sloppy, unholistic, immature concept of research evidence' (Coles, 2006). *Youth Matters* offered a number of proposals for action, notably in trying to increase the number of options for young people to choose in their leisure time ('somewhere to go, something to do' was the fashionable mantra) and shaping these into a 'Youth offer' to be constructed as a kind of local market of services. Structurally, it endeavoured to bolt the youth agenda on to the new Children's Services arrangements and, as part of this, to re-integrate Connexions into the local authority's planning and commissioning system. The follow-up action gave considerable weight to involving young people in decision-making about local facilities, notably through the Youth Opportunity Fund. But the specific attention given to youth work was slender. As another critic noted:

> *A more extended analysis of the complex relationship between young people and their fast-changing social world might have led to greater prominence given to the contribution that youth work has to make. The limited number of references to youth work fail to recognise how youth work at its best provides reflective space to explore some of these complexities and develops in young people the skills and confidence to envisage and demand better futures and improving services from local authority*

departments and voluntary organisations. (Merton, 2005: 33)

Nevertheless, the policy framework began to be implemented and there was even a modest improvement in the legal basis for some aspects of youth work, though Ministers recoiled from using the term. Happily, other practical and policy forces were also in play and, unusually, HM Treasury had by now engaged on a closer analysis of the position of young people and how a 10 year strategy to meet their needs could be planned and financed. The National Youth Agency with others, including young people themselves, produced an extensive battery of evidence to the Treasury placing particular emphasis on the role of the youth worker as the one mediator who could help young people to learn from their experiences, extend their horizons and develop personal resilience. The NYA adduced a range of evidence from youth work's contribution to public policy issues – in justice, health, heritage – and showed how a burgeoning youth work field could play an even larger role if some key conditions were met (NYA, 2006). The policy line too often continued to overemphasise the individual rather than the group; the market place rather than the public service; and the negativity rather than the potential of young people's lives. Nevertheless, the needs of adolescents and the contribution of those who work with them had come in from the margins of political consciousness to a point where it was being discussed in Cabinet.

When the 10 year strategy was eventually launched, in July 2007, it appeared under the title *Aim High: young people and positive activities* (HM Government, 2007). This document recycled much of the analysis used in *Youth Matters* to which it added some development of the Feinstein critique of unstructured youth clubs – hence the report's emphasis on 'positive activities'. It did manage to say rather more about the role of the youth worker and appeared to have rediscovered the form of developmental youth work practice which had been advocated by Batten, Button and others in the 1960s and early 1970s (Batten1967, Button 1974). It contained a number of interesting proposals, not least to strengthen the voice and influence of young people and to refurbish the much decayed building stock. But it remained weak on how the youth workforce would be developed and on the standards, scale and volume of youth work which could be expected to be available in localities.

Conclusion

It is sometimes said that policy about children's welfare in this country only follows a crisis or moral panic. Something similar affects youth work. The variable interest of policy-makers may, however, say more about their changing pre-occupations than about the needs of young people or youth work practice. Over the course of 25 years, the approach to policy-making has changed. The Thompson Report was in the previously classical mode: a review committee of the 'great and good', chaired by a safe pair of hands with a secretariat supplied by HM Inspectorate. Evidence was sought from the field and from committee visits, then carefully weighed before presentation to Ministers. Twenty five years later, the approach to *Youth Matters* and *Aim High*; was new style: the committee was replaced by in-house crafting by civil servants, there was much political interference and some misuse of evidence though the field was invited to contribute views. Work with young people had survived two decades of neglect. By 2007 it had begun to benefit from the warming rays

of political attention: it was less clear, however, that this warmth would extend fully to the particular practice known as youth work.

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The Thoughts of Chairman How!

A selection of columns written for *Young People Now*

Howard Williamson

This selection of columns written for Young People Now between January 2003 and December 2006 comes from one of the most respected voices in the field of youth work. As an academic, a practitioner and a policy maker, Howard Williamson is well placed to comment on the world of youth work, and The National Youth Agency is delighted to present a selection of his wit and wisdom, taken from his weekly magazine columns.

Youth justice and offending, Europe, alcohol, supervision, residentials, gambling, drugs and girls' work are just some of the topics he turns his eye and pen to. Whether you're a youth work student, an elected member, manage or work in a youth setting, research youth issues, help formulate local or national youth policy or simply someone who cares about policy or the way we support our young people, this book is for you. It is a richly rewarding read, and contains much to entertain and challenge.

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The National Youth Agency
Getting it right for young people

A plague on all our houses? Reflections on media coverage of young people

Tim Burke

Asked in 2004 to talk about young people's portrayal in the media, Stovin Hayter, then editor of *Young People Now* magazine, picked out a couple of choice headlines. One from the *Peterborough Evening Telegraph* read: 'Like a plague, the city seems to be in the grip of lawlessness among the young'. Whatever was going on in Peterborough, Hayter was able to reveal what might be termed another plague – that of the press reporting of young people. 'From the language and tone used, you would think that teenagers were responsible for the majority of crime and that young people were completely out of control,' he told the young people's current affairs website *HeadsUp*.

> *In fact only 1.8 per cent of 10 to 17-year-olds were convicted or cautioned in 2001. For 21 to 25-year-olds it was 2.4 per cent, and for 26 to 30-year-olds it was 2.1 per cent. The sense of moral panic that is fuelled by the Press, the shrill demands that 'something must be done', influences politicians and people who vote. It fuels public fear... Eventually, such hysteria feeds into public policy.*

Trust in the media

There's something of a paradox here. We might get worked up about the effect of what appears in the media, but it also appears that we don't actually believe what journalists tell us. A MORI poll in 2002 looking at the trust the public has in different professions showed doctors top of the list with 91 per cent of respondents expressing trust, 6 per cent not trusting. The Police came in around the middle at 59 per cent trusted, 31 per cent not trusted, and of course journalists propped up the list of shame, outdoing even politicians to come in at just 13 per cent trusted, and 79 per cent not trusted. And why? According to former *Mirror* editor Piers Morgan, and he should know, it is because 'we exaggerate, we distort, we sensationalise, we sex things up a bit for good measure'. In October 2003 he told a meeting of the Society of Editors. 'We don't say sorry enough ... We're a bit too nasty ... Newspapers are sneering, cynical, aggressive little animals'. Kim Fletcher, then editorial director of both the *Daily and Sunday Telegraph*, told the same meeting that 'Journalism is not social work. We're going out there because we're part of an aggressive industry which is out to make money.'

So far, so predictable it is not news to anyone that the press sensationalises or that young people are the subject of moral panics. *Youth and Policy* readers will have sat in far too many conferences where a speaker has trolled out a quote from some ancient Greek to show that, *tee hee*, they had problems with disrespectful youth too, would you believe?

Positive images

Nonetheless the last few years have seen some serious efforts taken to both track and challenge the way young people are presented in the media. It has not always gone down well with the press themselves. Tim Gospill, editor of the NUJ's house journal *The Journalist* accepted the idea that the press has a duty to report fairly, but bridled at the notion of any 'duty' to present positive images of young people; 'I've read a lot about how badly the media treat young people but I've never noticed it myself,' he told *Young People Now* as it launched its Positive Images campaign in 2004. That campaign was based on the magazine's own survey commissioned from MORI. The analysis involved looking at tabloids, local papers and broadsheets over the course of a week. It was adjudged that 71 per cent of articles had a negative tone, 15 per cent were neutral and 14 per cent were positive. The research also focused on ways in which the perpetual identification of young people in connection with stories of theft and violence threatened to distort the way we see young people. A third of all articles on young people concerned crime. Some 48 per cent of articles about crime and violence depicted a young person as perpetrator. This was compared to 26 per cent of young people who admit to committing a crime of which only 7 per cent involved the police. Additionally only 8 per cent of stories about young people actually carried any quotes from young people. One might have some sympathy with some journalists here, given the sensitivities involved and the barriers that may be placed in their way when attempting to talk to young people. Nevertheless, the sense was very much of an incomplete picture.

The *Young People Now* survey of course came at a time when the Anti Social Behaviour Order was giving a boost to a naming and shaming culture and offering up juicy full-tosses to those media editors with a penchant for hitting young people for six. The *Sun* proposed its own SASBOs (Sun ASBOs) while South London's *News Shopper* freebie took advantage of the lack of reporting restrictions in civil courts to plaster its front page with photos of miscreants and invite readers to play 'Shop a Yob Bingo'.

Supporting the campaign launch, Mike Jempson of the international training organisation MediaWise said editors were also increasingly keen to challenge the criminal courts over identifying under 18s, 'Editors see legislation that prohibits the identification of young people involved in criminal proceedings as a restriction on press freedom'.

Taking action

So what's to be done? *Young People Now*'s aim was not just to report the survey findings but to press for change. In that at least they were supported by Tim Gopsill who stated bluntly, but not without some justification:

> *Organisations that purport to represent young people should stop moaning and put more work into helping the press to actually get good stories about young people, rather than complaining that they don't get them.*

The publication of the survey was accompanied by the launch of the campaign the stated aims of which were to:

- encourage the media to look for positive stories;
- encourage youth groups and young people to be proactive in contacting the media;
- develop a press code that would help give young people a voice; and
- ensure local government made a real effort to celebrate young people as part of a long-term strategy.

To start with the last item first, 2008 has seen some advancement on this front. The Government's *Aiming High Implementation Plan* (March 2008) set out the Government's long-term vision for improved services and opportunities for young people. It has six key aims, number one of which is:

> ***rebalancing the public narrative about young people*** – counteracting the unrelentingly negative perception of young people by celebrating the achievements of the majority.

The government is seeking to encourage local authorities and youth organisations to take action on this front, establishing a number of pilots to explore how young people can design and organise events to celebrate their transition to adulthood. Of course many already do – the limit of government activity has been to provide funding of up to £15,000 to build on what is happening locally and run two youth-led celebration events by 2009 – one in schools, one community-based. Publicity for these events, including the involvement of the local press, was an explicit requirement in the specification letter sent out to those applying to be part of the pilots.

It has been made clear to everyone that this is not the start of a positive publicity grant scheme, but an attempt to ferret out some best practice examples which could inform a future Youth Week. The government has been influenced by an Australian model here and according to the *Aiming High Implementation Plan* 'a sub-group of the Empowerment Working Group' is looking at how a focused week could showcase and celebrate the achievements of young people. The Australian National Youth Week is a joint Australian State, Territory and Local Government and voluntary sector initiative that in 2006 involved over 272,500 young people in some 1,789 events and which is 'supported by substantial media coverage...initiated and managed at national and local level'.

Given the headlines appearing in July 2008 – 'Greedy, rude adults "fuelling teen violence'" said the *Guardian*'s front page lead following an interview with Alan Steer, head of the government review of school behaviour policies – perhaps we will soon see some similar pilots celebrating the achievements of us Fortysomethings.

A media code

The implementation plan also usefully includes a sample media code which it attributes to Leighton Buzzard and Linslade Youth Forum; it is in fact – with minor revisions – the code

that was drawn up for the *Young People Now* 2004 campaign and mentioned above. The Leighton Buzzard version quoted reads:

1. Local newspapers should use loaded and emotive words with care, not as catch-all terms to describe all young people e.g. 'yobs', 'thugs', 'monsters', 'evil' and 'gang';
2. Young people should be recognized and respected as part of the community through the pages in the newspapers; they should not be ostracised from it;
3. The media should ensure that young people have a voice and are given their chance to comment on issues that affect them, this should be by regular positive news stories and possibly regular columns written by young people on relevant issues;
4. The media should recognise that most young people do not become involved in violent crimes, while it is the media's duty to provide coverage of young offenders, it should provide a fair representation of young people, balancing negative stories with positive portrayals;
5. 'Naming and shaming' those young people who are the subjects of Antisocial Behaviour Orders can put their safety and the safety of their families at risk;
6. The media should always refer to the relevant press codes when dealing with young people, including the Press Complaints Commission Code of Practice – Clauses 6 and 7, the International Federation of Journalists' Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Children and UNICEF's Principles for ethical reporting on children.

It's hardly realistic to think that sending this out is going to cause a searching of collective consciences in Canary Wharf or at the *Peterborough Evening Telegraph*. There's hard cash in sales by scaring the *bejesus* out of a readership. But if by virtue of having some such code to promote, young people and youth organisations are encouraged to build links and open channels of communications, there is at least the possibility of a leavening of the negative message with a few more rounded reports. Journalists need stories and they need quotes. They cultivate people who supply them. If you make yourselves available and give journalists what they want, there is more of a chance that they'll respond when you are seeking coverage for stories you have initiated. It may be that a little media training for young people is required; if so, so much the better, how much better to support a young person in explaining the background to an issue than a youth worker or management committee bod.

Repeated survey

Young People Now did not leave its survey and campaign as a one off but has repeated it several times since, combining it with awards that reward both journalists for serious media coverage and the efforts put into securing positive coverage by young people and youth groups. In 2005, the survey found around the same proportion of positive stories at 12 per cent but a shift towards the middle ground with negative stories falling from 71 per cent to 57 per cent and 'neutral' stories – those about young people but which do not seek to comment on them – doubling from 15 per cent to 30 per cent. Award winners included the likes of Ashanti Fearon, a young mother who helped promote the YWCA's Respect Young Mum's campaign and who put herself in the firing line in order to get across some of the challenges faced and achievements made by young mothers. In the 2007 survey broadly positive coverage had jumped to 22.7 per cent. While adults were quoted in 38 per cent of

stories about young people, it was still rare to find young people's views being sought – a young person's quotation appeared in only 11 per cent of the coverage. The magazine was not getting carried away, a report on the 2007 survey pointing out that:

> *While in any one week particular stories might dominate a news-agenda, there is little to suggest that the negative coverage of young people is atypical. The range of topics covered by the national media was predominantly negative, with an emphasis on problem behaviour and young people the instigators or victims.*

Editor Ravi Chandiramani, of *Young People Now*, said that while the previous three years had seen something of an improvement in positive coverage young people were still being seen but not heard, risking reinforcing negative stereotypes and further alienating young people.

Young people's media

Over recent years there have been a number of attempts to redress the balance of reporting on young people – some from a commercial angle, others with more of an educational or socially-oriented approach. In the late 1980s there was a relatively short-lived phenomenon of national papers creating young people's versions. The *Independent* took advantage of its emerging nickname and launched The *Indy*, a 20-page weekly tabloid sold separately to the parent paper. In those days the *Independent* was rather a stolid, middle-ground kind of publication, but the *Indy* was a lively, committed, campaigning paper, staffed by young professional journalists and with a large amount of open access pages for readers. Circulation settled for a while at around 22,000 but it seems it never reached the target figure of 35,000 which became the financial success required of it. Other papers looked on with interest – the *Telegraph*, one eye firmly trained on its famously aging readership profile, tried a few versions of *Young Telegraph* and *The Times* was on the verge of launching *The Thunderer* but pulled back.

Launched in 1988 was *Early Times*, an independent newspaper for 8 to 14 year olds published by an academic after he realised that many other parents were getting continually questioned by their children on issues in the news. It was popular with educationalists, with foreign language teachers and to the kind of enthusiastic young person who probably also watched *Newsround* on television. It regularly picked up 50,000 weekly sales, many of them in Europe, but again struggled to grow much bigger. 'In Holland we're a household name and looking to grow further,' said editor Ian Eckert in 1990, before adding 'but it's a real struggle to expand sales here'.

Within a few years the growth of the internet and subsequently of social media made the idea of a youth newspaper seem almost quaint. Nonetheless another approach at getting young people's perspectives into the media has prospered. *Children's Express* launched in the UK in 1994 as a 'personal development and learning programme' for young people aged 8-19. Renamed *Headliners* in 2007, it has operated as youth news agency rather than a publication, giving young people a chance to work alongside professional journalists, picking up knowledge and skills and gaining the opportunity to get their voices heard in the

media. It now has offices in London, Newcastle, Derry and Belfast and in recent years has developed peer training, and participation work with partners in the third sector. Over the years they have placed 1200 press pieces and filmed reports, including supplements for the likes of the *Daily Mirror* and *Independent* on young people's views and films for Sky News and BBC News 24 as well as films to help promote the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds.

Impact

It may not compensate for acres of less thoughtful coverage elsewhere but all the activity discussed above – from surveys of press coverage to media activism by young people – has helped create a climate where the media portrayal of young people is at least recognised as a serious issue. The UK Youth Parliament made it a key part of its 2007 manifesto:

> *UKYP believes that young people are often portrayed in a stereotypical way and this is not only in the media. We believe that young people need to work together to resolve this negative discrimination.*
>
> *We believe that positive images of young people should be promoted in the media. Also, we believe that young people should be given the opportunity to work with the media. A youth column in a national newspaper is an example of this. This should be backed up with a written section within the Press Complaints Commission's Code of Conduct that includes a clause about giving young people a fair portrayal within the media.*

The government has, as well as the pilots for celebration events, established a funding line – entitled *Mediabox* – precisely to help young people create their own media representations and get their voices heard on film, television, radio, online and multi media platforms.

The message has certainly got through to some parts of the media. Compare the comments of *Observer* columnist John Naughton to those of Tim Gopsill. According to his paper, Naughton 'electrified' the Society of Editors conference in November 2006 when he savaged the newspapers' coverage of young people and their determination 'either to insult or to ignore them'.

It's worth quoting Naughton at length:

> *Just imagine for a moment that you're a British teenage boy. You're struggling to grow up, to find out who you really are. Your parents' marriage has broken up. Your Dad's long gone. You're either under pressure to perform in school – SATS, GCSEs etc – or you're in a sink school that is threatened with closure, where the Head's off having a nervous breakdown and the only instruction you get comes from frightened supply teachers. You're threatened with an ASBO if you congregate with your mates. You get banned from shopping centres because you wear a hoodie. The only adult role models available are thuggish older lads who are in the same boat as you. You carry a knife not because you are violent, but because you're scared witless most of the time you're out*

on the street.

And if, by any chance, you happen to find one of our newspapers on the pavement of that street and you start to read it, what do you find? You are likely to read spiteful, biased, inaccurate factoid-based journalism that portrays you as a hateful, terrifying, anti-social, petty criminal that society would be better without. Plus a lot of garbage about celebrities, liposuction, conquest shagging and footballers' wives. And – ungrateful wretch that you are – you decide that, no, you're not going to shell out 50p to read that stuff.

Naughton also went on to berate his audience for the lack of youth presence or awareness on their editorial floors and the failure to understand the way young lives are led.

I started this piece with a rather strained allusion to the 'plague' of press reporting. For those of us who spent our late teens in black polo neck sweaters the word conjures thoughts of former Oran goalkeeper and journalist Albert Camus and the title of his most famous novel. At the end of *La Peste* he wrote 'la bacille de la peste ne meurt ni ne disparait pas' (The plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good). He was alluding metaphorically to human indifference to suffering – or perhaps just Nazism if you like your allegories straightforward. Camus was also for a while a typesetter with *Paris Soir*, until he left, depressed at its diet of scandal and crime. So it's pleasant to speculate that he would have supported moves to lessen the virulence of that particular strain of journalism identified by Piers Morgan and which still infects too many parts of the media. For the rest of us, it remains a continuing struggle to ensure balance and fairness.

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Getting Better All The Time

case studies of improving youth work services

Bryan Merton, Rob Hunter and Harriet Gore (2006)

This book aims to share widely the lessons that can be learned from services that have brought about significant changes to the way they work in order to raise standards of youth work provision and practice. Themes have been selected that impact on quality outcomes for young people, case studies describe how these have led to organisational development and service improvements, and reference is made to models of change management to help pull the various threads together.

It is invaluable reading for all those who are responsible for developing policies and services for young people, along with funders and the front line staff who deliver the work.

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The National Youth Agency
Getting it right for young people

The Changing World's View of Christian Youth Work

Mary-Ann Clayton and Naomi Stanton

This article explores the key changes Christian youth work has experienced since the 1980s. It addresses the tensions between Christian and secular youth work, and explores some of the 'sticky' subjects such as evangelism and the apparent lack of boundaries in some faith-based work. We recognise the difference in worldviews promoted by Christian and secular youth work to be the source of tension, and argue that neither is more subjective than the other. It also looks at the professionalisation of Christian youth work over the last 25 years. Three interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders in the Christian youth work field. We aim to be open and frank about evangelical Christian youth work, its aims and values over the last 25 years, and look forward to its future with hope and anticipation. We hope that this article provokes response and criticism, and energy to continue debate in the area.

When youth work began in this country it was as a voluntary venture, undertaken by those who saw a need and were inspired by their Christian faith to respond. Since then it has evolved to a considerable extent into a state-sponsored strategy to deal with the 'problems of youth'. Alongside this trend we have witnessed the emergence of youth work as a profession. Until recently faith-based youth work was left behind and left out of this professionalisation process. However over the last 25 years there have been massive changes particularly in the Christian youth work sector as it has responded to the drastic decline in the numbers of young people attending church and made moves to keep up with the secular field. Christian youth work is often seen as residing at the margins of the youth work field but recent changes in both the Christian and statutory sector mean the Church of England now employs more youth workers than the combined local authorities in England and Wales (Brierley, 2003). This article will examine the main issues for Christian youth work over the last 25 years, and how it fits with the shifting worldview of British society. The main issues identified are the professionalisation of the sector and development of training and resources; the increase in boundaries and protocol that come with this new professionalism; and the growing controversy over evangelism and radical Christian youth work. The article is informed by interviews with three stakeholders in the Christian youth work sector, the National Director of *Youth For Christ*, the Chief Executive of *Frontier Youth Trust*, and the founder and Director of a radical youth project *The Message Trust*. Through these interviews it emerged that over recent years a new culture of social action and partnership working has developed within the Christian youth work field.

Young People's rocky relationship with the Church

'Ask an adult congregation "Is this parish church accessible to young people?" and the answer frequently is "Yes, because they only have to walk in through the door." Ask the

same adults if they have ever avoided using public toilets, even if they have needed to, and there will be stories about why they couldn't use them on particular occasions, even though they were 'accessible'. The barriers young people have to climb are similar in terms of experience to adults turning away from public toilets. Who might you meet in there? Does the environment match my values and standards? Will I feel embarrassed?' (Denis Tully, Diocesan Youth Officer, Southwell Diocese, cf. Church of England.)

Dave Wiles of *Frontier Youth Trust* (FYT) stated in an interview that experience has shown him a generation of young people who want to engage with spirituality but are wary of organised religion. Brierley (2006) analyses the 2005 Church census to create 'a contemporary picture of churchgoing'. He reveals that since 1979 the average age of the church-goer has increased from 37 to 45. He compares this to the average age in the overall population in Britain which has risen from 37 to 40. Brierley highlights one particular decade, the 1990s when some 500,000 children and young people left the Church. He acknowledges that this decline has slowed in the new millennium partly due to their not being enough under 18s left in the Church for such a sharp decline to occur again, and partly due to the Church's response to the decline. By the term 'the Church' we refer to all denominations of the Christian church and their members. A significant response includes a massive increase of full-time professional youth workers employed by churches. Brierley states that around one third of churches now have access to a paid youth or children's worker, however the 2005 church census revealed that some churches have no young people at all in their congregations. Around half of churches have no 11-14s attending and well over half have no 15 – 19s (Brierley, 2006). Brierley recognises that despite the fact that the decline has slowed significantly since the 90s, these statistics are fairly drastic for churches hoping to recover their youth population. In interview Andy Hawthorne, founder of *The Message Trust* (MT) and a radical evangelist, acknowledges that in general churches are 'ill-equipped' to deal with young people and the issues they face – in fact his entire ministry is based on this premise. It seems that where young people are attending church, they are choosing to access those churches without large elderly populations. Brierley (2006) highlights the difference between the average age of the attendee for different denominations of church, with the Methodist and United Reformed topping the list with an average age of over 55, and the Pentecostals and New Churches being the youngest at 33 and 34, over 10 years below the average of 45. There are also a number of Churches belonging to other denominations with healthy numbers of young people. These pockets of thriving youth churches are interesting at a time when many traditional churches are struggling to maintain any young people at all. What is it about these churches that attracts young people? Brierley puts it down to the more radical approaches within them. This shift in the methods of Christian youth work was confirmed by Roy Crowne, Director of *Youth For Christ* (YFC) who stated in interview that 'what I think has changed in the way we then do it over the last 25 years is the kind of innovation means, that we don't just preach at them; that we dialogue and discuss with them'. Dave Wiles (FYT) also argues the importance of connecting with the world of young people. In Leeds, for example, the local churches responded to the decline in youth attending their congregations by praying and consulting with young people, and then creating a youth church movement outside of the traditional church boundaries. The 'Leeds Youth Cell Network' grew from 10 to 400 regular members between 1999 and 2005 with 36 groups meeting in different locations (LYCN, 2008). Significantly, the move has not been to do away with the teaching of the faith, but

to accept young people and allow them to ask questions about the faith and explore its claims for themselves.

The professionalisation and changing culture of Christian youth work

There has been a significant rise in the number of paid Christian Youth Workers in Britain over the last couple of decades following the dramatic decrease in the numbers of young people attending church. Green describes this as the 'professionalisation' of faith-based youth work and she acknowledges that many of these workers are professionally qualified. She states that 'in Christian youth work now young people are much more likely to experience informal education delivered by trained workers which is less likely to be recreational or purely social'. Green also emphasises that 'In many Church of England dioceses the number of full time youth workers exceeds the number of statutory youth workers' (2006: 3). Brierley (2003: 55) states that by 1998 the Church had become 'the largest employer of youth workers in the country' employing more than even the Local Authority. Alongside this was a concurrent rise of Christian training programmes that combined the JNC qualification with a study of theology and practice relevant to youth ministry (Brierley, 2003). As well as a rise of BA and diploma level courses offered by Christian agencies such as Oasis, the Centre for Youth Ministry, and Spurgeons among others, some universities have also created youth ministry courses or specialisms that incorporate the professional qualification.

However this professionalisation of Christian youth work may not be entirely positive. Andy Hawthorne (MT) recognises it has become more difficult in terms of the guidelines for involving young people in activities and trips, though he emphasises the child protection and health and safety benefits of such procedures. Further study needs to be undertaken as to whether there has been a decrease in Christian youth work volunteers as churches shift to a reliance on 'the professional' to do the work. Dave Wiles (FYT) mentions that the professionalisation of the sector has undermined the confidence of many volunteers who feel inadequate in the face of professional qualifications. Hawthorne suggests people within the Church are now less motivated to volunteer when their offerings contribute to paying for a professional. Wiles also believes that adults within the Church are less likely to take on responsibility when there is a paid member of staff. Such volunteers are valuable, both in the time and skills they contribute and because they communicate a message that Christians are engaging in youth work out of a motivation apart from the income it provides. This begs the question of whether, to a certain extent, to be paid for youth work undermines its effectiveness.

Since the 1980s, statutory funding cuts for youth work have accompanied the rise of professional Christian youth work. The first Ministerial conference in 1989 'defined the Youth Service as comprising all voluntary, statutory and independent providers engaging in youth work', making the Church a huge stakeholder (Brierley, 2003: 53). By the end of the century the Church was now eligible to be a provider and access state funding for work with young people defined as at risk of social exclusion. Brierley states that the appointment of a Bishop as chair of the National Youth Agency reflected a change in the view of Christian

youth work by the statutory sector. However alongside this integration, and its growth and professionalisation, Christian youth work has had to respond to the wider societal challenges facing those working with young people.

> *So for me over the 25 years we need to have maintained our core, the gospel. Innovation in the way that we do it is key to where we presently now find ourselves in the context of the culture that pluralistic society, multi faith society and the whole globalization, a whole stack of things that have kicked in that have changed young people massively.* (interview Roy Crowne, YFC)

The last 25 years have been a time of both innovation and professionalisation for Christian youth work whilst seeking to protect its faith-inspired motivation and goals. Alongside this, Roy Crowne (YFC) states that there has been a diminishing significance of faith in the majority of people's lives which has led to a fervour rather than apathy among those who are Christians.

> *I think the other change that I can see that is fascinating is that there used to be a mixture that everybody was kind of religious, now if you are a Christian you might as well go full blown into it and commit yourself to it.* (interview Roy Crowne, YFC)

Not everyone within the Christian youth work sector has conformed to the professionalisation agenda and resulting boundaries for youth work, and some fairly radical alternatives have emerged. These will be discussed later on.

Recent literature and debate within the Christian sector

Over the last 25 years there has been a wealth of literature published about Christian youth work and ministry. A recent search on the website Amazon UK for books relevant to 'Christian youth work' found 993 listed. These focus mainly on the themes of engaging young people in Christian youth work, resources for Christian youth work sessions, and ministry and evangelism with young people. The Church itself is producing some of these strategies and guidance for engaging youth.

Faith in the City (Church of England, 1985) recognised the role the church can play in addressing social and community issues. It provided recommendations for how local dioceses can go about this and includes a section specifically on engaging youth. One of its main assertions is that the school provides an opportunity for contact with the majority of young people in an area, and it provides such guidelines for schools work. However over the last 25 years Christians have faced many restrictions on their access to schools such as fewer assembles (their main source of contact), shorter and staggered lunch breaks (affecting the development of Christian Unions), a decline in the teaching of R.E. (their access to lesson-time slots), and increasing boundaries in how faith can be presented through schools in a multi-cultural yet dominantly secularist society. The document recognises that the church must 'seek new ways of passing on the faith to children and young people', and it recognises the importance of meeting young people where they are such as through detached youth work (Church of England, 1985: 137). It also advocates for the importance

of working with and alongside the statutory Youth Service in addressing young people's needs.

In a book that compares secular youth work and Christian youth ministry Brierley (2003) argues that their aims and methods can complement each other. He claims that the values of informal education, equality of opportunity, and voluntary participation, identified by the Ministerial conferences at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s have been intrinsic values of Christian youth work since the start, being present even in the Biblical illustrations of Jesus' engagement with people. Brierley (2003: 12) states that all youth workers, whether faith-based or secular, are 'in the business of conversion' because effective youth work results in young people's development or change. However, it is the conversion of young people to the Christian faith that has proved most controversial, attracting accusations of indoctrination and spiritual abuse of vulnerable young people.

In another publication by the Church of England *Youth A Part* it is acknowledged that there was an increasing gap between church culture and youth culture in the 1990s despite the growing number of youth workers employed by churches (Church of England, 1996). The book provides a theoretical analysis of Christian youth work within the context of a post-modern culture, and makes recommendations for youth work within churches such as the need to encourage volunteers to work alongside paid workers, the setting aside of appropriate resources and the development of new approaches. It also recognised the needs and desires of young people for alternative worship, involvement in outreach, and participation in 'residentials' and festivals. It is significant that in the mid-to-late 1990s as Christian young people sought these things outside of church boundaries there arose a substantial festival movement created to provide opportunities for young people to develop their own styles of worship, evangelism and expressions of faith. *Soul Survivor*, *Greenbelt*, *The Message*, and the youth streams of all-age conventions such as *Spring Harvest*, the *Keswick Convention* and *Easter People* are all examples of this.

Evangelism and the changing worldview

Despite the apparent acceptance and integration of Christian youth work in recent years, some youth workers, including Dave Wiles (FYT), are quick to say that opposition to evangelism within their youth work programmes has increased over the last 25 years. What was once regarded as acceptable has in recent years become a taboo. Society has become increasingly intolerant towards the distinguishing characteristic of faith-based youth work. It hardly needs stating that faith based youth work would be secular youth work if the faith aspect did not take a leading and motivating role:

> *There is an a priori set of criteria that the concept of 'Christian youth work' must satisfy: those of Christian theology itself. If 'Christian youth work' is to be authentically Christian, it must stand in some relation to the unique person of Christ.* (Sam Richards, 1999: 5)

A secular youth work programme run by youth workers with a faith remains secular youth work, yet evangelism is often a taboo among youth workers, even for those who practice it openly and inform parents and young people.

Recent opposition to evangelistic youth work has its roots in our changing culture. The secularist worldview has been embraced with open arms and with it has come claims for its objectivity. Secularism is largely accepted as an objective non-faith, with those who subscribe to it often describing themselves as of no religion. In reality, secularism makes assumptions about God, the world and humanity just as any other worldview does. The absence of God from this worldview does not make it objective, nor does the presence of God in other worldviews make them more subjective. The difference is that secularism is now the dominant worldview and often regards faith based youth work as more subjective and therefore inferior. This shifting idea of objectivity demonstrates how Christian youth work has moved from the mainstream to the margins.

> *...the God framework that we used to have in our culture 20 years ago, 15 years ago is no longer there...* (interview Roy Crowne)

It is vital for a good understanding of this debate that we recognise that every youth work programme communicates a set of values and a worldview. If this is not done by words it is most certainly achieved through action. One of the author's first experiences of secular youth work as a teenager was a talk in a PSE lesson by the youth worker from the youth centre attached to her school. The emphasis of this session was that condoms were available free of charge at the youth centre. This communicated a message to the class: underage sexual activity is approved of; you don't need to tell your parents because we can give you what you need. It could be argued that this easy access to condoms says 'you don't need to give careful thought before entering a sexual relationship', or even 'we expect you to have sex'. Secular sex education most often presents abstinence as abnormal by omission compared with a number of recent Christian initiatives, such as 'Love2Last' (2008), which present it as a positive choice. Citizenship schemes seek to instil certain values, and government involvement in youth work programmes only serves to highlight the point we are making that contemporary secular youth work promotes a worldview as much as faith based youth work. One way to avoid indoctrination is to encourage faith based youth work programmes. This increases the ability of the young person to make informed life choices since they are presented with an alternative worldview.

A radical contemporary example – Urban Presence Ministry

Within the developing professionalism of faith-based youth work in recent decades, some radical alternatives have emerged within the Christian sector that can be seen as a return to its more informal roots. This has provoked a debate into how evangelism should be carried out and whether professionalisation is desirable. *Eden* is a project in Greater Manchester that defies the current context of professional boundaries, here Christian youth workers moved into council housing estates to live among the young people they work with. These people are not paid professionals, most have other full-time jobs. Serving the young people of the community is part of their life-style carried out in their time off, on the streets, in their homes, and in their churches. Some would argue this approach is unprofessional and lacking in boundaries, but perhaps this is real youth work, going back to its roots, as it was before its secularisation.

Andy Hawthorne began his ministry at the end of the 1980s founding the *Message Trust* in 1992 in response to the needs of the young people he and his brother employed in their factory. In its early days, the *Message Trust*'s main activity was the presentation of the gospel through schools work, band gigs, and large evangelical events. They found that young people across Manchester were responding to these events, but that there was a lack of follow-up support in place for these young people to be integrated into churches to explore their new-found faith further. The *Message Trust* recognised that 75 per cent of Manchester's population were living in urban estates yet 75 per cent of its Christians were living in middle class suburban areas (Wilson, 2005). The young people being reached through the work of the *Message Trust* were from some of Manchester's most deprived estates, and the vision for *Eden*, founded in 1997, was that Christians would move onto these estates to live and serve within the communities there.

> *And* Eden *was birthed because we were seeing so many people say 'yes' they do want to follow Christ but the church seemed to be ill-equipped to deal with all the issues they were bringing into their new-found faith. And so this all came to a head when in 1997 we did a couple of weeks in Bench Hill which was then officially the worst ward in Britain and we had about a hundred kids respond, joined the local church, really seemed to be going for it but they had so much stuff going on in their lives, you know in their worlds that this little church couldn't cope with it ... and so we started recruiting for people initially to move into Bench Hill and since then there's been another 9* Eden *projects around the city, and we've seen crime come down and churches grow on the toughest estates over the last 10 years so it's been really cool.* (interview Andy Hawthorne, MT)

One way to look at the impact of this 'urban presence ministry' (Wilson, 2005) is to observe the effect on crime levels within the *Eden* areas.

> *[In] the ten* Eden *areas crime has come down significantly and its often youth crime and youth nuisance . . . our favourite statistic is that long-term crime in the Swinton Valley estate came down by 45% . . . And Greater Manchester Police will say that wherever we do* Eden, *crimes come down significantly.* (interview Andy Hawthorne, MT)

Hawthorne recognises that his workers will have less boundaries than local authority youth workers but this is what gives *Eden* authenticity and perhaps is closer to the traditional values of youth work and relationship. It may be argued that this is not youth work but rather missionary work. However every piece of youth work, whether Christian or secular, has a mission or purpose and communicates a particular worldview. This is not the only example of such radical intervention by the Christian sector. Many other churches and youth workers have made a similar move to engage in this type of hands-on youth work which meets young people in their need, and projects similar to *Eden* are being rolled out in several locations around the country.

The rise of social action

> *Jesus said that people will see your good deeds and then love your father in heaven.* (interview Roy Crowne, YFC)

While social action, often seen to be the domain of secular youth work, may have been largely forgotten for a while among faith based youth work, there has been a new focus and much debate on the role social action should play within Christian youth work over the last couple of decades. Pugh (1999) questions whether Christian youth work is evangelism or social action, but over the last 25 years these two elements have become increasingly linked. Dave Wiles (FYT) points out that Christian leaders have been calling for this change for a long time, to concur with the Biblical guidance on evangelism. Crowne states that evangelism cannot consist purely of social action; 'if [it does] we're just like the social worker, or any secular youth work or best practice that serves the community'.

Wiles (FYT) takes the role of social action even further. He uses it as a way of engaging young people with the Christian faith and bringing them into the Church. He argues that young people should be doing social action as well as it being done to them. Crowne (YFC) also seeks to involve young people in social action, arguing that this is what they want. He recognises that in the last couple of decades there has been 'a massive theological debate between social action and the proclamation of the gospel' but he goes on to say that he believes 'this new generation of young people don't even understand the debate'. He implies that the current generation of Christian youth see evangelism and social action as inter-linked and current projects within the Christian youth work sector reflect this. He gives the example of *Slum Survivor* where:

> *... a number of churches and areas would actually stay in a 24 hour shack or boxes or whatever and sleep outside for 24 hours experiencing slum conditions, lack of water, lack of food and then off the back of that experience catch something of the heart of how we can change the slums of the world, and how we can engage with globalisation, and also some of the poor townships in South Africa or wherever.* (interview Roy Crowne, YFC)

Andy Hawthorne (MT) also describes a 'sea change' in 2000 when 'words and action' and 'working together' became key within Christian youth work, claiming this change was called for by the current generation of Christian young people. He claims that these young people are 'far less labelled by what denomination or stream you're part of' than the previous generations of Church members. This change is reflected in projects like *Message 2000* where *Soul Survivor* combined their Christian youth festivals with the social and community action of the *Message Trust*. In talking about how young people have changed over the last 25 years, and the impact of this on Christian youth work methodology, Crowne states that they 'want to see where the gospel impacts on community so word and deed has become a critical part of mission and evangelism'. An example of this is *HOPE 08*, the shared vision of Roy Crowne (YFC), Andy Hawthorne (MT), and Mike Pilavachi (*Soul Survivor*). *HOPE 08* was launched this year to encourage churches to work together in a nation-wide youth movement that would see Christian young people engaging with their local communities in social action projects. As well as uniting churches, the project aims to encourage those churches to foster links with schools, police and other community agencies. This is an example of contemporary evangelism where Christians are not afraid to share their aims and methods with others, but seek to work together with other community agencies on a youth project that could challenge current perceptions of young people and of Christian youth work. In response to the question of whether *HOPE 08* marks a change in the Christian youth work, Crowne describes it as a 'revolution'.

> *85 per cent of all revolutions that happen in the world happen by young people below the age of 23. And so we're really saying to these guys "Come on you can do it, and you can make a difference. You have the potential to change your area".* (interview Roy Crowne, YFC)

He describes the dream for *HOPE 08* that it will result in churches working together within the community led by their youth, creating ground-level partnerships with all stakeholders in the community, through action that will make a difference. This is a positive picture for Christian youth work this year and into the future.

Conclusion

Over the last 25 years, Christian youth work has had to adapt to work within certain boundaries whilst seeking to maintain its core. The flawed assumption that secularism is neutral has led to a culture where faith-based work is progressively inhibited and in danger of losing its distinguishing features, particularly with the rising fear of religious extremism and, to a lesser extent, of organised religion in general. Secularism is communicated and imposed on a daily basis through the media, school, youth work and other role-models whereas evangelistic Christian youth work faces increasing opposition to its message. In order to create a balance, we need to increase young people's exposure to other worldviews and Christian youth work is ready to play its role. The rise of secularism, particularly over the last 25 years, has led to both the professionalisation of the Christian youth work sector in general, and to the emergence of radical projects in defiance of the increasing boundaries placed on Christian youth work. As the largest employer of youth workers in England and Wales, the Church has the potential to lead youth work and young people into the future. With its current focus on partnership work and social action through 'word and deed' mission, Christian youth work has potential to facilitate a national movement like that aimed through *Hope 08*. Andy Hawthorne (MT) recognises that 'we have a Church that has all the resources needed to reach all 60 million people in this nation'. Perhaps the future marks a return to the grass roots of Christian youth work with the potential to make history as did their colleagues of the past.

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The transformation of youth labour markets in the UK

Bob Coles

This journal has been in existence for twenty-five years. This article examines how, during that short time, the relationship between young people and the labour market has changed fundamentally. For brevity, discussions of associated matters concerning 'NEET' (young people not in education, employment or training), long term unemployment, underclass and social exclusion are excluded except to the degree that these have influenced labour market change. So too excluded is any detail about linkages between educational performance and work careers (Muller and Gangl 2003). We start with an examination of what we mean by labour markets, and how different types of relationships to them developed during periods of high levels of unemployment. This was influenced by, first, the growth of youth training and, second, by a growth in post-16 and post-18 education. For the majority of young people routes into secure and settled employment is complex, messy, risky and, above all, long. For others they involve cycles of 'poor work' and periods of unemployment. Some writers have written about this as leading to a fundamental polarisation of the experience of youth – 'the youth divide' (Jones 2002). Others have described the emergence of a much more complex array of routes into the labour market (Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Bradley and Devadason 2008). This complexity also involves labour market careers becoming embroiled and enmeshed with other aspects of young people's developing lifestyles. This calls into question the very conceptualisation of 'youth' as a (relatively simple) term and what we mean by 'youth' and 'young adult.'

The 1980s and the school-to-work transitions: learning (not) to labour

In the mid 1970s so called 'traditional transitions' into the labour market predominated (Coles 1995). Young people left school, usually at minimum school leaving age, and got a job. According to the National Child Development Survey (a very large sample of children born in 1958), by the time they had reached the age of 18, more than two thirds had left school and obtained work, with nine out of ten obtaining employment within six months of leaving school. There were clear demarcated divisions within labour market transitions in the 1970s. Ashton and Field described three: the 'extended career' – through higher education into professional jobs; the 'short-career' – for upper working class and lower middle class youth, involving craft apprenticeships, banking and finance and clerical work; and the 'career-less' routes into semi- and unskilled 'jobs' rather than careers (Ashton and Field 1976). For all three routes, the school-to-work-transition was easy to achieve and was taken-for-granted as an age-related *rite de passage*. The big issue of the day was certainly not about employment or unemployment but about the social inequalities involved in entry into the labour market. One of the iconic books of the time was Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (Willis 1977). It was not about whether school leavers got jobs, but whether their responses to schooling meant they destined themselves for working class jobs.

The world in the twenty-first century is very different (Muller and Gangl 2003). Some have written about the replacement of traditional transitions with extended ones, as young people are diverted from labour market entry into forms of post-compulsory education or training (Coles 1995). But the evidence reviewed here suggests that this is now far too simple a view. Rather, as several studies have illustrated, within a few short years after reaching minimum school leaving age most young people embark on different courses of study or training, spend time in a variety of different jobs (both full-time and part-time), and have some time unemployed, doing nothing or spent travelling (Bynner et al 2002; Fergusson et al 2000; Furlong and Carmel 2007; Bradley and Devadason 2008). Few reported career experiences seem the same. Such 'individualised and diversified routes' (Bradley and Devadason 2008) give a superficial impression of a weakening of the sociological determinants of class, qualifications and gender. Yet, Furlong and Cartmel claim they are able to identify distinct patterns in the fortunes of 16-23 year olds, albeit with as many as eight types of transition route. Some of these include diversions involving education or training, others relate to domestic commitments, such as having children. One case study quoted by Bradley and Devadason and given below serves to emphasise both the complexity and the length of the journey before young people regard themselves as having 'settled' in the labour market.

> *'Danny is 34 and living with his mother ... He left school early, did a YTS training course in engineering but dropped out to start earning. He held jobs in warehousing, tool and machinery repairing, telecommunications and driving. Periods of travelling and short episodes of unemployment were interspersed with 'little jobs' such as bar and catering work and plastering; it is interesting that he used the self-derogatory term as married women often do. He trained to be a personal trainer, supporting himself by working part-time in a leisure centre. Finally, a hospital job kindled an interest in physiotherapy and when interviewed he was starting a degree ... finding what he described as his 'destiny' in occupational terms.'* (Bradley and Devadason 2008: 128)

Many young people do not report themselves in 'settled' labour market positions until their late twenties or early thirties. What is less clear from this and other examples is the degree to which these extended and complex routes are determined by changes in labour market demand or by attitudes towards youth labour markets – labour market supply.

Supply or demand changes?

Where there are markets, economists advise us to look for two sides with different factors impacting upon them in different ways. Labour markets are made up of labour market supply – people with skills seeking work – and labour market demand – employers with jobs requiring skills and offering employment to would-be workers. The turbulence in youth labour markets in the 1980s, in particular, has been subject to profound scrutiny and debate to determine precisely just what happened and the role played by supply and demand side factors in either the 'disappearance' or 'transformation' of youth labour markets (Ashton et al 1990).

Arguments about 'demand-side changes' concentrate attention on the way in which, during the 1980s in particular, employers simply didn't have jobs they were willing to offer to young workers as some industries spiralled into decline and others relocated in an increasingly global economy. Some writers also point to some part of the job market being 're-engineered', transforming both the jobs on offer and the attractiveness these had to potential workers. What this meant in practical terms was the disappearance of full-time, low skills or no skills jobs in the extraction, construction, manufacturing, retail and service industries. Jobs in the retail and service sectors were also redesigned as part-time jobs, attractive to an expanding workforce of women workers and (full-time) students (Ashton 1990). In the 1970s, young people used to joke about the dead-end jobs of stacking supermarket shelves and check-out operatives. In the twenty-first century these same jobs are being done by A-level students and undergraduates, funding their way to graduate careers, as well as part-time women workers working flexi-time whilst bringing up a family.

One major factor influencing the 'supply side' of youth labour markets was demography – the number of 16 to 19 year olds eligible to leave school and enter the labour market (Bynner et al 2002). This could be controlled by policy change, such as occurred through the raising of the school leaving age in 1972. It could also be influenced by policies to displace young unemployment into various forms of post-16 training scheme (Roberts 1984). One major cause of big rises in youth unemployment of the 1980s was the number of 16-19 year old school leavers. This peaked at 3.7 million in 1984 but reduced to 2.6 million ten year later (Ashton et al 1990). But policy developments directed at youth unemployment also served to channel labour market supply into diversionary routes through youth training and in so doing to significantly transform the youth labour market in ways from which it would never recover. Traditional trade apprenticeships, for instance, disappeared almost overnight, swamped by government subsidised training (Ashton 1990).

The first phase of this displacement was justified as a means of 'remedying' what was perceived to be a lack of young people's skills (Mizen 2004). In the period we are discussing (the last quarter of the twentieth century) this was most obvious in the infamous Holland Report of 1978, in the wake of which came the first of many big youth training debacles of recent times – the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP). Based upon a notoriously flawed survey of employers, Holland put the rising unemployment of the late 1970s down to a lack of basic skills which young people had to offer employers. It also sought to regulate the flow of youth labour from school leavers, by warehousing young people in training schemes (Roberts 1984). Instead of addressing issues around structural changes in the demand for labour, policy focused on inadequacies of supply and a whole new and expensive youth training industry was born. Initially, these took the form of short courses of 12 weeks for 5 per cent of the youth labour force. But by 1978 YOP was planning for half a million 16 year olds to be trained for six months. The training period (warehousing) was then expanded to one year on the Youth Training Scheme in 1981, and by the mid 1980s more than a quarter of all 16 year olds were recruited onto a 24 month scheme (Coles 1995: Finn 1987). Each reform was heralded as enhancing the quality of training so improving the supply side of the youth labour market. Yet there is little evidence that this influenced the demand for youth labour, except by offering incentives for employers to embrace government subsidised schemes instead of their own apprenticeships. Youth employment rose throughout the 1980s – by more in a single year 1979-80 than in the previous decade. And when there

were no jobs for young people, policy still focused on remedying victims of structural unemployment by day-by-day telling them that 'if only they had the requisite skills... '. The adverts on TV for YTS were ridiculously upbeat – 'Watch out Japan here comes Tracy Logan!'. Yet in sober reality young people were being 'cooled out' of the labour market or, as one critic put it, young people were 'learning not to labour' (Stafford 1981). Sociologists, meanwhile, were gainfully employed in cutting their ethnographic teeth, telling us how this was done; how young people's ambitions were cut down to size (Bates and Riseborough 1990). Youth labour supply was being trimmed and tucked into a fashion that was marketable but one crucially fashioned in the interests of employers.

Segmented and local labour markets

As the study of youth labour markets expanded during the 1970s and 1980s, so did the sociological sophistication of our understanding of the operation of markets. Initially, the growth of youth unemployment was explained by economists as simply an exaggerated response to a general lack of labour market demand. In a recession, employers started by not recruiting new workers and, where redundancies had to be made, these were governed by a last-in-first-out policy. This made young workers particularly vulnerable. Unemployment was regarded as mainly cyclical, with youth unemployment merely taking on larger swings of fortune. So, for instance, one much quoted estimate suggested that, when male unemployment rates rose by 1 per cent, male youth unemployment rose by 1.7 per cent. Yet, even these early reports suggested that there was more to it than that as female youth unemployment was seen as even more responsive than its male counterpart, with a 3 per cent increase in the female youth unemployment rate for each one per cent increase in the adult rate. This, of course, suggested that there were at least two labour markets with young men and women applying for, and being recruited to, different types of jobs.

As youth training provided a more extended bridge to work, training schemes too were linked to a deeply gendered labour market (Cockburn 1987). A youth cohort study of young people reaching the age of 16 in 1991 found that four fifths of young women on youth training were being trained in clerical, cleaning and catering jobs whilst three quarters of their contemporaries outside training were in the same job sectors (Courtnay and McAleece 1993). Over half of young men in training were being trained in manufacturing, mining and construction industries. Rather than a single labour market responding equally to forces of supply and demand, several could be seen to be responding in much more complex ways. Professional bodies and trade unions guarded entry, with stipulations about suitable and necessary qualifications and experience and determining and defending rules and customs regarding recruitment and dismissal, thereby creating 'labour market shelters' (Ashton 1986). Other labour markets were distinctively local rather than national or international. Young people who entered the labour market as graduates would often be expected to move to wherever the work was being offered. But low skilled jobs were only advertised locally, sometimes by word of mouth or through advertisements pinned along workplace time clocks or in local supermarkets.

As the 1980s recession began to take hold, there was a wider recognition that this was not simply cyclical unemployment but that it was also bringing about widespread structural

change. Furthermore, the re-structuring of the youth labour market was impacting on different regions and sub-regions of the UK in different ways. Heavy industry, extraction and manufacturing industry previously located in south Wales and the north of England was in significant decline at the same time as banking, finance, computer services and the service sector were buoyant in the south and east of England. One study, which compared the labour market life chances of young people in St Albans, Stafford and Sunderland, concluded that the chances of becoming unemployed amongst young men in Sunderland was one in three compared to one in thirty-three in the more prosperous St Albans (Ashton et al. 1988). With differences as great as this, other factors were over-shadowed, including links between social background, educational qualifications and labour market success (Ashton et al. 1986; Ashton, Maguire and Spilsbury 1988). Where you lived was what mattered most.

The 1990s and beyond: the expansion of post 16 education and new and more complex routes into work

Following the deep recession of the 1980s, the youth labour market did not return to its previous state for a variety of reasons. During the 1990s, as unemployment rates fell, the majority of young people did not, as they had in the 1970s, leave school at the earliest possible moment to seek work. Rather, the vast majority (seven out of ten) stayed in some form of post-16 education. Education participation rates have also continued to rise since the turn of the century and there are now firm proposals from government to raise the 'school leaving age' once again to eighteen, albeit this being inclusive of work-based training (DCSF 2007). There are regional and sub-regional differences in the proportion of the age cohort in extended education but, paradoxically, the areas with the lowest educational take-up are also the areas with the highest levels of unemployment (Coles and Richardson 2005). Some claim this is further evidence of the 'youth divide', a polarisation of experiences in which there are extended and complex routes into the labour market for the many, but short and fractured 'transitions' for a significant minority (Bynner et al 2002; Jones 2002; MacDonald and Marsh 2006).

Fractured transitions often involve cycles of youth unemployment interspersed with precarious 'poor work' (Furlong and Cartmel 2004; MacDonald 2009). Some of the evidence is confusing as both sides of the (so-called) divide can be shown to be seeking work in the same labour market segments. Yet, as MacDonald argues:

> *[m]iddle class students 'paying their way' through university may do lower quality jobs to finance their study and leisure, knowing that this is neither enduring nor constitutive of their transitions. For less advantaged young adults, denied greater room for post-16 manoeuvre, precarious employment can be a more serious and lasting affair that comes to define their labour market transitions and outcome.* (MacDonald 2009 draft: 4)

Care, therefore, needs to be paid to both the identification of the nature of jobs and employment, and the orientation of young people to these. Both have changed in recent years and in ways which suggest that the relationship between young people and the labour market is much more complex than a simple polarisation of winners and losers.

Methodologically it is easier to describe the changed relationship between young people and the labour market than it is to be precise about how the labour market itself has changed. However, some fundamentals about the labour market are clear. The first concerns the changing size of labour market segments. Jobs in manufacturing industries have declined markedly (1.6million jobs lost since the mid-1970s), with jobs in steel production, motor manufacturing, ship building and engineering most effected (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). At the same time, there have been increases in jobs in the service sectors, many of these including retail, hospitality, hotels, restaurants, and catering. The declining sectors have involved the loss of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs previously occupied by young men and many seem reluctant to be simply displaced elsewhere (Nixon 2006). But the growth sectors have also been in areas in which young workers predominate. Some claims have been that, taking both trends together, there has been a switch from jobs for young men to jobs for young (and older) women (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). There are also claims that this switch of jobs across segments also involves a change in the *type of jobs* on offer, with jobs in the new economy being less likely to be permanent, secure, or as well paid (Bynner et al 2002). This suggests that the labour market has not only been made more 'flexible' but that routes into the labour market for young people are less clear cut and transitions to work full of risk (Beck 1992).

Claims that young transitions to work are now full of risk, whilst fairly common, remain contentious. To be sure, young people are more likely than older workers to move in and out of jobs (Bradley and Devadason 2008). Yet, there is little evidence from large scale labour force surveys of the growth of jobs with low security of tenure suggesting, to some, that risk theorists have wildly over stated their case (Fevre 2007). Some options taken up by young people, especially those involving self employment, are clearly bedevilled by insecurity and risk, including serious and substantial debt and eventual bankruptcy (MacDonald and Coffield 1991). But evidence that this is associated with widespread labour market change is less easy to assess.

Studies of the work careers of young people, however, do present some evidence of jobs which are both precarious, and of employment structures and practices which appear to trap some young people in cycles of 'poor work', poverty and unemployment. Helpfully a number of studies relating to a variety of very different labour markets and different skills and qualification segments do help to illuminate the complexity. In a high unemployment area in north east England, young people with few if any qualification proved to be highly persistent in their search for work, despite the few jobs they were able to be obtain (Johnston et al. 2000). These were also largely short term, with poor working conditions and associated with low pay (Johnston et al 2000; MacDonald and Marsh 2005; Webster et al. 2004). MacDonald describes the respondents as 'being hazy' about why their jobs came to an end accepting being 'laid off, "cancelled" sacked or made redundant' in a seemingly fatalistic way (MacDonald, 2009 draft: 4).

Bradley and Devadason describe a variety of work patterns followed by young people across much more prosperous labour markets in Bristol (2008). They try to make sense of the very different relationships between young people and the labour market through the construction of a typification of different pathways to work. Amongst the 'shifters' were those who started and finished jobs, courses of education and training, for a variety of

reasons, sometimes because they did not like the work, but often also for other reasons, such as to travel or to try their hand at another career. 'Switchers' too were characterised by those who changed their minds about their intended careers or took on 'little jobs' in bar work, hotels and catering when returning from travelling or dropping out of courses. But, rather than this being confined to the poorly qualified or early school leavers, these labour market careers were shared by those with high levels of qualifications (degrees and doctorates), as well as by those with few. As the authors point out, the destination statistics for those leaving higher education suggest that more than a third of graduates entering work in 2003 did so by taking up what HESA classified as 'non graduate employment' and only 12 per cent were in 'traditional graduate jobs', such as medicine, science, teaching and the professions' (2008). Other types of relationship to the labour market, which they classify as 'settlers' and 'stickers', are also drawn from a range of groups with different levels of skills and qualifications. Certainly, those who left school early proved to have experienced a higher number of jobs since leaving compared to those whose careers took them through further and higher education. However, the authors emphasise what they describe as a complex 'internalised flexibility' and a 'yo-yo effect'. These comprise 'movements between full-time, part-time and temporary work; periods of study or training; self employment or voluntary work; unemployment and travel'. This also seems to suggest a relationship with the labour market in which young people are exercising significant degrees of choice, with patterns and outcomes which are much more complex to interpret than as a simple polarisation of experiences.

Despite this apparent importance of choice, Bradley and Devadason also draw attention to the way in which 'choices are constrained by social hierarchies – class gender and ethnicity – and by the limitations of local opportunities' (2008). In another study of extended labour market transitions, Furlong and Cartmel go into more detail about how this is brought about. In many ways their sample bears some resemblance to the Teesside studies, dealing, as it does, with 'vulnerable young men in fragile labour markets' (Furlong and Cartmel 2004). Both argue that involvement in 'poor work' does not provide stepping stones into more permanent and secure employment. Yet, Furlong and Cartmel argue that one of the main reasons for this is that the jobs are controlled by new types of employment agencies which first came into existence in the late 1980s. These place the workers at two steps removed from the actual employer, many of whom they describe as major firms, companies and organisations. They include both multi-national companies and public sector employers, such as the NHS, who use agencies in order to fulfil the requirements of Compulsory Competitive Tendering and as means of fulfilling contracts such as cleaning contracts to hospitals. Given the terms of agency contracts, it is highly unlikely that the temporary employee would ever be given a permanent job. Indeed, many have specific clauses in their contracts imposing financial penalties on the 'poaching' of agency staff. Furthermore, as the authors point out, the conditions of employment with these agencies are always inferior to other workers in terms of conditions of work. Supervision and surveillance is more stringent, and workers constantly face the likelihood of dismissal before any legal entitlements to better conditions of employment are triggered (Furlong and Cartmel 2004). As a result the young men reported that they were constantly made redundant 'every couple of months'. Insider accounts of this might make young workers look like 'switchers' and many might be vague about why their employment always seemed to come to an abrupt end. But, for the agencies, this was simply putting into practice what they had learned about how to keep

labour costs to a minimum. Labour market 'flexibility', it seems, relies heavily upon keeping the employment of young workers precarious.

Youth, youth transitions and young adults

Much youth research during the lifetime of this journal has concentrated on the teenage years (Banks et al 1992; Catan 2004; Jones 2002). Yet there has been a growing interest in more protracted transitions through what some have referred to, as 'young adulthood' (Bynner 2005; EGRIS 2001; Furlong 2008). Certainly, some of the labour market careers reviewed in this article suggest that young people do not regard themselves as having 'settled' into the labour market in their teenage years. Indeed, many define themselves, as still in 'transition' even in their late twenties and early thirties (Bradley and Devadason 2008). Does this signal an expansion of the period we must consider as 'youth'? Or does this mean that we must redefine youth in ways other than through transitions – thus excluding transitions to 'settled employment'? This article has reviewed both changes in the young labour market (demand and supply) and the changing orientations young people have to it. This suggests that we either add another significant phase to the life course (young adulthood), to our understanding of transitions, or we reconsider the very meaning of 'youth' and the age group it encompasses (Mizen 2004).

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Experiencing Youth Poverty: A Case Study

Roger Green and Bonnie Curran

The ten plus years since New Labour took office have witnessed the end of social mobility and, for many young people facing poverty, an inability to escape their class destiny. Labour's promise to deliver on greater equality of opportunity has not in the authors' view been met with sufficient financial, practical and emotional support for disadvantaged young people. The case study that will feature within this article relates to a small housing estate in East London and is included in the hope that it will offer an insight into the realities of New Labour's failed youth policies and the challenges for youth workers.

In the mid 1990s one of the authors began a participatory action research project with the Kingsmead Kabin Project, a community based charity, and residents of the Kingsmead Estate in Hackney, East London. Hackney is one of the most socio-economically deprived communities in the UK. All of Hackney's twenty-three old wards were in the most deprived 10 per cent nationally and seven of those were in the most deprived 3 per cent (London Borough of Hackney 2008). The Kingsmead estate lies in the Kings Park Ward of Hackney.

> *The ward is very ethnically diverse, with proportionately more Black people and fewer White ones than average. King's Park's economic and social profiles show it to be poorer than the Hackney norm. Levels of qualifications are lower and more people are economically inactive – less than half the working-age population is in work.* (London Borough of Hackney, 2007)

The on-going research project is giving what Hardcastle et al (1997) called a 'hearing' to the community by working with them to initiate 'bottom up' community development processes for social change and re-empowerment. This includes a commitment to researching the experiences and needs of the young people living on the estate and the surrounding locality.

With a research project office based in the Kabin Project, this 'insider' process is applying applied social research to what Ledwith (1997) termed, as 'a tool for liberation rather than a product which is owned by the academic establishment'. The project has resulted in a number of collaborative research projects involving residents of the estate (for example, Green et al, 2007).

The major impact from this research project has been supporting the Kabin Project and the estate's residents in providing research evidence of their needs. This research has supported funding of over £1million from the UK's Big Lottery and other key UK grant giving organisations. Several community projects have been started including the re-opening of a much needed youth project: the Concorde Centre for Young People.

Youth poverty

Poverty and New Labour

The UK has been characterised over the last quarter century by a process of growing social fragmentation and inequality and declining social mobility. These changes have undermined the basis for common social citizenship. The extent of this process has recently been confirmed by research conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation which concludes that:

> *With respect to both poverty and wealth, Britain became increasingly segregated and polarised over the past two or three decades of the 20th century. Particularly notable is the clustering of poverty and low wealth in urban areas, and the concentration of wealth (especially with regard to exclusively wealthy households) in the South East of England.* (Dorling et al. 2007:87)

Since 1997, the UK government has been committed to ending child poverty by 2010. In 2005 over three million children were living in poverty and the UK now has proportionally more poor children than most rich countries (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008). London has the highest level of child poverty in the UK – 41 per cent compared to 30 per cent for the UK (London Child Poverty Commission, 2007). At the national level the UK government has failed to tackle growing inequality, and this comes in conjunction with the spiralling salaries and bonuses of the City of London's top executive 'super-rich' (Wilby 2006; Bunting 2007). Indeed commentators have argued that this will be the first Labour government, which has presided over an increase in inequality, between the rich and the poor, between people living in the north and south of the UK, and between Black and White (Bennett 2007). As the Joseph Rowntree study Poverty, *Wealth and Place in Britain*, 1968 to 2005 (Dorling et al, 2007) reported, the UK faces the highest inequality levels for 40 years with the UK becoming increasingly segregated across all age groups by, for example, wealth, health, and education (Thomas and Dorling 2007).

Fitzsimons points to 'mounting evidence that New Labour strategies to combat social exclusion, such as New Deal for Communities programmes and the Connexions Service are having a minimal impact on socially excluded young people' (2007:51). She explores the idea that the limitations of youth policy, and their 'flawed' nature, 'could be used to construct a localised agenda which can provide a strategy for [youth] workers to work within the spaces which surface from the contradictions of the policies' (op cit.). Fitzsimons discusses the perspective that this paradox is based upon a focus on agency as opposed to structure, and that this has resulted in a lack of discussion on the related complexities. For example Tony Blair suggested that the key defence against social exclusion was to secure employment and that this could be achieved through education, training and experience, but omitted to recognise the barriers faced in achieving this.

While this may open up a valuable space for flexibility and creative youth work as Fitzsimons proposes, it is argued here that further research regarding young people's experiences of poverty are required to ensure that this work does not also fail to take account of the complexities of these experiences. It is not enough to assume that these intricacies will be accounted for through local participation processes, particularly as the *Aiming High for Young People* consultation found that:

> *those experiencing social exclusion, including homeless and unemployed young people... often find formal participative structures, such as youth forums, unattractive. They want and need more support to feel confident about influencing what is available in their area.* (HM Treasury 2007:35)

Thus if their views are not being heard through formal policy structures, alternative routes must be sought.

Young People and Poverty

It is argued here that young people's daily experiences of being in poverty, or rather having little or no disposable income, is a relatively under-researched area. Living with their family, can often disguise young people's personal poverty, as Pavis et al highlighted in their Joseph Rowntree study (2000). Moore suggests that when considering youth poverty it is important to be mindful that this 'is often linked to parental poverty and childhood deprivation, and – like poverty in childhood or old age – can have implications across the life-course of a young person and that of her/his household' (2005:2). Nonetheless, it is also important to consider poverty directly in relation to young people as there are dynamics in play that are distinct to those for children and adults, yet such consideration is too often overlooked. For example The London Child Poverty Commission's report (2008) into child poverty in London makes little or no reference to young people and their experiences of poverty and offers only very generalist ways forward which primarily focus on children.

There are two apparent domains in which enquiries regarding youth poverty can be located. There is a significant body of quantitative national and international data available that has been used to consider incidence rates for example, based on indicators such as income, employment and health (see for example Palmer et al 2007). However much of this data represents 'child poverty' rates and parental factors which can be analysed as 'risk factors' for children and young people such as family income, rates of lone parents, domestic violence and criminality (Home Office 2008). Ascertaining an understanding of youth poverty in this context is therefore based on economic and demographic factors and prevalence projections. While this data is of value this is an approach which allows for a limited understanding of young people's lived experiences and environments.

A number of studies (for example MacDonald et al, 2005; Palmer and Pitts 2006; The Princes Trust, 2007) have also considered the 'consequences' of living in poverty and much of this work also relates to the 'risk factors' noted above. Perceived consequences include anti-social behaviour, low educational attainment, teen-age pregnancy, high-risk behaviour, and mental health problems. Such outcomes are discussed in terms of the 'cost' of exclusion primarily in financial terms, considering the 'net cost of youth unemployment to the exchequer' for example (The Princes Trust, 2007:14), or has a focus on one element, such as drug misuse (MacDonald et al, 2005). While such research sets out quantifiable evidence and may identify risk factors and is therefore of value, it fails to illustrate the multi-dimensional experience of poverty for young people. Policy development must include substantial qualitative evidence regarding 'experience' and 'meaning' in order to avoid interventions falling short.

Understanding the Experience

Moore (2005) puts forward an argument for the usefulness of the concepts 'chronic poverty, life-course poverty and intergenerational poverty' for understanding youth poverty. Her argument suggests such concepts could prove useful for a consideration of 'causes' for example, which can contribute to appropriate types and timings of preventative anti-poverty interventions. This approach also keeps at the forefront the argument that young people's experiences are key to their life course.

The notion of poverty as relational to life course also indicates some of the lived experiences of youth poverty. This approach is also able to take some account of life events occurring at particular 'life stages' which Moore importantly notes are not intrinsically related to age. She also comments upon a lack of useful longitudinal research that considers youth poverty, she recognises that this is beginning to change but proposes that 'longitudinal data is required to understand *both* aspects of youth poverty – the long-term causes and implications as well as the shorter-term fluctuations in opportunities, obstacles and wellbeing' (2005:11). In the case of the latter it would be hoped that such studies would focus on the *experience*.

Palmer and Pitts (2006) illustrate that inadequate data can result in the construction of misrepresentations. In their discussion of the dynamic that emerged following Margaret Thatcher's election in 1981, they note that:

> *commentators of the left and centre had argued that Black youth crime and disorder was rooted in an inequitable social and economic structure and institutionalised racism... the commentators of the right emphasised cultural factors, and in particular the role of fatherless Black families in the transmission of attitudes and beliefs to be conducive to involvement in street crime and social disorder.* (2006:7)

This subsequently led, they point out, to more 'military style' policing 'in which special units would swamp areas of Black residence and stop and search Black citizens apparently at random' (Palmer and Pitts 2006:7).

Palmer and Pitts identify a 'gulf between the lived experiences and the concerns of an excluded section of the Black community and the perceptions of its most vociferous 'representatives' (2006:13). They recognise a need to understand the nature of these lived experiences in order to comprehend the choices and chances available to them; an understanding that it is argued here as necessary if youth policy is to successfully engage and benefit all young people. Such an understanding is required because causal theories become too simplistic to cater for differing cultural values, local community dynamics and individual interpretations of space and place for example which are arguably in a continuous state of flux yet shape experiences, understandings and subsequently outcomes for young people.

Understanding the experience of poverty can also serve to highlight the reciprocal processes in play; young people are not simply subjects of poverty, they are agents and while too many may remain socially excluded and potentially unable to generate some forms of change, a degree of autonomy is identifiable. The shift from modernity to post-modernity and the processes of globalisation are theorised areas of change, which are contentious

and often ambiguous, but they are arguably bringing forth new opportunities and issues for individuals to contend with in relation to their identities and the choices they make. Byrne asserts, on the basis of a consideration of the discourses surrounding the term 'social exclusion', that for New Labour 'people and places are excluded, but there is no sense of there being any agent – other than by implication themselves' (2005:56). He goes on to argue that a key agent, largely absent from discussion in policy are corporations. He draws on Fairclough who proposes that:

> *by focussing on those who are excluded from society and ways of including them, [the objective of social inclusion] shifts away from inequalities and conflicts of interest amongst those who are included and presupposes that there is nothing inherently wrong with contemporary society as long as it is made more inclusive through government policies.* (cited Byrne 2005:57)

Indeed while there is an increasing recognition of the growing youth consumer base there is little recognition in policy of the strain of this upon young people in poverty, the role of social differentiation, how young people may develop their identity in relation to this and what the outcomes of this are. Yet it is necessary to understand social practices and the meanings that are ascribed to these if they are going to be the subject of interventions. Similarly, MacDonald and Marsh (2002) propose that in order to understand drug use and why some people become problematic users and others not, it is necessary to acknowledge the appeal in relation to the local culture and differentiated fractions within it. For example some young people involved in MacDonald and Marsh's research 'described their recreational drug use in terms of "leisure and pleasure" lifestyles' while heroin users explained its attraction in terms of what the drug was able to block out: 'not having a care in the world', 'taking all their worries away' (2002:36). MacDonald and Marsh suggest that it is not difficult to understand heroin's appeal in the context of social exclusion 'as a poverty drug; a form of self-medication for the socially excluded' (2002:36).

It is necessary for professionals to gain an insight from the local vantage point and to understand young people's experiences and what these mean to them; both in relation to matters such as drug use but also to consider these 'elements' of one's experience. This is something policy has thus far failed to do and which it is argued here, requires a realignment of focus. Again this relates to the argument posed above that unless youth culture and the meaning of practices are recognised in policy the aims of policy may not be achieved. The inadequacies of New Labour policies may well have opened up a space for youth workers to create 'imaginative alliances and partnerships' (Fitzsimons 2007:52) tailored to the local context but young people's voices must not be confined to local level interaction, an understanding of their experiences is required at every level and youth workers may again have an important role to play in this.

Making money on the Kingsmead Estate

For some young people it is a daily challenge to find some money to live on outside of the home. Not being a student at the local college, not having a job, whether on the books or cash in hand, or not receiving any welfare benefits means many turn to the 'informal

economy'. If you receive benefits from the age of 16 onwards then the £47.95 a week does not go far, nor does the minimum wage of £4.60 per hour for young people between the ages of 18 to 21, if employed. On the estate in Hackney this can often mean getting involved in a gang, which offers access into entrepreneurial activities that produce money. Tony, for example, is 15 years of age, and receives no money from his mother who is a lone parent. He has four younger siblings.

> *I don't get any money from the flat (from his mother) ... school is a joke so I don't go ... I have friends who look after me as long as I do jobs for them.*

Recent conversations with young people on the estate have revealed a lack of daily disposable income, and also that income is considered on a daily basis rather than weekly or monthly as such a time scale was considered unrealistic. Nonetheless, this was not considered to be problematic.

> *I make out ok ... we do things down the market (Dalston Market) and make some money ... been doing this since school so its no problem.*

> *He (another member of the group) helps me out...we deliver packets (much laughter).*

> *I get some (money) from her (mother) ... she doesn't know (money stolen from her purse/bag).*

Groups of young people often gather near the local amenities on the estate and openly ask passing adults for money. Whist appearing threatening to many adult residents who have to pass through or around the group to get to the shops, this is a social gathering location which can produce some money.

> *Lend us some money ... haven't eaten for a while ...*

> *You give me £2 and I will go away.*

This ritualised exchange between adult estate residents and younger residents on one level is now a 'formalised' event but one which depending on the need of the young person can sometimes result in threats and verbal abuse within the shops and between these groups if credit is refused.

Two research reports (Green 1997; Green et al 2007) ten years apart, and undertaken on the same estate, although not specifically focusing on young people and poverty, highlighted some of the issues young people experienced because of the lack of money. These ranged from a lack of income in the family home, no 'proper' holidays, no 'pocket money' or 'weekly allowance' from a parent or carer, and the usefulness of belonging to a gang, which created opportunities for earning money. Wysling's unpublished pilot survey (2006) of young people's needs on the estate added to this picture, with young people's needs including many specifically relating to money, for example, not being able to afford the existing leisure and cultural activities on offer in Hackney, often results in having nothing to do but hang around the streets, an issue highlighted by the Governments 'ten year youth strategy' (2007).

Justin is in his late teens and is unemployed. He has done time for possession and dealing. From a well known criminal family on the estate he has often visited the Kabin Project on the estate to 'borrow' some money from one of the staff members. Often he is desperate for money to buy some 'chicken and chips' from the local takeaway. Threats to members of staff are not uncommon in his search for some money. Justin will not 'sign-on' as he wishes to keep away from the authorities.

I need money (for drugs)...eat when I can...we'll get a job soon (criminal activity).

Making money takes on many forms. Driving his car in one of the one-way streets adjoining the estate some months ago one of the authors faced a 13-year-old boy riding his small bike towards him. Slowing down to avoid hitting the boy and his bike the boy cycled past pointing his finger and hand in the shape of a gun at the cars occupants. Speaking to him later it emerged he was 'running' drugs for some older boys and was under strict orders not to stop for anyone or anything. Having known the boy since he was much younger his family history is one of extreme poverty with his mother trying to survive on welfare benefits and making some money through home-based prostitution. Bernard Hare's book (2005) on the 'Shed Crew', a group of young people living on a housing estate in Leeds, shows in graphic detail a similar pattern of young people, experiencing poverty and other forms of social exclusion trying to survive.

Criminal gangs operating on the estate therefore provide the necessary opportunities for any young person from a poor family in need of 'making some money'. The arguments for why young people join gangs, often reluctantly, has been summed up by Pitts (2007) in his study of gangs in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, that the experience of growing up poor is one of the motivational factors in joining a gang. Life on the Kingsmead Estate for young people without money is not untypical of many urban inner-city housing estates around the UK. Youth poverty merely compounds other forms of social exclusion.

Discussion and conclusion

Government Policies

Government policies relating to youth poverty and youth work intervention have during the Thatcherite, Major and the New Labour years since 1997 been noticeable by their absence (Nicholls 2001). Current government initiatives such as the £190 million pounds Myplace monies to fund a new generation of youth centres looks good but it is debatable as to whether it will engage with many of the young people who are poor and who do not attend youth centres. Similarly the Youth Opportunity Fund and the Youth Capital Fund may be attracting young people from 'disadvantaged backgrounds' (Children and Young People Now, 2008 p.13), but it still remains the case that in 2007, 30 per cent of 18-21 year-olds, living in households below 60 per cent of median income, were deemed at risk of being in poverty and of the 1.5 million young adults aged 16-24 in low income households, 1 million were single without children (DWP, 2007).

It is also debatable as to the effectiveness of the Connexions Service in tackling the so-called 'NEETS', as Dave Wiles, Chief Executive of the Frontier Youth Trust, based in Birmingham,

commented, he was:

> *... unsure that Connexions as a response to education employment and training (and arguably poverty) has been that effective – it seems to me that a whole bunch of energy was wasted on its gradual and piecemeal implementation, that it caused lots of confusion and now seems uncertain about the future. We have examples of young people 'dropping through the net.'* (2008)

More generally the Public Service Agreements (PSAs) introduced by New Labour in 1998, now 30 in total, aim to 'set out the key priority outcomes the Government wants to achieve in the next spending period (2008-2011)' (HM Treasury, 2008). PSA 14 which talks of increasing the number of children and young people on the path to success through, for example, 'positive activities', and 'engagement' is high on rhetoric but low on specifics. What youth worker working face to face with young people has ever heard of a PSA, let alone their relevance to working with young people without money?

Youth poverty is not going to go away very easily. The recent Rainer Report (2008) showed that the majority of young people surveyed were in debt by the age of 21 with over half of 18-24 year olds owing more than £2000.

The Need for Research

There is an apparent need to supplement the large scale surveys and research studies that exist for children and their families with more localised small-scale studies into the experiences of poverty and the lack of money available to some young people, particularly those living in socio-economically disadvantaged geographical localities such as Inner-London. Empirical, context specific, research is arguably required to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of poverty for young people in order to explain how policy initiatives, funding, and youth work interventions will be received and subsequently how outcomes for young people are affected. A heightened understanding of the experiences of poverty for young people would:

- Benefit youth work practitioners who implement policies that fail to highlight the experience of poverty;
- Inform current and future government youth policies;
- Enhance public understanding and subsequently support to end youth poverty.

The Challenge for Youth Workers

The challenge for youth workers in engaging and supporting these young people can only be realistically effective if the youth work profession is valued more highly by central government ministers, local authority councillors, and professionals from other disciplines. The implementation of the *Every Child Matters* agenda, especially 'achieving economic well-being', at the local authority level would seem to be an opportunity for youth workers to have a major input, firstly, by identifying the needs of young people with little or no income, and secondly, through local multi-agency Children's Trusts and local Social Inclusion policies and Local Area Agreements, for example, working towards practical solutions to tackle this enduring problem and its social consequences. Localised 'youth poverty hearings' based on the Church Action on Poverty hearings for example would help bring the issue of

youth poverty more into the public domain. Youth workers might facilitate such hearings. David Cameron, who may well be the next Prime Minister, remarked last year that, 'We're always telling young people to be more responsible. Society needs to be more responsible as well' (The Centre for Social Justice, 2008). If we are therefore serious about tackling this enduring problem of youth poverty and highlighting to politicians and the wider community the realities of young people, living on inadequate benefits, being paid poverty wages, or drifting into the entrepreneurial side of gang culture, then we must stand up and make our voice heard.

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Could Do Better: Education Policy Since 1983

Tony Jeffs

Some tinkering has occurred during the intervening years, but essentially the structure of the education system operating in England and Wales 25 years ago was fashioned by the 1944 Education Act. Often called the Butler Act, after R. A. Butler the minister responsible for guiding it through parliament, it was, predictably, a consensus document, having been sponsored by a coalition government. As such it approximated to the current views of the three major parties regarding their hopes and ambitions for education in the post-war period. The Act delegated responsibility for the management of schools, further education and large swathes of Higher Education to local authorities, much as the 1902 Education Act had done. Central government had a role but it was legally far more restricted than now. It determined the overall framework and structure; topped-up the monies raised by local education authorities (LEAs) via the rates, largely to assist the poorest LEAs and to fund capital projects; controlled both the number and design of new buildings; and set global funding levels for universities and teacher training whilst leaving the disposal of those funds to autonomous bodies who acted according to criteria they themselves formulated. Little wonder that the post of Minister of Education was low status, usually occupied by middle-ranking politicians, and that education rarely attracted the attention of parliament. Although Scotland and Northern Ireland adopted fundamentally similar structures, they were covered by separate legislation and the 1944 Act did not apply there. Scotland retained a different examination system and initial age of entry into university, whilst Northern Ireland chose a system that allowed the two religious communities to educate their children independently, thereby enabling the schools and universities to do their part in keeping sectarianism alive and kicking for generations to come.

The Butler Act made secondary education universal and free, legislated for the raising of the school-leaving age to 16 (although this did not take place until 1972), abolished all-age schools and equalised the pay of LEA teachers. It decreed that young people must be educated according to their 'age, aptitude and ability', and although this was never spelled out, assumed post-11 schools would be single sex. Age meant nursery school, followed by infant, junior, and finally a secondary school. Aptitude entailed offering two variants of secondary and post-secondary education – the academic and professional alongside the technical and vocational. The former was provided by grammar schools and universities; the latter by secondary modern and technical schools and finally further education colleges, usually on a part-time and day-release basis. Ability related to selection at age 11 when, following an IQ test, those with the highest scores went to a grammar school, the rest to a secondary modern. In reality, although that was never the intention of the Act, a child's destination at age 11 was determined almost as much by place of residence as it was by IQ due to variations in the number of grammar school berths. This variation ranged from eight to 30 plus percent. Nationally the percentage attending Grammar Schools peaked at around 25 per cent in the early 1950s, then declined as the post-war baby-boom generation reached secondary age and as local authorities (often Conservative) incrementally

abandoned the 11 plus test and elected to go comprehensive. This process was not promoted nationally until 1965 when a Labour government issued Circular 10/65 requesting LEAs to submit proposals for the introduction of non-selective secondary schooling. By 1983, selection and grammar schools remained as now, in only a handful of redoubts, notably Kent and North Yorkshire. Apart from the abolition of the grammar schools, in most respects the educational system envisaged by the architects of the Butler Act remained intact until the mid-1980s. Indeed the story of the last 25 years might best be categorised as a narrative of how it was progressively dismantled by successive governments, Conservative and Labour who rushed through 24 Education Acts, (20 more than had been passed in the previous 45 years and more than all those enacted by parliament since 1832). This is symptomatic of a generalised acceleration in the volume of new legislation since the late 1980s, a velocity that quickened under New Labour, who after 1996 introduced over 3,000 new laws, one for every day in office (Waiton, 2008). Many of these impact upon education. For example the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 included sections designed to deal with truancy, school behaviour and parental and school contracts. In addition to new laws government has incessantly bombarded schools, colleges and universities with circulars and instructions; more now pore forth from Whitehall in a fortnight than 40 years ago materialised in a year.

Decades of growth

In 1900 the school population was 5,700,000. Half a century later it had only increased by 100,000. However by 1983 the total had almost doubled to 10,400,000. This growth only marginally reflected demographic shifts. Indeed the peak year for numbers was 1977, with over 11 million scholars, when the children of women born during the 1943 to 1948 baby boom reached school age. Since then, although the birth and fertility rates, along with immigration, have fallen, the number of pupils has remained at around 10 million. The prime reason for this has been an enduring belief amongst politicians and individuals in the validity of the 'human capital theory' which argues that both national wealth and individual lifetime earnings are significantly influenced by educational attainment (Becker, 1964). Therefore successive governments have sought to maximise the take-up of educational opportunities. This has been achieved partly by compulsion – raising the school-leaving age; partly by punishing those who leave at the earliest opportunity – reducing or removing their benefits and allowances; and partly by offering bribes and inducements – grants and cheap loans. Overall governments have been pushing at an open door, for parents and young people mostly share their belief in the 'human capital theory', being convinced that the more qualifications secured, the higher the point of entry into the labour market in terms of earnings, status or both, and the greater the potential for life-long earnings. Evidence regarding the relationship between educational outcomes and national economic well-being is not totally persuasive (Sianesi and Van Reenen, 2000) but until recently, research offered unambiguous proof of a link between an individual's educational level and their earnings. However these rarely eclipsed the benefits of having wealthy parents (Mortimer et al, 1988; McNamee and Miller, 2004).

Expansion, sustained by belief in the economic benefits of education, has not slackened during the last 25 years. Rather, it has quickened, especially in relation to sixth form,

further and higher education. Greater staying-on has produced a marked increased in exam success. For example, in 1982 only 14 per cent of 18 year olds secured 2 or more 'A' levels whereas now almost 40 per cent do. During this time-span numbers in further education grew by three million to four and a half million and those annually completing under-graduate degrees trebled from below 100,000 to 316,000. A major contributor to this growth has been the growing percentage of young women remaining in full-time education. Whereas 25 years ago the proportion completing 'A' levels was within one percentile of young men it is now 10 per cent higher. Whilst in terms of entry into higher education at the beginning of the 1980s the ratio of men to women was three to two, now it is nine to seven in favour of women. This shift has been translated already into a growing 'feminisation' of a number of professions that were within living memory male dominated. Half of all veterinarians are now women whereas in 1974 the figure was 35 per cent and by 2015 the figure is predicted to be 90 per cent; 61 per cent of trainee GPs are women; 74 per cent of student teachers; 63 per cent of students enrolled with the Law Society; 42 per cent of new ordained clergy; and 42 per cent of students on architecture courses.

The collapse of the youth labour market in the late 1970s early 1980s led to a growing proportion staying in education in the hope of eventually securing a toe-hold on the career-ladder. Simultaneously more employers refused to fund their own routes to a vocational qualification leaving the state, parents and young people to pick up the tab. Since 1867 governments have been rightly expressing serious concern over the poor quality of training provided by employers. The 'skills' shortage and the manifest gap between the quality of vocational training offered by employers here compared to that provided in other parts of Europe, notably Germany and more recently Scandinavia, has been an endless subject of debate and focus of a score or more official reports (Wolf, 2002; Hyland and Winch, 2007). Now though governments had to act, principally because of the short-run social costs of inaction – rising levels of crime and racial tension alongside a tangible threat of public disorder. Initially the response to growing youth unemployment was to fund job creation programmes. Gradually since the early 1980s the emphasis has shifted towards education and training initiatives as the penny dropped that even if the labour market picked up many of the young people, they would still fare badly due to the preference of employers for older female and better educated or at least more amenable foreign workers. By 1987 the government was spending £2 billion per annum on school and college-based programmes and was resigned to impounding a high proportion of the bottom 10 per cent of achievers in further education colleges in the hope they might eventually be 'fitted' for work (Jeffs and Spence, 2000). Although demand for labour picked up during the 1990s it did not resolve the problem posed by the existence of a stream of young people annually leaving school with such low levels of numeracy, literacy and ambition they bordered on the unemployable, not least because there were already too many fitted only to undertake the 28 per cent of jobs currently requiring little or no knowledge. The challenge posed by our low skill base was highlighted by a series of articles and reports. Particularly damming were the comparisons drawn between productivity levels in a range of industries located in Britain, Germany, Holland and France. The research unambiguously demonstrated that productivity was consistently lower in the former and the principal explanation for this was the pitifully poor quality of much of the workforce. Indeed the 'more complex the work, the greater the gap observed between Britain and the Continent in the proportions of the workforce with vocational qualifications' (Prais, 1995: 69). To address the problems emanating from

this situation governments have increased the funding allocated for vocational education. However it has neither been enough nor wisely spent. To make matters worse, our competitors have relentlessly invested more, retaining and even extending their lead. When this is linked to low UK investment in 'knowledge' (that is Research and Development, software and higher education) which currently stands at 3.5 per cent of GDP compared to the USA 6.6 per cent, Sweden 6.4 and Japan 4.3, the picture that emerges is of continued relative economic decline (Brinkley, 2008).

After 1983 expansion was not only propelled by governmental ambitions to raise productivity and individual aspirations to improve their own, or their children's, life-chances. Apart from schools and colleges being used to contain and manage the young unemployed, they have been increasingly utilised to warehouse young people to free up their mothers for employment. As the percentage of children living in single-parent households grew from 12 per cent in 1983 to the current figure of 25 per cent and the proportion of two parent households that could only manage if both adults work increased, the government sought to reduce child poverty and welfare dependency by forcing mothers of pre- and school-age children into the labour market (OSN, 2008). If poverty and stepped reductions in benefits provided the push, the pull came via increasing provision of cheap subsidised child care, much of it located in schools and now linked to the *Extended School Programme*. This Educare is designed to offer amongst other things:

- 08.00 to 18.00 year-round childcare for primary pupils;
- A varied range of activities for all pupils, including study support, sport and music clubs.

What this means is that young people, some as young as four and as old as 14, are locked in the school for at least ten hours a day. Over and above this the Minister for Schools has asked all secondary schools to help reduce truancy and anti-social behaviour by locking their students in during lunch and break times (Smithers, 2004), something made ever easier with the growing use of swipe cards and CCTV to monitor the arrival, departure and movement of students within the building. Surveillance technology, plus the erection of fencing more appropriate for the caging of zoo animals than young people, mean that many schools have taken-on the appearance of a prison or army barracks. Educare can only add to the alienation of many young people who find themselves locked in soulless buildings, supervised by poorly paid and educated staff, for periods of time that exceed those that adults are allowed to be in their workplace under the EU Work Time directive. By encouraging the warehousing of young people within school buildings we devalue education and turn what should be a 'sacred place' devoted to learning and reflection into a depot for the containment of second-class citizens.

Stretching the cloth

Expansion has benefited many young people allowing them to secure a level of education denied their parents. However it has been purchased at a cost. Growth in numbers has not been matched by a parallel enlargement of the funding base. This has resulted in the adoption of a range of strategies to overcome the shortfall. Firstly, institutions and funders have sought to secure economies of scale. For example this has resulted in the average number of pupils per secondary school creeping upwards since 1983 even though all

research shows pupils feel less engaged with schools the larger they become. Since 1997 the tempo has quickened resulting in the average moving from 850 to 1,000, with 10 per cent over 1,500 and a growing number in excess of 2,000 (Garratt et al, 2004). In 2009 the first school with over 3,500 opens in Nottingham. Secondly there has been a contracting out of services such as catering and caretaking to the cheapest provider. The result has been little short of disastrous especially in relation to the quality of school meals. Thirdly, given that over 60 per cent of the education budget is consumed by the salaries of teachers and lecturers, a number of strategies have been employed to reduce staff costs per student. These include:-

(a) increasing casualisation of the teaching workforce with hourly paid and part-time workers being employed in preference to salaried staff. FE is now the second highest employer of hourly-paid staff, eclipsed only by hotel and catering (Hodgson and Jeffs, 2007), whilst in HE 40 per cent of teaching in some institutions is sub-contracted to casual staff (Jeffs and Spence, 2008). This shift not only encourages an attitude to take hold amongst managers and core staff that teaching is a second-order activity best left to minions but it leads to lack of continuity and the routinisation of the teaching process to enable staff 'delivering' a module or course to be easily replaced.

(b) growing intensification of workloads. As student numbers rise, so staff, salaried and hourly-paid alike are required to do more, often in less allotted time because another strategy has been to trim teaching hours and fiddle with the length of academic years and terms.

(c) employment of low paid teaching assistants and ancillary staff to undertake 'non-teaching' duties. Predictably management have slowly sought to use them as cover for teachers.

The result of these changes, along with others discussed in the next section, has been to produce a discontented and stressed workforce. Green (2001) found teachers were amongst the most stressed and exhausted of workers and Webb et al (2004: 186) found all the teachers they interviewed 'were in agreement that what was needed to make teaching a more attractive profession was not additional income but a cut in workload'. Little wonder then that Smithers and Robinson (2000) found over a third of teachers would like to leave the profession, or that a similar percentage of post-graduate students after tasting life in a school opt out. Research into the experiences of those teaching in further and higher education tells a similar story (Lee, 2007: Law and Work, 2007). Once teaching recruited its own, with enthusiastic teachers persuading the brightest and best students to pick up the torch. Now the government has to fund advertising campaigns and offer bribes to attract recruits. Apart from the armed forces no other occupation currently needs similar investment to be kept afloat.

Big shifts

The election in 1979 of a government dominated by a cabal convinced that primacy must be given to unfettered markets meant that, if they survived, a radical re-structuring of the education system was inevitable. Initially however they had bigger fish to fry, namely those who threatened the viability of the whole project specifically trade unions, local government, welfare dependents and a civil service wedded to quaint concepts of public

service and welfarism. Eventually when the big victories had been won, or nearly won, attention was turned towards dealing with education. But these victories were incomplete, which explains why so much education policy under Thatcher, and subsequently under Blair and Brown, both of whom slavishly believe in the ideological superiority of the American way of doing business and of the private over the public provider, lacked apparent coherence. However they only appear incoherent if scrutinised through an 'education' lens; once you grasp that the prime motivation is to empower the market, destroy the education unions, fashion a business and enterprise culture that permeates into every pore of our being, emasculate local government and drive the last remnants of progressive and Marxist thinking out of the education corral, it makes absolute sense. This was never a conspiracy. For Thatcher, Blair and Brown by word and deed have been consistently open about what they sought to achieve, and their disdain for the values and ideologies that dominated their respective parties prior to their ascendency. The first education 'policy' pushed through by New Labour was the introduction of top-up fees and the abolition of student grants. It is difficult to imagine what else they might have done to more clearly announce their commitment to continuing in the same direction as their predecessors. Of course, being politicians, they often sold and spun education policies to the gullible on the basis that they would raise standards and give us a 'World Class' education system: they had to do that to get elected. Indeed they may have at times actually convinced themselves this would happen, or that these things might come to pass as a by-product of what they were implementing, but these were never the underlying 'drivers'. If they had wanted to create a world class education system then they would have studied the best elsewhere and judiciously borrowed from them. In other words they would have gone to Scandinavia, the Benelux countries, Switzerland and Germany, learnt what could be achieved and acted accordingly. They never did so because ideologically they loathed the Social Democratic principles that shaped those educational systems. Instead they shamelessly borrowed education policies, like their foreign and welfare policies, from their spiritual homeland, the United States. It mattered not that the United States was a serial poor performer, an educational basket-case in many respects; that despite its enormous wealth it had scandalously under-resourced under-performing schools in far too many localities; that its higher education system ranged from the world class to the third-rate producing graduates with levels of literacy and numeracy below those of a half competent sixth former. Even if British politicians had read the copious publications of Jonathan Kozol or Allan Bloom or John Taylor Gatto on the manifest failings of the American system, which they almost certainly did not, it would have counted for nothing. Because what American schools and colleges accomplished was the manufacture of young people who overwhelmingly distrusted progressive ideas, assumed liberalism was as dangerous as socialism and unquestioningly assimilated the 'can-do' enterprise culture.

To achieve the desired result, the 'enemies' had to be simultaneously attacked. First the powers vested in local authorities had to be taken from them and transferred to central government, business men and women, the market and a new breed of trained and biddable 'education' leaders. This was done by a series of acts that transferred the management of whole swathes of education to government appointed bodies dominated by representatives of business. The first to be hived-off were further and adult education and the local government sector of higher education. Then gradually the schools themselves were prised from LEA control; first with the PFI (Private Finance Initiative) being used to

transfer ownership of school buildings to private companies. Second via manipulation of funding mechanisms and abuse of the inspection system, secondary schools themselves began to be removed from the control of democratically elected local authorities and transferred to unelected business sponsors and faith organisations. The most recent manifestation of this policy is the Academy School, nearly half of whom have re-introduced selection (Paton, 2006) and whose management structure strips:

> *the last shreds of democracy out of the school system. Once, you could elect councillors who took decisions about education, and if you were a parent, elect parent governors who took decisions about your school. All those decisions are now firmly in the hands of the sponsor.* (Beckett, 2007: 169)

Second the teaching profession had to be refashioned. Control of the curriculum was transferred from teachers, advisers and a broad range of exam boards to central government and a small number of stringently supervised exam boards, increasingly dominated, as in the case of ICT, by employers. A National Curriculum was introduced in 1992 which has become progressively more prescriptive so that now it not merely tells teachers what to teach but also how to teach it. Worse it also becomes more time-consuming as each year government ministers respond to the latest moral panic by hanging another bauble on the curriculum Christmas tree – this year relationships, next citizenship, then financial management, sensible eating, so on and so on. Less and less space is therefore allowed for creative and rewarding teaching as the job is closed down and de-professionalised (Griffith, 2000). Refashioning has not merely taken place via the removal of professional autonomy. New bodies have been created to allow central government to more directly manage the 'training' of entrants. Professional training now largely excludes theory, for after all it is not required any longer when teachers are told what and how to teach. Why learn countervailing theories of reading acquisition when the government tells you which one to use? Why study the sociology of education which will only confuse the unwary and encourage a questioning attitude towards management, bureaucracy and the dictates of central governments? And what possible reason is there to study the philosophy of education when central government decides what should and should not be taught and whole-school policies, fashioned by managers, tell you what is and is not acceptable behaviour? Discussion and debate regarding 'what' and 'why' within education has in the last two decades been purged by a Stakhanovite obsession upon the 'how'. As one explained:

> *If the best that she or he [the manager] can come up with is 'meeting my targets', a 'business focus', or even 'excellent customer service', this offers slender spiritual nourishment. Living on a diet of such thin work purposes provides individuals with little joy or satisfaction in achievement.* (Sinclair 1996: 243)

What initially occurred in schools has gradually spread upwards into the post-secondary sector, for example with the introduction of subject 'benchmarking' designed to standardise the 'degree product'; and low cost Foundation degrees delivered in further education colleges and the workplace. These transfer control of the syllabus and curriculum from academics to employers, thereby enabling the latter to construct 'degree' programmes tailored to meet their narrow needs rather than offer students a rounded education that stimulates critical and reflective analysis.

Third, quasi-markets were created to force young people and their parents to think of themselves as customers rather than pupils or students. It was assumed the new 'parentocracy' as Brown (1990) called it would drive up standards and shift the locus of power from the professionals to the customer. It has not worked like that. Attempts have been made to abandon catchment areas to force parents to shop around for the 'best' school. However this was unpopular, especially with middle class parents, some of whom may have purchased houses near good schools in the expectation this would secure a place, and all of whom viewed a good local school as a guarantor of above average increases in the value of their property. So successive governments have been reluctant to follow the policy through to its logical conclusion. But the policy that money trails the 'customer' has been retained and extended. The idea was that popular schools, colleges and universities should prosper and unpopular ones fail. This has led to some further education colleges merging and some schools closing. But parents choose schools and students opt for universities on grounds other than the quality of the education. As research has shown, for low income families in particular, nearness is the main factor determining choice (Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998). In particular the former avoid schools because of an unfavourable racial or social mix; students opt for universities because they are in 'good' areas, nearer home or cheaper than others. Consequently our schools and universities have since the 1980s become more rather than less divided (Davies, 2000). The better-off quickly learnt how to play the system to their advantage clustering around good schools, attending church to get a letter of recommendation from the priest or getting their applications in early (Swift, 2003). This might be viewed as a policy failure but actually given that such an outcome is popular with those most likely to vote, who live in marginal constituencies and who fund and join political parties it may well be the case that it has by sleight of hand achieved an intended outcome. Increasingly these divisions are replicated in the higher education sector. Sub-standard foundation degrees are for 'other people's children' most certainly not for the offspring of those who introduced and manage them. Meanwhile as the number of universities has trebled since 1983 so the sector has fragmented – socially and to a degree racially. For example one university, London Metropolitan, now has more Black Caribbean students than all of the top 20 Russell Group research universities combined (Attwood, 2008). Others recruit almost exclusively from a pool comprising individuals from low income families, whilst at the other end of the scale some amongst the Russell Group select up to a third of their students from the private sector (Jeffs and Spence, 2008).

To keep teachers, schools and providers in line and focused, as well as to enable parents to chose what educational product to purchase, a battery of tests and a thoroughly unpleasant system of inspection is required. British children are now the most tested and examined in the world (Jeffs, 2003; Woodward, 2000). By the time French and New Zealand youngsters take their first tests in their mid-teens many English children will have been subjected to 14 sets of tests. A greater evil than the grind of the test regime itself, is that it denies them a rich and rounded education. For here the focus is placed on the shallow 'rote' learning required to secure the required outcome. League tables and testing regimes lead to a concentration on exam targets: as one survey confirmed, 80 per cent of the 1,500 teachers interviewed admitted 'teaching to the test' and working at 'break-neck speed' to ensure pupils ticked the right boxes (James et al, 2007; Tymms, 2004). As Gillborn and Youdell report:

> *Our case study schools have responded by interrogating virtually every aspect of school life for the possible contribution to the all consuming need to improve the proportion of pupils reaching the benchmark level of five or more higher grade passes.* (2000: 199)

Teachers' grounds for doing so are well founded, for the Chief Inspector intends to ensure that any school that fails to hit the benchmark of 30 per cent of pupils gaining five good GCSEs should not receive an inspection rating above satisfactory. All schools that fail to achieve this by 2011 risk being closed or taken over by a high performing school (Marley, 2008).

Unaddressed issues

Before concluding, it is important to briefly consider two rarely addressed topics. The first is the independent and private school sector which the Butler Act simply ignored. Although Labour was once theoretically committed to their abolition, in practice it showed no greater enthusiasm for doing so than Conservative administrations. Consequently we still have a two-tier education system: one that enables the rich, aided by a generous taxation system and feeble charity laws, to purchase at well below the market cost a superior education for their off-spring. Currently around seven per cent of young people attend private schools although the figure rises to over 10 per cent in the secondary sector. Whereas in 1944 it was possible for the government to largely eradicate this divide, much as it did in relation to private hospitals and medicine, it is doubtful if, as things stand it has the capacity to do so, fundamentally because existing European Laws would not allow it. Although large sections of the population, and the political class, might refuse to acknowledge such a thing as a 'problem' emanating from the existence of this sector it ultimately cannot be wished away. Indeed during the last 25 years, as the gap between rich and poor has grown (Toynbee and Walker, 2008) so have educational inequalities. Private schools charge parents twice the amount that state schools receive per pupil. This difference masks an additional hidden income from investments and gifts, to the extent that the expenditure on each pupil attending Eton in 2000 was approximately £20,000 per annum compared to the £2,732 spent on state school students (Davies, 2000). Predictably the smaller classes, superior equipment and more highly qualified staff in private schools deliver better results; results that seamlessly carry their students into the better universities and afterwards into more remunerative jobs. Since 1988 they also benefit in a less obvious way, for the mind-numbingly narrow National Curriculum, along with the requirement that pupils sit the endless diet of tests that accompany it, does not apply to private schools. The Cabinet and Ministers who introduced both never intended that either should be forced upon their own off-spring. Consequently private schools can offer a much broader, relevant and intellectually coherent curriculum and focus for much longer, on the examinations that ultimately matter – 'A' levels and their equivalent. Slippage may occur along the way, and some from the state sector do join the ranks of the privileged but the outcomes of our education system remain as closely linked to parental income and social origins not only as they were in 1983, but as they were in 1944 and before. Over a century ago Ruskin told those who listened that 'the only way to abolish the east-end is to abolish the west-end'. The fundamentals of his analysis remain sound. Without matched expenditure and investment, something that will demand Scandinavian levels of progressive taxation, schools

and education will always fail to appreciably re-draw the maps of inequality. Rather they will sustain and fuel those inequalities, as they have in the past and continue to do so today. The second rarely discussed issue, also largely left undisturbed by the 1944 Education Act, is that of the religious schools. Initially, politicians were not willing to 'take on' the combined might of the Anglicans and Roman Catholics at a time when sustaining national unity in the face of a common enemy was a priority. Moreover, in 1944, in a then increasingly secular society it appeared that the 'tide of history' was moving against sectarian schooling – so why bother? The result was a compromise whereby if the church raised the capital to provide the buildings, the state agreed to meet subsequent running costs. Few expected the prevailing levels of provision made by the churches to survive. Indeed the unspoken assumption was that the non-independent 'church' sector would wither on the vine as their stock of buildings decayed with age. It was an arrangement constructed by parties who in no way could have imagined that six decades on, a system designed for a Christian nation, with an official religion, would be straining to accommodate a range of faiths which then had no significant presence. That compromise now satisfies few. However whereas in 1944, or for that matter 1964, it might have been politically possible to impose a secular structure similar to the American one which separated the state and religion it increasingly becomes more, not less, difficult to do so. The result is a growing sectarian divide within education, one that serves to partition communities and separate young people from each other, much as it has done in Northern Ireland for almost a century. It also means parents and religious leaders are better able to control what young people can and cannot learn, as well as what teachers, can and cannot teach. In a free society it is right and proper that individuals should be allowed to offer young people the opportunity to join religious groups or attend sectarian schools, but that it not the same as saying these should be funded from general taxation or that they should be part of a system imposed on young people via compulsory attendance. Religious indoctrination is as unpleasant and damaging as political indoctrination. Both will occur in a free society in homes and communities but they should not be funded by the Exchequer and nor should those young people who are the victims of such indoctrination be denied the right to an open non-sectarian education.

Conclusion

The distribution of wealth in Britain, now back to 1937 levels of inequality (Toynbee and Walker 2008) helps ensure that the situation George Crabbe observed two centuries ago still operates:

> *To every class we have a school assigned*
> *Rules for all ranks and food for every mind.*

Despite the growth that has taken place during the last 25 years, our schools, colleges and universities are as socially divided as ever. We perform reasonably well in comparison with other rich countries when it comes to test scores relating to numeracy and literacy, but we fail badly in other respects. Our young people experience some of the worst levels of poverty, regard themselves as less happy, drink more alcohol, take more drugs and have more under-age sex than their peers in other 'rich' countries. They are also more likely to fail at school, experience bullying at school and leave education earlier (Bradshaw, 2007).

Such outcomes are not accidents of fate but reflect acute levels of social inequality and the narrowness of the curriculum and the context in which it is delivered.

Whether or not educational standards have improved during the last 25 years is difficult to assess. Certainly 41 per cent of university admission tutors polled believed the standard of applicants had decline in the last decade and 32 per cent that they had remained the same (Institute of Directors, 2008). Worse, the levels of 'teaching to the test', and in some schools cheating and manipulation of results and returns, make it foolhardy to make serious judgements regarding the degree of actual progress (Paton, 2007; Davies 2000). Once government re-introduced the Victorian system of paying teachers by results and forcing schools to compete, it was inevitable we would acquire the structure we have today – one that encourages and rewards the dishonest and slick, and punishes the honest.

Some things are certain to happen during the next 25 years. One is that the education systems operating in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland will become markedly distinctive from each other and from that encountered in England. Already differences in the funding structures, testing regimes and curricula serve to set them apart. For example, in 2003 Wales and Scotland abandoned the use of league tables and Northern Ireland followed suit. Scotland has no National Curriculum, merely a set of guidelines and with regard to higher education, Scotland has no student top-up fees for residents. The Welsh Assembly charge Welsh students studying at a Welsh university only £1,255, less than half the £3,000 paid by their English counterparts. A second is that hard economic times will reduce the already low levels of direct support from the private sector to a trickle. The government has virtually abandoned trying to get companies to sponsor academies and opted to bully and bribe public sector institutions, such as universities and local authorities, into providing tokenistic backing. Worse may yet happen, for already one company, Amery, has given notice that due to financial difficulties it is severing its links with the academy it sponsored (Marley and Stewart, 2008). Others will surely follow, or simply not pay the promised money, something a number have long avoided doing. As a parliamentary question from Austin Mitchell embarrassingly exposed, 12 out of the first 26 academies have not yet received the monies promised by their sponsors, despite a requirement that 'donations' be transferred prior to opening (*Private Eye*, 28th July 2007). Similarly the private sector will further cut back on training thereby leaving young people and the state to increasingly pick up the costs of vocational education. Finally we can be certain that a high proportion of young people will be attending schools located in more modern buildings than those currently provided thanks to the £45 billion *Building Schools for the Future* programme which is expected to re-house the complete secondary sector by 2020. However as the majority will be run as academies and/or financed by PFI, in most cases the facilities will be unavailable for use by community and youth groups.

Less certain, but possible, is that some measure of common sense will prevail and the current testing regime will be reformed and the national curriculum trimmed. If not we can be certain that our children will become more utilitarian in their attitudes to learning and many more will be miserable, depressed and alienated from education (Alexander and Hargreaves, 2007). The raising of the school leaving age to 18 will almost certainly not help. Rates of truancy, already growing (Paton: 2007a) will continue to increase and more schools will face greater problems of disorder. Finally we may see a gradual fall in the proportion of

young people progressing into higher education. Currently only 12 per cent of graduates enter 'traditional graduate jobs' and one third enter what can only be classified as non-graduate employment (HESA, 2008). The economic and social advantages that flow from securing a degree, when the average debt on graduation in England now exceeds £33,000 (Hunter, 2005), are becoming increasingly marginal:

> *Currently there are 110,000 more graduates working in personal services than a decade ago; 120,000 more working as clerks. There will be a tipping-point moment when graduate employment divides clearly into knowledge and non-knowledge jobs, making talk of average graduate pay a nonsense – and for a critical mass of graduates, the returns from a degree will plummet.* (Hutton, 2008: 19)

Some things will merely stay the same. Our mania for uniforms and regimentation compared to others will continue, as will the obsession with hierarchies and leadership rather than scholarship and virtue. Indeed it may well get far worse before things get better as the new generation of educational leaders with their suits, mumbo-jumbo and systems come of age. The fences and CCTV may alter the outward appearance of our institutions but inside they will sound and look much as they do now and did 25 years ago. Many young people will still emerge alienated from learning and with their intellectual curiosity erased, so that just as now, a quarter of 16 to 24 year olds surveyed will probably not have read a single book in the previous year, including almost half of the men in that age bracket, and fewer than 50 per cent of all adults will have read five or more books in the previous year' (Prince 2008).

Possibly the greatest tragedy of the last 25 years has been the way in which central government has been allowed to bring to an end the democratic control of our schools and colleges by locally elected and accountable councillors. It would be almost impossible to conjure up an education system that could wreak more damage to the tapestry of civil society, undermine local and national democracy, injure the threads of community and dissuade the intellectually able and socially committed from entering (and staying in) the teaching profession than the one introduced during the last quarter of a century. Barber reminds us 'education makes citizens; only citizens can forge freedom' (1992: 265). The tragedy is that education now is run in a way that displays a total contempt for democracy. Local communities are not trusted to manage the institutions that matter most to them – the schools and colleges that educate their children and their future fellow citizens. Control instead resides in the hands of unelected and unaccountable sponsors, Whitehall satraps and sail-by managers. None of these care unduly about local democracy for they benefit from its emasculation. Nor does the health of the communities where the institutions are located overly concern them as in most instances they rarely live in them. The most urgent task is to undo the damage done, and restore our schools to democracy and inject democracy into our schools and colleges. Liberty grows from the bottom up and is badly served by an education system, such as ours, imposed from the top down and managed by strangers.

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In from the margins and back again – 25 years of policy: young people, sexuality and gender

Billie Oliver

In 1960, the *Albemarle Report* (HMSO, 1960) observed that 'much thought' would need to be given to ways of attracting girls into youth organisations. However, it was the continuing domination of boys and men in youth work settings during the 1970s, at a time when feminism was a rapidly growing movement that 'opened up opportunities for feminist and women-centred practice' (Steward, 2001:34). By 1986, Carpenter and Young (1986:9) were able to claim that 'work with girls and young women has been around in youth work for some time now.'

Tett (1996:49) offers two key perspectives which determine the way in which gender based work is carried out. One of these identifies inequality as a 'problem of equal importance' to young men and young women. The other regards women's 'lack of power as part of a far broader pattern of female subordination'. This latter, feminist, perspective has tended to 'concentrate on the politics of change' through an emphasis on the value of collective action and group work whereas the former perspective has been predisposed to adopt a 'consensual, professional approach which plays down the possibility of conflict'. Interventions framed within the 'equalities' perspective tend to view women and girls as 'disadvantaged', 'lacking in confidence' and as 'under-achieving' and are therefore designed to increase women's access to existing provision. The 'feminist' perspective, on the other hand, assumes that 'gender stereotypes are open to contestation' and provision, therefore, aims to provide a space for women where their subjective experiences can be recognised and validated.

It was within such a feminist or woman-centred framework that much of the provision that developed in the 1980s was set, and it is from such a perspective that this review of gender based provision is informed. Carpenter and Young (1986) pointed out that this type of provision was not based on 'activities' nor was it 'problem centred or focused on crisis.

> *The work is about young women: who they are, and how they live their lives. It starts from where young women 'are at' and offers them opportunities for choice and the development of their potential.* (Carpenter and Young 1986:9)

Those were the days my friend, we thought they'd never end

By the late 1970s the strength of the girls work movement had been such that the National Association of Youth Clubs was pressured into establishing a Girls Work Unit which produced a very successful and popular 'Working With Girls Newsletter'. The National Organisation for Work with Girls and Young Women (NOW) was formed and provided information and resources, support and training for work with girls and to help develop more women friendly facilities.

In 1982 The *Thompson Report* (HMSO, 1982) appeared to accept the argument for girls work as mainstream when it urged the youth service to take the needs of girls and young women seriously and to tackle and challenge ingrained attitudes and unconscious assumptions (Carpenter and Young, 1986:9). Seen, according to Davies (1999) as an important paper amongst youth work practitioners the *Thompson Report* made public statements about the deprivations and injustices facing increasing numbers of young people and endorsed some 'out of favour humane and person-centred values' (Davies, 1999:24) urging the youth service to commit to eradicating sexist attitudes. As Batsleer (1996:12) has suggested, in the early 1980s it seemed as if the agenda for youth work with girls and young women had 'shifted away from the philanthropic focus' which had traditionally seen girls 'as problems'. It appeared at that time as though 'girls work' was beginning to gain a 'sense of excitement' and to view girls 'as people with potential'. However, while it was something of an achievement for girls work to be mentioned at all in a government policy document, many regarded the Thompson Report as luke-warm in its recommendation that work with girls be promoted as a temporary, short term or optional step towards full integration in mixed activity rather than identifying how 'anti-sexist practice can become a central element of mixed provision' (Spence, 1990:84). And what the Thomson Report completely failed to do was to address the issues of hetero-sexism and sexuality, totally ignoring the existence of young lesbians and gays.

> *All that the six men and two women members of the committee could muster on sexuality was that "for both sexes, sexual relations are a source of anxiety as well as bewilderment".* (Kent-Baguley, 1990:113)

Whatever its merits or limitations, the *Thompson Report* would appear to have been all but ignored within hard policy terms anyway. The then Minister for Education took two years to make his formal, but largely indifferent, response and as Davies (1999:24) pointed out, ten years after it appeared, 'the positive gains flowing from it were not easy to discern'. Girls work remained 'under-developed' because it was still 'misunderstood and misinterpreted' and most local authorities allocated 'too few resources to sustain or develop it' (Davies 1999:100). Writing in 1986, Carpenter and Young were still calling for the establishment and implementation of 'appropriate policy' to support gender-based work to avoid it remaining 'excluded and on the margins' (p.12).

In 1990, a DES convened conference to clarify a core curriculum for youth work agreed a 'statement of purpose' the aim of which was to 'redress all forms of inequality and to ensure equality of opportunity for all young people' (Davies, 1999:94). However, as Davies reminds us, this statement produced some 'healthy scepticism' and even some downright 'resistance' from more traditional perspectives within the youth service who were 'unready to contemplate the shifts in power and resources which the statement ... implied' (op.cit.).

Spence (1990:89) described work with girls as 'very slowly gaining respectability' but warned that this respectability left 'no room for complacency'. How right she was! In 1987 the Girl's Work Unit within the NAYC was suddenly closed and the staff made redundant. Set up only a few years earlier, this unit had been seen as crucial to the introduction, promotion and communication of gender issues in youth work. Its closure was blamed on budgetary considerations and assurances were given that girls work would continue to get

attention within the organisation (Davies 1999:36), but the closure was widely seen at the time as an anti-feminist move.

Despite a report on *Youth Work with Girls and Young Women* (DES, 1989) 'deeply regretting' the mistrust with which girls work was generally 'and unjustifiably' regarded and recommending that organisations concerned with provision for girls and young women formulate a policy and develop an 'action programme' for the development of work with girls and young women (Batsleer, 1996:144), the marginalisation of young women's needs continued throughout the 1990s.

In 1994, the National Organisation for Work with Girls and Young Women (NOWGYW) was closed. This had been active since 1981 and had gained a renewed significance following the closure of the NAYC's Girls Work Unit. Its demise left a significant gap in the representation of autonomous work with girls from a feminist perspective (Batsleer 1996:14). While work with girls and women continued, it did so, as Osborne and Walmsley (1995:9) pointed out 'in more difficult circumstances' and with fewer resources.

Let's hear it for the boys

One of these 'more difficult circumstances' was widely considered to be the so called 'feminist backlash' of the 1990s and the jostling for position of the various priorities that emerged under the label of 'issue-based work'. One of the overriding themes of the so called 'backlash' was the fear that the gender issue had now come full circle with men as the new victims and a climate of 'political correctness' which skewed power too much in the direction of women. Feminism came to be something to be caricatured and made fun of and its gains viewed as putting men at a disadvantage. As Figes (1994:217) pointed out, the word 'feminisim' came to be associated with 'man-hating, aggressive, anarchic and lesbian' with the result that 'few were prepared to stand tall and claim it for themselves'. The term 'post-feminism' came to be used instead to imply that the women's movement was no longer needed. However, as Coats (1994:150) has pointed out 'although the media (and many men) claimed that women now had 'equality', the available evidence demonstrated that this was untrue'.

It is widely suggested that young women today have increased opportunities and freedoms. However as Steward (2001:35) has pointed out, these freedoms also come hand-in-hand with increased pressures and responsibilities. Modern concepts of 'girl power' often mask the underlying needs and vulnerabilities of young women and the need for work with young women has therefore not diminished. Recent research confirms that despite the higher educational achievements of girls over boys (Casson and Kingdon, 2007), women graduates are still paid less from the very beginning of their careers (Curtis, 2007). Recent statistics from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2007) suggest that women are paid less than men even in full time graduate jobs and even before they start to interrupt their careers by having children. Another report (EOC, 2007) suggests that women with young children face more discrimination in the workplace than disabled people or those from ethnic minorities and that four-fifths of employers still try to avoid hiring pregnant women or those in their early 20s deemed to be of 'childbearing age'. Nevertheless, in the

context of declining resources, prioritisation became inevitable. It began to appear that in many people's thinking – and especially in policy terms – girls work had 'been done' and that because it was now 'rooted in universal good practice (it could) now drop from sight' (Davies 1999:101). As Batsleer (1996:146) has argued, 'in the context of identity politics, the women's agenda became a disappearing space'.

Work with girls and women has continuously been dogged by challenges about the neglect of boys and men – often on the grounds that class is a more salient form of oppression than gender (Tett, 1996:61). Around the time that the NOWGYW was being closed, the YWCA was complaining that support for work with young women was being squeezed by the increasing priority being given to work with young people at risk – and that that work was 'predominantly, with young men' (Davies 1999:101). The social changes of the late 1980s and 1990s affected, in some people's opinion, males more than females (Lloyd, 1997:3) and led a small group of male workers to develop an area of practice in 'working with men' to redress some of these confusions and transitions. But as Lloyd (1997:73) admits, within work with boys as in work with girls and young women there was confusion between what might be called 'boyswork' and 'anti-sexist work'. Prior to the 1990s, 'boys work' had tended to rest within the domain of the traditional, uniformed voluntary sector and early attempts to develop gender based work with young men had tended to be developed from a class perspective (Davies 1999:96) focussing on issues facing working class young men. In 1990 Spence claimed that 'to date, while many male workers have applauded the achievements of feminist work, very few ... have attempted to illuminate the difficulties for themselves or to incorporate its lessons into their own practice'. Consequently, 'the agenda for anti-sexist male youth work remains relatively open and obscure' with 'little sign of this situation changing in the immediate future' (p. 97).

In the 1990s, however, developments began to emerge that attempted to work with young men from a 'masculinist' perspective. Lloyd (1997:74) asserted that the main difficulty facing those trying to develop 'boyswork' was the assumption that the aims of boyswork are the same as for girls work. The pre-occupation with 'anti-sexist work', according to Lloyd led to a resistance to the sort of 'boyswork' that was based on issues of patriarchy and power. The 'masculinist' perspective, therefore, sought to find methods of working with young men that 'broadens their options and choices outside of the limitations of masculinities' (op.cit.). The primary focus of 'boyswork', according to Lloyd, should be on the young men themselves and not on the young women.

Despite the continuing efforts of a small number of men to develop boyswork in this way, it has remained a relatively marginal area of youth work and one that was faced with some of the same resource and policy challenges that faced work with girls and young women. As Batsleer (2006:61) has observed, despite there being 'more openness now than there ever was to the exploration of masculinity' separate work with boys that 'broadens their options and choices outside of the limitations of masculinities' is hard to find.

We're here, we're queer and we're not going shopping

Work with young men and young women around their identities did, however, open up

opportunities for the exploration and discussion of sexuality and allowed separate work with young lesbians and gays to emerge. Osborne and Walmsley (1995:3) have noted that the pioneering work and ideas of the women developing the Girls Work movement led to the 'routine' embracing of anti-oppressive practice within the curriculum and to 'service delivery plans trying to ensure that work is directed to previously excluded groups'. In this way, work with young people around their sexual identity began to emerge as a discrete area of practice. .

The Thompson Review (HMSO 1982) however, had nothing at all to say to encourage or support work with young lesbian and gay people, nor, according to Davies (1999:112) did any key national youth service voices or even professional training courses 'break this silence' over the following decade. Throughout the 1980s gays and lesbians 'were assaulted through public policy' (Davies 1999:112) and through homophobic tabloid representations of AIDS as 'the gay plague'. Youth services were far from immune from the effects of such bigotry and broaching issues of sexuality with young people, within the homophobic climate of the 1990s severely limited the development of this type of work.

In the late 1980s, however, government guidelines and fear about what may or may not be permitted became a 'major inhibitor of good practice' (Batsleer, 1996:76) with the introduction, in 1988, of the infamous Section 28 of the Local Government Act. This clause stated that local authorities should not 'intentionally promote homosexuality as a pretended family relationship, or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality'. While there was no evidence that Section 28 could be used legally to prevent education about sexuality, the existence of such legislation clearly led to a reinforcing of the social stigma associated with lesbian and gay identification and strongly influenced the moral framework of work with young people (Valentine et al, 2002:6). As a result, Section 28 came to be widely used as a reason not to support projects aimed at young lesbians and young gay men. Section 28 also led to some overt and immediate actions such as the closing of some projects. Well into the 1990s local authorities were still using it as the pretext for banning or at least refusing to fund, youth work with gay and lesbian young people. It also had some more subtle consequences. While before Section 28 youth workers had 'rarely fallen over themselves to cater for gay, lesbian or bisexual young people' (Davies 1999:113), following its introduction many more became wary about discussing issues surrounding sexuality. In 1990, Kent-Baguley (1990:112) argued that youth work tackling hetero-sexism had 'hardly begun' and as a consequence young lesbians and gays were left feeling 'awkward, unhappy and unwanted in the majority of youth clubs'.

In the absence of any policy or youth service lead it was left to voluntary sector groups and grassroots movements to continue to press for and develop accessible provision for young gays and lesbians. Their efforts undoubtedly helped to shift perceptions and practice. However, as Davies observed:

> *Gay, lesbian and bisexual young people were still a long way from being able to assume that their access to the service would be developed in strategic ways or that their actual reception on the ground would be sensitive and welcoming.* (1999:114)

Despite the eventual repeal of Section 28 in 2003, many difficulties remain for those

attempting to challenge assumptions around sexuality in work with young people. Professionals are still 'often caught in a web of conflicting pressures' (Trotter, 2001:25) when trying to respond to the needs of lesbian and gay young people. Furthermore, in addition to the financial and structural pressures that continue to lead to competing demands for scarce resources, what Valentine et al (2002) have called a 'visibility paradox' can often be the biggest hurdle.

> *A fear of coming out means that this group does not visibly demand resources or support from service providers. This enables service providers to claim that because there is no evident demand, there is no need to provide specialist support for them. Yet because there is no visible provision or acknowledgement of their needs they anticipate institutional homophobia and so are fearful to come out.* (2002:26)

There is no such thing as society

One of the biggest challenges to developing gender-based work and work with young lesbians and gays over the past 25 years was the long rule by the right-wing Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher. The dominant ideology of individualism, espoused by Thatcherism, was not sympathetic to the provision of, for example, women-only groups based on the principles of shared learning and mutual support. In addition espousal by the Conservative governments of Thatcher and Major of 'traditional family values fuelled a noticeable backlash against the liberationist ideologies of the 1970s. In particular, the so called 'New Right counter-attack on the loony left' (Davies, 1999:93) led to the abolition of specialist women's units and posts within local authorities and also to the introduction of Section 28. Overall :

> *This came to constitute an uncomfortable, not to say hostile, environment in which to sustain and take further the issue-based youth work which the youth service had begun, albeit grudgingly and marginally, to incorporate.* (Davies 1999: 93)

In addition, the Conservative government's restructuring of local education authorities in the 1990s led to appropriate provision for girls and young women being further eroded. Aird (1993:66) has referred to the 1990s as a decade of 'utilitarian educational philosophy and constraining financial stringency'. This shift in ideology, away from development work and towards work with specified measurable outcomes led to the undermining of developmental group work and to the growth of work focused on individuals. This made it very difficult to access funding for development work that did not have specified outcomes. As a result much of the innovative work of the voluntary and community sector, where the majority of successful girls work, boys work and gay and lesbian youth work was developed, came to be further threatened and marginalised.

Do all young people matter?

The erosion of developmental group work continued under New Labour with an increasing focus on young people's 'social exclusion' and 'promotion of active citizenship' (Williamson

2005:14). When they came into office in 1997, Labour 'hit the ground running in relation to youth policy' (Davies 1999:159). However, while there was some relief that a government was once more prepared to place young people at the heart of its educational and welfare strategies, 'not all of its starting assumptions were appreciated' (Davies 1999:159). In particular they have been criticised for operating from the same deficiency model of youth which had shaped most Conservative policies of the previous two decades. Persistent themes in recent youth policy have been those aimed at stimulating a shift towards preventative strategies for young people at risk of social exclusion, with a particular focus on those young people referred to as NEET (Not in Education, Training or Employment) and pregnant young women. This has led to an over emphasis on monitoring young people's progress and to the imposition of targets by which to direct and judge the performance of the agencies involved with them. Jeffs and Smith (2001), amongst others, have argued that this target-led culture has given rise to inequalities in resource allocation, with resources being diverted from work associated with personal development and underlying needs, which young people may need first in order to be able to achieve the harder outcomes. Smith (2002) argues that there has been a shift from 'open' provision towards the targeting of provision on working with groups of young people deemed to be 'at risk' in some way. Davies (1999:123) has suggested, the range of issues that face youth workers today amount to a 'formidable agenda' for under-resourced local youth services already trying to implement a highly ambitious array of other curricular commitments and methods. Together with the diminishing morale and energy that result from frequent local and national re-structuring, it is not surprising that the capacity to develop innovative and responsive gender based work is not there.

The long awaited *Youth Matters* (DfES,2005) failed to include any discussion of gender based or sexuality based work with young people, its focus remaining very much on 'at risk' young people. This focus on 'problematic youth' and 'at risk' youth has affected the ability of community and youth workers to respond developmentally to the needs of young women and young men in an exploration of their gender and sexuality. Youth services have been 'encouraged' to refocus their attention onto target groups, raising issues around how to justify work with young people who do not fit into the governments preferred categories. Recent, so called, 'social exclusion' and 'community cohesion' strategies have created some opportunities for increased work with young women and young men, however, such initiatives are inevitably designed around an issue deemed to be 'blocking their transition and integration into the economic mainstream' (Steward, 2001:36). Analysing some examples of current gender based practise, Batsleer argues that 'the rationale seems to have changed'.

> *More often than not separate work seems to exist because of some perceived 'lack' in girls. Lack of confidence, lack of self esteem are mentioned a lot.* (2006:60).

Carpenter and Young's (1986:17) discussion of how the Albermarle Report (HMSO, 1960) emerged from a 'backdrop of anxiety about teenage cultures' is strangely reminiscent of current debates. According to Carpenter and Young the Albermarle Report highlighted three significant elements:

> *the training of professional youth workers, a massive building programme to establish*

> youth centres ....and projects to reach the *'unattached' – predominantly the heavy end boys – greasers, mods and rockers, youths on street corners.* (1986:17)

Reading the recent *Aiming High for Young People* (DCFS, 2007) one might wonder what on earth we have been doing in the intervening years. Despite hinting that government has recognised the error of its ways in viewing young people as 'problematic' and committing to presenting a 'positive vision' for youth development (p.5) this new policy also offers a ten year strategy to develop a 'skilled' youth work workforce; to invest in and improve youth facilities in every constituency; and to provide targeted and structured provision to help to tackle the 'significant and stubborn challenges' effecting young people's participation. *Aiming High For Young People* (DCFS, 2007:19) recognises that young people need access to 'support in places where they feel comfortable and from people they can trust' and that providers will need 'to innovate' if marginalised groups of young people are to be reached successfully (p.39). It also recognises that young people want a space to socialise with peers facing similar issues and experiences and specifically refers to 'gender' (p.45) and 'sexual orientation' (p.54). Nevertheless, on examining the detail, we find that gender issues concerning both young women and young men are once again addressed in terms of deficiency and risk. For example as the following quotes indicate 'the risk of teenage pregnancy is increased for girls with lower self esteem than their peers' (p.7) and ' many ... young black men can be caught in a cycle of low aspiration and achievement, and are often vulnerable to negative peer influences (p.62).

Community and association

While acknowledging that there have been 'enormous transformations in gender and our understanding of gender in the last twenty five years', Batsleer (2006:59) also points out that 'some persistent patterns' remain. Crucially, she points out that the arenas for promoting debate, discussion and celebration of such work are hard to identify today. Without such discussion it is difficult to see how gender based practice, that is focused on 'the politics of change' through an emphasis on the value of collective action and group work (Tett, 1996:49) can re-emerge. Smith (2007), amongst others, has pointed out how recent policy has tended to remain focused on the development and containment of individuals rather than on strengthening association, group life and self-determination. Current policy tends to adopt a consensual approach and favours interventions framed within, what Tett (1996) called an 'equalities perspective' that emphasise increasing 'under-achieving' young people's access to existing provision.

I fear that it is unlikely we will witness radical changes in approach or thinking in the near future. However, I would like to highlight some indicators that suggest to me the possibility of change. Whether or not young people and/or practitioners are able to take appropriate advantage of them remains to be seen. The first indicator is the changing dynamic of the youth work workforce. In 1991, Sawbridge and Spence were pointing out the continuing dominance of the 'male agenda' in youth work.

> *It is hard to escape the impression that when one is discussing youth work, one is in fact discussing a service primarily staffed by men for young men.* (p. 60)

Spence (1990:80) suggested that it was 'largely men who make the major decisions regarding policy, funding and methods' and that while feminism has 'questioned and to some degree influenced' thinking, this has been done 'in an often hostile atmosphere'. Interestingly, today, Robertson (2008:94) claims that there is growing evidence to suggest that the youth work profession is currently attracting far more women than men, indicating a trend towards a more female-dominated profession. Although Robertson found little evidence that the increase of women into the profession is leading to a resurgence of the 'feminist agenda' it is possible that this could, in the longer term, change the dynamic of how services are delivered to young people.

The second indicator is the subtle shift in funding towards the community and voluntary sector that is espoused in recent policy. Robertson (2008:96) observes that more women than men youth workers seek work in the voluntary and community sector and that the rise in the numbers of women entering youth work could, therefore, lead to a decline in 'traditional forms of centre based youth work'. While Robertson views this as a problem for youth clubs, it could also be seen as an opportunity to strengthen and develop the more imaginative and exciting community based work where gender-based practice has traditionally thrived.

In a nostalgic review of the 'glory days' of the 1970s and early 1980s, Batsleer (2006:59) describes the 'creativity and determination' of workers in the community sector who were 'committed to a liberationist practice' that was so successful in transforming the lives of the many of the girls and young women 'we worked with'. However, writing about community based work with girls and young women in 1996, Batsleer (1996:140) pointed out that 'the question of how to sustain a critique of this discourse while retaining resources and funding is very important'. One of the more positive themes in *Aiming High For Young People* (DCSF, 2007) is its recognition of the role the 'third sector and community organisations' can play in successfully engaging marginalised groups. Much of the innovative good practice within gender-based work and work with gay and lesbian young men has historically originated from grass roots movements within the voluntary sector. In recent years, as I have described above, such work has struggled to secure the funding it needs to continue and develop. The promise of increased resources to 'expand the availability of such provision' (ibid.: 63) is, to me, one of the more hopeful sentences in this most recent policy report.

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The Changing Shape of Youth Crime

John Pitts

In the 25 years since the birth of *Youth & Policy*, recorded youth and adult crime rates in England and Wales at first rose sharply, from around 2,750,000 offences in 1983 to 6,000,000 in 1992, and then declined steadily to around 5,750,000 offences in 2005. Between 1992 and 2002, the number of 10- 17 year olds convicted, cautioned, reprimanded or warned for indictable offences, fell by over a quarter, from 143,600 to 105,700 (Nacro 2004).

The rise in overall recorded crime in the 1980s was accompanied by a rise in the numbers of young people convicted or cautioned for crimes of violence. An international study of crime trends found that, in England and Wales, the numbers of young people aged 14-16 convicted or cautioned by the police for a violent crime rose from around 360 per 100,000 in 1986 to 580 per 100,000 in 1994 (Nacro 2004). But, like crime in general, from 1994, recorded violent youth crime also began to fall (Bateman and Pitts 2005). These trends are not peculiar to the UK; indeed, the 'crime drop' is evident in official statistics, victim surveys, and self-report studies across mainland Europe and the USA.

The changing shape of crime

However this 'crime drop' masks the reality that, over the period, criminal victimisation has been redistributed from the prosperous to the poor and that, in some of Britain's poorest neighbourhoods, youth crime has become far more serious. The 1992 British Crime Survey (BCS), based on interviews with randomly selected households, identifies both a substantial increase in the volume of crime and victimisation between 1982 and 1992 and significant changes in its nature and distribution. The BCS divides neighbourhoods into ten categories on the basis of the intensity of the criminal victimisation of their residents. By 1992, the chances of a resident in the lowest crime neighbourhood ever being assaulted had fallen to a point where it was barely measurable. Residents in the highest crime neighbourhoods, by contrast, now risked being assaulted twice a year. This polarisation of risk is made clearer when we recognise that, by 1992, residents in the highest crime neighbourhoods experienced twice the rate of property crime and four times the rate of personal crime than those in the next worst category. These findings point to a significant redistribution of victimisation towards the poorest and most vulnerable over the intervening ten years. Tim Hope (2003) argues that:

> *It is no exaggeration to say that we are now two nations as far as criminal victimisation is concerned. Half the country suffers more than four fifths of the total amount of household property crime, while the other half makes do with the remaining 15 per cent.*

Moreover, whereas overall recorded crime has been falling since 1992, in many of Britain's poorest neighbourhoods it has remained stable or continues to rise. Why should this be?

The great reversal

A major effect of the introduction of US-style economic liberalism into the UK was the reversal, from 1979 onwards, of the post-war tendency towards a narrowing of the gap between rich and poor and the growth of both absolute and relative poverty. Between 1981 and 1991 the number of workers earning half the national average wage or less, the Council of Europe poverty line, rose from 900,000 to 2.4 million. In the same period those earning over twice the national average rose from 1.8 to 3.1 million. In February 1999, the gap between the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the poorest and the richest regions in the UK was the widest in the European Union (EU). The richest region, Inner London, ranked against an EU average of 100, scored 222. The poorest regions like Merseyside and West Wales scored less than 75, rendering them eligible for EU 'special aid' (Pitts 2003).

The concentration of disadvantage

As the 1980s progressed, relatively prosperous, middle-aged, higher-income families left what came to be called 'social housing', to be replaced by poorer, younger, often lone-parent, families (Page 1993). This 'secession of the successful' meant that, increasingly, it was the least 'successful' who were entering social housing. Andrew Adonis and Stephen Pollard (1998) write:

> *Twenty years ago, if you wanted to find a poor family, you had to ring a number of door bells of typical council flats before you found one. Today, arrive at a council estate, ring any bell, and you have probably found one ... no one chooses to live in a council house – especially if they want to get on.*

Meanwhile, reductions in income support for the payment of the mortgage interest of unemployed homeowners, and the house-price slump of the early 1990s, which forced many separating couples to hand back their keys to their mortgage lender, meant that 44,000 families moved from owner-occupation into social housing (Dean 1997). Between 1984 and 1994 annual residential mobility in social housing increased from 4 to 7 per cent of households. Whereas in the 1980s and 1990s, 40 per cent of heads of households in social housing were aged 65 or over, 75 per cent of newly formed households entering social housing were headed by someone aged between 16 and 29. A high proportion of these new residents were unemployed, not least because they included a heavy concentration of young lone parents (Page 1993). As Malcolm Dean (1997) has noted:

> *Two quite distinct communities are emerging within the sector with quite profound differences in lifestyles and culture. At one end there are the established elderly residents, who have lived in social housing all their lives and who remember a time when having a council home was a desirable goal. At the other end are the new, younger residents, frequently suffering from multiple problems: unemployment, poverty, poor*

work skills and perhaps mental illness and drug abuse as well. (p.13)

In its report, *Bringing Britain Together*, the government's Social Exclusion Unit (1998) identified 1370 housing estates in Britain which it characterised as 'poor neighbourhoods which have poverty, unemployment, and poor health in common, and crime usually comes high on any list of residents' concerns'.

The racialisation of social disadvantage

In contrast with the steady upward educational, occupational and social mobility of a substantial section of Britain's Black and Asian citizens, in the slump which began in the late 1980s, many other Black and Asian Britons experienced downward mobility, finding themselves immobilised at the bottom of the social and economic structure. By 1995, 40 per cent of African–Caribbeans and 59 per cent of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in the UK were located in the poorest fifth of the population. This contrasts with only 18 per cent of the white population (Power and Tunstall 1995). In London, by the mid-1990s, up to 70 per cent of the residents on the poorest housing estates were from ethnic minorities (Power and Tunstall 1995; Robins 1992; Palmer and Pitts 2006). Lynsey Hanley (2007) writes:

> *You can take this social stratification further, by looking at the height of the council property they rent: if they live above the fifth floor of a local authority block in England they are more likely not only to be working class, but also to be from an ethnic minority ... The effect of this spreading-out of wealth through private ownership rather than state-led redistribution, however, has been to make the poor suffer most, and to perpetuate a situation in which the worst off are also the worst housed.*

Family poverty

At the beginning of the 1980s the average household income of council house residents was 73 per cent of the national average. At the beginning of the 1990s this had fallen to 48 per cent. By 1995, over 50 per cent of council households had no breadwinner and 95 per cent qualified for some form of means-tested benefit – Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Family Credit and Disability Working Allowance (Power and Tunstall 1995). By 1997, 25 per cent of the children and young people in Britain were living in these neighbourhoods.

In a recent study of violent youth gangs in three London boroughs (Pitts 2008), the researchers found that a substantial majority of the gang-involved young people interviewed had grown up in some of the most socially deprived neighbourhoods in the metropolis, with exceptionally high rates of street crime, drug dealing and firearms crime. In one South London borough, over 40 per cent of the children in the borough lived on or near the poverty line and, in the wards where gang activity was most prevalent, between 47 per cent and 60 per cent lived in families eligible for means tested benefits.

Structural youth unemployment

In the 1980s Britain lost 20 per cent of its industrial base. In Sheffield, a city of 200,000 people, for example, between 1979 and 1989, 40,000 jobs evaporated. Between 1984 and 1997, the numbers of young people aged 16-24 in the labour market shrank by almost 40 per cent (Coleman 1999). Some were absorbed into the government's welfare to work programmes while others gravitated towards higher education, but a substantial proportion can now be found in the unemployment figures. These changes had a particularly detrimental impact upon Black and minority ethnic young people aged 16 to 24, and on young men in particular, who are substantially more likely than their White counterparts to be unemployed – 36 per cent of Black Caribbeans, 31 per cent of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, 26 per cent of Indians and 14 per cent of Whites (Pitts 2008). Saskia Sassen (2007) sees falling incomes and youth and ethnic minority unemployment as indicative of longer-term changes in urban 'employment regimes' that have, she argues, destroyed the 'bridge' from low-wage jobs and poverty into sustainable working class or middle class employment:

> *It is the downgrading of manufacturing that has played a crucial role in cutting off the bridges that used to enable low-income youth to move into reasonably paying jobs in a world of expanding, mostly unionised factories. Now many of these jobs are gone or have been downgraded to sweatshop work, often drawing on immigrant workers. This cuts off one of the key ways for youth to mainstream themselves out of gang life. The result has been that gang members stay longer in gangs and are more likely to participate in the criminal economy.* (p.104)

Economic segregation

Many commentators argue that the spatial concentration of social disadvantage is a result of poor neighbourhoods becoming spatially segregated from local economies (see for example McGahey 1986). Economic segregation sets in train processes that further isolate these neighbourhoods because, as McGahey suggests, residents in poor, high-crime, neighbourhoods, tend to derive their livelihoods from the 'informal economy' and 'secondary sector' labour markets, characterised by low wages and sporadic, dead-end work, supplemented by:

> *... government transfers, employment and training programmes, crime and illegal hustles' which 'constitute important additional sources of income, social organisation and identity for the urban poor.*

Another characteristic of high crime neighbourhoods is that skilled, economically mobile, adult workers leave them and their departure, serves to further destabilise the neighbourhood, thereby deepening family poverty. McGahey writes:

> *The quality and quantity of jobs in a neighbourhood determine the ways people form households, regulate their own, and the public behaviour of others, and use public services. The resulting neighbourhood atmosphere then helps to shape the incentives*

> *for residents to engage in legitimate employment or income-oriented crime. A high level of adult involvement in primary sector employment spawns stable households, stable families, stable social relationships and enhanced vocational opportunities for the next generation.*

And, of course, a low level of adult involvement in primary sector employment produces the opposite.

Socio-political marginalisation

A further characteristic of these neighbourhoods is that residents tend not to be connected to locally influential social and political networks (Wilson 1987). This denies them information about social, educational or vocational opportunity as well as access to the political influence that could improve their situation. It is not that people in these neighbourhoods have no 'social capital' but rather that their social capital tends to be 'sustaining but constraining', enabling them to 'get by', to survive the day-to-day struggle, but not to 'get on', by moving out of their present situation and into the social and economic mainstream (De Souza Briggs 1998; Pettit and McLanahan 2001).

Discreditation and stigma

Moreover, living in a poor neighbourhood, amongst what Detleif Baum (1996) has described as a 'discredited population', makes residents the object of stigma and discrimination, which can undermine their self-esteem, making them even less willing to move beyond the confines of the neighbourhood. Baum writes:

> *Young people sense this discreditation in their own environment, in school or in the cultural or leisure establishments. Through this they experience stigmatisation of their difference, of their actions, and the perceived incompetence of the people they live among. The options for action are limited and possibilities for gaining status-enhancing resources are made more difficult. At some stage the process becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; young people and adults come to think that there must be 'something in it' when their characteristics and ways of behaving are stigmatised, and some become confirmed in this uncertainty.*

Surveys have repeatedly shown that people who live in poor areas, tend to condemn petty crime and benefit fraud (Dean and Taylor-Gooby 1992). However, the struggles of everyday life in a poor neighbourhood can mean that they find it difficult to live up to these values (Wilson 1987). They may therefore 'go along with', and in some cases benefit from, the criminality in the neighbourhood. This, in turn, contributes to the stigma that attaches to them and thereby compounds their isolation. Beyond this, it also gives out an ambiguous message to young people who are involved in, or may be on the threshold of, criminal involvement (Kennedy 2007).

The redistribution of crime and victimisation

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s in Britain, those people most vulnerable to criminal victimisation and those most likely to victimise them were progressively thrown together on the poorest housing estates that saw growing concentrations of children, teenagers, young single adults and young single-parent families. As a result, although crime has been dropping steadily in the UK since 1992, crime in areas of acute social deprivation has, in many cases, intensified and become far more serious (Bullock and Tilley 2003; Pitts 2003, 2008).

The Pittsburgh Youth Study analyses the lives of over 15,000 young people in the city (Wikstrom and Loeber 1997). The researchers found that offending by subjects with no, or very low, individual and familial risk factors, occurred significantly more frequently in the lowest Socio-Economic Status (SES) neighbourhoods, and that the relation between these risk factors and serious offending 'breaks down' for those living in the most disadvantaged communities. These findings challenge what Elliott Currie (1985) calls the 'fallacy of autonomy', the idea that the behaviour of individuals and their families can be separated out from the circumstances in which they live. Malcolm Gladwell (2000) states the matter succinctly when he says that, given the choice, it is far better to come from a troubled family in a good neighbourhood than a good family in a troubled neighbourhood.

The crime in these destabilised urban neighbourhoods is more likely to be youthful, violent and implosive, in that it is usually committed by, and against, local residents in general and local young people in particular. This intra-neighbourhood crime pattern is a distinguishing characteristic of high-crime areas in Britain in the 21st century (Hope 2003; Pitts 2008). Its other distinguishing feature is that these young people, being locked in a state of perpetual adolescence, do not 'grow up'. And because 'growing up', the assumption of adult roles, rights and responsibilities, usually accompanies 'growing out of crime' (Sampson and Laub 1993), they do not. So, as Graham and Bowling (1996) have suggested, they continue to perpetrate 'youth crime' into their twenties and beyond. As John Hagan (1993) has observed, pre-eminent among the factors which make for higher levels of crime in destabilised neighbourhoods is that young people who, under other circumstances, would have grown out of crime, leaving it behind with other adolescent enthusiasms, become more deeply and more seriously embedded in a criminal way of life which, with the advent of crack cocaine and the ready availability of firearms, become ever more dangerous.

In the past decade, the use of firearms in pursuance of crime has grown significantly and 2001/2002 saw a 34 per cent increase with a further 2 per cent rise recorded in 2002/2003 (Home Office RDS 2004). Bullock and Tilley (2003) in their study of gang related shootings in the Black community in south Manchester, a firearms hotspot, found that in one gang '...members (were) evenly spread from their early teens to 20s: two to four at every age between 15 and 23'. The last two decades have also witnessed a remarkable increase in the availability and use of class A drugs (e.g. heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine) with a concomitant increase in the numbers appearing in court on drug-related or drug-driven offences (Hammersley et al 2003). Just under a quarter of all the arrestees surveyed by Trevor Bennett and his colleagues (2002) had used opiates in the preceding seven days and the 9 per cent of those using more than one such 'class A' drug were responsible for 52

per cent of all offences recorded. They were also five times more likely to have committed robbery. In consequence, from the mid-1990s, certain inner-city neighbourhoods and out-of-town estates in London, Birmingham and Manchester developed the types of crime profiles only previously associated with the North American ghetto (Campbell 1993; Bullock and Tilley 2003; Pitts 2003, 2008).

From a blag to a business

Meanwhile, higher up the criminal food chain, things were also changing. In London in the 1980s, traditional organised crime, characterised by a familial organisation rooted in traditional working class parochialism began to give gave way to 'project crime', a series of temporary collaborations between specialists, in which the link between territorial control and market sovereignty was attenuated, as the neighbourhood was supplanted by the market as the major field of operation (Hobbs and Dunningham 1998). By the late 1980s, however, improved security and the erosion of the community and familial networks that supported this kind of criminality meant that this type of artisan crime was becoming less profitable and so the old time 'blaggers' turned instead to a new and far more lucrative source of easy money; drugs (Hobbs and Dunningham 1998).

But the drugs business is a business, requiring a relatively elaborate division of labour within a large workforce, which must maintain and protect the supply chain; market, package and distribute the product, protect the key players, silence would-be whistle blowers, collect debts and ensure contract compliance. Moreover, it is in the nature of the drugs business that the numbers of people needed to run and protect it will increase until the market reaches saturation point. In consequence, in this period, there was a growing demand for young people with the requisite skills and disposition to fill vacancies in this burgeoning illicit labour market. Unfortunately, as a result of structural youth unemployment, school exclusion, which peaked in the early years of the 21st century, and truancy, there was no shortage. Manuel Castells (2000) argues that the upsurge in youth homicides in the USA in the 1980s was a product of the youth gang emerging as the 'shop floor of the international drug economy'. The research undertaken by the present author suggests that this was also true in the three London research sites (Pitts 2008).

Gang structure

Drug dealing and street crime are major sources of income for some violent youth gangs in London and for many it also appeared to be the glue that held them together, generating the money that, along with the violence and their connections into organised crime, enabled them to wield such extraordinary power in their neighbourhoods. Moreover, these gangs appeared to dictate the style and promulgate the values adopted by other 'gangs' and crews for whom crime was a more sporadic or marginal activity.

In one of the London boroughs studied, the crack business was dominated by members, or close associates, of four families; some of the older members of which had been involved with the Kray Brothers in the 1960s, while others were said to have links with, or to

operate under a franchise arrangement for, the notorious Adams Family of North London. These were the *Faces*, always operating in the background, leaving the younger, higher-profile gang *Elders* to make reputations for themselves, but also to take the risks that the achievement of such notoriety involves. However, the knowledge that certain gangs were 'connected' to these families was the key to the power they are able to wield on the street. In all three boroughs, the larger gangs consisted of a hardcore of young men, *Elders*, usually in their late teens and early twenties. The *Elders* were attended by 'crews', small groups of younger boys, variously known as *'Youngers'*, *'Run-arounds'*, *'Soldiers'* or *'Sabos'* ('saboteurs'), usually aged between 14 and 17, who acted as 'foot soldiers' for the gang. To be a *Younger* is to be an unpaid apprentice or aspirant who is held there by the possibility that one day they might ascend to *Elder* status and so acquire the kudos, wealth and protection that *Elders* enjoy.

Gang *Elders* make their 'Ps' (money) from drug dealing (largely Skunk, Crack Cocaine and Heroin) which is sold on the street by *Shotters*. *Elders* are seldom involved in street robbery, which is regarded as 'petty change' and the province of the smaller, lower-status Crews. The largest gang in one South London borough also had several legitimate businesses, including a barbershop and a record label. Elders appeared to direct, or at least influence the activities of the *Youngers/Soldiers* whose responsibilities included:

- Ensuring drugs get to the *Shotters* (street dealers);
- 'Hanging out' in the neighbourhood to give early warning of a police presence;
- Patrolling the territorial boundaries of gang estates to protect them from other gangs with a 'beef';
- Collecting debts for *Faces* or *Elders*;
- Taking vengeance and making 'hits' on those who disrespect or cheat them or the *Faces* or *Elders*;
- Harassing and burgling rival dealers;
- Undertaking street crime and burglary to raise money for the *Elders*.

Gang *Youngers* may deal in drugs or collect the proceeds from drug sales but the money tends to go 'straight up' to the *Elders*. The crews of *Youngers* make most of their money from street crime, although some deal in soft drugs.

Wannabees hover on the fringes of the gang and although they may assume the trappings of street gangs, insignia, street names etc., and lay claim to territory, they are essentially unrewarded aspirants trying to gain acceptance and eventual inclusion.

Youngers and *Wannabees* may carry weapons, drugs or stolen property for the Elders, to ensure that if the Elders are stopped and searched, they will be 'clean' and that no 'forensic' is transferred by direct contact. They may also serve jail terms for them if this proves necessary.

Such is the kudos of the gangs in some neighbourhoods that children as young as seven or eight are claiming gang affiliation. Several primary schools in a North East London borough reported conflict between self-styled gang members and, from time to time, gang-affiliated youngsters from secondary schools are summoned to primary schools by their younger

brothers and sisters as reinforcements in the aftermath of an 'inter-gang' playground 'beef'. More recently, however, gang-involved young people and professionals have been talking about Tinys; children, some as young as seven or eight, who are involved on the fringes of gangs and are used to run errands and hide or carry drugs, knives or guns.

Reluctant gangsters

Some children and young people embrace gang involvement enthusiastically because it appears to offer opportunities for inclusion, success and protection in a world characterised by violent inter-group conflict. For many others, however, gang affiliation is prompted, first and foremost, by a concern for their personal safety. They can be described as 'Reluctant Gangsters'. The reasons why some reluctant young people are recruited and others not is as complex as the reasons for voluntary affiliation, but it seems that race and ethnicity, gender, family connections, reputation, and perceptions of personal attributes and style are key. However, as with 'Joes' in prisons, notionally unaffiliated young people can be asked to undertake one-off tasks for gang members, which they would be unlikely to refuse, knowing the kind of retribution that refusal was likely to incur. In 'gangland', everybody is a potential affiliate.

Alternative cognitive landscapes

James Short (1997) argues that, over time, gang-involved young people come to develop 'alternative cognitive landscapes'. He writes:

> *Mutual suspicion and concern with respect pervade the ghetto poor community. Under such circumstances social order becomes precarious ...Out of concern for being disrespected, respect is easily violated. Because status problems are mixed with extreme resource limitations, people – especially young people – exaggerate the importance of symbols, often with life-threatening consequences ... These consequences are exacerbated by the widespread belief that authorities view black life as cheap, hardly worth their attention. This view is reinforced when black-on-white crime receives more attention by authorities and by the media than does black-on-black crime. The result is that people feel thrown back on their own limited resources. They arm, take offence, and resist in ways that contribute to the cycle of violence.*

In these circumstances, Short argues; wider cultural values become unviable and these young people come to occupy, a far bleaker, 'alternative cognitive landscape', developing what is sometimes called a 'soldier mentality', characterised by a heightened sensitivity to threat and a constant preparedness for action (Sampson and Lauritson 1994). And this, as Decker and Van Winkle (1997) have demonstrated, tends to isolate gang members from the social and cultural mainstream to the extent that they can only feel at ease in the neighbourhood gang.

The changing shape of youth crime

These violent youth gangs represent something new in the sphere of crime. While most gang-involved young people are subject to the situational 'risk factors' associated with involvement in crime, for example poor housing and low income (cf Farrington 2002) many have few of the personal and familial risk factors that are conventionally associated with youth offending. Whereas, traditionally, youth or juvenile crime has been regarded as a phase through which children and adolescents will pass, many gangs now span a twenty year age range and gang-involved young people are tending not to grow out of crime.

Indeed, the reverse is true, because the violent gang represents a unique convergence of organised crime with street corner crime, it presents some young people with a criminal career path which could lead them on to the higher echelons of international organised crime. Its other unique feature is the control it is able to wield over the children, young people and adults in those areas in which it operates. Bourdieu speaks of *'habitus'*, by which he means a system of *'durable and transposable dispositions (lasting and acquired schemes of perception), thought and action'*. He argues that in any given social situation the individual develops these dispositions in response to the determining structures (such as class, family, and education) and the external conditions (fields) they encounter. They are therefore neither wholly voluntary nor wholly involuntary. The habitus provides the practical skills and dispositions necessary to navigate within these fields and guides the choices of the individual without ever being strictly reducible to prescribed, formal rules. At the same time, the habitus is constantly remade by these navigations and choices (including the success or failure of previous actions). The field of the gang, let us call it 'gangland', is both a geographical and psychological territory (a habitus) characterised by a culture of Coercion and Conflict, Coercion and Control, where gangs shape the lives of both affiliated and unaffiliated young people, and the adults, who reside there. This culture determines what they can and cannot say, to whom they can say it, what can be done, and with whom, what individuals must do, and in some instances, who can live there and who cannot. This is territory that once belonged in the public sphere but, because it can no longer be defended has, in effect, been ceded to the gangs.

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Young People and Illicit Drug Use: differentiated experiences and policy failures

Tracy Shildrick

Young people persist in being the biggest group of consumers of illicit drugs. At times, it seems as if their engagement with illicit drugs is the 'single, most talked about, written about and broadcast about item in contemporary discourses about the state of the young in the UK' (Parker et al 1998a). The last 25 years have been perhaps some of the most eventful in respect of young people's drug use, with rates of drug use dramatically increasing. Newcombe (2007) reports that amongst young adults, lifetime prevalence of drug use has moved from around 10 per cent in the 1970s to around half during the 1990s and beyond. Young people's use of drugs has become an increasingly controversial issue in both the political and public imagination. Popular depictions of youth as and in trouble (Pearson 1983; Griffin 1993) sit easily within discussions of their drug use which mediate fears both for, and of, young people. Young people's drug use is, however, a topic that is beset with complexity and confusion because drugs have tended to incite fear and concern. Indeed, Yates (2004:271) goes so far as to suggest that 'young people's use of drugs terrifies most of adult society'. Whilst perhaps overstating the case, informed debate is all too often hampered by fear and confusion.

UK drugs policy aims to stem the harm that drugs can cause for society, individuals and their families. Melrose (2006) points to the 1980s as a period when most emphasis was placed upon harm reduction as it was recognised that increasing numbers of young people were becoming drug users. This, set in the context of concerns around HIV and AIDS, fuelled the view that drug use was becoming a threat to the health of the nation (ibid: 2006). Young people were of particular interest and concern as many believed that drug use was becoming simply another one in a long list of risks associated with the period of adolescence (Parker et al 1998a). Yet, at the same time, there is much evidence to suggest that amongst (some) young people drug use has become a more everyday, normalised feature of their day to day lives (see Parker et al 1998a). There is also evidence of a more general cultural tolerance of at least some drug use, as illustrated, by the acceptance of the drug-using revelations of David Cameron prior to his election as leader of the Conservative party (see Shildrick et al 2007). It is the purpose of this article to explore some of this complexity in the light of developments in respect of young people's drug use over the last 25 years. For reasons of space the paper concentrates upon illicit drug use, rather than legal drugs such as alcohol and tobacco.

Young people and drug prevalence

Accurate data on drug use is difficult to obtain as young people may over-claim their use of drugs (in order to impress) or under-claim the use of illicit drugs (fearful of admitting illicit behaviour). Nevertheless, researchers have developed relatively sophisticated means of

assessing drug using behaviour and many tools reveal similar findings in respect of trends in illicit drug use. The British Crime Survey (BCS) provides a useful source of data which can be used to illuminate patterns of drug use over time. It is limited, however, not least by the fact that some populations are likely to be missing or underrepresented. Newcombe (2007) points to the problems of non-response and the exclusion of groups with high rates of substance use such as prisoners and the homeless. Whilst mindful of the problems of accurately assessing the numbers of young people using particular drugs a number of broad observations can be made.

Over the last 25 years the general trend in terms of drug use has been one of increasing rates of consumption. Despite suggestions to the contrary there are still relatively large gender differences in rates of drug consumption with young men almost always using more drugs and more regularly than young women (Newcombe 2007). Overall rates of drug consumption reached their peak in the mid to late 1990s, when around half of young people admitted to using an illicit drug, although it should be borne in mind that these rates are based on life-time usage, which for some could be a one off experience. There can be no simple explanation for the general increase that took place during the 1980s and 1990s. Certainly wider availability has played a part, as has the availability of a more extensive range of drugs. New drugs such as ecstasy, relatively unheard of until the late 1980s, were introduced to the popular mainstream, via developments in respect of dance cultures (Measham et al 2001). Heroin too, became widely and easily available in certain deprived and de-industrialised areas of the UK, leading to a number of serious and damaging heroin outbreaks during the 1980s and 1990s (see Seddon 2007).

In respect of young people aged 16 to 24, the British Crime Survey (Murphy and Roe 2007) shows that 44.7 per cent of young people have used an illicit drug, with 14.3 per cent using in the last month. Cannabis remains by far the most popular drug associated with young people. It is not only the most popular drug, but also one that attracts low levels of social stigma (see Shildrick 2002). The 2006/7 BCS estimates that 20.9 per cent of young people have used this drug in the last year. Most studies show that cannabis has become increasingly accepted and normalised amongst the youth population. As Newcombe concludes 'only one indicator clearly and directly supports the (normalisation) hypothesis namely: lifetime use of any drug amongst young adults, which has been reported as over half by some recent BCS reports' (2007:36). In this sense cannabis has become 'statistically normalised'.

During the 1990s it was amphetamines which were the next most frequently consumed drugs with around 22 per cent of 16 to 29 year olds having used this drug at any time. Ecstasy gained widespread media prominence during the 1990s, although statistics suggested that this drug was constantly less popular than amphetamines (and LSD) with around five per cent of young people having tried this drug (Ramsay et al 2001). During the 1990s, ecstasy, despite lacking general appeal, managed to earn the status of the new 'demon drug', of which young people – and society at large – should be fearful (Redhead 1993). In Shildrick's (2002) research on youth cultures and illicit drug use, many respondents reported solidly anti-ecstasy views which were clearly related to the media coverage of a small number of highly publisized deaths associated with this drug. Other research has shown similar findings where some young people have absorbed some of

the more extreme messages about this drug, thus equating it with heroin and perceiving it to be strongly associated with potential death (Leeming, Hanley and Lyttle 2002). At the same time for clubbers, ecstasy became the vanguard drug of the 1990s, quickly coming to epitomise the pleasure-seeking principals of the 'chemical generation'.

During the 1990s cocaine has gained significant popularity in the recreational drug scene. In fact, it is now the second most popular drug after cannabis (Murphy and Roe 2007). This has served to shift the dynamics somewhat, in that for the first time, a Class A drug has moved into the more mainstream drug markets in terms of acceptability as well as use. Media responses to this have been different, indeed less sensationalist, than has been the case for many other increasing tends in drug consumption. Whilst there has been some salacious reporting of the negative consequences of cocaine use in respect of high profile media personalities (for example, the socialite and heiress Tara Palmer Tomkinson, who have had to publicly suffer unpleasant physical and mental effects of over indulgence in cocaine use), the general coverage of this issue has been constrained. In many respects cocaine's status as a 'drug of choice for the rich' (Durlacher 2000:7) and its continuing association with glamour and wealth may have detracted from the potential health problems with may be associated with prolonged and long-term use.

Crack cocaine and heroin are generally used by no more than one per cent of the population, although again this varies significantly according to differing localities (Parker et al 1998; Johnston et al 2000). Indeed qualitative studies have shown that in some deprived and economically impoverished localities there are few people who are untouched by the insidious effects of heroin markets and its impact on families and communities (Seddon 2007). Hence, it is this drug which has become most closely associated with economic deprivation and social exclusion, a point that will be returned to.

From the marginal to the mainstream: the normalisation of recreational drug use?

There is a long-standing association between youth sub-cultures and the use of illicit drugs, although it was 'during the 1960s that the connection between drugs and youth culture became more closely interwoven' (Blackman 1996:138). The advent of the dance scene was to cement this relationship once and for all and bring with it some significant changes in patterns of drug consumption. The dance scene had strong associations with illicit drugs and for the first time perhaps, drug use was to permeate the youth cultural mainstream rather than remaining largely at the peripheries as it had in the past. Whilst for some drug use within this culture did not appear to be extensive (Lyttle and Montange 1992), for most there was a clear recognition that, to a greater of lesser extent, the rave scene was 'underpinned by the use of ecstasy' and other illicit drugs (Merchant and MacDonald 1994:1). Certainly, statistical data would suggest that where young people affiliate themselves strongly with dance club cultures drug prevalence rates are significantly higher than for the rest of the youth population (Release 1997).

One of the alleged consequences of the widespread popularity of the club dance scene is that drug use allegedly moved from the sub-cultural into the mainstream to the

extent that some researchers suggest that illicit drug use has become normalised. The leading proponents of the normalisation theory are Howard Parker and his colleagues at the University of Manchester, although others offer support to varying degrees (South 1999; Taylor 2000; Wibberley and Price 2000). Parker et al describe their thesis most comprehensively in their book *Illegal Leisure* and suggest that:

> *The concept of normalisation has been used in many contexts but essentially it is concerned with how a 'deviant', often subcultural population or their deviant behaviour is able to be accommodated into a larger grouping or society...Normalisation in the context of recreational drug use cannot be reduced to the intuitive phrase 'it is normal for young people to take drugs'; that is both to over-simplify and overstate the case. We are concerned only with the spread of deviant activity and associated attitudes from the margins towards the centre of youth culture, where it joins many other accommodated 'deviant' activities such as excessive drinking, casual sexual encounters and daily cigarette smoking.* (1998a:152)

Drawing upon the general trend that around half of young people have tried an illicit drug, Parker et al suggest that their normalisation thesis best describes the processes and changes that have resulted in a situation where young people perceive the use of drugs to be an integral aspect of their leisure and cultural landscape. In essence, they suggest that the 1990s were remarkable because:

> *Most adolescent drug users merely fit their leisure in to busy lives and then, in turn, fit their drug use in to their leisure and 'time out' to compete alongside of sport, holidays, romance, shopping, nights out, drinking and most importantly of all having a laugh with friends.* (op cit. :57)

In the broader sense normalisation refers not only to the increasing propensity of young people to use illicit drugs, but also to the fact that young people are simply more 'drug-wise' (ibid), in so far as they are frequently in situations where they are offered drugs or are willing to consider using drugs in the future. As such, drugs are no longer deemed to be part of an unknown and unorthodox world that is alien to the majority of 'ordinary' young people, but shift into a position where they become an accepted and integral aspect of the cultures and contexts which most young people inhabit. Parker et al are keen to point out, however, that chaotic, combination drug use and daily dependent drug use of substances such as heroin form no part of their conceptualisation.

The idea that illicit drugs have become normalised is not only concerned with drug consumption, drug wisdom and drug offers, but can also refer to the ways in which drug imagery has become an integral aspect of mainstream culture. As South points out:

> *The notion that drug use has become more visible is supported by the multiplicity of references to illicit drugs that circulate in contemporary society, and the sheer volume of social activity concerned with or referring to, drugs.* (1999:7)

The normalisation thesis is not without its critics. Shiner and Newburn have suggested that claims about the 'extent and normative context of youthful drug use are exaggerated and

inaccurate' (1999:142). They argue that normalisation theory presents a picture of drug use which emphasises the normalcy of drug consumption when, in reality, the majority of young people refrain from using drugs. Ramsay and Partridge too, are sceptical of 'full blown normalisation' thesis (1999:57). Drawing upon data from the British Crime Survey they suggest that 'for a large proportion of young people illicit drug use is unusual or exceptional; offers of drugs may or may not be accepted, in short drug use is far from seeming normal or unproblematic' (ibid). Shildrick argues that the concept of 'differentiated normalisation' (2002) might be more appropriate as it allows for the ways in which different sorts of drugs might be normalized for different groups of young people. Furthermore, a differentiated approach to normalization allows for the possibility that *some* drugs might be normalized for *some* groups of young people (see Shildrick 2002, 2006). A more differentiated approach also allows room for the ways in which structural inequalities may still impact on the ways in which young people engage with, and are exposed to, illicit drugs.

Young people and 'problematic drug use': the appeal of 'poverty drugs'

The idea of drug normalisation rests on the assumption that most drug use is recreational and for the most part, unproblematic. The debate hinges upon the generally accepted distinction between recreational and problematic drug use, which asserts that young drug users can be slotted neatly into one category of the other. Those that are largely engaged in the use of cannabis, and ecstasy or amphetamines (and latterly cocaine) are generally described as recreational users and their drug use is assumed to be reasonably unproblematic and accommodated relatively simply in their everyday lives. Problematic drug use on the other hand, tends to be associated with poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion. As Neale (2006:1) points out 'social exclusion is not likely to be invoked as an explanation for university students smoking cannabis; clubbers using ecstasy at the weekend; sports people taking performance enhancing drugs; or city executives and media personalities snorting lines of cocaine'. Problematic drug use tends to be associated with economically marginal young people, living in areas which might be described as socially excluded.

Some writers have argued that this distinction is not as rigid as many writers have inferred and indeed the boundaries between recreational and problematic drug use may be less rigid and more permeable than assumed (MacDonald and Marsh 2005; Shildrick 2002). In MacDonald and Marsh's research with socially excluded young people in the North East they found that at least some young people, in areas defined by high rates of poverty and disadvantage, were 'crossing the Rubicon' which divided recreational drug use and the dependent use of heroin (MacDonald and Marsh 2002). In their research, a minority of young people were making the transition from recreational drug use to more problematic drug using behaviours. MacDonald et al (2007) use the example of Barney to illustrate the complexity of these sorts of transitions. Barney moved through a range of drug using (and non-using) experiences and transitions, from the non-use of illegal substances in late childhood, through occasional leisure based recreational drug use in his early teenage, though to daily, dependent heroin use and when they last spoke with him,

to more sporadic use of heroin (and crack cocaine) interspersed with frequent attempts at desistance. Such research is illustrative of the complicated and sometimes relatively fluid boundaries which sometimes exist between recreational use of drugs and that which may be deemed more problematic. Biographical accounts help elucidate the complexity of how such transitions are created. They are not simply the result of drug using careers that progressed incrementally from recreational use to problematic heroin use, but ones which were a complex sum of structural constraint associated with poverty, young people's personal agency and decision making, often coupled with generous helpings of (bad) luck, chance and opportunity (see Webster *et al* 2004; MacDonald and Marsh 2005). Similarly, Shildrick's research shows that for some groups of economically marginal young people the 'recreational' use of prescription tablets can also lead to problematic drug using experiences, again illustrative of the fragility of the problematic/recreational divide (2002, 2006).

It is clear that whilst the boundaries between recreational and problematic drug use may not be certain, the most problematic experiences of drug use amongst the youth population tend to be found within those groups who are economically marginalised or socially excluded. It would be a mistake to assume that drug use does not cut across social class boundaries. There can be little doubt that heroin use, for example, can be found in the more affluent classes as well as the poorer sections of society. Carnwath and Smith (2002) convincingly argue that the drug can be used with few or no ill effects in some instances. Yet, we know that heroin use can also produce massive social, economic and health problems for both users and the communities in which they live (and inevitably, of course, for society more generally). As Seddon properly concludes it is the context of such use that is significant and indeed it is the case that the 'most vital contextual factor is economic' with heroin related deaths disproportionately affecting the most deprived areas to a staggering extent' (2007:73).

Socio-economic background is extremely significant when it comes to drug use and the propensity to become involved in the more problematic side of drug use. Some drugs and patterns of drug use can be found most often in the poorest groups. Solvent abuse tends to be confined to the lower social classes and is generally found amongst those that are economically marginalised. Tyler points out that solvents are widely used by young people in their early teenage years, most often young people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds (1985) with approximately 10 per cent of young people claiming that they have used solvents at least once (Beinart et al 2002). There is now an increasing body of evidence which notes that where young people are caught up in street based youth culture(s) they are very likely to come into contact with illicit drugs. Pavis and Cunningham-Burley have suggested that drug use is neither 'marginal nor peripheral to street youth culture' (1999:13). Collision suggests that whilst drugs are generally widely available, 'some locations are saturated with them and in these locales drugs take on the shape of an "ordinary" everyday commodity' (1996:433). It is for these young people that the most problematic drug careers are most likely. As with Barney, mentioned earlier, the likelihood of sustaining a drug habit without recourse to crime is unlikely for the poorest groups of young people. Whilst the links between drug use and crime may not be straightforward, dependant 'drug users need large amounts of money to support their habits and, as they are rarely able to meet these costs from legitimate sources, they need to commit crime'

(Bean 2002:7). The appeal of so called 'poverty drugs' (MacDonald and Marsh 2002) for some young people in some deprived locales and neighbourhoods who are leading difficult and marginalised lives should not be underestimated. As MacDonald et al (2007) point out it is often forgotten that drugs have pleasurable effects. It is for the poorest and most marginalised that those effects might be the most seductive and, at the same time, the most difficult to escape from.

Conclusions and some comments on policy development

This article has briefly reviewed the situation regarding young people and illicit drug use in the UK over the last 25 years. Drugs continue to occupy a complex position both in relation to young people's lives, but also in society more generally. Whilst sensitivity to the complexity of the situation would be both wise and potentially beneficial, much of the discussion tends to be dramatically polarised and frequently muddled and ill informed. On-going debates around the potential reclassification of cannabis provide a good example (it was recently reported that Gordon Brown is keen to 'push ahead' with reclassification despite repeated evidence from experts to the contrary (*The Times* 2008)). Research shows that for many young people drugs are an accepted and normal aspect of their youth cultural life worlds. Yet, at the same time, drug use for some young people inflicts serious damage on both young people's lives and that of the communities in which they reside. As Seddon rightly reminds us context is everything (2007). His comments in respect of heroin use are important ones. Whist the use of this drug may not be harmful for all it is most harmful to those who are most economically marginalised and the communities in which they live. Current government strategy lacks sensitivity to both different types of drugs and the context in which they are used. Amidst general rises in rates of drug use over the 1980s and 1990s we have seen drug policies shift from ones which are concerned with preventing drug use, through to those that are interested in harm minimisation and back to those that emphasise desistance from drug use. As Neale (2006) points out drug policy has shifted from a concern with preventing harm to the individual to one that focuses on protecting communities from the harm caused by drugs and drug users. Yet despite indications to the contrary policy on drugs appears to have limited success. As a leaked Government Strategy Unit report points out there are serious flaws in much of the current policy (see MacDonald et al 2007). Moreover, whilst policy developments continue to either downplay, or simply ignore the fact that the drug trade is a highly lucrative one, it seems that little real progress is likely to be made.

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Good Youth Work:
What Youth Workers Do, Why and How

Bryan Merton

This book describes and explains good youth work, drawing on the reflective practice of those who do it. It is aimed at practitioners and managers of youth work, wherever it is located, and at policy-makers and commissioners who may want to know more about the work they support.

By examining what good youth workers do it hopes to make youth work practice explicit, visible and comprehensive; and thereby reveal its complexities, nuances and the different kinds of knowledge, skill, resource and insight that youth workers draw on in their everyday work. In doing so, author Bryan Merton draws on his many years of experience to illuminate what tends to be obscured by the phrase 'the youth work approach' and show how youth workers operate with sometimes very challenging young people in often difficult circumstances.

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The National Youth Agency
Getting it right for young people

Young people and leisure

Ken Roberts

This paper explains how Britain's 'traditional' youth services originally designed for 14-20 year olds have lost their centrality in most young people's leisure. Consumer-based youth cultures have now been central in most young people's leisure for over half a century, and young singles now remain part of these scenes until their late-20s or 30s. Nevertheless, traditional youth services still work successfully with the under-15s. These services have been less successful in addressing social exclusion because leisure provisions can be no more than part of an answer. However, it is argued that since the 1950s there has been a life stage gap between young people outgrowing traditional youth services and being able to access the full range of adult commercial provisions. The paper argues that this gap could be filled, and all young people offered additional options to those provided by commerce, through an imaginative fusion between sports/leisure centres-plus and higher education student unions.

1939-1970s

The Youth Service during and before the Second World War

Young people's leisure during the last 25 years needs to be set in a longer historical context, especially if a focus is on government policies. Britain acquired a national youth service only during the Second World War (see Evans 1965). Previously local education authorities (LEAs) had been allowed (under permissive legislation) to support other youth organisations and to make their own provisions for young people's leisure. With the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 all this was made into an obligation, which was confirmed in the 1944 Education Act. At that time the youth service was for 14-20 year olds, and in the UK the term 'youth' has remained firmly associated with this particular age group. It is different in other countries, and the underlying conditions have changed in Britain, but for most people in Britain 'youths' are still within the 14-20 age group. Up to and throughout the Second World War, 14 was the statutory and the normal school-leaving age in Britain. Even at grammar schools most pupils left at age 16. Less than 3 percent of young people progressed into universities. Thus the youth service was deemed responsible for catering for young people's leisure between their leaving full-time education and settling into adult roles, which they were assumed to do at or soon after age 21.

The youth service at that time comprised uniformed, church-based and other voluntary groups that received state support via LEAs, plus social youth clubs (often based in schools) that LEAs themselves organised. Youth workers were mostly part-time, and many were unpaid volunteers, but full-time professionals were also appointed. Thus youth work became a recognised profession with its own forms of training and qualifications. The youth service of that era remains a marker against which the profession and others tend to benchmark everything that has happened since.

Prior to and during the Second World War the youth service was a prominent provider of organised out-of-home leisure for young people. Although no-one realised this at that time, this was the youth service's historical high point. The service never reached all young people. The 'unclubbables' were a recognised problem group from the 1920s onwards. Even so, the service was a major provider. Young people's access to commercial leisure was limited. Between the world wars, youth unemployment was a serious problem in many parts of Britain. Young people's jobs, when obtained, were typically juvenile jobs paying juvenile wages. The cinema and the dance palais became popular places for young people to go between the world wars. Flying and driving were also new recreations, but only for the better-off. At that time the radio, the gramophone and the piano were items of lounge furniture whose use was controlled by adults. Homes (typically rented terraced houses) were not attractive leisure centres for young people. The youth service was the main alternative to 'hanging about' on the streets or in local parks where young people were deemed to be 'at risk'. Compared with the alternatives, youth clubs which offered some combination of sports, music and dancing, crafts and hobbies, were beacons of opportunity.

Post-war youth affluence

During the 1950s the youth service lost its earlier prominence in young people's leisure lives. This was basically due to the improved post-war labour market conditions. Full employment was achieved and maintained in most parts of Britain. There was a strong demand for youth labour. The old juvenile jobs and wages disappeared. Youth wages rose more rapidly than adult earnings. Young workers were usually treated generously by their families. Parents knew that, 'You're only young once' and tended to 'spoil' their offspring in the sense that young people were left with the greater part of their earnings to spend on themselves. Parents still tend to behave in this way and even the poorest households tried to ensure that their own teenage children are not deprived of normal teenage leisure (see West et al, 2006). Thus from the 1950s commerce began to target the affluent young consumer with music, appropriate forms of transport (motor bikes and scooters), and fashions. During the 1950s most households installed television sets which kept adults 'in'. Thus cinema audiences, and football crowds also, became increasingly young. A series of new 'types' of young people appeared: teddy boys, rockers, mods and skinheads. Young people's leisure was spinning out of adult control, even adult comprehension. In 1960 the Albemarle Report concluded that traditional youth clubs, meeting in draughty church halls, were unable to compete with the glitzy world of commerce.

Youth clubs and uniformed organisations responded by targeting children, anticipating a later trend in which youth has been extended downwards into childhood as youth fashions and pop music have been created for and marketed at the pre-teens. In 1969 a report of the Youth Service Development Council advocated that future provisions for the over-16s should be via general, all-age community organisations (arts and sports organisations, for example). By 1979 Tony Jeffs was arguing that the youth service, as known up to then, should be allowed to die a natural death, but this prognosis was unnecessarily pessimistic.

1970s

Youth unemployment and social exclusion

During the 1970s the youth service found a new mission, or at any rate, was given a new mission by governments. Mass youth unemployment returned to Britain. Since the 1970s and 80s levels of youth unemployment in Britain have subsided, but this is not because youth employment has recovered. Most of the jobs that 15 and 16 year olds entered from the 1940s through the 1960s have been lost to de-industrialisation, occupational and economic restructuring, competition from married women returners, immigrants, and students seeking part-time and/or temporary jobs.

The response of mainstream youth has been to prolong their education. Staying-on at school or in a further education college has proved more popular than the successive training schemes that were introduced as alternatives in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Today over 70 percent of 16 year olds continue in full-time education, around a third of young people progress into higher education, and the government aims to raise this figure still further to at least a half. Young people in Britain now pass age 21 before a half of them have left full-time education and obtained full-time jobs (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2000). In this respect, today's young people make slow progress towards full adulthood compared with earlier cohorts of young people, but British youth still progress rapidly into employment compared with the pace at which young people in most European countries make this transition.

Young people who extend their education have maintained and, indeed, have often boosted their spending on leisure with money received from parents, earnings in part-time jobs, and debt in the form of government student loans and other loans by commercial providers. These young people have been deferring marriage and parenthood and typically remain part of young singles scenes until their late-20s or 30s. Their youth life stage has thereby been elongated upwards, and the young singles have become a larger, more attractive (to commerce) consumer market segment. City centres throughout Britain have been undergoing 'studentification'. City centre entertainment (and night-time economies in particular) are geared to students and other young singles. However, substantial numbers of young people have been left out of these developments.

Educational attainments by Britain's young people have improved steadily since the 1970s, and in the process a tail of low achievers has fallen further and further behind. Some young people disengage from schooling long before they reach the statutory school-leaving age (16 in Britain since 1972, but there are government proposals to make education compulsory up to age 18). Already pupils truant in substantial numbers in their final years of compulsory schooling and when they attend school these young people appear to learn precious little. Around a fifth of young people leave education without acquiring the standards of basic numeracy and literacy that are now required to handle everyday life (and virtually any job) (see Bynner and Parsons 2001). Beyond age 16 these young people may do 'odd jobs', often 'fiddly jobs' (off-the-record). They are most likely to enter and exit training schemes without moving up the labour market. Typically these young people are from neighbourhoods with high levels of adult unemployment, and where many families depend on state benefits. Often the young people attend low achieving schools (so-called

'sink schools'). They hang about in their neighbourhoods, 'at risk' of various kinds of trouble – with the law, problem drug use, and (for girls) teenage pregnancy (see Shildrick and MacDonald 2006). They closely resemble the 14-20 year olds for whom traditional youth services were designed before the Second World War. However, out-of-school unemployed 14-20 year olds are now a minority within their age group.

Teenage motherhood is actually far less common in Britain today than in the 1950s, but the present-day teenage mother is less likely to be partnered and in a financially independent relationship. The young women know all about contraception and abortion, but pregnancy is not the worst fate that could befall them. It provides a reliable route to adult status, integration into extended family and neighbourhood networks, and often access to independent (council) housing as well (see McDermott and Graham 2005).

Youth workers have been briefed to engage with 'at risk' youth. Nowadays the risks are summarised as 'social exclusion'. These youth workers are likely to operate 'on the street', in young people's places, wherever these might be, but they may well have bases in youth clubs, colleges, sports or community centres. Sometimes they operate as members of youth justice teams. Sometimes they are attached to the Connexions Service that was created in 2001 with the priority task of engaging the NEET group (young people not in education, employment or training). The leisure offer is likely to include sport and possibly adventure experiences.

Does leisure succeed as a way of including the otherwise excluded? Some assessments are enthusiastic (see, for example, Department for Culture, Media and Sport 1999). However, academic reviews all conclude that the evidence, at best, is inconclusive (see Centre for Leisure and Sport Research 2002; Coalter et al 2000). Follow-up evidence from the 1970 birth cohort has shown that teenage membership of sports, church and community groups in the 1980s reduced risks of social exclusion at age 30, but teenage membership of youth clubs actually increased the risks of adult exclusion (Feinstein et al 2006). What appears to matter most is the kind of associates who at risk youth acquire through participation. Leisure settings that congregate at risk youth together appear to amplify the risks (see also Skogen and Wichstrom 1996). Settings that integrate those at risk with mainstream youth have positive outcomes. A problem, needless to say, is that mainstream youth and their parents typically want to avoid contact with young people who are associated with trouble. The door policies of commercial leisure businesses (pubs and clubs, for example), often exclude 'undesirables'. In principle, most people may support the idea of including the excluded, but 'not in my backyard'.

Mainstream youth cultures: the middle class takeover

In the 1950s all the post-war youth cultures, and therefore being 'on scene', had strong working class associations (see Hall and Jefferson 1976; Sugarman 1967). This changed during the 1960s, most visibly in Britain's universities, which became sources of rock musicians such as Mick Jagger. Pop music replaced jazz in student unions, hippies swarmed around, and student protests – against 'the bomb', then the war (in Vietnam), and then against the entire oppressive capitalist system – brought some campuses to a standstill.

Through student cultures alcohol and drugs were mainstreamed into youth scenes.

Young people in full-time education have always been leisure-privileged. They may have lower incomes than same-aged workers, but they have access to subsidised leisure facilities, and crowds of same-aged peers among whom people with similar tastes and passions – for a sport, an art form, politics, religion or whatever – can find one another. Students are the most leisure-active section of the entire population, and since the 1960s they have become the most active young people in all kinds of leisure, leading the cultural transformation of the middle classes from highbrow to omnivore.

Since the 1960s pop music genres and youth fashions have multiplied. No artists now achieve such widespread appeal as The Beatles or Elvis. No fashion exerts the pull of blue jeans 30-40 years ago. Hair can now be worn long, medium or close cropped, by males and females alike. The splintering of music scenes has been facilitated by changes in the technologies for producing and distributing recorded music, and the increased number of radio channels. According to some youth sociologists, since the 1960s we have entered a post-subcultural age (in former times youth subcultures were believed to be 'subs' of class cultures) (see Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004). Some youth cultures retain definite class associations: chavs or charvers, for example, whose bling, trainers, track suits and Burberry express the same pride in their own backgrounds and contempt for their supposed betters that was achieved by teddy boys in the 1950s (see Nayak 2006). However, most youth cultures no longer map onto class or any other social divisions in any obvious way. Some young people (a minority) align themselves with particular scenes and styles (goth, punk or rap, for example), but most pick-and-mix in ways that allow them to express their individuality (see Miles 2000). Alongside these developments, class differences in young people's leisure preferences and activities have become blurred (see Roberts and Parsell 1994). Gender differences have also narrowed (see Sweeting and West 2003). Britain's transformation into a multi-cultural society has added further to the variety of cultural production and consumption.

Mainstream youth listen to popular music (many types), participate enthusiastically in the night-time economies, play sport and travel. They know what they like, and they pay to be served. Youth work (as hitherto understood) has no place in their lives. Expert coaches and entrepreneurs in popular and more specialist arts, sports, travel and other leisure fields have replaced youth workers.

Moral panics

One set of youth workers is now briefed to draw excluded youth into the mainstream. Meanwhile, another set of experts warns that the leisure of mainstream youth involves unacceptable risks for their own the wider society's future:

- Sex: too much unsafe sex, exposing young people to the risk of contacting AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (see British Medical Association 2003);
- Obesity: due to a combination of too much eating, unhealthy eating, and too little exercise. The standard prescription is that young people should play more sport, but

young people's sport participation has been monitored repeatedly since the early-1990s, and the findings have shown that most young people play a lot of sport, and more than before on each occasion when they have been surveyed. Even so, government spokespersons insist that young people are still not playing enough (see Sport England 2003);
- Alcohol: too much underage drinking, and too much bingeing by the over-18s;
- Tobacco: smoking is continuing to decline, but take-up by young people is still a cause for concern;
- Drugs: recreational use, which has now been normalised (see Parker et al 2002), is said to entail known and unknown long-term health risk;
- Hooliganism: at sports events and in other places;
- Gambling: in arcades, casinos and online, which can be harmless fun, but there are risks of 'problem gambling';
- New technologies: exposure to inappropriate material on TV, videos/DVDs and the internet, and to the dangers of 'grooming' in chatrooms;
- Active citizenship: said to be far too rare.

In response to these alleged dangers, a 'new authoritarianism' has entered policies towards young people's leisure (Jeffs and Smith 1995). Young people are subjected to unprecedented surveillance by CCTV. They are addressed by a host of new experts: citizenship educators, health educators, drug educators, sex educators, and dieticians. They are bombarded through TV and cinema adverts about the dangers of the misuse of alcohol, and any use of tobacco and drugs. Food packages warn consumers that the contents may be too salty or too fatty for their long-term good. Alcohol cans and bottles inform drinkers about the number of units that they are imbibing. Tobacco packaging blares the message that the product kills.

Most of the propaganda is ineffective. It assumes that young people are ignorant whereas in practice most are knowledgeable about the risks associated with sex, drugs, alcohol, etc. They also know that 'risk is a part of life', that totally safe, predictable, hygienic leisure can soon become boring, and that risk creates 'buzz', excitement. Moreover, young people insist that they not only know about but also are in control of all the risks that they run. Most young motor cyclists believe that their road skills outweigh the risks. Most drug users insist that they will not become dependent (or mad). Young drinkers claim to know their own limits (see Bellaby and Lawrenson 2001; Lupton and Tulloch 2002). Nevertheless, 'wars' continue to be waged against young people's drug and alcohol abuse, and couch potato lifestyles.

Youth work: the service that refuses to die

The resilience of traditional youth work

As far as we can tell from surveys from the 1930s onwards, sometimes national and otherwise in particular localities in Britain, rates of participation in traditional youth clubs and organisations have not declined. Most young people have been and are still 'in contact' at some point in their lives, usually before age 16 since the 1940s, after which sport is the kind of organised leisure in which young people (especially males) are most likely to

be involved (see Department for Education 1995). Maybe most traditional youth work is now with the under-15s rather than the over-14s, but it still appears to meet a need at a particular stage in young people's social and psychological development. Traditional youth work was invented in Britain, and the original formulas still work, albeit with pre-teens and young teens rather than the 14-plus age group. The success of these social inventions should be a cause for celebration. Traditional youth work still inspires thousand of volunteers. Even if 'left alone' this type of youth work will not die but will continue to flourish.

An unfilled gap and unmet demands

The developmental stages through which young people's leisure progresses do not appear to have changed since the 1930s. In childhood leisure is adult-led. Subsequently it becomes peer group based, and it is then that young people are most likely to join traditional youth organisations. Subsequently leisure shifts towards commercial facilities (see Hendry et al 2002). After the Second World War, teenage affluence appears to have been a catalyst that led to an acceleration in young people's development, and a gap opened (a gap that still exists today) between young people feeling that they have outgrown youth clubs (which are said to be for kids) and being able to access commercial facilities either because of the cost or simply their exclusion by age (from pubs and late-night music clubs, for example) (see Jephcott 1967; Leigh 1971; and the comparable evidence in Hendry et al 2002). During this 'gap' period, much of young people's leisure time has been, and is still, spent just 'hanging around', complaining of boredom and lack of things to do. Meanwhile, young people's presence in groups on the streets, in town centres or in parks, is experienced as a nuisance, even threatening, by many adults

Britain's children and young people seem to be treated badly compared with the treatment of the age groups in comparable countries. In 2007 a UNICEF report placed the UK at the bottom among 19 European countries plus the USA and Canada in terms of children's and young people's well-being. There is scope to dispute some of the indicators used in this report, but whatever the indicators – material or subjective well-being, health and safety, family and peer relationships, for example – the UK was close to or at the very bottom of the league. *Youth Matters*, a 2005 report from the Department for Education and Skills, recognised the need to make it easier for young people to take part in 'positive activities'. How to deliver? Other countries seem to be more successful. Generally these other countries have less competitive, less exam-ridden education systems, higher retention rates after age 16, and teenagers have less spending money and the exposure to commercial consumer cultures that comes with it. Maybe an answer for the UK would be to find ways of offering all young people the kind of facilities routinely made available for students in higher education. All young people need opportunities to be 'members' and 'citizens' as well as consumers. Sport is the obvious base for provisions for the 14-plus age groups. Most young people are keen on sport, and there is now little difference in participation rates in indoor sports between males and females. Sport/leisure centres-plus, with facilities for the arts, meetings and spaces with catering to just 'hang around', with the student union as the management model, and transport with the American school bus as the model, might render redundant, or reduce the need for, special efforts to reach excluded youth.

After age 16, even before in Britain, there is no sensible alternative but to recognise that young people have become active consumers. They can be offered information and opportunities, but young people themselves will decide how to use their leisure on the basis of their own assessments of the risks and benefits that participation in different activities confers. Young people will make their own choices, but in part of their leisure they will want the experience of membership and the opportunity to simply 'hang around' as ordinary citizens. There is more to leisure in all age groups than playing the commercial consumer role. Britain has still not discovered how to offer all young people the full range of leisure opportunities. This full range still remains a privilege for, but it need not remain confined to, those young people who remain in full-time education into their 20s.

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Housing policy for young people: constructions and contradictions

Mike Seal

Since its inception, housing policy in the United Kingdom has been determined by the dominant political philosophy of the time. (Balchin and Rhoden, 1997:1)

Several questions arose for me when I was asked to write this paper on the development of housing policy for young people. The argument I present, following Balchin and Rhoden(1997), is that housing policy in general has been determined by the dominant, often political, discourse of the time. I will contend that these discourses, with regards to young people, have been informed by two factors; first social constructions of young people and second by changing economic conditions and demands on young people as a workforce.

I will contend these constructions have focused on the concept of young people leaving home, seeing this process variably as the loss or gain of economic income for the family, as a transition to a new economic unit, as a cultural transition and finally as a pathway to adulthood. The housing policies that have responded to these constructions of young people have, in turn also been inconsistent and contradictory, leaving many young people today in a precarious position with regards to housing

This article will focus on the last 25 years. However I think it is important to examine briefly what went before, as earlier constructions often inform more modern counterparts, making them conflictual and contradictory. Balchin describes how, prior to the First World War, and particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century, housing policy was dominated by a laissez-faire economic approach. In terms of 'leaving home', Hareven and Adams (2003) note a similar laissez faire approach with children being seen, even by the families, as an economic asset with a duty to look after the parents, often living with them even after marriage.

Towards the second half of the nineteenth century such laissez faire views were challenged. There was a concern with the plight and living conditions of the poor. However, Pelham et al (1997) note how the policies tended to be harsh, accompanied by social ostracism of the group and were underpinned by an attitude that blamed poor people for their situation. The slum clearance and temporary accommodation acts of the time were largely ineffectual because rate payers were reluctant to spend money and slums were often on prime land. Specific provision for young people was negligible, as they continued to live with their families.

After the First World War time attitudes towards housing, and public housing in particular, underwent a philosophical sea change. Addison, who brought in the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919, established the principle of public house building, to a high

standard, as a duty of local authorities. Post 1945 housing policy accelerated this process dramatically. This was the result of a number of factors including the need to replace bombed and damaged housing, to replace worn out stock and to meet the general needs of the population, which increased by a million over this period. Together with a change of political regime, preferring a Keynesian economic policy over a laissez faire approach, this post war period was the 'golden' era of public house-building. (Balchin and Rhoden,1997). However, young people were still not really taken account of. In his first Housing Bill in 1947, Bevan strongly emphasised public housing being for families, and that it was not to be targeted at perceived marginalised groups, including young people.

Modern constructions and constrictions: 1979-1996

The post war consensus on housing was broken sharply by the Conservative administration of 1979-1997. They sought to 'reinvigorate the private sector' .The 1980 Housing Act and subsequent legislation severely reduced housing subsidies, by 50 per cent in real terms between 1979-1996, and introduced the tenants' right to buy council housing. However, local authorities were not allowed to spend the capital receipts from these sales on new housing. Local authority house building plummeted from 107, 000 in 1978 to 37,000 in 1996. At the same time the 1980 Act deregulated private housing, introducing short-hold tenancies and broke the link between fair and regulated rents, in favour of market rents. While there were sporadic attempts to invest money in the private sector, their attempts at re-invigoration were largely in the form of 'freeing up the market' and offering tax cuts for investors. At the same time the government decreased the availability of renovation grants for the private sector. All this resulted in large increases in rent in the private sector, three fold in terms of rent controlled properties whilst overall in the period 1980-1996 that stock tended to be of poor quality often lacking basic amenities (Balchin and Rhoden, 1997).

At the same time as this severe constriction in supply, as Jones and Bell note most housing policy in relation to young people continued to be based on the premise that single young people would remain in the parental home as dependants until they could afford to leave it and compete as 'newly formed families in the adult housing market'. For there was

> *little policy recognition that young people might need to live independently of their parents. The idea of the family home as a continuing resource and a safety net was an example of the dependency assumption.* (Jones and Bell, 2000: 24)

Such policies had also not kept up with changes in the labour market, which necessitated single young people having to move away, or leave 'home' for protracted periods of time in order to function in this changed economic climate. To compound this during the recession in the 1980s youth unemployment rose massively. The government response resulted in legislation and control, starting with schemes such as YTS (Youth Training Schemes) and YOP (Youth Opportunities Programme) which developed into the New Deal. Unemployed young people aged 16 to 18 and subsequently 18 to 25, had to participate in such schemes, or they received no benefits. Rugg notes how these and similar social policy changes were instituted for young people 'with only minimal recognition of the need to understand how these will interact with their ability to secure housing' (1999:12).

The example of the homelessness legislation is an interesting case in point as it represents a twist of how young people and their leaving home processes are constructed. Homeless legislation was first brought in at the end of the Labour regime in 1977, and further legislation was introduced in 1985, 1996 and finally in 2002. (I will return to this legislation at a later stage in the article.) It is interesting legislation because it recognised that some vulnerable groups in society should have priority access to public housing, and that the local authority had a duty to house people temporarily until permanent accommodation could be found. However, there were qualifiers in the legislation with intriguing constructions about young people. One such is that the person needs to be 'priority need', and while this includes people with dependant children as a specific group, young people as homeless applicants were not included within the priority need group. As an inquiry in 1996 states:

> *The underlying assumption is that young people without dependants are not vulnerable and can fend for themselves. This view is reflected in both the types of housing provided by the public sector and the access rules and priorities that public landlords apply.* (Evans, 1996: 2)

Another provision within the Act is that the person has to be not 'intentionally' homeless, that is they did not deliberately make themselves homeless in order to access public housing. Underpinning this provision is the assumption of collusion between parents and young people taking advantage of the provisions of the legislation. The old myth of a young woman getting pregnant to get housing is contained within this construction as to do so would overcome the 'priority need' barrier. These perceptions that young homeless people and homeless people in general, were jumping the queue for public housing, resulted in the 1996 Housing Act taking the right to guaranteed public housing away from applicants altogether, to be replaced with a duty to provide two years' temporary accommodation (Balchin and Rhoden, 1997). We again have the return of laissez faire constructions that the poor and vulnerable are responsible for their predicament with the added notion that they are cheats and exploitative.

This return of laissez faire constructions permeated other aspects of housing. Kemp et al (1994) notes that during the Thatcher and Major Governments main policy initiatives sought to reduce youth homelessness via the reduction or withdrawal of benefits seen by policy makers as 'incentives' to leave home. This is despite compelling evidence, as we shall see later, that young people leave home largely for 'push' factors such as family breakdown (Centrepoint, 2006; McNorton, 2008). However, this was not a simple return to laissez faire ideologies. A compounding factor for these constructions could be that young people were breaking the aforementioned traditional 'transitional' model of acquiring adulthood (Jeffs and Smith,1999), whereby 'those who postpone life decisions typical for adulthood, such as taking a steady job or building a family' (du Bois-Reymond, 1995: 79) are perceived as less than adult, less than mature. Whatever the rationale in the 1980s and 1990s a series of policy changes were implemented with the explicit aim of keeping young people at home, and punishing those who left. For example:

Social Security benefits – in 1984 age discrimination was introduced. Those under 25 were entitled to lower levels of benefit than those over 25. The Green Paper's rationale at the time related this to housing and household responsibility. It was explicit in its view that

young people were, and should, remain at home.

Board and Lodgings regulations – in 1985 financial help given to young people living in board and lodgings was restricted: time limits were imposed and rent ceilings introduced for the under-25s. In 1989, new rules were introduced, except for those living in hostels, boarders could claim housing benefit only for accommodation costs. Other costs would have to be met from benefits. Grants for rent deposits were removed and replaced by more restrictive Social Fund provisions.

Exceptional Needs Payments – which could provide additional help (e.g. for furniture and equipment) for those in receipt of welfare, were abolished in 1987 and replaced (in theory) by loans from the Social Fund with priority going to those leaving institutional care of which there were substantial numbers due to the closure of mental health institutions

Housing Benefit – in 1988 student eligibility for housing benefit was restricted and in 1990 it was withdrawn altogether. This culminated in the adoption of single room rents in 1996. For most people under-25 eligible housing benefit was henceforth capped at the average market rent for a room in a shared property, regardless of housing circumstance.

The consequences of these assumptions are noted by Jones and Bell

> *These policies resulted in an extension of dependency among young people able to continue to live in the parental home, and an increase in the vulnerability of those who have left it. The consequence was not to prevent young people from leaving home, only to make the process more difficult. If anything, the risk of homelessness was increased.* (Jones and Bell, 2000: 12)

A pertinent example of a policy that was designed to ameliorate some of these contradictions, but which some argue have exacerbated them, is the development of foyers. The idea of foyers was based on the existing French *foyers pour jeunes travailleurs* (hostels for young workers). The concept is to combine accommodation with training and support for young people. Foyers were seen as a possible model for tackling the dual problems of youth unemployment and homelessness. In 1992, a pilot project was set up in Britain to develop foyers, consisting of five existing YMCAs, and two new purpose built foyers being developed by housing associations (Anderson and Quilgars, 1995).

Gilchrist and Jeffs (1995) argue that the foyer model ignores young people's aspirations for independent living and institutionalises residents in a model of tied housing reminiscent of the aforementioned 19th-century workhouses. Furthermore in linking shelter to employment, foyers they suggest provide only for those young people willing and able to work or participate in training schemes, thereby excluding those in greatest need. Similar conclusions have been drawn by other authors (Chatrick,1994) who also notes that many young people are negative about government training schemes. Gilchrist and Jeffs (1995) have also argued that such separatist provisions have the consequence, not of integrating young people into the mainstream community, but of marginalising and stigmatising them. Indeed most subsequent reports on foyers have found that the most needy are often not deemed suitable for such accommodation. (Maginn et al, 2000; Smith, 2004). Other

research focuses on the uncritical acceptance of agencies in adopting this model, and that hostels or supported independent accommodation could fulfill the support needs of young people in their transition to adult life more adequately than foyers (Fitzpatrick et al, 2000; Smith, 2004). However much of the criticism may have failed to take full account of the ways in which foyers have learnt from experience and developed. Nevertheless, the central point is that these schemes have a particular construction about how young people are to make housing transitions, how this relates to their economic status, and how this is to be controlled.

1996 onwards: all change?

New Labour promised radical changes in housing policy. These included stopping the pressure to transfer council houses to housing associations; to release capital receipts so that councils could build more houses; to undertake a major programme of repair and improvement to public housing; and to build sufficient affordable housing so as to drastically reduce homelessness (www.labourpolicywatch.com).

In fact under New Labour it has been a mixed picture. King (2005) argues that they in fact adopted and extended many of the housing policies of the previous Conservative regime, as well as their market orientated economic policies. Indeed, the emphasis has been on encouraging investment from the private sector, subsidized through housing benefit, instead of direct investment in the building of public housing, an approach Stanley (2006), traces back to the approach of the Conservative minister Nicholas Ridley.

Pressure to transfer council housing to housing association has continued with a target of 200,000 homes transferred per year. Most of the capital receipts still cannot be used for new council housing, which in 2002 was being built at a lower rate than ten years previously (CIH, 2002). The Barker Review (2006) showed that the private sector has singularly failed to make up the gap vacated by public house building, In 2006 100,000 households were living in temporary accommodation and more than 1.5 million households were on council house waiting lists. Stanley also notes the social and economic impact of the residualisation of most of the public housing. The lack of capital investment in new and existing social housing, combined with the loss of the best stock to right-to-buy sales, means that now only the very poor live in public housing – a marked contrast with the vision of Bevan in 1947. This has led to the social exclusion debate and the rise of a whole new policy agenda focused on tackling concentrated deprivation.

Repairs have been tackled to a degree, and investment in social housing has increased; indeed this has almost doubled since 1997. However, release of capital receipts and new investment has often been made conditional on the transfer of public housing out of council control. This has meant that people on low incomes face higher rents in the part-privately financed housing association sector and even higher rents in the deregulated private rented sector and temporary accommodation, creating dependency on housing benefit (Stanley, 2006).

In terms of the more vulnerable, while the number of homeless households has risen sharply

since 1997, the numbers sleeping rough has been severely curtailed. The Homelessness Act 2002 extended the categories of priority need, recognising young people aged 16-17 as a priority need category and placed a new duty on local authorities to develop a homelessness strategy, including taking account of the needs of young people. In April 2003 the government launched the Supporting People Initiative aimed at 'providing housing related support services' to those leaving, or in danger of entering, institutional care. Billions have been spent on the programme with young people 'at risk' being seen as a particular target.

In spite of this, housing policy for young people continues to be underpinned by conflicting constructions of young people. The ODPM's 2005 policy document' *Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes; Changing Lives* placed prevention centre stage in the approach to reducing homelessness. Local authorities are now expected to try to help people to avoid becoming homeless through prevention services, rather than just processing their application under the homelessness legislation. However there are concerns about this approach. Ames notes that

> *agencies working with homeless people have expressed concern that homelessness prevention schemes can be a form of gatekeeping, by which they mean that people are prevented from accessing services.* (Ames, 2007: 8)

For example, in October 2006 the Local Government Ombudsman found 'maladministration causing injustice' following a complaint against Thurrock Council. He stressed that the focus on prevention of homelessness 'should not lead councils to adopt a "gate-keeping approach" – meaning they refuse to take homelessness applications from people who may be eligible for help' (Homeless Link, 2008:).

The Department for Communities and Local Government sees family mediation services as the main plank of service provision for young people. In its aims for such services it states that mediation services can help support young people to remain at home or return home, but also that the service must ensure 'that false claims of homelessness or abuse are not made to secure a tenancy' (DCLG, 2006: 8). While it does qualify the latter saying that services also need to respond where young people are genuinely either homeless or at risk of homelessness there are echoes of the 1977 legislation's constructions of false claims and the need for young people to return home.

Another significant factor has been the increase in the number of full-time students, with an average increase of 138 per cent between the 1988/89 and 1998/99 academic years. This has increased since and the government still has a target of having 50 per cent of people in university education by 2012. Yet, minimal attention has been given to housing the growing student population. A Joseph Rowntree report in 2000 (Rugg et al,2000) found that accommodation provision has not grown in line with their expansion in student numbers leading to an increased reliance on the private market. Increased demand has resulted in the establishment of 'niche' student markets. They found that 'most students were living in particular types of property, in geographically specific neighbourhoods, and renting from landlords who would be unwilling to let to other groups' (Rugg et al, 2000: 2). The report found that 'student landlords' preferred letting to students because of higher returns from a shared student household. In addition, they tended to regard students as reliable tenants.

Such perceptions are still pertinent today with a recent housing industry report seeing student accommodation as a lucrative market. They found this sometimes led to oversupply, leading to empty properties because either landlords are reluctant to let to other groups, or potential tenants do not want accommodation in 'student areas'. Higher Education Institutions cited occasions where local residents were unhappy about the impact of student 'ghettoisation' on local amenities with locals feeling marginalised to the extent that they had formed residents' groups to represent their concerns to the to the local colleges and universities and the local authority. Yet Higher Education Institutions, and government, have not been strategic about the issues with the former responding

> *to increased student numbers in an ad hoc way depending on their individual budgetary circumstances, student welfare priorities, the opportunity for physical expansion within their area, and the extent to which they are in competition with other HEIs to recruit students.* (Rugg et al, 2000:14)

In some locations prospective owner-occupiers and first-time buyers in particular have been priced out of the market whilst some wealthier parents have made a profit from buying their sons and daughter a property while at college. Figures from the Halifax in 2004 revealed that parents who invested in Bath five years previously would have seen their investment grow on average by 156 per cent, in Sheffield 133 per cent and in York 130 per cent. While the downturn in house prices will no doubt have an impact on these profits, it shows a growing economic and class division in relation to student debt.

How do young people leave home and obtain housing?

We have examined the social constructions about how young people leave home. This begs the question of what pathways young people actually go down to obtain housing. Rugg (1999), analyzing the SEH (Survey of English Housing) data for 1996/7, found that 59 per cent of young people still lived at home. However, within this grouping there are marked differences in gender balances with 50 per cent women leaving home, but only 33 per cent of men, In terms of age 99 per cent of 16 year olds are still living at home, 67 per cent of 21 year olds and only 34 per cent of 25 year olds. Those who leave at 16 tend to do so because of disputes at home, those who leave home at 18 are bound for university and late leavers tend to do so to set up home with a new family (Jones,1990). Figures for the year 2006/7 are remarkably similar, apart from a growing tendency for young people not to go into public housing, or owner occupation, but the precarious private sector.

However, Jones noted class differences in patterns of leaving home, with

> *an increasing polarisation between young people who stay on in education and gain qualifications, and those who leave school at 16 or 17, risking bad jobs, low pay and unemployment.* (2002: 4)

She also noted that working class families tend to start families in their teens and leave home to form a new economic unit, while middle class families live in shared private housing until they become owner occupiers. Race was another factor, Jones noting that 'increasing

educational achievement of some minority ethnic groups does not seem to be resulting in the expected dividends for them in terms of work and pay' (Jones: 2002 p 4), which subsequently impacts on their realistic short and long term housing options. She noted similar outcomes in terms of class, even those working class people who were university educated, often went back home to live after university, not having got the job that could enable them to be an owner occupier. A more recent report (Allen,2006) is even starker about working class aspirations in terms of housing reporting the main consideration of many working class people was to get by from 'day to day'. They judge their housing and neighbourhood on that basis, and did not even see themselves as being on a property ladder.

Ford and Rugg (2002) identified typical pathways that young people go down to enter housing (although each is on a continuum): a chaotic pathway, an unplanned pathway, a constrained pathway, a planned (non-student) pathway and a student pathway. They noted three main factors that determined each of these: the ability of young people to plan for and control their entry to independent living, the extent and form of constraints that characterise their access to housing, and the degree of family support available to them. Of particular note here are those young people who have chaotic or unplanned pathways. Centrepoint, a London homeless charity, found in 2006 that 32 per cent of the young people they saw had run away from home aged 16 or 17, over 80 per cent left home due to 'push factors' – conflicts, family breakdowns, evictions, abuse. Moreover 57 per cent of the young people were black or of ethnic origin and 24 per cent of the young people had no source of income, and could not support themselves when they first approached the organisation (Centrepoint, 2006).

For the 16 and 17 year olds the picture is even more acute. Even being accepted for housing under the new legislation is only part of what will make for a successful pathway. A DCLG funded report (Pleace et al, 2008) found that those temporarily housed by the local authority under the Act had common characteristics of traumatic childhoods; family disruption; poor relations with parents; and disrupted education. Almost all had left because of relationship breakdown, with 41 per cent having had experienced violence at home. Unsurprisingly 33 per cent had mental health issues, 37 per cent issues with drugs and alcohol, 57 per cent were NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) and 39 per cent had criminal records or ASBOs.

Conclusion: the role of youth and community workers

Hopefully this article has given practitioners a steer for the issues and contradictions in housing policies aimed at young people, and the social constructions that underpin them. I would like to conclude with some ideas about how practitioners can respond to this.

a) Campaigning for change

The areas one could campaign for are many. Fundamentally they come down to the urgent need for affordable housing for single young people, in both rural and urban areas. There is also the aforementioned legislation, such as housing benefit and social security benefit restrictions for young people that needs to be challenged. For the most vulnerable, the

homelessness strategies which all local authorities are obliged to produce would seem to be a starting point, including whether their prevention initiatives have elements of gate-keeping about them.

b) Challenging the assumptions of both policy and provision

Perhaps as importantly, there is a great need to challenge the assumptions about young people, both in general housing policy and any initiatives aimed at young people. Jones (2002) provides an interesting list of assumptions that need to be challenged, that I have adapted. Age – that people gain responsibility and independence with age, regardless of social class, gender, or cultural variation. *Dependency* – that young people are, or can (or should) remain, dependent on their parents. *Parenting* – that parents will accept extended responsibility for their children. *Economic rationality* – that economic incentives or disincentives alone can be effectively deployed to control behaviour (or indeed that we should wish to do this at all). I would qualify Jones's last recommendation regarding empowerment. She contends that we should challenge the assumptions that 'giving young people a voice' confers power on them. ' While I agree this, such a statement should not be a reason for not involving young people. Indeed she notes that young people are subject to social constructions in that most young people saw their own futures conventionally as 'nice husband or wife, nice house and nice car', and to 'settle down in a good job, buy a car and get married' (2002, p10) This leads to my next recommendation.

c) Challenging communities and young people ideas about adulthood, leaving home and transitions

Jones recommends that educational programmes need to be developed for young people and communities about the realities of the housing market and, for her, the importance of education as a route to housing, or the means to obtaining housing. This would seem crucial to me and would necessitate practitioners developing their own knowledge of what is a complicated fractured housing system. This may include challenging our own perceptions, for practitioners are not immune from the influence of certain social constructions; indeed we often mirror them and play an active part in their construction.

d) Being a source of support for young people

As all the studies mentioned have shown family support is crucial for young people in their pathway to housing. However in the absence of that support the youth and community worker may be a crucial presence. Interventions could take the form of mediation, because the local authority mediation process may well be loaded, or be triggered too late in the process, when the person is taking steps to leave (Groundswell, 2008).

e) Make greater links with homeless and other support services

Finally there are many agencies out there for those who are particularly vulnerable in terms of their housing. In my own practice I found workers' knowledge of them scant. Our liaison may well go beyond knowledge. Many hostels and temporary accommodation do not offer the level and personal support they need (Groundswell, 2006, 2008) and we can open up

our provision to them. For instance, workers could liaise with the local authority to make contact with those young people who have been temporarily housed in their area and offer them a service.

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Architects of Change – studies in the history of community and youth work

Edited by Ruth Gilchrist, Tony Jeffs and Jean Spence (2003)

£12.95

History shouldn't only be about the grand narratives – the rise and fall of nations – but should include the landscape of everyday life for ordinary people caught up in the fall out of these wider national, political and social changes. It is in this landscape that community and youth work is located.

The 13 chapters in Architects of Change tell tales of intervention, organisation and action within daily struggle. Of intentions and purposes motivated by the ideals of justice, democracy and equality. Of how community and youth work has been, and is, a catalyst for creative, cooperative activity amongst ordinary people. To understand our history, it is as important to consider the small moments, the characters and the local groups as it is to be aware of the wider narrative. Architects of Change provides a fascinating insight into some of these moments and individuals.

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Getting it right for young people

'Hiding out in the open': young people and social class in UK youth studies

Tracy Shildrick

Everyone, whatever their class position detects the minutiae of class difference signs and uses the information delivered by these signs in the making of difference everyday of their lives. It takes place regardless of the fluidity of boundaries or transformations in economics. It is subtle and complex, but deadly. (Walkerdine et al 2001:26)

This review looks at the changing place social class has occupied over the last quarter of a century in respect of young people's lives and the ways in which those lives have been theorised. Once the most widely used concept in the sociological toolkit, during the 1980s and 1990s it provoked attack with claims that its 'rigorous conceptual framework was more of a straightjacket than a help in our understanding of the dramatic and remarkable processes of change taking place in the contemporary world' (Beynon and Glavanis 1999:1). A number of developments have combined to help obscure the continued significance of class for young people in a context where young lives have become more complicated and diverse for all. Widespread de-industrialisation and the increasing importance of technological advances have undermined the utility of class as a concept for understanding the social world. Processes of individualisation have assisted in diminishing any real sense of class as a collective state and, as Lawler (2005:798) points out, class, if referred to at all is most often understood as part of the individual, marked as 'wrong' or 'right', 'deficient' or acceptable'. Emphasis on other dimensions of inequality has also helped to shift the limelight away from class analysis (Bradley 1996).

It seems curious, however, that whilst class analysis has suffered a crisis of popularity, British society has become increasingly economically divided. As the sizeably minority of the very rich have become richer, with the richest 10 per cent claiming a quarter of all disposable income, the poorest 10 per cent have seen their relative incomes decline whilst owning virtually no disposable income (Midwinter 2006). The vast majority of people believe that the gap between the rich and the poor is too great (Orton and Rowlingson 2007) and most people believe that Britain is class divided. This paper will assess some of these competing themes. In conclusion, it will be suggested that class continues to play a crucial role in the lives of *all* young people. It may have become less visible, but its effects remain omnipresent, showering some young people with rewards and opportunities, whilst erecting multiple obstacles in the way of others.

Young people, individualisation and the decline of social class

Over the last couple of decades class has become an unpopular concept, despite evidence that British society is inherently unequal. The last 25 years have seen an acceleration of

dramatic social change and widespread processes of individualisation. Hence, it is perhaps of little surprise that few young people – indeed anyone much under the age of thirty – should hold much strong affinity with the concept of class. One has only to teach sociology undergraduates about this topic to find ample evidence in support of this. Young people today have grown up as part of the 'Thatcher generation' when discourses of individualism happily collided with the rapidly changing face of the economy. Through ideology and the accompanying policy developments, responsibility was shifted away from the state and towards individuals and families. Thatcher's bold and widely reported proposition that there was 'no such thing as society' set in motion a train of thought that has permeated a good deal of government thinking and policy development since. John Major constantly referred to the 'classless society' which boasted 'opportunities for all'. Failure became something that could be laid firmly at the door of the individual (or the family), explained away by lack of motivation or aspiration, deviant lifestyles and behaviours or alternatively as simple lack of skills and intelligence (Saunders 2007). These themes, whilst less overt and all encompassing still feature heavily in New Labour's promises to 'give everyone the chance to succeed' through commitment to building a meritocracy.

Many scholars too, have questioned the continued efficacy of class analysis (Pahl 1989). For many, it seems that class is no longer the simple determining force it once was, propelling the rich and the poor in different directions. Some writers have been seduced by Giddens' (1991) idea that individual lives are better understood as 'reflexive biographies of the self' where young people become free to author their own biographical destinies. Emphasis here is on active decision making. Beck describes it thus:

> *Individualisation in this sense means that each person's biography is removed from given determinants and placed in his or her own hands, open and dependent on decisions. The proportion of life opportunities which are fundamentally closed to decision making is decreasing and the proportion of the biography which is open and must be constructed personally is increasing. Individualisation of life's situations and processes, thus means that biographies become self-reflexive.* (1992: 10)

These theories have found their way into much youth research. Today the transitions which young people make have become more complex, fractured and elongated. Many commentators advocate the concept of 'career' as a means to understand the ways in which young people negotiate the paths and choices which face them when they reach the age of sixteen. Prior to the late 1970s it was the class predictability of the routes which young people took which characterised the literature (Willis 1977). As Griffin points out in 'the early 1970s nearly 75 per cent of British 16-19 year olds were employed' (1993:31). In contrast by the 1990s finding a job directly from school had become the exception rather than the rule and many young workers were forced to confront the realities of a hostile labour market in a way previously unimaginable (Mizen 1995). Rather than simply choose between work and education, young people have now to 'navigate' their way around a multitude of choices and decisions (Furlong and Cartmel 1997). These empirical changes had fed into ideas that emphasise young people's agency as shaping school to work transitions (Rudd and Evans 1998; Wyn and Dwyer 1999) as it is generally accepted that routes have become more complex, difficult and elongated for *all*. The straightforward predictability of routes to adulthood that characterised times past – and which were easily attributed to young people's

class positions – have been replaced by ones that are characterised by stops and starts, beset by risks and opportunities and argued by some to be less predictable. As Furlong and Cartmel (2007:1) argue today's young people 'have to negotiate a set of risks which were largely unknown to their parents: this is true irrespective of social background (and gender)'. Miles (2000) warns us against underestimating the power of young people's agency in shaping their lifestyles and biographies. In support of this view, Saunders (2007:188) states that:

> *the evidence is unambiguous and compelling. It shows that, while Britain is not a perfect meritocracy, ability and effort are far more important in shaping occupational destinies than social class origins or the socio-economic conditions in which (young) people grow up.*

Arnett (2004) has utilised the idea of 'emerging adulthood' to try and capture ways in which young people's lives have become subjected to more individualistic processes and criteria, in an age of exploration and possibility.

If the study of youth transitions has been the main focus of youth research, youth cultural research is a close second (see Shildrick and MacDonald 2006).Young people have been at the forefront of the consumption explosion, the apparent vanguards of the consumer society (Miles 2000). After the influential and class based studies of the Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) the 1980s were a relatively quiet period in youth cultural terms. The supposed radicalism and resistance of the 60s and 70s, was replaced with a more conventional 'conservatism'. During the late 1980s, however, a new youth subculture emerged in the UK. The advent of the rave scene, as it was initially known, was to 'once again put Britain and London back at the centre of international youth culture' (Polhemus 1994:116). The early days of acid house or rave were characterised by large warehouse parties, which would last for the whole of the night. Government legislation, in the form of the Criminal Justice Act 1994, made such events illegal and, as a consequence, much of the scene became mainstream. Polhemus argues the rave scene was replaced in the 1990s by a 'much more exciting, dynamic club culture scene' (1994:124). There can be little doubt that the dance club scene, in all its variants, is a hugely popular pastime amongst young people. Structures, such as social class, were no longer deemed as important for young people's experiences as rave culture was not subcultural in the sense that it attracted a more socially diverse clientele (Melechi 1993; Redhead 1993; Merchant and MacDonald 1994). Young women participated in this culture in roughly equal numbers to young men. The culture appealed across socio-economic backgrounds attracting young people from professional as well as unemployed backgrounds (Gilman 1991; Merchant and MacDonald 1994). Class background, it was suggested, was no longer neither the precipitator, nor the prohibitor of subcultural membership (Hall and Jefferson 1976); rather, it was argued, the increasing significance of consumption (as opposed to production) allowed for individual lifestyles which were more reflexive, fragmented and reflective of individual choice (Miles 2000:158).

The rediscovery of class in youth research

> *In the modern world young people face new risks and opportunities. The traditional links between the family, school and work seem to have weakened as young people*

> *embark on journeys into adulthood which involve a variety of routes, many of which appear to have uncertain outcomes. But the greater range of opportunities available helps to obscure the extent to which existing patterns of inequality are simply being reproduced in different ways.* (Furlong and Cartmel 1997:7)

Processes of individualisation and widespread social change have helped disguise the uncomfortable fact that Britain remains an embarrassingly unequal society and that class background continues to influence the course of young people's lives. As Johnson (2008:78) points out class differences 'hide out in the open'. Although ever present they frequently 'produce signs that can only ever be whispered' (Walkerdine et al 2001:19). Roberts et al have used the concept of 'structured individualisation' to try to make sense of the ways in which young people's transitions into the labour market have become more individualised, but at the same time continue to be affected by their wider socio-economic positions. They admit that there is more scope for young people to 'construct individual transitions' (1994:44), but, at the same time, also recognise that opportunities are still unequal and progression often remain dependent 'on the familiar predictors – family, educational background, sex and place of residence' (p48). More recently, Evans has used the concept of 'bounded agency' to try to describe the ways in which 'agency operates in differentiated and complex ways in relation to the individual's subjectively perceived frames for action and decision' (2002:262). Evans argues that 'a person's frame has boundaries and limits that can change over time, but that have structural foundations in ascribed characteristics such as gender and social/educational inheritance' (Ibid). For Furlong and Cartmel this is best understood as the 'epistemological fallacy' of late modern life, where 'crises are perceived as individual shortcomings rather than the outcome of processes which are largely outwith the control of individuals' (2007:144).

Evidence for the continued influence of social class on the course of young people's lives is overwhelming. Roberts (2001) points to the continued pervasiveness of class as it permeates virtually every aspect of human life. Referring to Walkerdine and colleagues' outstanding study of young women in London he notes that there are 'vivid illustrations of class getting into pretty much every aspect of the girls' lives' indeed to the point that it is not hard to 'spot it a mile off' (cited in Roberts 2001:9). Youth culture and leisure, for some, might reflect individual choices and preferences, but for many youth cultural identities still reflect some straight forward class patterns (McCulloch et al 2006). Research has shown that those who adopt 'spectacular' identities, such as Goths, tend to be more middle class (Hodkinson 2002; Shildrick 2006) and that those who are most active in music and dance cultures tend, as well, to be from more affluent social groups (Muggleton 2000; Bennett 2000). Furthermore, recent research has been important in making visible those who are marginal to these 'spectacular' or dance based cultures. Here researchers have pointed to the significance of street based socialising (MacDonald and Shildrick 2007) and its connection with broader aspects of young people's lives. Recent youth cultural research has drawn attention to groups defined as 'chavs' or 'charvers' (McCulloch et al 2006; Nayak 2006). Whilst this is rarely reported as a self-identifying label, it is almost always one which reflects fairly traditional markers of class based inequality and used to describe young people or youth groups who are predominantly unemployed, living in deprived council housing estates and who are economically marginal. These are pejorative labels applied to the contemporary 'undeserving' poor (Shildrick et al 2007).

Social exclusion and the fragmented working class

It is for those at the economically impoverished periphery that the 'continually tightening constraints of class' (Roberts 2006:97) are felt most acutely. Class is both, 'missing' and omnipresent. Clear, overt discussion of class has virtually disappeared from contemporary political discourse. Yet, perhaps simultaneously, the language of social exclusion and the alleged social pathologies and problems of the excluded poor have come to the fore. Poverty, deprivation and cumulative disadvantage can bring with it despair and unhappiness. Most cope, somehow, showing remarkable resilience and conformism. Research on young people's aspirations consistently shows that the vast majority of young people remain highly conventional and committed to mainstream goals and objectives (Webster et al 2004; Macdonald and Marsh 2005; McKendrick et al 2007). Qualitative research in particular, has been illuminating in demonstrating the strong commitment to traditional work ethics, even when, in most respects young people might objectively be defined as socially excluded. Rather than rejecting work for long-term reliance on benefits most young people with few formal qualifications continue to reverberate – with surprising lack of complaint – between poverty jobs, spells of unemployment and occasional engagement with education and/or training (Webster et al 2004).

Despite the increasing importance of education, educational achievement remains boringly class predictable, even after decades of educational reform. Reay (2006:304) notes that 'social class remains the one educational problem that comes back to haunt English education policy again and again and again; the area of educational inequality on which education policy has had virtually no impact' As Bynner (2005:375) points out 'extended participation in education and occupational achievement is concentrated in the most advantaged sections of society'. Indeed he goes on to point out that the gap between the 'haves and the have-nots is actually getting wider with a substantial minority of young people at the bottom end of the social scale falling substantially behind the rest' (Ibid). Young working class men are of particular concern, often disengaged with education, a strategy that was much less risky, but now can bring with it the potential for disaster. Taking account of the recommendation of the Leitch Report, the Labour government recently pledged that by 2015 *all* young people will remain in full or part-time education or work-based training up to the age of 18. This will effectively remove the option of employment for young people under 18. This is a laudable aim. The numbers of young people in the UK with few or no qualifications compares unfavourably with our European counterparts. At the same time, such a proposal fails to recognise that those with a tendency to vacate learning at sixteen have already been failed, often badly, by an education system that continues to serve best those in more advantaged social positions. Such failings are unlikely to be rectified easily by further prolonging what has become for some young people a disappointing, and even damaging, process (MacDonald and Marsh 2005). Furthermore, if the British government persists with its plan to criminalise those that don't comply, there is a strong possibility that such a move will do little more than simply add to the burden of cumulative disadvantages that most early school leavers already face. This is perhaps a good example of the ways in which well meaning attempts to help address problems of youth exclusion can sometimes have the effect of exacerbating it. As Yvonne Roberts (2006:100) notes:

This is what meritocracy means when you are at the bottom. It means that education becomes a luxury, not a right. Fifty years ago, education was the magic wand, facilitating social mobility no matter how deprived a child's background. Recent research tells us this is no longer the case. On the contrary, in the unevenness of its delivery, it appears to be the cause of social exile for too many of our young.

Ken Roberts makes the rather simple, but telling point that 'old class formations are in decline which is easily mistaken for a decline in class itself' (2001:12). Class is constantly evolving. In the past it was thought that the starkest disparities existed between the middle and the working class, but it seems that these differences may now be less pronounced. There is increasing evidence of economic polarisation, with those at the very bottom, getting worse off and for some constituting a youth underclass (Runciman 1990). It might well be the case, that as the economic infrastructure evolves, there will be a relatively large, 'middle mass' (Byrne 2005), where class inequality is less overt, less obvious and indeed, maybe even less important. Social changes, coupled with numerous policy developments have made it easier for the 'working class to masquerade as middle class' (Walkerdine et al 2001:22). Moreover, it seems that increasingly salvation for the working classes lies only in the adoption of middle class values (Roberts 1999). Recently, it has been noted that rates of social mobility have declined and opportunities for social betterment are reduced for today's young people compared with pervious generations (Blanden et al 2005). In the past, young working class people may have had to fight to take a step upwards or, alternatively they could legitimately choose to 'turn their backs on social mobility' (Roberts 2006:97). Today, in a context where class inequalities, at least at the very peripheries, have become more extreme, the prospects for upward social mobility may be of less pressing concern. Those on the lowest rungs face a colossal task just to maintain their footing. For some, the prospects may be even more depressing, as they risk slipping ever further into the economic margins. The more immediate concerns here will be how to avoid downward social mobility rather than how to facilitate movement in the other direction.

Conclusions – it may be 'tough at the top', but it is even tougher at the bottom

Processes of individualisation have helped to obscure the continued significance of class for young people's lives in a context where young lives have become more complicated and diverse for all. Whilst the concept might have lost some of its explanatory appeal, or become more difficult to define and to observe, it remains, nonetheless, omnipresent. Furthermore, class processes are neither impartial nor fair. By their very nature, they are unfair and unjust fostering for some, advantages and opportunities, whilst for others hardship, scarcity and misfortune. It is the economically marginalised, of course, who feel the harshest and most adverse effects of class inequality. It is at the lowest economic margins where social class processes are at their most damaging and from where it is the least easy to escape. For the economically marginal, disadvantage stacks up against multiple layers of hardship and adversity. Young people at the economic margins, continue to live out and experience the effects that class disadvantage can bring. These young lives will sometimes be *chosen*, insofar as they will be the result of poor life choices and/or young people's active decisions. Most often though, they are lived out and experienced by those who have started life on

the lower rungs of the class ladder. Thus, these sorts of lives and biographies are not freely chosen, but achieved from a starting position where the odds were stacked up in the negative. Few young people that start higher up experience the ravages of poverty on quite the same level or in quite the same way as those born to this way of life. As Lister points out, New Labour's emphasis on meritocracy is misplaced, as meritocracy – even if it could be achieved – would be likely to 'exacerbate socio-economic inequality' (2006:233). Whilst society remains grossly unequal, inequality will seep into the very fundamentals of how we live, inevitably producing both advantages and disadvantages. Class, by its very nature, is a process of reproduction. Privilege breeds privilege, making poverty and disadvantage even harder to escape. It's a simple, but important, fact that 'the children of the poorer do not compete fairly with the children of richer groups' (Midwinter 2006:110).

Yvonne Roberts (2006:97) argues working class jobs once provided 'the hub of what was to many an acceptable wheel of life' providing the foundations for working class 'respectability'. De-industrialisation and individualisation have shifted the benchmarks of respectability, as middle class experiences have become the acceptable norm. Failure to comply with these new rules of 'class respectability' can result in open derision, disparagement and denigration. Young people are at the very heart of these developments, frequently portrayed as either victims of (welfare dependent) families that fail to adhere to good (middle class) child rearing practices or as anti-social and in need of restraint and punishment. Both political and popular discourses reinforce this middle class norm, to the point that any divergence from it has become subversive or deviant. Disrespecting aspects of working class lifestyles via popular television programmes such as *Little Britain*, has become not only a mainstream pastime but has also served to legitimise overt class prejudice (see Shildrick et al 2007). Aspects of working class culture have become offensive to the majority who occupy the safe ground beyond the unpleasant boundaries of the shameful and unacceptable face of the working class. We need not look much further to see that social class remains ubiquitous. As Lawler points out 'class is harder to see, but no less present' (2005:804) and there can be little doubt that its consequences will continue to reverberate throughout young people's lives.

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Getting it right for young people

Young People in the Community

Keith Popple

It is now over 25 years ago since Tony Jeffs, the late Frank Booton, Alan Dearling, Ron McGraw and I planned the launch of *Youth and Policy*. Our aspiration was to produce a quarterly peer-reviewed journal that made connections between theory, practice and research, and between youth workers, policy makers, managers, students and academics. Nearly three decades later *Youth and Policy* enjoys a well deserved place in the world of youth affairs publishing. This achievement has been due to the commitment of the too many to name contributors, those who have played an active part as Editorial Board members, and the numerous readers who have demanded a journal that meets the need for a critical analysis of youth matters.

My time on the Editorial Board of *Youth and Policy* was relatively brief. When I left the North East of England in 1985 to take up a post at the then Plymouth Polytechnic it was agreed that it would be difficult for me to regularly travel to the monthly editorial and business meetings and therefore I reluctantly stood down. Our view was that a journal like *Youth and Policy* demands of its Board members constant attention to ensure it the significant number of tasks required to produce each issue are undertaken. It was an honour therefore to be invited as a previous Board member, and as someone who has tended to write more about community and community development than youth, to contribute to this celebratory issue on the topic of young people in the community.

First things first

I have drawn attention above to the considerable commitment that authors, readers and the Editorial Board members of *Youth and Policy* have made in the last three decades to the study and critical reflection of matters affecting young people. Unfortunately this has not been matched with a positive commitment to young people by successive governments during the same period. In fact quite the reverse has happened and both Conservative and New Labour governments have marginalised and discriminated against young people. This approach is not an accident but is a result of the policies that governments of different colours have had in redirecting the economy and civil society from its social democratic roots of the post-war period to one where neo-liberalism and authoritarianism has gained the ascendancy.

Arguably, the most important international change that has taken place in the last 25 to 30 years, and which has had the greatest impact on communities, has been ever increasing globalisation and the accompanying neo-liberalisation project. One of the main foci of this article therefore is to examine this development and to consider how communities have transformed in the last thirty years and in turn how young people's relationship with the communities has evolved.

It would be easy to romanticise the place occupied by young people in the community in the early 1980s to that experienced by young people in the community in the 21st century. But all indicators show that community has changed and in turn young people's relationship with both the ideal and the reality of community has altered. There is a need to examine these changes in order to better understand the place of young people in community life.

We will start be examining the impact of the policies of Margaret Thatcher who as Secretary of State for Education and Science rejected progressive polices for young people. Later as Prime Minister, Thatcher's economic and social policies were to have a devastating impact on working class communities and young people. It was the Conservatives under the leadership of Thatcher who were in power when *Youth and Policy* was launched. After Thatcherism, our attention turns to considering the New Labour government and how they have shaped the economic and social policies which have introduced regressive practices for young people in the community.

'Thatcher the milk (and youth and community work) snatcher'

Margaret Thatcher was the scourge of people and organisations that championed the progressive development of communities and young people. Prior to being leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister, she was Secretary of State for Education and Science in the Tory government led by Edward Heath from 1970-1974. In her education role Thatcher abolished universal free milk for school-children aged seven to eleven (the previous Labour government had already abolished free milk for secondary school students). Her action provoked a good deal of public protest, and led to cries of 'Thatcher Thatcher, Milk Snatcher'. However in relation to services for young people in the community the impact of Thatcher was most sharply felt by her clear rejection of the Fairbairn-Milson Report (1969). The committee, jointly chaired by Andrew Fairbairn and Fred Milson, was set up by the 1964-1970 Labour administration to review youth work and to produce a set of proposals for the development of the youth service in the coming decade. One of the Report's key proposals was to unambiguously advocate community development as the most effective method for the delivery of an empowering youth and community work service. However the final Report was published at the tail end of Labour's period in office and consequently it was left to the incoming Conservative government and in particular Thatcher, with responsibility for education, to respond to the recommendations. Thatcher was to leave the Report uncommented upon until in March 1971 when, in a reply to a written parliamentary question, her department informed the House of Commons that the government had no intention of establishing a youth and community service. Davies (1999a: 130) states that Thatcher wanted the emphasis to be on youth work rather than community work.

We can speculate what might have happened if the government had chosen to take up the Report's proposals and implemented a comprehensive youth and community service that had at its core a community development approach which could help young people make critical connections between their personal circumstances and the political and economic structures that perpetuate them. When Labour was elected to power in February 1974 they

had an opportunity to respond to the Report and to rise to the challenge presented by the authors. However the Labour government did not return to the Reports recommendations but instead found their main efforts being directed into tackling a severe down-turn in the country's economic affairs which was caused by a massive increase in the price of oil, a State of Emergency called by the Conservative government in the face of industrial action by the National Union of Mineworkers, a bank minimum lending rate of 13%, and a 'scene of industrial bitterness perhaps unparalleled since the General Strike of 1926' (Sked and Cook 1984: 290). As Davies has stated, the political climate for the reception of the Report had also changed and by the late 1960s and early 1970s:

> *a group of right-wing academics, professionals and politicians published the first of a series of 'black papers' on education. These were vitriolic in their condemnation of just the kind of ideas by which Fairbairn-Milson set such store. Over the decade these collections of highly polemical essays helped to turn notions like non-directive teaching and learning by doing into despised epithets synonymous with 'woolly liberal' and 'dangerously permissive'.*(1999a: 127)

Community life under Thatcher

It was exactly these kinds of views Margaret Thatcher was to make her own in her ascent to leader of the Tories and then in 1979 as Prime Minister of a government that pursued New Right policies. Thatcher was heavily influenced by the work of the Austrian-Brititsh economist and political philosopher Friedrich Hayek (1899-1992) and in particular his book *The Road to Serfdom* (1944). Hayek, who was known for his defence of classical liberalism and free-market capiltalism, argued that the ills of the world are due to socialism and permissiveness. His views influenced Thatcher's understanding of the potential role of the state and she accepted Hayek's argument that the efficient exchange of resources could only be maintained through the price mechanism. Hayek and Thatcher were both committed to neo-liberalist economic policies as well as socially conservative social policies (Thatcher, 1995). The outcome was that Thatcher and her government pursued policies that included the deregulation of business and the reduction of state involvement in the detailed supervision of the economy, a re-orientation of the welfare state, a reduction in direct taxation and in particluar higher rates of taxation, a curbing of trade union influence, the privatisation of nationalised industries, and the restructuring of the national workforce in order to provide greater industrial and economic flexibility in an increasingly global market.

During her period in power from 1979-1990 Thatcher was to make an assault on commutiy life by delivering economic polices that increased people's fear of unemployment and short-time working. Although the Tories claimed that the implementation of lower direct taxation would stimulate the desire of people to work, in reality it was the increase to some three million unemployed that had the greatest effect on making people work harder for fear of joining those without employment.

> *The January 1982 unemployment figure of 3,070,621 represented 12.5 per cent of the working population, and in some parts of the country it was even higher: in Northern Ireland, unemployment stood at 20 per cent, while in some areas dominated by*

declining industries such as coal mining, it was much higher still. (www.politics.co.uk/reference/issue-briefs/economy/employment/unemployment) URL accessed 6 May 2008)

The restructring of British industry was most evident in areas where tradtional 'heavy' industies such as coal mining, steel, iron and ship building were located. During this period unemployment in the north of England, Scotland, and Wales and as noted above, Northern Ireland, was considerably higher than in the prosperous south east and London. Similarly within regions, there were local pockets of high unemployment. Many towns that were dominated by a small number of large industries or businesses were badly affected when they down-sized or closed. At the same time the production sectors of the economy were overtaken in size and volume by an increase in the service and finance sectors.

Young people were one of the key groups most affected by this unrelenting increase in unemployment. They were particularly affected due to the severity of the 1980s recession, the decline in industrial growth rates, and the resultant reduction in the workforce in many industries. The shortages of jobs, alternating periods of employment and unemployment and the lack of job security were the main features of the employment situation for young people in the UK even though at this time the work participation rate amongst young people decreased considerably due to the extension of the period of compulsory education. Male unemployment among 18 and 19 year olds rose by 219 per cent between 1979 and 1984, and by 176 per cent among 18 and19 year old women (Davies 1999b).

In response the government created the Manpower Service Commission whose remit included administrating a battery of schemes aimed at providing young people with different forms of low paid short-term jobs and questionable training. The key purpose was to financially subsidise employers through a difficult economic period and keep young people in work mode so that when the economy did improve and 'proper jobs' were available they would be well placed to gain employment. Another intended outcome was to inculcate young people with the notion that low paid employment was better than unemployment so that they would be receptive to the demands of employers. The 1980s was also the beginning of greater dependancy by young people on their parents for increased support in the period after compulsory education. This trend has continued through to the present day with parents expected to provide accomodation and financial support as young people negoiate their way through further and higher education, training and employment, and finally to living independently.

This was to take its toll on communities in the 1980s as unemployed and low -paid young people became increasingly dependent on their familes at a time when Thatcher and her acolytes were proudly proclaiming that New Right policies would lead to the liberation of people and assist in their independence. The reality was that increasing and greater inequality was impacting on families and young people. Tensions grew as young people felt frustrated they could not live financially independent of their parents. Similarly, parents felt frustrated that the government were forcing them to stretch their already tight resources to further support their off-spring.

Young people's action and government reaction

Significantly levels of youth unemployment were thought to be one of the reasons for the sporadic outbreaks of violence during the early and mid 1980s in communities such as Brixton, London; Toxteth, Liverpool; St Paul's, Bristol; Broadwater Farm, London; and Handsworth, Birmingham. These areas were known for their severe social and economic problems including high levels of unemployment, high crime rates, sub-standard housing, few and usually inadeqaute public services and amenities, and an alienated predominantly black community (Kettle and Hodges 1982). Certainly young people, and in particular black and Asian young people living in these communities, felt they were the victims of the economic recession. The subsequent Scarman Report (1982) (although primarily focusing on the Brixton Disturbances of 1981) recognised that the riots did represent the result of social problems such as poverty, deprivation and discrimination.

The Thatcher government responded by demonising disaffected young people and directly blaming them for the social problems in their communities. Michael Heseltine, the Secretary for State for the Environment, was similarly of the view that young people could do more to help themselves although fortunately he did have greater insights than the Prime Minisiter into how some of the issues could be approached. He convinced Thatcher to give him a role in helping to re-generate Liverpool, a city with communities suffering severe economic and social problems. Heseltine, who became known as the 'Minister for Merseyside', established the Merseyside Task Force and launched a series of initiatives, some of which were aimed at addressing high levels of unemployment among the young (Heseltine 2000).

Globalisation and neo-liberalism

By the time Thatcher had stepped down from office and John Major took over as Prime Minister in 1990 it was clear that the world was fast changing. Influences from the globlalising world economy and the spread of New Right policies in an increasing number of countries were quickly affecting community life and the experiences of young people.

Briefly examining globalisation we can see that from the late 1980s onwards economic expansion increased at a remarkable speed with the emergence of a trans-national, global or world economy, where markets and enterprises operate globally in what has been described as a 'borderless world' (Ohmae 1990). Markets that at one time were internal to a country or a particular region were extending their reach around the world. This process has created important new linkages and dependences among national economies. Gigantic trans-national corporations for example Wal Mart, General Motors, Exxon Mobil, Ford Motors, General Electric, Chevron Texaco, Conaco Philips, Citigroup, Royal Dutch Shell and Toyota; influential international political and economic institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, and the United Nations; and huge regional trading systems such as the European Union and the North American Free Trade Association all emerged as the key structures in the new global economic order.

The central driving force in the development of globalisation has been neo-liberalism, which stresses the value, and benefit of the economic free-market on the lines advocated

by Hayek, Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and all US Presidents since. As we noted above the core premise of neo-liberalism is that the market is pre-eminent at producing and distributing goods and services, is best at rewarding managers and workers, and is more efficient than state or bureaucratic planning. It is argued for example that the collapse of the Soviet bloc was due in part to the inability of its closed centrally planned communist economies to compete in a global economy that had become increasingly integrated and expanded.

Consequently neo-liberalist ideology has been traditionally hostile towards public expenditure, public borrowing, taxation and the collective provision of public services, which it believes to be a parasite on the wealth generating private economy. The neo-liberal thesis is that high levels of taxation to fund public programmes lessens incentives to work and means that the production of goods and services is less than it could be, thereby reducing economic growth. Any social welfare provision therefore must not damage the system of rewards and must be justified by the benefits it brings to the economy. A key reason for this is the neo-liberal view that economic and social inequality is fundamentally necessary to reward 'success' and to provide the incentives for the creation of wealth.

Finally, neo-liberals argue that private provision is more efficient and superior to public provision. They argue that competition, which is a cornerstone in the furthering of private markets, creates greater efficiency by removing inadequate and inefficient providers and suppliers (Adams 1994).

Increasing wealth and income inequality

The main impact of globalisation and neo-liberalism on UK communities has been the noticeable growing increase in wealth and income inequality. Although there is recent evidence in the UK that the bottom 10 per cent of the population now have an improved real income compared to before New Labour came to power in 1997, the richest 10 per cent in the UK have during the same period seen their income increase much more in real terms. The improvement for those at the bottom has come about through increases in tax relief and benefits for those with children, and those receiving state pensions (Hills and Stewart 2005). This needs to be placed along side evidence from Paxton and Dixon (2001) that from 1990 to 2000 the percentage of wealth held by the wealthiest 10 per cent increased from 47 to 54 per cent. These trends are confirmed by a recent Rowntree Foundation report (Dorling et al 2007), which examines how poverty and wealth are distributed in the UK. In a study that looked back 40 years the authors discovered that already-wealthy areas had tended to become disproportionately wealthier, and there was evidence of increasing polarisation, where rich and poor now live further apart. The study also shows that both poor and wealthy households have become more geographically segregated from the rest of society.

Growing social exclusion

It is increasingly recognised that widening inequality presents itself as social exclusion and exacerbates problems such as crime and unemployment. Social exclusion is usually

defined as individuals or groups who as a result of multiple deprivations, are not able to fully participate in the economic, social and political activities enjoyed by the majority of people. Social exclusion can present itself through crime with some criminologists such as Jock Young (1998, 1999) suggesting that certain criminal activity is due to individuals experiencing being on the margins of 'respectable society' and not enjoying its benefits, in particular in terms of meaningful well paid work. Similarly, globalisation and neo-liberal economics have had the effect of excluding people economically as work is transferred to regions and countries where labour unions are weak and employment costs are low. This has produced job insecurity and unemployment that has highlighted the widening gap between people (Grint 2005).

New Labour and the regeneration of communities: tackling social exclusion

When New Labour was elected to government in 1997 they immediately attempted to address the impact of globalisation and inequality on communities. The government was aware that failing to tackle the damaging outcomes of increasing inequality could reduce the UKs international competitiveness and produce greater disaffection than already existed in low income communities. However, rather than levy higher direct taxes on the individuals and corporations gaining most from globlaisation New Labour attempted to ameliorate the negative impact on the poorest areas and on people on low incomes. For example New Labour introduced an age-related minimum wage and the New Deal for Young People (NDYP). The introduction of the paltry minimum wage was aimed at giving an improved income to the very poorest wage earners, many of whom were young people. The NDYP was aimed at increasing employment among those aged 18 to 24 years. However the results of the NDYP have been mixed. It has been found that where young people reside is an important variable in them securing employment. Research by Sunley and Martin (2002) reveals that the programme's effectiveness in tackling youth unemployment has varied significantly across different parts of the country, depending on local labour market conditions. In those cities and regions with low labour demand and a lack of employment growth, the New Deal has been far less successful at getting young people into work and keeping them there.

A further approach used to increase market efficiency has been New Labour's attempt to tackle social exclusion and highlight the role community regeneration can play in addressing poverty and enhancing it's policy of 'welfare to work'. This approach was kick-started by the report from the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU 2001), which built on an earlier report (SEU 1998), which had documented the conditions in some of Britain's poorest areas, and led to the establishment of Policy Action Teams to develop strategic responses. The 2001 SEU report was to herald a move from short-term area-based government funded projects, which had marked the previous decades, to more long-term strategic programmes that integrated the work of different departments but which delivered at a neighbourhood level. One of the key proposals was the New Deal for Communities which focused on 39 neighbourhoods of between 1,000-4,000 households that needed to tackle five areas of concern: unemployment and poor job prospects; improving health; tackling crime; raising educational achievement; and improving housing and the physical environment. The

key to these interventions was the partnership of different agencies and bodies, and the involvement with local residents. This capacity building of local people was a departure from previous government backed interventions and drew attention to the need for residents to be more involved in their own communities.

Young people and contemporary community life

What has all this meant for young people in UK communities in the first decade of the new millennium? A clear impact of globalisation has been the flow of labour to and from different regions in the world. In the UK this has led to the establishment of new communities. These new communities, which are made up of economic migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and 'undocumented persons' include a significant number of young people. The development of new communities in Britain is another example of how globalisation perpetuates and extends inequality. Carrington and Detriagiache (1999) demonstrate that approximately 30 per cent of the better educated young people in Africa, the Caribbean and Central America are leaving these areas to work in knowledge based economies like the UK.

The greater number of UK minority ethnic communities, primarily people from the Caribbean islands and India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, came to the country during the period from the late 1940s to the 1980s. The vast majority had a connection with the UK through being citizens of Commonwealth countries and traveled to Britain as economic migrants in the hope of establishing a more prosperous life for themselves, their children and families. However, since the 1990s immigrants have come from a much wider range of countries, especially non-Commonwealth and non- European Union states. These new migrant groups are highly diverse, with their own gender and age formations, and different languages and religions. Vertovec titles this 'super-diversity' and states that:

> *Some are mostly women, such as Slovakians and Filipinos. Others are mostly men, such as Algerians and Albanians. Some are mostly single people, others have families. Some are particularly made up of young people in their 20s, others have a fuller range of ages. Immigrants today range from the highest-flying skilled professionals to those with little education and training. Many hope to remain in Britain and become new citizens, while others plan to stay for only a relatively short period.* (2007: 94)

Blaming the young: tackling anti-social behaviour

Perhaps the biggest impact that globalisation and neo-liberalism has had on young people has been New Labour's authoritarian stance as it attempts to address social exclusion in neighbourhoods. Reminiscent of the response by the Tories to the urban disturbances in the 1980s, the present government is attempting to scape-goat young people. They are often seen as a convenient target by the government, local authorities, police and concerned community members for the relative decline in neighbourhoods. In targeting young people in this manner attention shifts away from the economic failure of globalisation to blaming young people themselves for behaving in a manner society considers unacceptable. Young people's behaviour is therefore viewed as the reason for the communities decline. Young

people however may want to point to the failure to meet their leisure and educational needs in a system that is driven by profit and not by need.

Perhaps the best example of New Labour's authoritarian stance towards young people in communities has been the creation of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) which were introduced to target those young people who are engaged in behaviour deemed by the state as unacceptable. In England, Scotland and Wales an ASBO may be ordered in response to:

> *conduct which caused or was likely to cause alarm, harassment, distress, or harm to one or more persons not of the same household as him or herself and where an ASBO is seen as necessary to protect relevant persons from further anti-social acts by the Defendant.* (Crime and Disorder Act, 1998)

The targeted offending behaviour is often presented in terms of young people binge drinking, using illegal substances and hanging around on streets. However many writers in *Youth and Policy* and elsewhere have pointed to ASBOs serving to criminalise and demonise young people and criminalisaing behaviour that is otherwise lawful. The National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO) has stated for example that:

> *There is ample evidence of the issuing of ASBOs by the courts being inconsistent and almost a geographical lottery. There is a great concern that people are being jailed following the breach of an ASBO where the original offence was itself non-prisonable.* (House of Commons, 2005)

This approach to young people has been accompanied by the public's scepticism of the effectiveness of ASBOs (Mori 2005).Together with increased police patrols in neighbourhoods the outcome is to make young people feel threatened in their own communities, somewhere they should normally feel at ease (Stepney and Popple 2008). In more recent times with the prevalence of knife-crimes usually in large cities by and on young people, there are important questions being asked of the often chaotic and abusive environments that young people have to live in and the way that society is treating them. At the same time the increase in the use of stop and search in 10 boroughs across London means that young people are developing a 'culture of resentment towards the police' (Brooks 2008).

Another example of police surveillance of young people is on the Five Links estate in Laidon, near Basildon in Essex where in May 2008 the police launched Operation Leonard. This operation involved intensive policing aimed at under18 year olds and included photographing and filming young people, some as young as 11 years old, who they considered to be 'troublemakers'. The initiative received support from the Home Secretary Jacqui Smith who claimed that Operation Leonard created an environment:

> *where those responsible for anti-social behaviour have no room for manoeuvre and nowhere to hide, where the tables are turned on offenders so that those who harass our communities are themselves harried and harassed.* (Quoted Lewis 2008)

On closer examination we discover that the Five Links estate has been nicknamed Alcatraz because of its fortress-like appearance. It is a community comprising of over 1,400 homes but only has three shops and was built in the 1960s on a Radburn plan which has since been described as a failed architectural experiment.

> *Following completion, the estate soon experienced a downward cycle of problems including poor design, structural defects and high maintenance. The physical problems contributed in no small measure to the general problems which the estate now faces ranging from poor reputation, low demand, poor stock condition, crime, unemployment, neighbour nuisance, to low educational attainment.* (www.web4residents.org/5links/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id) URL accessed 30 May 2008

Again this is an example of the relevant authorities failing their young people (and the wider community) with a completely inadequate living environment. However the response of the authorities, and in particular the police and the Home Office, has been to marginalise and demonise young people rather than properly attending to their needs for good quality education and leisure facilities.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that young people's experience of community in contemporary times is a different one to when *Youth and Policy* was launched in the early 1980s. Increasing authoritarian policies and practices to curb disadvantaged young people have been introduced as the impact of inequality from globalisation and neo-liberalism, continues to bite.

At the same time our understanding of community has changed and we now recognise the complexity of the notions of community and neighbourhood (Stepney and Popple 2008). The complexity of life in a society like the UK means we have to consider community in different ways than we did some twenty five years ago. Young people can now belong to a range of different communities that may include, but not necessarily be bound or dominated by location or neighbourhood. Young people can belong to a multiplicity of communities that are based upon for example, ethnicity, religion, nationalism, gender, sexuality, age, disability and life-styles. New and different forms of communication and information technologies including the virtual community of the Internet have had significant consequences upon the notion of community. These new and emerging IT communities which have attracted young people in their millions sit alongside and interact with other more established communities mentioned above. Whether these new virtual communities provide users with a sense of belonging or attachment in the way we have conventionally considered community however remains unclear at present.

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The National Youth Agency
Getting it right for young people

Sexplanation!

From anti-oppressive practice to community cohesion

Kalbir Shukra

The fury of young black people that blazed through the streets of many urban conurbations in 1981 was re-shaping urban social policy when the first issues of *Youth and Policy* emerged in 1982. In the wake of the riots, multiculturalism became the new orthodoxy and was the touchstone through which policies affecting minority communities were developed (Solomos 1988; Modood 2007; Alibhai-Brown 2000). More recently, multiculturalism has lost its allure and some early proponents have since recanted (Phillips 2004). Today the management of ethnically diverse areas is framed by New Labour's cohesion agenda. To accommodate the new framework, many in community and youth work have rejected the anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice paradigms that special editions of *Youth and Policy* (1995) and *Community Development Journal* (1997) were dedicated to understanding. Whereas an anti-oppressive approach was rooted in the legacy of 1970s/80s social movements and focused on interpreting what it could mean for practice, community cohesion is the new touchstone in political, policy and practice debates of how best to shape and maintain a diverse yet acceptable multi-ethnic Britain. Conferences on developing black perspectives that dominated the 1980s and 1990s have been replaced by conferences on developing 'muslim youth work' (*Youth and Policy*, Summer 2006) and calls for a stronger understanding of black youth experiences (Sallah and Howson, 2007). This article will explore the shift from an anti-oppressive to a community cohesion approach to youth work and consider the challenges to progressive youth work that are posed by the new consensus that community cohesion should be a key driver in today's youth work.

Up to the 1980s the key voices as far as youth work and minorities were concerned came from one of two opposing camps: state commissioned inquiries or the anti-racist movement. The agenda for state commissioned inquiries from the mid 1960s was one of how to manage the education of minority youth. A series of reports and government circulars relating to the education of immigrant children rooted in an assimilationist perspective emerged. The assimilationist perspective encouraged immigrants to fit in and to remain insignificant minorities in schools. Where numbers became too big in schools, local authorities were even authorised to bus children out of the area to other schools.

The 1967 Hunt Report *Immigrants and the Youth Service* was the first significant report on black youth. Hunt argued that the youth service could play a significant role by encouraging black youth into predominantly white clubs to encourage greater mixing. It was assumed that mixing would help immigrants to learn English and help white youth understand what were perceived to be the strange eating habits and way of life of immigrants. It was the 1976 Community Relations Commission that reported on the failure of youth services to develop 'a youth policy capable of meeting the needs of ethnic minorities, or in many instances those of white young people...'. However, by this time, black communities were

organising their own youth provision in the form of Saturday schools, church and temple run provision.

Models of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice were developed from the early 1980s. By the 1990s they were sometimes called 'perspectives' as in 'black perspectives' or 'feminist perspectives' (Williams 1989; Thompson 2003) because they represented the voices of particular movements. As far as youth work and minorities were concerned, the broad black and anti-racist movement provided an alternative perspective to the assimilationist state commissioned inquiries. Whereas the assimilationist approach was concerned with how to manage minority youth and how to encourage immigrants to fit in, the key voices from the black and anti-racist movement between the late 1960s and 1980s[1] sought to build a black consciousness that would challenge state racism. The militant campaigns around policing, the workplace and schools between the 1970s and 1980s (Ramdin 1987) were not publicly funded, but independent campaigns that organised against state racism and drew primarily on what was understood to be a principle of independent black and Asian self-organisation (Shukra 1998). Crucially, none of the struggles were based on working with the state – indeed 'no-reliance on the state' and 'self-determination' became core campaigning slogans of the time. However, independent black self-organisation died in the 1980s when black radical activists decided that they needed to take the grants, the jobs and positions on committees that would bring them closer to a new site of struggle: the local state.

In 1981 the Rampton Committee (on Education) followed by the Swann Report (1985) introduced multi-cultural education, which was intended to broaden the cultural horizons of every child. Multi-cultural education was focused on schools but nevertheless influenced youth work. Multi-cultural youth work was premised on everyone being different but equal and laid the responsibility on white communities to learn about minority cultures so communities might get along better. This approach came to be known as the steel bands, saris and samosas approach to youth work (Chauhan 1996). Despite the criticisms at the time that multi-culturalism was too focused on cultural difference and not focused enough on rights, it nevertheless became the basis of state funded youth and community work amongst minority communities and was developed alongside some separate provision, new projects and campaigns.

The diversity agenda borne of the late 1990s (Martin 2006) has been accompanied in this decade by a growing debate about the state of the nation's connectedness. It has centred on Goodhart's (2004) view that Britain has gone too far in multiculturalist diversity for the good of social cohesion. The concept of social cohesion took off after inquiries into riots in the north of England in 2001. Reports authored by Ted Cantle (2001), John Denham (2001) and Herman Ouseley (2001) respectively, concluded that minority and white communities are divided and live parallel but separate lives that were in part shaped by social policy and in part by the values and attitudes of Asian communities in particular. The consequences of the local divisions were viewed as the source of local tensions and youth alienation. The solution was to be found in imbuing social policy with the intent of building cohesive communities locally. The intended outcomes were ' a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities', an appreciation and positive valuing of difference in backgrounds and circumstances, similar life opportunities for people from different

backgrounds and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds (Local Government Association 2002).

Community cohesion is now a key policy driver in regeneration programmes, local authorities have community cohesion strategies and a new industry devoted to community cohesion has emerged to enable professionals to use the language and framework of community cohesion rather than anti-discrimination/oppression. Cohesion strategies in practice have produced ever better ways of helping minorities to be or become better people: learning English, becoming politically literate, socialising with other minorities, understanding other faiths are key in the cohesion consultant's repertoire. The focus of cohesion practitioners is on modifying communities ideologically and behaviourally rather than empowering communities to change social structures that hold them back. Ideologically, community cohesion is little more than a reconstruction of 1960s and 1970s 'assimilation', assuming that cultural differences obstruct integration and that those who are different need to adjust in some way (Back et al 2002).

Central to the recent White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (Department of Communities and Local Government 2006), community cohesion moved into managing diversity as a way of 'tackling extremism'. The White Paper confirmed previously implied links following 9/11 and the London bombings between 'diversity' and 'extremism'. It noted that tackling and preventing extremism is 'core business' for central and local government, as well as other partners including the third sector. On this basis, for community and youth work practitioners, then, it becomes unavoidable. Indeed, the Home Office developed a funding stream devoted to preventing extremism that is so explicit that some community and youth workers have refused to engage with it.

The 2006 White Paper posed a distinction between the ideas of the vast majority of muslims who share British values and a tiny minority who justify terrorism with extremist ideologies. Local government was presented as having a role in preventing extremism by winning hearts and minds and working with the right organisations. The acceptable organisations, of course are ones that can be policed in a zone of moderation acceptable to New Labour (Back et al 2002). In this process, youth participation becomes less about enabling young people to develop a voice and more about filling a 'vacuum' that might otherwise be 'exploited by extremists'.

The discourse around 'diversity', 'segregation' and 'extremism' in the 2006 White Paper translates into British Asians or Muslims deliberately setting themselves apart from majority communities and allowing their youth to fall prey to extremists who may encourage them to become terrorists. As such, they are seen not as the victims of discriminatory housing and employment policies, but as perpetrators of home grown terrorism. Therefore the objective of tackling racism has been reconstructed into one of changing the attitudes and lifestyles of British Asians and Muslims in particular. Many of the new cohesion initiatives seek inter-community dialogue with the aim of increasing understanding of difference and therefore greater tolerance. Tolerance of course does not address racism as it is 'passive' (Quirk 2006). Barry Quirk, Chief Executive of London Borough of Lewisham suggests that in order for local government to 'create the conditions where local political citizenship and local civil society can flourish amid ethnic, religious and cultural diversity', we need to move

from closed communities to open communities. Whether commentators write of 'closed' or 'segregated' communities, their focus for change remains the behaviour of Asian – particularly Muslim – communities and not rural or white communities. That is perhaps due to the policy focus on the 'incivility, rather than the civility, of urban life' (Fyfe et al 2006). The calls for greater tolerance, open communities and removing the veil (Ramadan 2006) are all about promoting civility and curbing incivility by encouraging ethnic minority groups to engage with and conform to a 'common language' (Fyfe et al 2006) or a 'common culture' (Eagleton 2007).

Under New Labour, organisations and voluntary associations that cannot be relied on to support the common culture are treated as extreme or criminal as they 'contribute little or nothing to a society's stock of civility' and at worst are 'bearers of incivility' (Boyd 2006:875). The allocation of blame and responsibility for riots, home grown terror and other urban social problems results in Asian Muslims and new migrants being viewed as destructive. Their closedness or self-segregation is seen as a problem because their 'behaviours are less easily regulated by the approbation or sanction of others' (Fyfe 2006). Their attachment to a different way of life in a British context is portrayed not as a source of richness – which would imply valuing diversity – but either as an alien threat or 'fundamentalism' in a liberal society. Anyone in the establishment who doesn't subscribe to this is vilified by peers and press alike, as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams discovered in 2008 when he commented on including Sharia law in Britain.

By contrast, social movements that produced models of anti-oppressive practice, have understood closed communities to be a potentially positive development in the sense that they foster solidarity and collective forms of organisation. The all important 'us' against a perceived 'them' is vital to building a movement so isn't automatically a negative development. We must ask ourselves why and how communities became closed in the first place? Is it a symptom of their incivility or is it a rational response to their experiences of oppression and discrimination? The social movement analyses have not only sought to understand 'why' people look inwards but have also recognised that there are structural reasons. By contrast, the community cohesion agenda identifies those who self-exclude and are not part of the common culture as the source of urban problems.

Histories of minority community organisations demonstrate that newness, hostility and fear produce informal networks of support (Shukra 1998) or what the social capital theorists call 'bonding' capital (Putnam 2001). Hostility in the form of police raids, racist attacks, anti-muslim public discourse is unlikely to produce the trust needed to open up already closed or segregated communities. Equally, demanding that people speak English at home, remove their veils and open up their communities is unlikely to produce the desired results, just as Sennett (2003:260) noted that 'treating people with respect cannot occur simply by commanding it should happen'.

Some community cohesion projects seek to create the opportunities for people to mix, socialise and celebrate together. To build bridges, dialogue, civility or openness across communities, however, a precursor to success is tackling the symptoms and source of oppression and discrimination. It may be naively idealistic for us to believe that we can successfully facilitate long term openness before we live in a world where everyone is

equal. After all, the structural oppressions are likely to send people back to their closed corners, their alienated responses and their incivility to seek shelter, strategies of survival or to organise separately. Thomas (2003) reported how in the course of a carefully planned cohesion project, a group of Asian young people had their minibus attacked with adults and young people asking 'Why are Pakis using our centre?' Without prioritising the dismantling of oppressive socio-economic and ideological structures, policy makers and practitioners remain at risk of doing little more than scolding Asians for not having white friends or neighbours, for not speaking English when in England and for not fitting in.

In critiquing community cohesion, I am not arguing against an uncritical youth work with minority communities. For youth work, a major challenge lies in developing strategies for tackling the inequality and repression that women, gay men, traveller communities, people with disabilities and others within isolated, faith-centred or closed communities can face and developing these strategies without demonising whole communities. We need to support the most isolated individuals (the Asian girl facing a forced marriage or the young man who is afraid to come out as gay) without selling our souls to assimilationism or crying out against separate provision as a matter of principle. That may mean taking the risk of supporting the Asian girl who sees no way out but to leave her family so that she may be free of domestic force (Cressey 2006:43). But it also means ensuring that the work that we do with Asian young men and boys addresses the issues of gender inequality, the role of men in supporting girls and women and gay rights so that the young men who so often collude with repression of girls and women are challenged through youth work interventions. At a time when there is so much hostility against Muslims, the most effective way of directly challenging patriarchal attitudes towards women may sometimes be in a separate, isolated environment rather than in mixed provision. The same may apply to other minority groups.

Developing separate provision is a matter of principle only insofar as oppressed communities have a right to organise themselves against their oppression and external attacks on any oppressed group that organises to defend itself remain unacceptable. Currently, the principle of self-organisation amongst Asian groups in particular is under attack, even by those such as Trevor Phillips who speak for the establishment after having benefited themselves by promoting separate organisation. The value of separate organisation can diminish organically but this would require external support and solidarity for the rights of the oppressed group to grow enough to allow group members to feel able to build bridges and alliances with others outside of their group. Progressive rather than assimilationist approaches to integration and cohesion involve developing bonds of solidarity and principled alliances in contrast to initiatives led primarily by managerial social policy that condemns alls forms of separate provision.

The Final Report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) made some headway in recognising some of the weaknesses in the way that the cohesion agenda has been shaped to date. The authors noted that 'addressing political extremism must be distinguished from addressing issues relating to integration and cohesion' (p.15), inferring that the White Paper's linkage of the two is at best spurious. Crucially, the Final Report also emphasised the importance of tackling discrimination:

> *if the discrimination experienced by some groups within our society continues, we will not be able to achieve the goals we set out in this report for building integration and cohesion.* (p.28)

In recognition of this, there is an acknowledgement of the importance that needs to be placed on a sense of justice and fairness as well as rights and responsibilities.

The interim report of the Commission was widely publicised as focusing on the importance of migrants learning English. The Final Report of the Commission has in fact been highly constructive, criticising the idea that integration requires assimilation, arguing for recognition of local factors within a national framework and promoting the notion that:

> *integration and cohesion are about how all individuals and communities contribute and participate – not just something that belongs to national or local Government. ... that to build integration and cohesion properly, there needs to be a wider commitment to civil society, and respect for others.* (p. 77).

Furthermore, the Commission reviewed the established definition of a 'cohesive community' and produced a new typology:

An integrated and cohesive community is one where:

- *There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country*
- *There is a strong sense of an individual's rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn*
- *Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment*
- *There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny*
- *There is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common*
- *There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace*

The typology is underlined by the idea that each area needs to be understood in its local as well as its wider context so that, for example, in areas where there are settled BME communities who have concerns about new migrants, that processes are put in place to ensure that claims for resources are managed fairly. Of course, what the report cannot address is the reality that for as long as vital resources that communities and their young people need are shrinking, rivalry and competition for them is likely to intensify. The form that the tensions take may vary and be exacerbated by national politicians and media scares of too many migrants from Africa or Eastern Europe. Moreover, for as long as people

are racialised and divided by nationality rather than coming together under a notion of international citizenship, the source of unhealthy divisions at a local level and systematic oppression – which is not acknowledged by the Final Report – will not be eradicated.

This shift from tackling structural problems like racism to focusing on the way that diverse communities should live together in the framework of a common culture has taken place as a result of two key developments in the 1980s. One of these was a shift from the state being seen as the source of racism to becoming the site of anti-racism in the 1980s. This process transferred our focus from building a wider social movement against structural discrimination and oppression into changing policies and organisations.

A second development was a political settlement by the 1990s between the state and the black and anti-racist movement. The settlement centred on the integration of BME professionals and politicians into the mainstream, to create a process through which potentially militant activists emerging from community action could be emasculated. Crudely, minority professionals and politicians entered the mainstream in exchange for resources, influence and representation for minorities (Shukra 1998). They became representatives of minority civility: the respectable BME communities. Meanwhile they distanced themselves from trouble-makers and 'incivility' – namely, the undesirable elements outside their sphere of influence.

As the normative settlement developed on the basis of jointly agreed notions of what constituted civil or acceptable/respectable behaviours and responses and what did not, middle England has been able to support respectable BME people, even when this pits them against the incivility of unrespectable white people. This explains why Stephen Lawrence and his family, who symbolised new black British civility received widespread support against unrespectable white youth who are believed to have killed him. It also explains the antagonism to Jade Goody in Channel 4's Big Brother house and the overwhelming support for respectable Indian celebrity, Shilpa Shetty.

In return for endorsing respectable minorities, the state is allowed free rein to attack unrespectable minorities. Thus it has become open season on unrespectable ethnic minorities whether they be those classified as illegal immigrants, terror suspects or criminals of some other sort. As perceived 'bearers of incivility' they are deported, detained, jailed or, since 9/11, kept in Belmarsh and Guantanamo or shot in police raids. Those trying to get into Britain by whatever means are equally treated as criminals rather than people who seek refuge in a state of desperation.

The ideological process of creating support for the normative settlement involved the construction of recognisable agents of incivility. Hall et al (1978) identified how black youth in the 1970s were turned into folk devils through the creation of 'mugging' as a new crime which in turn received widespread media coverage, producing a 'moral panic'. Today this is replicated with Asian youth being turned into the new folk devils as home grown terrorists, gang members or rioters while the criminalisation process makes them difficult to defend. Similarly, the new moral panics focus on the myriad dangers and strangeness of others in our midst – from veil wearing women to bearded Asian men who become stereotyped as potential suicide bombers. They are all seen to fall outside mainstream values of what is

acceptable, respectable or part of a common British culture.

Mainstream youth work driven by what could be a positive citizenship and participation agenda, increasingly has cohesion grafted onto it. Some of the work shaped by these policy concerns in schools and youth clubs aim to train young people to be what Crick (1998) calls 'politically literate' citizens. For Crick, political literacy is about a 'compound of knowledge, skills and attitudes'. Characterised by participation in youth parliaments, youth councils or Operation Black Vote-style initiatives learning how to use institutions is the way to develop political literacy (Shukra, et al 2004). This fits the community cohesion framework.

An anti-oppressive model of citizenship education and youth work, however, would need to expand Crick's definition so that 'politically literate' citizens can recognise and challenge racism as an anti-democratic force. This might draw on Freire's notion of political education and so be more consistent with youth and community work with a focus on deliberative democracy, developing critiques of structures and social change rather than voting and conformity. These could be the basis of new community solidarities built on fighting discrimination and oppression. In the process, communities might themselves arrive at compromises through their everyday interactions rather than relying on New Labour institutions to define 'citizenship' and 'Britishness' and then forcing people to sign up to it. The language and framework of community cohesion led youth work is a managerial one that seeks to contain and direct people's lives by reducing difference. It is at the expense of young people's freedom to forge their own identities, relationships and solidarities in the process of challenging oppression and discrimination. The challenge we face is to keep these freedoms alive in our youth work.

Note

1 These included Gus John, Darcus Howe, A. Sivanandan, John La Rose, Martha Ossamer, Southall Black Sisters, various Asian Youth Movements and my own late colleagues Lionel van Reenen and Courtney Tulloch.

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The National Youth Agency
Getting it right for young people

The making of leaving care policy 1971–2008

Mike Stein

This article tells the story of the main developments in leaving care policy in England and Wales, from the introduction of Social Services Departments in 1971 to the Children and Young Person's Act which entered the Statute Book April 2008. It is a story of how wider contextual influences, including opportunities and constraints, common to all young people, have interacted with a more parochial child welfare agenda, and the agency and actions of many, including young people in care themselves, in the making of leaving care policy.

Social services and leaving care policy 1971–1989

By the beginning of the 1970s it seemed social work had developed a strong professional identity and a clear vision of the future. The growing influence and power of social work was exemplified by the key role of childcare experts in shaping the Children and Young Person's Act 1969, and, by its contribution to the Seebohm Report, in determining the future organisation of social services. But at the same time as the internal dynamic for professional unity and growth was reaching its peak the external context was changing. The consensus surrounding the belief in the good society was evaporating.

The rediscovery of poverty, greater recognition of a range of social problems including inner-city deprivation, homelessness, ethnic conflict and educational under-achievement, combined with challenges to traditional forms of authority and authority relations by 'new' pressure groups and social movements, to point to a far more uncertain future. A professional culture which had stabilised itself around a psychodynamic world view and which focused exclusively upon the pathology of the individual, or family, as both a cause and solution, was being challenged. The new curriculum included anti-psychiatry, deviance theory and Marxism, the new practice welfare rights, community work and advocacy. The total equalled radical social work (Pearson 1975).

More specifically, the reorganisation of the personal social services and the introduction of the Children and Young Person's Act 1969, both in 1971, far from leading to a comprehensive after-care service within the new departments, resulted in the decline of specialist after-care work in many local authorities. The end of the Probation Service's involvement in after-care, with no commensurate transfer of resources to the new social service departments, as envisaged by Seebohm, the replacement of Approved School Orders with the new all purpose Care Orders, and the related re-designation of approved schools as Community Homes with Education, all contributed to the demise of the specialist after-care officer.

Also, specialist work with adolescents, either living in children's homes (now designated

Community Homes) or after they left care, became a very low priority among the new front line generic social workers – and many fieldwork practitioners were new and untrained following the post-Seebohm bureaucratisation of social services. Care leavers became a forgotten group. But it was not too long before their voices were heard. Against the wider background of the major social changes outlined above, as well as the emergence of an embryonic children's rights movement, there was a re-awakening of leaving care in the professional and political consciousness.

From as early as 1973 small groups of young people living in care came together to talk about their experiences of living in children's homes, of being on 'the receiving end'. Local 'in care' groups, the *Who Cares?* project, Black and In Care and the National Association of Young People in Care, in different ways, began to unlock the feelings and views of young people about care, and in particular, the connections between their lives in care and their lives after care. A major theme that emerged from the voices of young people was their lack of power over their lives, for example, in relation to their use of money, their attendance at their own reviews, their opportunities to shop, cook and generally to participate while in care. And the dependency created by care was related to their fears about leaving care ((Stein 1983; Collins and Stein 1989).

A major gap in our knowledge in the post-war period was the absence of any research into after-care. But this was beginning to change from the second half of the 1970s with the publication of mainly small-scale descriptive studies (Stein and Carey 1986; Stein 2004). The main impact of these studies was to highlight for the first time the problems and challenges experienced by young people leaving care. Such findings included the lowering of the age at which young people left care, often as young as 16, and were expected to live independently. Changes in childcare law and practice introduced during the 1970s (as a result of the Children and Young Person's Act 1969), contributed to this. For where as the old Approved School Orders, parental rights resolutions and Fit Person Orders combined legal prescription and high level committee authority with normative expectations in determining the age of discharge from care, discretionary welfare, embodied in the new Care Order, was far more subject to individual social work judgement and external constraint – the latter including pragmatic concerns, such as the pressure on residential care places. An ironic situation given the hopes riding on the new welfare thinking to contribute to a more needs led practice.

The low priority afforded to these young people in the new generic social service departments has already been commented upon. There was to be little improvement in after-care services during the 1970s and early 1980s, for against a background of successive child abuse inquiries, child protection work increasingly became the main preoccupation (Parton 1985). In addition, where as an emerging welfare model had gone hand-in-hand with the commitment of the pre-Seebohm childcare officer to assist these young people, radical social work and the new curriculum, including the developing children's rights discourse, was a far more contradictory force. It did, as has been argued, provide a climate for the re-awakening of leaving care in the political and professional consciousness, particularly through its support for advocacy and in-care groups. But it was a crude practice nourished on a very basic diet of Marxism (Pearson 1975). It didn't want to know about residential care, about more bricks in the wall. And even less about those behind the wall.

Also, subsequent policy developments during this period, however progressive in themselves, did not serve these young people well. The persistence of the institutional critique and the closely linked and enduring popularity of community care, both underpinned by a rare academic and political consensus, the rise of the permanency movement to greatly increase the use of adoption and fostering, and the managerial and professional drive to prevent and divert young people from entering care, all reinforced the same message: residential care is bad. And it was – and a lot worse than was realised at the time given recent revelations of physical and sexual abuse (Utting 1991, 1997; House of Commons 2000; Colton 2002; Stein, 2006).

During these years residential care increasingly operated in a climate of denial and welfare planning blight, as well as in a philosophical and theoretical void. But young people leaving foster care were neither seen as leaving care in a formal sense – the assumption being that they would continue to be supported by their foster carers. In this context, little thought was given to preparation for leaving care or to the type and extent of after-care support needed. Social Service Departments were thus, in the main, unprepared for the major changes in society and in social legislation that were to have such a significant impact upon the lives of care leavers.

From the late 1970s onwards there have been profound economic and social changes, changes described and analysed as post-Fordism and, more recently, by the other 'post' – post modernism (Clarke 1996). And, whereas the former captures the processes of economic reorganisation in advanced industrial societies, the latter suggests a new post – or late? – modern era of fundamental and complex transformations in the social, economic, cultural and technological spheres (Giddens 1991). The decline in traditional industries, the development in new technologies and the dramatic rise in youth unemployment during the 1980s had a major impact upon the lives of many young people. And, whereas in the past a highly stratified job market had been able to provide opportunities for all, whatever their level of education, the low levels of educational attainment of most care leavers now left them ill-prepared to compete in an increasingly competitive youth labour market. As a consequence a high proportion of care leavers were unemployed and dependent on some form of benefit and therefore living in, or on, the margins of poverty (Barnardo's 1996; Stein 1990).

In March 1980 the plight of homeless adolescents first became a headline story following the media take-up of Christian Wolmar's article *Out of Care* that appeared in Shelter's magazine *Roof*. The author's combative exposé of homeless ex-care young people in London, drifting from hostels to squats to railway arches, led directly to Shelter setting up Homebase (which later became First Key, then National Leaving Care Advisory Service) as a response to the inadequate housing provision being made by local authorities for young people leaving care. Following Wolmar's revelations, two studies, published in 1981, showed that over a third of single homeless people had experienced local authority care (DoE 1981; SCSH 1981).

The actions and self organisation of young people themselves, the findings from researchers, the increased awareness by practitioners and managers of the problems faced by care leavers, and the campaigning activities of Shelter and First Key, provided the

momentum for a change to the law in relation to leaving care, which had remained much the same as the Children Act 1948. However, after all the evidence had been considered, and the law reviewed, there was only to be one significant obligatory change between the new Children Act 1989 and the 'old' Children Act 1948, a new duty, under Section 24(1), 'to advise, assist and befriend young people who are looked after with a view to promote their welfare when they cease to be looked after.' New permissive powers were introduced under Section 24, 'to advise and befriend other young people under 21 who were cared for away from home' – thus widening the target group for after-care support, and under Section 27, 'the power to request the help of other local authorities, including any local housing authority to enable them to comply with their duties to provide accommodation'. But other than that there was far more of the old than the new in the 1989 Act – the old duty to advise and befriend young people under 21 who were looked-after remained, as did the permissive powers to provide financial assistance.

In fairness, it could be argued that the Children Act 1989 Act introduced a far more progressive legal framework as a general context for care leavers, given the connections between the lives of young people in families, in-care and after-care. In this sense, the new provisions for family support services, for the inclusion of children with disabilities, for the recognition of culture, language, racial origin and religion, for consultative rights, for the accommodation of children in need, and for new rights to complain, are all to be welcomed. But this should not detract from the way that social work policy and practice failed many of these young people during much of this period.

The Children Act 1989 and continuing care

The Children Act 1989, described 'as the most comprehensive and far reaching reform of child care law which has come before Parliament in living memory', was introduced in October 1991 (Smith 1989:1). But, as detailed above, it could not have been implemented at a more difficult time for care leavers – the virtual end of the traditional job market, shrinking housing options, major cuts in welfare benefits and reduced expenditure on public services.

The reform of social security (by the Social Security Acts 1986 and 1988) based on the 'guarantee' of youth training and the assumption that families should take greater financial responsibilities for their young people, ended income support for 16 and 17-year-olds, except in severe hardship, and abolished 'householder status' for under 25s, by the introduction of lower rates of income support for this age group. Although campaigning activity by care leavers resulted in exceptions for them to receive income support at 16 and 17 for limited periods, the differential age rates of income support remained in place, resulting in demands on social services to provide 'top-up' payments in order to prevent young people from experiencing extreme poverty, deprivation and homelessness (Barnardo's 1996; Stein 1990).

From the mid-1980s, in response to the increasingly desperate situation facing many young people leaving care, some voluntary organisations and local authorities – but by no means all – pioneered specialist leaving care schemes and projects. Planning for the 1989 Act also

increased the profile and awareness of leaving care within many local authorities and the introduction of specialist schemes was seen by social services as a way of meeting their new legal responsibilities under the Children Act 1989.

For some local authorities the 1989 Act provided the legislative framework for a comprehensive range of leaving care services through the provision of specialist leaving care schemes integrated within an overall general childcare strategy linking care and after-care (Biehal et al 1995; Stein and Wade 2000). However, the more general picture in England and Wales was of great variation in the funding, range and quality of service provision, as well as the complex, inconsistent and discouraging wider social policy framework – confirmed by a wide range of sources including research findings, the Social Service Inspectorate, and the Action on Aftercare Consortium. Research findings from Scotland and Northern Ireland revealed a similar picture (Garnett 1992; Biehal et al 1995; Barnardo's 1996; DoH 1997; Broad 1998; Pinkerton and McCrea 1999; Stein 1999; Stein et al 2000; Dixon and Stein 2005).

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

The Labour government, elected in 1997, in its response to the Children's Safeguards Review, following revelations of widespread abuse in children's homes, committed itself to legislate for new and stronger duties for care leavers. William Utting, who chaired the Review, had drawn attention to the plight of 16-year-old care leavers, 'unsupported financially and emotionally, without hope of succour in distress' (Utting 1997). In addition, the research evidence cited above was persuasive.

The proposed changes, detailed in the consultation document, *Me, Survive, Out There?* were to build upon Labour's modernisation programme for children's services in England (DoH 1999). This included the *Quality Protects* initiative introduced in 1998 in England and provided substantial central government funding linked to specific service objectives. In relation to young people leaving care objective 5 was to 'ensure that young people leaving care, as they enter adulthood, are not isolated and participate socially and economically as citizens'. Three performance indicators linked to this objective were:

> *for young people looked after at the age of 16, to maximise the number engaged in education, training or employment at 19; to maximise the number of young people leaving care after their sixteenth birthday who are still in touch... on their nineteenth birthday; to maximise the number of young people leaving care on or after their sixteenth birthday who have suitable accommodation at the age of 19.* (DoH, 1998)

Also, in England, wider government initiatives to combat social exclusion, including the introduction of the Connexions Service, and initiatives to tackle youth homelessness, under achievement in education, employment and training, and adolescent parenthood sought to impact upon care leavers (SEU 1998; 1999). Indeed, the changing economic climate combined with the restructuring of post-16-year-old education and training resulted in reductions in youth unemployment – although there continue to be regional variations, as well as stratification by class, gender, disability and ethnicity, and the continued expansion

of low paid jobs in the service industries – and a combination of more opportunities and more risks.

Against this background the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 was introduced in England and Wales October 2001. Its main aims are to delay young people's transitions from care until they are prepared and ready to leave; strengthen the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care; provide better personal support for young people after-care; and to improve the financial arrangements for care leavers. To meet these aims the main provisions of the Act apply to different groups of 'eligible', 'relevant', 'former relevant', and 'qualifying' young people – (see Chapter 2 of the Guidance for a clear explanation of who gets what (DoH, 2001)). The key responsibilities are: to assess and meet the needs of young people in and leaving care; pathway planning; the appointment of personal advisers to provide advice and support to young people; to participate in needs assessment and pathway planning, to co-ordinate services; to be informed about progress and well-being and to keep records of contact; assistance with education and training up to the age of 24; financial support for 'eligible' (young people looked after at 16 and 17) and 'relevant'(16 and 17 year old young people who have left care); maintenance in suitable accommodation; and a duty to keep in touch by the 'responsible authority', that is by the local authority that 'looked-after' the young person.

Policy, practice and challenges post-Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

The new legal framework has provided an opportunity for improving services and thus the level of resources for young people leaving care. Surveys of the work of leaving care teams carried out before and after the Act point to improvements in financial support, increases in the proportion of young people entering post-16 education and related reductions in those not in education, employment or training (Broad 1998, 1999, 2005). But overall, educational outcomes remain poor in comparison to normative samples of young people. However, normative education outcome measures are a blunt instrument by themselves: some young people do well, and others make a lot of progress, although this often goes unrecognised by the use of normative outcome data as the main measure of attainment.

There has also been a strengthening and clarification of roles towards care leavers through needs assessments and pathway planning and a greater involvement in inter-agency work (Hai and Williams 2004). However, the research evidence also reveals a wide degree of variation in the funding, range and quality of services between local authorities (Broad 2005). Such territorial injustices are likely to remain a major challenge, although one way of assessing the impact of the Act could be by the reductions in such inequalities.

What is also important as well as quantity is the quality of resource relationships. Young people who had successful transitions out of care not only had more access to resources they also had a lot more inter-active relationships. They were, for example, able *to* negotiate decent housing, secure meaningful employment or work, participate in community and leisure activities, and engage in education. Also, they were able to participate in 'general' or open access community activities and opportunities as distinct from 'specialist' leaving

care provision – although the latter can often pave the way for the former. There is a lot of practice evidence from the 1980s onwards showing that leaving care services have played a major role in involving young people at different levels: policy consultation, training as well as in individual practice. The Act should continue this momentum (Stein 2004).

Not all groups of young people are benefiting equally under the Act. There is research evidence that young disabled people are being denied access to mainstream leaving care services partly as a consequence of poor communication between disabilities' teams, leaving care services and adult services (Hai and Williams 2004). The Act has also been criticised for not including young disabled people who are 'high level' respite users (Priestley et al, 2003). Also, some young unaccompanied asylum seeking young people may be excluded from the Act if they are being supported under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 instead of being accommodated (Wade et al 2005). The needs of specific groups of care leavers could also be given more prominence: the racism experienced by minority ethnic young people (Barn 2005); and the lack of support for young parents, in their own right, not just as an extension of child protection concerns (Chase and Knight 2006).

There has been, albeit more recently, research evidence of the mental health problems of looked-after young people (McCann et al 1996; Cheung and Buchanan 1997; Dumaret et al 1997; Koprowska and Stein 2000; Meltzer et al 2003). For most of these young people their problems are associated with their damaging pre-care experiences within their families. These mental health problems are likely to have contributed to the reasons for them coming into care in the first place as well as being associated with poor outcomes after care.

Every Child Matters, Care Matters and the Children and Young Person's Act

In 2003 the government published the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (2003). It identified four key themes: increasing the focus on supporting parents and carers; early intervention and effective protection; strengthening accountability and the integration of services at all levels; and workforce reform. The government's aim for all children and young people, whatever their background or circumstances, was to have the support they need to improve outcomes in five key areas: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. Published alongside the government's response to the report into the death of Victoria Climbié, *Every Child Matters* resulted in a major consultation exercise and review of children's services, leading to the Children Act 2004, the latter strengthening the legal framework to protect and safeguard children from harm. In November 2004, *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* identified new ways in which all organisations involved with children and young people could work better together. In 2005, *Youth Matters* (2005) set out the government's priorities to support young people outside of schools, including action to give young people more say in how their needs are met.

In October 2006 the government published their Green Paper *Care Matters: Transforming the lives of Children and Young People in Care* against the background of continuing evidence of poor educational and career outcomes for looked after children (Wade and

Dixon 2006). The wide range of responses to this document, including a major consultation exercise with young people in care, conducted by the What Makes A Difference project, contributed to the White Paper, *Care Matters: time for change* published in June 2007. Its main proposals constituted the Children and Young Person's Act introduced in parliament in November 2007 and which became law in amended form in 2008, as well as a *Care Matters* implementation plan, to be introduced during the following year.

In respect of improving the experience of children and young people at school and in care this includes: restricting school moves; ensuring children and young people remain in placements until they are ready to leave; introducing a 'virtual school head' who, at a local authority level, will be responsible for improving the attainment of children and young people in care; putting the role of a designated teacher for young people in care on a statutory footing in order to help them overcome barriers to their learning; provide financial support to enable children and young people in care to access wider provision outside of school, and to assist those who go onto Higher Education. In addition, social work practices and extended foster care placements are to be piloted.

Furthermore the detailed proposals contained within the White Paper, *Care Matters*, for improving education, are consistent with the main ideas informing the *Children's Plan: building brighter futures* published in December 2007, in particular, reaching out to disadvantaged groups through 'personalised' teaching, learning and support, as well as the recognition of emotional and behavioural difficulties, as obstacles to educational progress.

Conclusion

During the last 30 years many have struggled and campaigned, not least young people in care themselves, to highlight the problems faced by care leavers. The introduction of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 represented a major step forward. However, as detailed above, significant challenges remain. The test of the *Care Matters* agenda will be if it leads to more comprehensive responses across the life-course of *all* looked after young people, including access to services wherever they are living. These service should include: early help to assist young people living at home; better quality care to compensate young people for their damaging pre-care experiences, through stability and continuity as well as assistance to overcome educational deficits; opportunities for more gradual transitions from care to adulthood more akin to normative transitions; a range of on going support into adulthood for all those young people who need it including specialist help for young people with mental health problems and complex needs.

Finally it will also be important that this highly vulnerable group of young people do not become hidden within the universal *Every Child Matters* outcomes framework. Their journey to adulthood may well be more severe and hazardous than for many other young people, and may take longer, but they should be given the help they need. To improve their well-*being* will contribute to their well-*becoming*. As we know from this short history, a failure to assist them will be at an enormous cost, both to them and to society.

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Young people, politics and participation: a youth work perspective

Tony Taylor

'The soul of the young citizen has become the object of government through expertise' (Rose 1991: 131)

In 1980, when *Youth and Policy* was but a twinkle in the eyes of its founders, two idealistic youth workers were being disciplined. They had been found guilty of 'corrupting youth'. Their crime was to support an embryo youth council, a bunch of a dozen or so young folk, who had within the pages of their newsletter, *Bog Off*, criticised the tokenism of professionals and councillors alike. The workers' defence was that their practice was founded firmly on the principles of the Service's Programme of Action, which declared its support for Brecht's 'little fishes' and its commitment to hearing the voice of young people. During the Show Trial played out before the Youth Advisory Committee, management satirised the workers' naiveté, 'fancy believing in rhetoric on paper!' The fledgling Youth Council was scattered to the wind. The exercise in participation and political education excised from the Authority's history.

Some months later, the sobered, if not contrite youth workers, of whom I was one, reflected on their fall from grace, noting the blockages to moving forward a participative praxis:

> *the rigidity of hierarchical structures, the flaccid response of many youth workers to authority; the insidious grip of common-sense; and [their] own specific failure to build a solid base of support within and without the Service.* (Ratcliffe and Taylor 1981: 27)

Speaking at a *Youth Work and Crisis* conference held in March 1981, we argued that politics and participation ought to be the closest of comrades, bereft without one another. Yet, our experience was that youth work seemed embarrassed by their possible intimacy, scared of their potential solidarity. This false separation had to be overcome. We aspired, perhaps pretentiously, to forge an explicit, self-conscious politicised practice 'on the side of young people'. Indeed, at the very same time, Davies (1981:36) was pleading passionately for 'the politicisation of social education and the humanising of political education'. We accused orthodox, mainstream youth work of hypocrisy. Its claim to be apolitical, masked an implicit, unconscious politicised practice 'on the side of the powerful'.

Of what consequence are such experiences and arguments over a quarter of a century later? Participation is once more on everyone's lips, the flavour of the New Labour decade. A chorus of consternation about not only young people's but a wider disaffection with politics has risen to a consensual crescendo. Is this the space wherein youth work can finally come of age, responding radically to democratic disillusionment in the name of young people or will it continue doing its Master's bidding?

So, how is the question of young people, politics and participation being understood today? For the Carnegie UK Trust (2008) politics is implicitly the arena of representative democracy at both the local and national level, which young people can influence primarily through the ballot box. Participation is understood to mean the involvement of young people aged 10-25 in public decision-making, about institutions' policies and programmes. This is hardly new and deeply limited. In contrast, by politics I mean the profound questions of who controls society, in whose interests do these people act and what can we do about it? By participation I intend the inter-related enigma of what serious influence do citizens, young or old, have upon the purpose and character of *their* societies?.

The Carnegie document, *Empowering Young People*, sycophantic to New Labour, typifies the thrust of contemporary social policy. It proposes that youth participation is vital:

- to bringing UK practice closer to the recommendations made by the UN Convention on the Rights of Children;
- to halting the increasing disengagement of young people from formal politics and the democratic process;
- to the modernisation of public services and organisations, to the youth-proofing of central and local government (Combe 2002);
- to reducing the concern that if young people are not drawn into the public embrace, anti-social behaviour will continue and even increase;
- to bridging what is perceived as the increasing separation of the worlds of adult and young people, leading to the deterioration of social stability;
- and to restoring a belief in the value of voting and in the necessity of politicians and political parties.

In seeking to persuade us of the efficacy of this argument the advocates of youth participation declare everyone will benefit:

- young people themselves will develop communication skills, enhancing their individual chances in the labour market;
- public services will improve their performance;
- and last, but not least, society will recover its bearings, as the lost social solidarities of the past are rediscovered and refashioned in the cloth of community cohesion. (see for example Rogers and Muir 2007)

This ambitious agenda will be delivered via such initiatives as the formation of a vanguard of 'champions' of participation within senior management, the inevitable introduction of quality standards, and a web-based, youth-oriented strategy of 'remixing and sampling' young citizenship. Leave aside my jaundiced reaction to a future in which 'Investing in People' plaques are replaced by those bearing the claim 'Investing in Participation', doubts lurk beneath the surface. Concern is expressed that a bottleneck of ignorance and misunderstanding inhibits the expansion of youth participation; that youth forums can become a conduit into professional politics for the acceptable, dedicated few; and that a quick-fix mentality prevails (Carnegie: 2008). This caution is very well-placed, but there is an understandable reluctance to delve deeper. To do so would require some serious reflection on history, practice and theory.

Historical precedents

Historically we've been here before and this is hardly surprising. Young people have long been sceptical about participation and politics, caught in their common-sense response that 'not much ever changes'. Given this collective stubbornness the state mounts initiatives to convince them otherwise. The Albemarle Report in 1959 proclaimed that young people should be the 'fourth partner' in actually running the youth service; the Youth Service Forum of 1970 discussed 'the alienation of the young and the need to enlist their commitment to the political process' and called for a national network of youth councils, the development of which, commented Thompson in 1982 was being 'constrained by ceremonial trappings and the formal machinery of committee meetings' (Davies 1999a: 134,145). With the arrival of modernised New Labour the participative push was given fresh impetus. Some seemed bowled over. Oliver (1999) welcomed the post-1997 embrace of social action principles, even suggesting that the ideas of Freire were moving to the centre stage. Others seemed underwhelmed. Jeffs (2005:8) questioned the absurdity of trusting politicians who 'have sacrificed democratic control to the highest bidder...yet now sermonise on citizenship and participation'. We will leave the last historical word to Davies (2008:141) who muses, 'how far had all the New Labour rhetoric and its myriad of initiatives merely served to oil the wheels of government by lessening irritating obstructions to what it wanted to achieve anyway'. Despite the propaganda young people remain unconvinced.

Elusive practice

What any of this rhetoric means in practice bedevils all comers? Given the fragile nature of the youth service, the imperative of survival, the bulk of its writing is self-justificatory and sterile, aimed at management, the employers and funding agencies. Self-criticism is not the name of the game. Thus the National Youth Agency 'participation' case studies are based on a proforma, which, in imposing the outcomes desired by *Every Child Matters*, squeezes the very life out of the material submitted. Such formulaic accounting, within which everything goes swimmingly, seems sufficient for the bureaucracy's needs. Yet, on the other side of the coin, things are little better. There are precious few reflective, detailed stories about contradictory, unpredictable attempts to foster a participative praxis. Although the interview with Paul Bradshaw (1981) around 'the theatre of participation' shows the potential of this way of uncovering the greasepaint of practice, something that it would be good to revive. Reading between the lines it is possible to smell the cordite of conflict, where young people have taken policy at its word. It would be fascinating to unearth the true tale of the demise of the post-1945 network of youth councils, set up to dampen rather than ignite political activism, but infiltrated by 'bolshie' elements (Jeffs 2005). Our minor fracas in Wigan, the aborted Youth Council, was inspired partly by the grand words of the Milson-Fairbairn Report, 'to establish a dialogue between the young and the rest of society: a dialectical and not necessarily amicable process'. However, it was Milson himself perturbed that we might be taking him seriously, who had gone public, 'tarring (radicals) with the dreaded Marxist brush' (Davies 1999a:126,192). Proud to be described thus, we recognised that our stumbling efforts towards 'opening up political issues (had) precipitated moral panic and the bureaucratic guillotine' (Ratcliffe and Taylor 1981: 29).

Therefore, whilst the literature is strewn with references to 'good' and 'best' practice, rarely do we get within touching distance of what this might mean. Of course, this is a relief for all those wishing to dodge the ideological character and purpose of all work with young people. To take the obvious example at the heart of this discussion, in what differing ways do we view the hoped-for outcome of social policy, the 'good' young citizen? Is she Plato's conformist citizen, content to consume and comment, to be led and represented? Or is she Aristotle's dissenting citizen, for whom all things are open to question, capable both of governing and being governed?

Theoretical myopia

Whether one is reading a Government sponsored paper (DfES 2001), a think tank commentary (Rogers and Muir 2007), the advice of the Rowntree Foundation (White et al 2000) or even some articles in *Youth and Policy* a certain unanimity of outlook prevails. Accepting utterly the status quo, the dominant focus is on behavioural, technical and managerial adjustment. In terms of the young individual, she must become 'self-regulating', able to make the right and responsible choices about her own health and safety, the products she wants, the level of participation she desires and the political leaders and representatives she trusts (Clarke 2005). In return the political class itself must become more empathetic, more skilled at conversing with and listening to its young constituents (Morris: 2006). These shifts in personal and social behaviour amongst young people and adults will contribute to the renewal of social capital, to improved collective practices expressed through social networking (Keaney: 2006) and through the reworking of a sense of Britishness and civic obligation. In this way both the lonely, isolated citizen and the lonely, disconnected representative will vanish from the political scene (Rogers: 2004). This remarkable process of metamorphosis will require significant technical support. Handbooks of advice and activities (Kirby et al 2003), practice standards, benchmarking tools and deliberative techniques (SCF: 2005) are all required. On the organisational level, local and national government must be modernised (Geddes and Rust 2000), alongside the continued need to support the UK Youth Parliament and rejuvenated youth councils (Hilton 2005; Matthews et al 1998).

Insofar, as any notion of power insinuates itself into this discourse, it surfaces in the form of Adultism. Contrarily this abstraction, the general adult, is one moment politically inadequate, but in the next a model of moral maturity and self-control to be contrasted with young people lacking a moral compass and out of hand. In the most sophisticated reading of the adult/ youth tension, Barber (2007) proposes an engagement zone, within which 'paedophobia' can be challenged and overcome. However this interesting model is undermined by its 'essentialism', by its failure to place age in its inextricable relation with class, gender, race, sexuality, disability and religion. The individual young person might be working-class, male, Asian, heterosexual, able-bodied and an atheist; the individual adult might be middle-class, female, white, lesbian, disabled and a Christian. Neither adults nor young people are homogenous categories. Adultism as a concept represents one relation of power, but its explanatory ability is diminished, if left to fend for itself. On a functional level too, adults and young people occupy different rungs in the hierarchy, wielding differing levels of influence over each other, usually but far from always in favour of the

elder. Not least, Adultism's pernicious influence is destructive, because it divides adults from young people within the very sphere of politics and participation, where they share common feelings of frustration and powerlessness. Much more illuminating is Martin's (2006) exploration of the relationship between political economy, a politics of structure and a politics of identity. He suggests that understanding people in terms of their 'multiple identities' forces us to rethink the relationship between power and diversity. He draws our attention to the value of the 'differentiated universalism' advocated by Lister and her emphasis on inclusive citizenship based on a politics of 'solidarity in difference' (Lister 1997:90).

In a nutshell the overarching instrumental perspective dominating policy resolves the Politics, Participation and Young People problematic through a programme of 'psychological restructuring' and institutional reform (Morley 1995). Even, on its own terms, this post-modern hybrid of social democratic and neo-liberal thinking seems likely to fail. My suspicion is that, if this is the way forward and the bulk of youth workers co-operate with its illusions, the 200th anniversary issue of *Youth & Policy* will carry another chapter bemoaning young people's alienation from politics and participation.

Thinking otherwise

However, thinking otherwise is not so easy. A form of 'cognitive closure' shuts off debate. Stepping outside of the set parameters and prescriptions is portrayed as dated and utopian. Thus we must reaffirm with one another that, at the very least, we are asking the right questions. If young people are less than enthusiastic about politics, what is the nature of the society which creates such disinterest; what is the character of so-called democracy and the political class; and what are the chances of changing anything?

We continue to live under the stifling embrace of a neo-liberal version of capitalist exploitation. In this scenario governments have deregulated and privatised, abandoning their citizens to the market; trade and capital mobility has accelerated; and the entire globe has opened its doors for business, but not without trouble. Crucially, though, what continues is the increasing 'capitalisation of power', the capacity of the ruling class to order society. If we wish to comprehend the motivation of the state, how its actions affect our relationship as youth workers to young people, we need to affirm the significance of political economy, once the very basis of critical social policy (Gough 1979). To my mind this means stressing that the rules for economic and political activity do not come from the outside through some abstract theory of utility or value. 'Whether imposed by rulers for the sake of power or crafted by ourselves for our own happiness, they are all made up by human beings' (Nitzan and Biehler: 2005:21). Thus the price of petrol, the wages of a young apprentice, the way in which the media interprets juvenile behaviour or the setting up of Youth Opportunity Funds are all the consequence of arguments across fractions of the ruling class, across their supporting cast of bureaucrats and politicians, about what is in their best interests. All of which is of immediate relevance to young people's lives; all of which is mediated by the intensity of our participation in the political struggle both to challenge and change those decisions.

All the more so, as the coming together of the market economy and representative democracy marks the formal separation of society from the economy and the state. Not only do we not control the product of our work, but we do not control political power. It is abandoned via elections to a political elite. We do not live in a democracy, but in a 'liberal oligarchy', where even the partial rights won through political struggle are threatened (Castoriadis 1997). To put the matter plainly, there can be no democracy without economic equality. Are we to believe seriously that our vote every blue moon matches the daily influence exerted by Rupert Murdoch? Representative democracy constitutes no challenge to the 'capitalisation of power'. It is in fact government of the people by their representatives (Parekh 1993) and even if the House is filled with civic-minded souls like Tony Benn, its function will not alter!

Such as Habermas (1996) and Giddens (1998) are the philosophers of democracy as procedure, apologists for the 'rule of law', parliamentary democracy and capitalism. Opposing them are such visionaries as Arendt and Castoriadis, for whom:

> *... political activity is not a means to an end, but an end in itself; one does not engage in political action simply to promote one's own welfare, but to realise the principles intrinsic to political life, such as freedom, equality, justice, solidarity, courage and excellence.* (Arendt, quoted Fotopoulos: 2008)

They imagine an inclusive democratic society which draws upon the forms of direct, collective decision-making created by those resisting the power of the elite, from the Diggers of 1649 and the Hungarian Councils of 1956 to today's Neighbourhood Committees in Bolivia (Mason 2007) and the 'horizontal' structures of the G8 Summit activists. Troubled by the continuity of this tradition, Coleman (2007: 8) attempts opportunistically to belittle 'direct democracy' in the name of 'direct representation', claiming that, on the basis of a MORI poll, that 'the public has no quarrel with the representational relation as such'. This Cisco-sponsored Oxford professor of e-democracy cannot contemplate a democracy composed of critical, reflective citizens, conscious of their intimate dependence on one another in making their own laws; a democracy that has no place for professional politicians.

There seems to be almost a 'gentleman's' agreement in the polite circles of research to ignore the authoritarian and hierarchical character of the contemporary political party, exemplified by New Labour. On the ground young people are asked, perhaps soon to vote at 16, to trust the good intentions of a party, which oversees a regime of surveillance and control aimed at the allegedly anti-social amongst them (Scraton 2007); to believe in the democratic rhetoric of a party, which exorcised dissension within its own ranks; and to excuse the hubris of such as Blair, Mandelson and Hain as accidental, rather than as a bureaucratic fascination with retaining power, whatever the cost (Michels 1919). Commentators and youth workers need beware their collusion with this charade.

To remind ourselves that politics is a struggle between those who accommodate to the system and those who resist suggests an alternative reading of why involvement in politics is low. To put it mildly, those in the red corner have taken a beating. The general retreat into conformism reflects the collapse of the labour movement, infected deeply

by bureaucracy itself, but to many eyes a cornerstone in their belief in a better society; it mirrors the rise and fall of the autonomous social movements organised around gender, race, sexuality and disability, their hopes diluted, their leaders incorporated; and it illustrates the ideological shift from a faith in solidarity, 'an injury to one is an injury to all' to the fetish of individualism. Yet this downhill journey is accompanied too by a well-placed scepticism about the oft petty 'courtier politics' being acted out before us, the recycling of parties in facsimile. This antagonism is not born of ignorance, an outcome of democratic deficiency. Its source is democratic disillusionment. At present the revulsion provoked remains dominant. This will not be reversed by the 'deconstruction' and managerial resuscitation of a civil society, which at best will offer only opinion and advice to the real decision-makers. But what might be an alternative road?

'Stand up for your rights'

To dwell upon this brings us to the question of ourselves, be we young people, youth workers or citizens; to our part in making history. Conversations amongst workers, particularly in the last three years reveal that despondency seems widespread (Critically Chatting meetings, November 2005 to March 2008). There has been no collective, militant defence against the assault upon youth work's 'soul' waged in the name of new managerialism, its imposition of targets and accredited, prescribed outcomes. Oliver (2002) points to the 'powerlessness' experienced by Connexions Personal Advisors in the midst of the Service's supposed focus on a participatory methodology. Individual workers resisting the imperative feel isolated and vulnerable. In this context we are forced to wonder: if youth workers lack the will to defend their supposed philosophy and practice, even their own conditions in the workplace, why do we think they will do anything else but accept the government's imposed prescription for youth participation?

My conjecture is that there is a relationship between youth workers standing up for themselves and young people doing likewise; between youth workers seeking control over their own work and young people seeking control over their own lives. From my own experience I'll pick out a few scattered moments where youth workers and young people fed off one another's energy in the creation of a participative, self-conscious, politicised practice:

- In the late 70s and early 80s, the formation of a militant local trade union branch and the afore-mentioned would-be Youth Council; the struggle by a Women Workers' Group for recognition and the flowering of girls' only groups; the impact of a feminist and socialist detached team, working and living on a deprived council estate and the emergence of a campaigning Play and Youth Association;
- In the mid-late 80s the presence in a mining village of an indigenous former Clay Cross rebel councillor, political activist and youth worker, a thorn in the side of the bureaucracy and young people's control of the local youth club;
- In this century the history of a close-knit workforce with a feisty tradition of resisting management diktat, of supporting harassed black youth against the police and the development, full of contradictions, of a long-standing participation initiative into a Young Mayor's Project (Shukra et al: 2004).

These contentious impressions are lent some weight on the broader front by suggesting a relationship between workers transforming and creating their own independent political collectives and their commitment to the autonomous activity of young people – for instance, the appearance of the Community and Youth Workers' Union from 1979 onwards, and the impact of its Women's, Black and even Socialist Caucuses; in 1980 the formation of the National Organisation for Work with Girls and Young Women; and in 1982 the appearance of the Black Youth and Community Workers' Association (Davies: 1999b). Suggestively, Millar (1995) intimates that where feminist workers, black workers, lesbian and gay workers identified themselves with the same struggles as the young people with whom they work, a strong 'anti-professional' strand emerged. It is difficult though to establish the authenticity of my proposal, not least because contradictions abound. In the face of a societal antagonism towards equality of participation, even the most democratic of ephemeral youth work projects or longer-lasting organisations can degenerate, lapsing into orthodoxy. So too the would-be radical facilitators can be seduced and co-opted , some converting into the most committed advocates of 'new managerialism' and 'community cohesion' (Shukra: 1998).

In today's circumstances being a democratically inclined young person or youth worker is tough. The social convulsions which spark political questioning and action seem absent (Kocheva and Wallace: 1993). The social forces, which inspired the efforts of workers around the time of *Youth and Policy*'s birth, are in hibernation. Yet, Capitalism is in a critical, if not life-threatening condition. Troubled by a crisis of meaning and legitimacy, its servant, New Labour considers seriously introducing mandatory voting and is advised to introduce compulsory participation for young people in positive activities (Margo et al 2006). Do these anxious proposals signify the opening of an opportunity to revive a dissident democratic practice?

To be honest I'm uncertain. I am inspired, though, by the possibility of a wider and deeper debate within and beyond youth work about the meaning of young people, politics and participation. The following individuals and groups seem to me to be opening up old and new windows around Shaw's (2007) distinction between *policy* [the top-down imperatives of the State] and *politics* [the bottom-up aspirations of the *demos*]:

- The Scottish Community Education and Development tradition has much to teach us with its self-critical recognition of the ways it has been often recuperated to serve the State (Shaw et al 2006): with its emphasis that the democratic struggle is based on the autonomy of collective action, within which dissent is celebrated not suppressed and with its declaration that as professionals 'we need to stake our claim to political activism and organising' (Emejulu 2006: 16).
- From a European perspective, Coussee (2008) asks us to engage with what he calls the youth work paradox. Official practices seem to empower the already powerful, articulate youth, whilst only policing the vulnerable and disaffected.
- The Black and Anti-Racist Movement's contemporary thinkers remind us of the centrality of 'self-determination' and 'no reliance on the state'; that racism is an anti-democratic force; and on the basis of globalisation and internationalism question the very idea of a singular citizenship loyal to the nation-state (Ibrahim 2004; Shukra 2007).
- The journal, *Youth and Policy* features critical commentators such as Morley (1995), who marks participation as a manipulative strategy masking the harshness of market-

oriented policies; France (1996), who sees 'active citizenship' as the neo-liberal project to remoralise society; McCulloch (1999), who, underlines young people's right to a voice outside of officially sanctioned structures; Mayo (1999), who ponders the role of workers in organising with and for youth in the trade unions; and Jeffs [2005], who urges all of us to become courageous citizens.

The Federation of Detached Youth Work continues to defend an improvisatory, democratic practice of equals, founded on a critical dialogue around young people's place in the 'public space', conscious that neither politics nor participation can be imposed from either above or below (Tiffany 2008). Whilst Spence (2007) teases out into the open the hidden voices of practitioners silenced by statistics, Davies (2005) lays out a campaigning Manifesto centred on education as a forever 'unfinished process'. Without a democratic *paideia*, how will we create democracy?

Give that present social policy and research believes that this is 'as good as it gets', holding to some idea that history has ended (Fukuyama 1992), the managerial attempt to secure young people's participation will be endlessly recycled. When push comes to shove, young people will take direct action, as over the Iraq War, whatever the government desires. But, more narrowly, within youth work, politics and participation will only spring to life when youth workers and young people together challenge and seek to change what is being imposed upon them. To paraphrase Castoriadis, the powerful wish to exclude us from decision-making, yet they cannot survive without our participation. But, when our creativity breaks free, they fear for their very existence. Therefore, metaphorically speaking, our political task, young and old, is to frighten them to death!

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The article **'Teaching' Values in Pre-qualifying Youth and Community Work Education** which appeared on pages 57 to 72 of the above special issue of *Youth and Policy* on Youth Work Training was written by **Susan Cooper and not Susan Cooper Bradford** as attributed on the contents page, contributors list, at the head of the article and on the outside back cover. The National Youth Agency is sorry for this mistake.

Talk to Frank: youth lifestyles, branding and governmental rationality

Patrick Turner

In this article I shall be exploring the current state of youth lifestyles primarily via an examination of a recent government public-health campaign on drugs aimed at youth and their parents *Talk to Frank*. This campaign marks an attempt by the government to 'orchestrate' 'changes to private behaviour' through the mobilization of some current youth cultural codes. I will begin with a summary and brief inventory of key specific features of changes in youth lifestyles over the past 25 years. In my discussion and analysis of materials from *Talk to Frank*, I will focus on what are commonly agreed to be the critical premises of contemporary youth lifestyles: namely, a blurring, or homogenisation of different social categories and groups, individuation and risk.

A curious feature of the evolution of young people's lifestyles over the past 25 years or so is that changes which have occurred have, on the one hand, been distinguished by the spectacle of a cultural homogenisation, and on the other, society's increasing individuation. How people from different backgrounds in what social theorists call 'late' or 'post' modernity live, play and consume no longer straightforwardly maps onto 'modern' ideas of social-class or to a simple correspondence model of lifestyle and leisure as a reflection of economic stratification. It is true that for quite some time now all youth have been able to buy cigarettes, have sex[1] and marry at sixteen, drive a car at seventeen, vote in an election and purchase alcohol at eighteen. Other factors mainly related to family occupation, community life and culture, however, had once ensured that lifestyle and leisure were stamped with a distinctive class character. For example, delaying independent adulthood by staying on at school beyond sixteen and then going into some sort of tertiary education or training was once the preserve of the privileged middle-classes.

However, the collapse in the youth labour market and work-based apprenticeships and the policy responses of recent governments, have resulted in working-class youth now experiencing a similarly extended transition to adulthood (Colley, 2003; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). Thus in a crucial dimension the lives of working-class youth have come far more closely to resemble that of their middle-class peers. And this has arguably been a key contributor to a situation in which, at least at the level of appearances, differences in the lifestyles, activities, tastes and preferences of young people from quite different socio-economic backgrounds have become harder to discern than might once have been the case. Accordingly, a crude snap-shot of the palpable evidence of this youth cultural homogenisation would include: an inter-active bedroom culture of home-computers, internet and hand-held games technology; widely affordable mobile audio and telecommunications; the growth in commercial youth leisure, sources of consumption and popular youth media; a cross-class 'lad' culture of guilt-free macho hedonism, 'boys' gadgets and hyper-consumption; the sexualisation of youth culture; the 'normalisation' of illegal drug-use;[2] a youth orientated, more female-friendly pub culture and drinks industry; a more egalitarian composition amongst the university population; the dissolving of tribal

style based youth subcultures and the dominance of commercialised branded sports and leisure wear; the widespread diminution of young people's access to and use of public-space; a heightened awareness of global and local health, crime and environmental risks and dangers.

To repeat, the break-down of working-class occupations, institutions and communities has contributed to a situation in which class culture has much less of a bearing on youth lifestyles than was previously the case. The things not just specific to being part of a particular generation but being a member of a particular social class which might once have influenced the form and content of youth identifications and lifestyles have, if not entirely disappeared, waned enormously in significance (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). In essence, class no longer seems to provide an intelligible means of predicting – and, importantly, differentiating – youth lifestyle and taste (see Beck, 2004). If, however, the spectacle of cultural homogenisation of youth lifestyles appears to confirm the waning of class, it also serves to mask enduring inequalities traceable now as ever to socio-economic and cultural location. Inequalities, moreover, which ensure an enormous variation in young people's experience, perception and access to consumer goods and leisure opportunities (see Furlong and Cartmel, 2007).

And yet the historical decline of working-class communities and cultures is but a feature of more general tendencies in 'high' modernity. According to Beck (2004), one of the legacies of modernity was the opportunity afforded many people to cast off for the first time the constraints of religion, family, social class and nature and to begin to determine for themselves the paths their lives would take on the basis of personal choice rather than tradition and inherited communal expectations. However, from today's vantage point of 'high' (or post) modernity rapid and hard to compass transformative effects now registered at all levels of society emanate directly from deregulated capital. The a-moral actions of transnational corporations and the global reach and power of today's culture industries (see Lash and Lury, 2007) contribute in a seemingly infinite number of different ways to a generalized economic 'enclosure' which potentially shrinks and denudes our sense of a 'commons' or public space.

The fragmenting tendencies inherent in modernity, not to mention the corresponding psycho-social need to develop a set of reflexive defensive responses, have not only increased, but exponentially so as a consequence. The norm is for all of us to live in a permanent and, for some, disabling relationship to risk and uncertainty. Whether or not one believes the libratory potential of such change outweighs any unwelcome sense of 'vertigo' (Young, 2007), this social fragmentation surely finds its fullest expression in the individuation, atomization and reflexivity which characterise advanced capitalist culture and society. As Bauman (2001: 9) puts it, 'all the messes into which one can get are assumed to be self made'. In what he calls 'the society of individuals' people live with a radically ambivalent and disorientating sense of being at once liberated and cast adrift. Thus the cultural individuation commonly understood to be a defining feature of the contemporary developed world is the social expression of this historically novel ontological dichotomy: freedom and vertigo.

In sum, a defining feature of the last 25 years, in the words of Furlong and Cartmel (2007:

4), is that: 'Individualized lifestyles come into being in which people [irrespective of social class] are forced to put themselves at the centre of their plans and reflexively construct their social biographies'. Following Beck (2004), Furlong and Cartmel (2007) take the position that it is key components of social risk – the increasing dominance of market forces and the concomitant loss of intermediary social institutions and sources of solidarity – which are largely responsible for a reflexive, individualized refiguring of the cultures, biographies and lifestyles of *all* groups in society. If it is true that the cultural homogenization of youth lifestyles and social individuation emerge from common sources, then, as I will attempt to show in the following sections, their commonness is no more in evidence than in the marketing of difference and individuality which occurs through the modern-day youth brand.

Talk to Frank

In their introduction to the most recent edition of the classic 1970s work on youth subcultures *Resistance through Rituals*, Hall and Jefferson (2006:xxxi) state that increasingly 'the consuming subject comes to provide the privileged way in which subjects experience their relation to themselves, to what they are doing and to their changing social worlds' (see also Binkley, 2007:113-115). Indeed, as these authors note, the hegemony of consumer sovereignty in the current period renders ever more difficult the meaning of autonomy and expressive freedom with respect to the role and status of youth cultural modes of identity whose *legitimacy* (as it were) derives from an at least symbolic opposition to officially sanctioned forms of conduct. Part of this difficulty is related to the fact that as, Binkley (2007) points out, in contemporary Western society commercial marketing and governmental rationalities now effectively 'mirror each other, or become superimposed on one another' (120-121). The youth cultural 'consuming subject' not only purchases – or to the more optimistic *purloins* – a serviceable identity from the market, governmental rationalities of behavior modification seek to position themselves as consumer services.

The idea of there now being an interpenetration of consumerism and governmental rationality can of course be traced to the historical social changes in youth lifestyles discussed above, the emergence of the individuated, post-class 'consuming subject' to whom Hall and Jefferson refer. In what follows, I shall attempt to demonstrate that with *Talk to Frank* the government's drawing on the 'cutting edge' expertise in niche marketing of a top London advertising agency Mother to create a new youth lifestyle brand offers compelling evidence of this interpenetration. Binkley (2007: 122) explains that:

> *The rise of the lifestyle brand can be correlated with the emergence of niche marketing more generally, or lifestyle consumption. In the lifestyle brand, everyday consumption choices are increasingly underwritten with explicit invocations of a good life, related in a discourse that goes beyond standard advertising messages to include guidance, knowledge, and advice related by the alleged properties of the brand.*

Binkley's (2007:122) contention is that this concern with 'themes of subjective well-being' on the part of marketers marks an intensification of interest by both commercial and governmental sectors in the conduct of people's inner lives with much borrowing and traffic

between the two (see also Brown, 2005). As with any comparable commercial campaign, Mother have attempted to skilfully mobilise the codes, argots and forms of deportment of contemporary youth cultures in the creation of the *Frank* brand with the intention of producing the desired changes in behaviour.

The effect is ambiguous, however. For whilst it has long been customary in marketing to youth for 'subjective well-being' to be associated with hedonistic release or even transgression, *Talk to Frank* is explicitly seeking to place putatively oppositional youth cultural codes in the service of prudence and self-regulation. Addressed to the issue of public behaviour and social responsibility, *Talk to Frank* aims to exemplify the 'creative' retuning of state welfare to cultural individuation and behavior modification. For the purposes of my case-study I will discuss some of the posters used in the *Talk to Frank* campaign. I will conclude the article by reflecting upon the cultural significance for youth and their families of a post-moral public policy for which strategy dictates a calibration to the at once homogenized and individuated character of modern day lifestyles.

Talk to Frank: Youth Culture and the 'Autotelic Self'

> *Breaking away from an emphasis on precautionary aftercare means confronting risk in a direct and engaged way...as has now become the case, lifestyle decisions are highly consequential for others...and also for one's quite remote future, new ethics of individual and collective responsibility need to be formed.* (Giddens, 1998:184)

Talk to Frank is a joint venture between the Home Office, who have overall responsibility for the government drug strategy, and the Department of Health who deliver its treatment and public health strand. Launched to some fanfare in May 2003, the campaign has taken the form of a series of television and radio adverts, posters, full-page ads in the youth and adult press, a web-site, and 'ambient' media such as beer mats and stickers for toilet doors, trees and lamp posts. Drug use may have become 'normalised' amongst modern day youth, but the official belief is that *healthy* discussion about drugs within the family home lags some way behind.

The situation of young people feeling reluctant to discuss sensitive issues like sex and drugs with their parents, and parents likewise feeling uncomfortable, is nothing new (see Parker et al, 2001:136-138). However, *Talk to Frank*'s youth centric approach works to give this age-old problem a decidedly contemporary spin; one which, arguably, manages simultaneously to embody some of the social anxieties summarised above and significant aspects of the state of contemporary youth lifestyles and leisure. As the creative team behind the campaign put it, if drug use has now become normalised then so must its discussion. The *Frank* in question, however, is not a real person or interlocutor but rather a cipher, a lifestyle brand created to re-launch the National Drugs Helpline. The legend *Talk to Frank*, carried on all of the campaign media, is an injunction to potential consumers of drug information and advice, i.e. young people and their parents, to call what was formerly the National Drugs Helpline.

Touting impartiality, and promising an unthreatening non-judgemental response to all

enquiries, the *Frank* brand claims to offer a 'well-informed', 'confidential' and 'honest' service in up to '120 languages'. By playing with and exploiting the absence of parental credibility in matters such as drug use *Talk to Frank* attempts to project a persona that is cool, irreverent and on young people's level, one that can 'get under young people's radar' (Navigator 980, 2003). Change can thus, it is hoped, be encouraged collaboratively by overcoming young people's customary defences and negative responses to anti-drug campaigns (see Blackman, 2004). A phone call to *Frank* might even achieve the result of translating curiosity, doubt and ambivalence into confession and critical self-reflection (Foucault, 1998; Rose, 1999).

Talk to Frank Posters

In stark contrast to the most notorious of previous government anti-drug campaigns, *Heroin Screws You Up*, with its depictions of junky physical decline, the young people in the *Talk to Frank* campaign posters appear, for the most part, relaxed. The posters present an image of youth as healthy looking, attractive and casually well dressed. Launched in 1985, the junkie figure in *Heroin Screws You Up*, a campaign motivated by fears over the potential spread of AIDS into the mainstream heterosexual community via injecting drug users, was literally a disease ridden scapegoat, the incarnation of fears about the feral poor and urban underclass. Whether consciously or not the latter was based on an exclusionary principle in which the dishevelled image of the junkie stood in opposition – almost to the point of inversion – to the Thatcherite ideal of competitive individualism, visible success and vigorous health. Just as the idealised yuppie figure of the 80s was heroically independent, unencumbered and autonomous, so the junky of *Heroin Screws You Up*, was isolated and anomic, apparently cast adrift from family and friends. Both the former and latter figure were emblematic of Thatcher's now famous dictum that 'there is no such thing as society'.

Interestingly, *Talk to Frank* and *Heroin Screws You Up* each seek to project notions of individuation. But where *Heroin Screws You Up* sought to isolate the heroin user from the mainstream and moralise or shame the former into action, *Talk to Frank* sets out to do the opposite. The campaign wants not to judge or point the finger, but to be accessible and unthreatening, depicting individuals in a sympathetic, often humorous light. The rationalist, utilitarian thinking behind the campaign is to extend the logic of drug normalisation by providing a consumer product that helps all those affected – contemplators, users and parents – navigate their way through the potential and actual risks of drug use. Arguably, the difference between the earlier and later anti-drug campaigns is paradigmatic of the difference between the minimalist approach to welfare of the New Right of the Thatcher era and the generative politics and positive welfare of New Labour. Whilst in Frank, subtle forms of stigmatisation do, however, occur, the ethos of the campaign is avowedly inclusive and 'non judgmental'.

The ostensible purpose of the *Frank* posters, then, is clearly not to shock, stigmatise or exclude. However, like in *Heroin Screws You Up*, the target consumer is centre stage, which invariably invites questions of identification. The product being sold, moreover, the *Frank* helpline, certainly seeks as a matter of urgency to attract particular groups of 'at risk' youth. And yet, crucially, the fact of drug normalisation, or as Blackman (2004) puts

it 'casualisation', a phenomenon that post-dates the *Heroin Screws You Up* campaign, necessitates in the eyes of policy makers, a universal provision. What is more, even if it was possible to accurately depict vulnerable, 'at risk' youth in *Frank* without resorting to the crudities of *Heroin Screws You Up*, the question to ask is whether this would be an intelligent piece of marketing? Are vulnerable, poor, abject, or 'at risk' individuals drawn towards mirror images of themselves? Do they even necessarily see themselves in that way? As Steven Kempfer (2003:47-48) says, in reference to marketing and brands, people's aspirations for themselves 'make addressing [them] in terms of popular aesthetics, at least popular aesthetics narrowly defined, less compelling than advertisements that speak to their hopes and long term strategies'. Thus, the young people in the *Frank* posters, notwithstanding the viewer is meant to believe they are 'contemplators' or maybe 'recreational' drug users, are both a vision of the kind of people *Frank* might attract and the kind of people others might aspire, with *Frank*'s help, to become more like.

They are, correspondingly, evenly distributed in terms of sex and colour, there being three males, two white one black, and three females, one Asian, one mixed race, and one white. Their class, however, is harder to locate, for although the scene is predominantly urban, the serene quality of the photographic image combined with the particular mode of sartorial styling and absence of other actors seems to isolate each individual from an obviously recognisable cultural milieu. What is significant here is that this social indeterminacy in fact, far from excluding contemporary youth culture, actually signifies some of its key elements. To wit: individuation and the dissolving of distinctive sub-cultural group identities, the latter exemplified by the famed inclusiveness, in contrast to previous youth movements, of rave or ecstasy culture (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; Parker et al, 2001:26; see also Collin, 1998). Efforts to attribute membership of a particular social class to each individual in the picture via their clothing – for that is the only semiotic clue one is given other than, controversially, inferring class on the basis of colour – are vigorously refused. The jeans, sports gear and sweatshirts are generic, and in a period in which the stylistic boundaries between generations are highly porous, not even necessarily generic to youth (Parker et al, 2001:26). If, however, inclusion has now been politically substituted for equality and inclusion is an effect of health and psychic wellbeing, such questions about class fade – perhaps deliberately – into irrelevance. The social origins of the poster's protagonists appear to be beside the point. Each one, heroically solo, is successfully plotting a course through the hazardous terrain of adolescence with *Frank*'s assistance. There is thus a kind of utopic, social foreclosure in operation, where the aggregate effect of these healthy looking individuals seems intended to portray a cultural rainbow with class and troubling difference airbrushed out.

Although the idea of the peer-group and its ecological environment is implied by the depiction of congregation points: bus stop, park bench, street corner, etc., suggesting that the habitus of these places does impinge in some way, each individual stands alone, at the apex of a decision. As potential places of arrival or departure, these transit points lend to the scene a liminal quality. Positioned slightly to the side of the frame in each instance, the young person is shown in an attitude of contemplation, their eyes directed upwards, their head tilted slightly to one side or in half or full profile. A white poster plastered, variously, on a wall, bin, or bus stop shelter, proclaims, in the centre of the photographic frame, a short message of a few lines in large upper case black letters. The brand name *Frank*, picked

out in squat white, optic characters with a black 3D surround, completes each message occupying a line of its own. Running along the bottom of each poster is the telephone helpline number and a web address 'talktofrank.com.' The messages are as follows:

- **WHEN MY SISTER WANTED TO DO DRUGS, I INTRODUCED HER TO *FRANK***
- **WHEN I'M GAGGING FOR AN E, I GO STRAIGHT TO *FRANK***
- **WHEN I FELT LIKE TRYING ECSTASY I CALLED *FRANK***
- **WHEN I FANCY SOME COKE, I ALWAYS CALL *FRANK***
- **COKE, E'S, HEROIN, *FRANK* SORTS ME OUT WITH ALL OF THEM. *FRANK***
- **WHEN MY MATE OFFERED ME DRUGS, *FRANK* TOLD ME WHAT TO DO. *FRANK***

Publicly displayed at the various youth assembly points, the white *Frank* posters appear to supply the private, confessional thoughts of each young person in the manner of thought bubbles in a teen magazine photo-story. The spectacle is one of inversion, parody, irreverence, colonisation and recursion. The act of inversion and parody derives from *Frank* the telephone counsellor assuming the place of the drug-dealer: a colonisation of the deviant, abject and counter-cultural subject position. The dealer will sell you drugs and exploit your lack of self-mastery; but Frank the anti-dealer inverts this by offering to plant the superior, even cooler habit of self-mastery. He thus simultaneously employs and inverts the conventional binary of a youth sub-culture occupying a subordinate and yet, in relative terms, morally and culturally superior, relation to the mainstream. *Frank* is adopting the vernacular and idioms of the former in order to labour on behalf of the latter. But even this impression is rendered ambiguous, as the heavy implication is that young people in fact already occupy this apparent behavioural mainstream.

The public display of the young people's thoughts, however, the symbolic place given to 'life politics' in youth public assembly points, exemplifies a therapeutic colonising of the public by the private (Bauman, 2003).[3] In addition, the cipher *Frank*, at the same time as expropriating youthful idioms, is colonising young people's inner mental space, i.e. 'do drugs', 'gagging for', 'sorts me out'. The recursive aspects refer to the strategy of using a poster within a poster within a person's thought, and a young person looking at a young person in a poster contemplating a poster. The ambiguities in this fictitious representation are legion. For instance, is the viewer confronted with a vision of young people wishing to publicly proclaim their thoughts about *Frank* and drugs in poster form, perhaps for the edification of others, as peer educators if you will, or perhaps just out of a need to 'share'? Is it in fact correct to assume, even though the various attitudes of contemplation suggest this is so, that these are the thoughts of the actual young people in the posters? Is the viewer being shown young people stumbling across the thoughts of others and being mentally stopped in their tracks? Are they pausing to consider a phone call to the *Frank* helpline? Is it merely all a matter of which to dial of two different phone numbers, one courting danger and the other health?

Trading on Transgression

Being an ironic inversion of the popular image of 'anti-social' urban youth, the *Frank*

posters serve almost as government wish-fulfillment. The viewer is presented with healthy young people in clean, calm urban environments festooned with pristine 'street art' posters bearing encomiums to self-regulation (albeit through parody). Deliberating on the available options and potential consequences of a particular course of action, and, what is more, prepared to publicly share these deliberations, the young people are alone and thus – significantly – free of the negative influence of peers. Though facing an uncertain future each will supposedly be happier and more secure for having *Frank* the anti-dealer at his or her shoulder.

Clarke (2003:223) writes that 'the image of rebellion has become one of the most dominant narratives of the corporate capitalist landscape: the "bad boy" has been reconfigured as the prototypical *consumer*' (see Heath and Potter, 2005). What image does *Frank* reflect back at consumers? For Parker et al (2001:157)

> *British youth culture has perhaps facilitated recreational drug use both in terms of what is acceptable for young people to do and in absorbing and accommodating the language and imagery of drugs via the fashion, media, music and drink industries which thrive on youth markets.*

This is the cultural field that the lifestyle brand *Frank* must enter as it attempts to position itself alongside an array of other youth leisure products that have metabolised drug culture and sold it back to young people in highly mediated form as commodities which have little directly to do with drug use (see Collin, 1998:272-276). Citing the way that advertisers have been particularly astute in this regard, Blackman (2004), points out how the iconography and the language of drugs has long enabled semi-licit operations to take place on the borders of mainstream social acceptability, associating products with risk and play. He writes, 'advertisements are packed with different levels of meaning and intention which can reinforce exclusivity or be directed at insider knowledge' (Blackman, 2004:73).

One of the significant aspects of the *Frank* posters is that, despite their pristine appearance, they are intended – like the other ambient media the campaign employs and in the manner of illegal 'street art' – to convey a sense of the spontaneous and transgressive. In this respect the campaign also emerges modishly out of the adoption of 'anti-advertising' techniques populised over the last decade by some of the more supposedly cutting-edge agencies (Himpe, 2006; Goldman and Papson, 2000; Lucas and Dorrian, 2006); this in turn, being, in part, a product of the particular generational link to post-punk youth culture of advertising's modern-day cultural intermediaries (Mason, 2008; Nixon, 2003). It has now become comparatively commonplace for advertising agencies, marketers and media companies to conspicuously exploit and profit from a blurring of boundaries between their own artfully promoted, expansionary 'guerilla' and 'viral' operations, and residual notions of the street as locus of transgressive creativity and forms of play which outstrip authorized power (Alvelos, 2004;Mason, 2008; Moore, 2007).

Alvelos (2004:185-186), in his analysis of the use of graffiti and sticker art for advertising purposes, thus states that 'rather than adding itself to a possible taxonomy of [activist, illegal, spontaneous] graffiti practices, advertising graffiti insinuates itself into all those practices'. What graffiti writing as viral marketing achieves is a 'blurring of the boundaries

of individual expression and mass consumption, of spontaneous and sponsored' (Alvelos, 2004:187; see Moore, 2007). Willis (2006:100) locates this phenomenon in the adaptive capacities of capital under intensified conditions of commodity fetishism and new forms of 'cultural relations'. As he puts it, 'capitalism has developed new forms of accumulation based on a kind of symbolic anti-capitalism, taking its cues from the streets, stealing semiotically from already economically dispossessed and deprived communities'. This novel historical situation:

> *seems to offer a safe distinction of resistance to everyone. Everyone resists and is voiced or allowed a space...The psychic pleasures of transgression are enjoined without crossing real lines of engagement.* (Willis, 2006:100)

Conclusion

At a representational level *Talk to Frank* thematically mobilizes aspects of youth lifestyles related to fashion, use of leisure-time, consumption, family relations, generational identities, transgression, risk-taking behaviour and individuation. In doing so, the campaign is not only coded with the political and cultural anxieties, not say confusions, these changes incite; it also exemplifies the sorts of communicational strategies government now believe vital if they are to connect with a generation shaped by consumer individualism, the proliferation of choice, social complexity and the common-or-garden nature of increased everyday risk.

According to the 'Stakeholder's Feedback', professional practitioners from the fields of youth and drug work saw the social marketing brand *Frank* as 'evidence of the government in touch with [the] reality of drug taking'. The metaphor *Frank*, aside from its suggestion of blokish informality, itself a signifier of honest brokerage, suggests that all will get a fair hearing; that what is shown in the campaign materials will be an impartial rendering of reality, with no punches pulled; that there will be candour and sincerity; that crucially, Frank is dependable and trustworthy. Moreover, *Frank* as metaphoric and actual plain dealer connotes the play on *Frank* as anti-dealer. Significantly, all of these notions relate back to the 'use value' of the product being promoted: the helpline. However, of equal importance is a whole second order of metaphoric significance in the name *Frank*. For in truth the world rendered in the campaign materials (for all their ambiguity) and the advice given over the helpline is not in the least bit neutral. *Frank*, this 'warm, human and empathetic' youth-brand, *is a branch of government*. In Foucault's (1991:304) lexicon the cipher *Frank* is one in a long line of 'Judges of Normality', promoting what Cohen (1993:232) would term an 'enterprise of inner space'. The consumer research findings state the duplicitous nature of the situation quite baldly:

> *Humour is vital in building Frank's personality. Frank talks like teenagers, and parents recognise this, even if it is not to their taste. It is also a useful weapon in undermining positive views about drugs. Humour allows negatives about drugs to 'get in under the radar,' and as a result teenagers then realise they are laughing at drugs, and perhaps even at themselves.*

However, this is not to suggest that *Talk to Frank* is merely the latest insidious approach

by the state to the control and regulation of today's youth; a rational, rationalist response to the way youth actually perceive, experience and act upon the social world. This is certainly part of the story, but not all of it. It is my contention that *Talk to Frank* in its design and execution is itself symptomatic of the very 'late modern' social conditions of which youth lifestyles are a significant part (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). And, what is more, that it stands as an instance of the continued hegemony amongst the political class of individualised solutions to problems created by enduring structures of injustice and hypocrisy.

As discussed near the beginning of this article, a simultaneous sense of insecurity and enhanced freedom allegedly characterises the ambivalent ontology of late modernity in advanced capitalist societies (Bauman, 2001; Beck, 2004). Through its particular representation of individualised youth and lifestyle risk, *Talk to Frank* promotes the hegemonic idea that recent changes to structural conditions which have made the journey through the lifecourse less predictable and more diverse, blurring former social categories and identities, have, in doing so, liberated the individual actor. But to attribute greater individual agency to the waning of previous forms of communal affiliation, social identity and cultural composition in combination with the appearance within legal and illegal marketplaces of a plethora of new items and locale for consumption and 'symbolic creativity' (Willis, 1990) amounts to a conflation of changed social conditions with social being (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007: 5-7). Thus *Talk to Frank* presents youth and their parents as subjects whose existence comprise a daily round of reflexive decision-making, the giving of confessional testimony, contemplation of individualized trajectories, the navigating of a profusion of biographical and consumer choices. Whether such individual agency results ultimately in better or worse outcomes is shown as being largely contingent upon whose advice is followed at key junctures in the now universally extended transition from youth to adulthood: peers, parents or professional experts. This is to say that in *Talk to Frank* the choice of one's interlocutor, their character and preparedness, are highly determining. Will risk or opportunity end up limiting or enhancing the capacity of individuals over the lifecourse to take full advantage of the historically unprecedented range of lifestyle options now available (McGee, 2005)? This, as I have hopefully shown, is what has motivated the government to cast around for a form of welfare intervention that captures the *zeitgeist* in the shape of *Frank* the youth brand, consumer product and life-coach. The sole purpose of this cipher, however, is in the end to do no more than enable young people to profit from their own oppression.

Notes

1 Now whether gay or straight.

2 Just to clarify my use of the term 'drug normalisation'. Parker et al (2001:152) write that: 'when we find that half this generation has tried an illicit drug by the end of their adolescence and perhaps a quarter are fairly regular recreational drug users, we can no longer use pathologising explanations. Today's young recreational drug users are as likely to be female as male and come from all social and educational backgrounds. They cannot be written off as delinquent, street corner 'no hopers.' It is clear we need to understand this social transformation in a very different way'. See also Blackman (2004).

3 For some critics tastes this perhaps rests on a somewhat essentialist divide between public and private (McGee, 2005; Seidler, 2005).

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Valuing youth work

Tony Jeffs and Mark Smith

We can never go back, that much is certain. The past is still too close to us.
(Daphne du Maurier)

Everything before us exists in the ideal world. The future is a blank and dreary void, like sleep or death, till the imagination brooding over it with wings outspread, impregnates it with life and motion. The forms and colours it assumes are but pictures reflected on the eye of fancy, the unreal mockeries of future events. The solid fabric of time and nature moves on, but the future always flies before it.
(William Hazlitt)

A lot of people call themselves 'youth workers'. They can be found in many settings – in churches and religious organizations, local voluntary groups, and in large international movements such as the YMCA, and scouting and guiding. Schools and colleges, prisons, large not-for-profit organizations, and state-provided children's and young people services also host what they describe as 'youth work'. New forms and locations are appearing all the time, and organizational boundaries have shifted at some speed in many countries over the last few years.

What is youth work?

For over 150 years, five elements have fused to delineate what we now know as youth work and to distinguish it from other welfare activities. It is distinctive only when all are present. Remove one and what is observed may possess a resemblance to, but is unquestionably not, youth work. The five are a focus on:

Voluntary participation. The voluntary principle delineates youth work from almost all other services provided for this age group (Jeffs 2001: 156). Young people have, traditionally, been able to freely enter into relationships with youth workers and to end those relationships when they want. This has fundamental implications for the ways in which workers operate and the opportunities open to them. It encourages them to think and work in rather more dialogical ways (op cit); develop programmes attractive to young people; and to go to the places where they are (see also Davies 2005).

Education and welfare. Historically, youth work did not develop to simply 'keep people off the streets', or provide amusement. Many early clubs grew out of Sunday schools and ragged schools, institutions that placed great emphasis on offering welfare and educational provision for young people (Montague 1904). The rise of the welfare state and expansion of state education during the late Nineteenth and early and mid Twentieth centuries eradicated the need for youth agencies to provide mainstream welfare and educational services,

however learning from being part of group life remained a key element. The recognition of such learning was further enhanced through the embracing of the notions of informal education (Brew 1946), social education (most notably Davies and Gibson 1967), and experiential learning (Kolb 1976). As a result the characteristic focus on learning through conversation, experience and relationship developed. With developments and changes in state support mechanisms, and the identification of other needs, the pattern of welfare provision has shifted – but remains a significant element of youth work. Contemporary examples of this include support groups, counselling and careers advice.

Young people. Although there have been shifts in age boundaries, youth work remains an age-specific activity. In Wales, for example, this is defined by a government strategy document as 11-25 years (Welsh Assembly Government 2007). While there may be problems around how we talk about and define youth – and around the sorts of expertise those working with young people can claim – there can be no doubting that many young people both view their experiences as being different to other age groups, and seek out each other's company (Savage 2007). Youth workers have traditionally responded to this – and learnt to tap into the ways of understanding the world young people occupy.

Association, relationship and community. 'Building relationships' has been central both to the rhetoric and practice of much youth work. Relationships are seen as a fundamental source of learning and of happiness. The aim was to work with young people in community so that they might better relate to themselves, others and the world. Those within religious settings might well add in relationship to God. Association – joining together in companionship or to undertake some task, and the educative power of playing one's part in a group or association (Doyle and Smith 1999: 44) – has been part of working with young people from early on. It was articulated in the Albemarle Report that argued that encouraging 'young people to come together into groups of their own choosing is the fundamental task of the Service' (Ministry of Education 1960: 52) . Historically group work – the ability to enter, engage with and develop various types of social collectivities – was viewed as the central skill required of a youth worker (see, for example, Coyle 1948; Matthews 1966; Button 1974; Robertson 2005; Newman and Robertson 2006). Youth work is fundamentally about community; about working as John Dewey (1916) put it, so that all may share in the common life. It is an activity of communities – and therein lies the problem, as we will see, for much state-sponsored work.

Being friendly, accessible and responsive while acting with integrity. Youth work has come to be characterized by a belief that workers should not only be approachable and friendly; but also that they should have faith in people; and seek to live good lives (Smith and Smith 2008: 25-42). In other words, the person or character of the worker is of fundamental importance. As Basil Henriques put it (1933: 60): 'However much self-government in the club may be emphasized, the success of the club depends upon the personality and ingenuity of the leader'. The head of the club, he continued, must 'get to know and to understand really well every individual member. He must have it felt that he is their friend and servant' (ibid: 61). Or as Josephine Macalister Brew (1957: 112-113) put it, 'young people want to know where they are and they need the friendship of those who have confidence and faith'. The settings workers help to build should be convivial, the relationships they form honest and characterized by 'give and take'; and the programmes

they are involved in, flexible (Hirsch 2005).

When thinking about these five elements it is also important to recognize the context in which they were forged. Since its inception youth work has overwhelmingly been undertaken by volunteers and workers operating in the context of local groups and clubs. These groups, in turn, are usually part of national and international movements. Scouting and Guiding provide a very visible and constant example of this. Youth work was born, and remains fundamentally a part, of civil society. It is wrapped up with associational life, community groups and voluntary organizations. Indeed, in Ireland where youth work is defined in law, this is recognized. It is to be provided 'primarily by voluntary youth work organizations' (Government of Ireland 2001). As we will see, the more the state becomes involved in the detail of youth work and seeks to direct practice, the more it risks destroying the work and the benefits it brings. Location in civil society has contributed to the emergence of distinctive traditions of work – with contrasting aims and ways of operating.

The state and work with young people

For a over a century in Britain what we now know as youth work flourished without significant state involvement. This situation changed in a matter of weeks following the outbreak of war in 1939. The era of 'total war' – with rationing, evacuation and bombing – created an urgent need for state funding and guidance to ensure universal provision (Jeffs 1979; Bradford 2009). Significantly, the British government was also desperate to avoid earlier models of state youth work established by totalitarian states such as Russia, Italy and Germany. At a time when the nation was locked into a struggle to sustain democracy it was essential that state youth work itself should foster its values and practices. Little or no innovation was needed here as there was a rich tradition of associational life, participation and democratic practice within many of the clubs and groups associated with churches, settlements and voluntary youth movements. Many of the established guides to practice (e.g. Henriques 1933) were quickly augmented by new texts that were self-consciously about youth work (most notably, Brew 1943; Rees 1943; Rees 1944; Armson and Turnbull 1944)). For these writers and others the role of the state was, predominately, to support what was occurring within civil society, augmenting provision where there were gaps and encouraging collaboration between agencies that had, in some cases, a history of mutual antagonism.

The model forged in the war years remained largely intact until the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed the last clear 'government' statements of youth work in its classic 'democratic' form can be found in the Albemarle Report (Ministry of Education 1960) and *Youth and Community Work in the 70s* (Department of Education and Science 1969). The former famously talked about offering young people opportunities for association, training and challenge, the latter openings for participation, self-determination and political engagement. These documents now bear little meaningful relationship to contemporary state practice. With the fading away of the 'Cold War', the virtually unchecked progress of globalization, and the rise of market values and consumerism, successive governments have 'opted' to set different priorities. At the same time their ability to impose those priorities has increased markedly in many areas. This has been linked to the decline of key

social and autonomous political movements and groups, and an enhanced capacity to monitor behaviour. In England documents such as *Every Child Matters* (HM Government 2003, *Transforming Youth Work* (Department for Education and Skills 2002) and Youth Matters (HM Government 2005), in Wales *Young People, Youth Work, Youth Service* (Welsh Assembly Government 2007), and in Scotland *Moving Forward* (Scottish Executive 2007) had none of the depth and rationale of their predecessors. They were simply prospectuses for the delivery of mostly already agreed priorities and policies. The twin priorities were public safety and economic productivity (and, thus, private profit). The needs of the market had come to dominate. Significantly, the one paper in recent years that had a fuller discussion and exploration, the English *Aiming high for young people* (HM Treasury 2007) did not have youth work as its focus but rather 'positive activities' for young people.

All these documents reflect certain key themes and processes. Here we want to note eight.

Centralization: While there is talk of local services setting their own curriculum and developing their own plans, one of the inescapable features of new frameworks is that agencies have to address centrally-defined targets and indicators. The rise of commissioning (which we will return to) has strengthened this. Locally debated and defined needs are peripheral to this process. Instead, the process of tendering and 'delivering' work is centred around demonstrating how outcomes meet state-defined priorities. This has been further augmented by an increased emphasis on central monitoring and reportage. The result has been a significant fall in the degree of freedom that state-employed and state-funded workers have to respond to the needs and wishes of the young people they encounter, or the wider communities in which they are located. Historic priorities linked to professional values and user-centredness are eroded as youth work agencies are forced to focus their gaze upon the funder, to show by word and deed that they are 'fit and trustworthy partners'.

Targeting: Major government pronouncements are classically phrased in soothing terms. For example, *Every Child Matters* (HM Government 2003) stated that it was the government's aim for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being. However, such vague aims presented in ways that no 'right minded individual' can object to, have been translated into precise targets – targets which have been arrived at without open discussion or consultation. While there may be talk of 'progressive universalism' (HM Treasury 2007) there is a continuing emphasis on working with young people at risk, and on specific targets and performance indicators linked to work with particular groups. As will be discussed latter 'targeting' is not a fixed but an active concept, one that constantly re-formulates itself. Universalist approaches seek to serve the greatest number, foster community and encourage inclusion. Selective and targeted approaches however operate from diametrically opposed perspectives. To choose one generally requires rejection of the other. With targeting the intention is to isolate and separate 'wheat from chaff', to constantly seek signs and indicators that more accurately identify the potential for deviance, dysfunctionality or mendacity. It is a process that advocates argue is, and will become ever more so, accurate in terms of predicting those who will fail, become 'troublesome' and act in ways dangerous to themselves and other (Odgers et al 2007; Sampson and Lamb 2003; Arseneault et al 2002; Henry et al 1993;

Moffitt 1993). Already this work is shaping child and youth policy in New Zealand and elsewhere and it is likely to do so here. Targeting within the sphere of youth work will entail narrowing the focus in ways that inevitably result in the stigmatising of those selected for and deemed in need of treatment.

Surveillance: There has been a strong focus on the surveillance of those who may cause a problem to social order. In recent years this has resulted in the growing use of close circuit television, attempts to enforce local curfews and the use of welfare workers to monitor the activities of families and individuals. With *Every Child Matters* and the Connexions strategy in England came the extended use of databases and other technologies to monitor the behaviour and performance of children and young people. This raised significant questions with regard to people's right to privacy – but the government pressed on with the creation of 'joined-up recording' and schemes to collect and organize data about individual young people. This has had a significant impact upon state-sponsored frontline workers who have to collect the data. It tends to alter their relationship with young people – they are routinely collecting data to pass on to others – and it raises questions around the extent to which they collude with government attempts to limit rights to privacy. Just as it already discourages some young people who are anxious to retain their privacy and autonomy from engaging with youth workers.

Accreditation: The pressure on work with young people to 'deliver' outcomes has resulted in much state-sponsored work with young people being tied to accredited outcomes. This has altered the focus of activity in a way that undermines or removes the informal and convivial nature of youth work. Alongside this has also come an emphasis on gaining competencies (particular skills) rather than competence (the ability to live life well). The result has been a formalizing of the tasks of workers within state-sponsored services that takes them away from open-ended practice. Instead they provide sessions or inputs that promise young people accredited and certified outcomes. Outcomes that it is implied, or promised, will give them, as individuals, an advantage within, what they are told, is an ever more competitive educational and employment market place. Given that our low skill labour market increasingly requires docile employees and seeks to minimise opportunities for worker self-management and autonomy the underlying drift of much accreditation is the measurement and assessment of 'bidability' and the characteristics required to survive repetitive work and insecure fragmented employment (Winch and Hyland 2007). To a large extent state-sponsored youth work now focuses on reproducing the life skills curriculum that low achieving young people encounter in school and further education. Little wonder that as accreditation has increased, so young people begin to view these settings as more and more akin to school.

Bureaucratization: For some years the adoption of so-called 'professionalism' has turned into an embracing of a bureaucratic orientation. A central aspect of this has been the dominance of what is 'correct' rather than what is 'right' or 'good'. Workers have increasingly submitted to policies and procedures that place their agency's and funder's interests first and cut the risk of litigation and disciplinary action. At one level the reasons for this are obvious. Issues around safety in minibuses and on trips and activities, and concerns around child protection require careful attention and inevitably lead to the imposition or adoption of rules and procedures. This encourages what Merton (1949)

termed 'trained incapacity' – the ritualistic adherence to rules as a mode of self-protection and career advancement. However, the policies that result often fail to take account of the particular circumstances, and undermine key aspects of youth work (e.g. around spontaneity and informality). Alongside this there has been a growing marginalization of the role of the volunteer in some services. The emphasis on policy and procedure and upon professional language and competence has worked to devalue their contribution. A constant theme within the rhetoric of contemporary welfare is the incentivizing and strengthening of management and the promotion of 'leadership' as the key to effective delivery (Pollitt 1993). The model to be emulated is that of the dynamic robust leader pushing forward a 'change agenda' and in the process overcoming the innate conservatism of professionals and communities. As Sennett points out this makes social relations more unequal and less respectful between providers and users reducing:

> *as in business, the interpretative communication between layers which marks the bureaucratic pyramid. "Need" becomes an abstraction, a number, a datum instantly assessed from the top rather than a negotiable human relationship.* (2003: 188)

Delivery rather than relationship: Organizing work around concepts like outcome, curriculum and 'delivery' has meant that many workers have lost 'relationship' as a defining feature of their practice (Smith and Smith 2008: 71-92). Education and the work of services for youth are being commodified. In the 1980s and early 1990s this movement was partly carried forward by the rise of managerialism in many 'western' education systems. Those in authority were encouraged and trained to see themselves as managers, and to reframe the problems of education as exercises in delivering the 'right outcomes'. This has meant that schools and youth work agencies have had to market their activities and to develop their own 'brands'. They have sold 'the learning experience' and the particular qualities of their institution in order to get the money they need to survive. Complex processes are reduced to easily identified packages; philosophies to sound bites; and young people and their parents to 'consumers' (Jeffs and Smith 2002). This has subtly but significantly changed relationships within youth organisations. Young people are less and less offered the status of member, someone with a stake in the organisation and implied democratic rights. Instead they are viewed as consumers, customers and clients purchasing a product or being worked upon.

Individualization: Within government policies there has been a growing emphasis upon targeting interventions at named individuals. Essentially a form of case management is now seen as a central way of working (Jeffs and Smith 2002). People are identified who are thought to be in need of intervention so that they may take up education, training or work. Action programmes are devised and implemented. Programmes are then assessed on whether these named individuals return to learning or enter work (rather than on any contribution made to the quality of civic life, personal flourishing or social relationships that arise out of the process). While this process predates the various government papers that appeared in the early years of the new millennium, it has been accelerated by them and taken a new twist. The youth support function had already moved some workers further towards the territory traditionally occupied by social workers and probation officers, the accreditation agenda specification also pulled them in the direction of schooling. Shifting, in the process, the overriding foci of practice from the group or collective to individual 'units'

or clients who are to be worked on rather than with.

Marketization: During the last three decades the government has sought to impose market forms and a market ideology upon youth work, much as it has done in relation to other welfare sectors (Mooney and Law 2007). Competition between agencies has been gradually extended via the introduction of commissioning and contracting out of youth work functions by both central and local government. The pace of change has quickened during the last few years following publication of The UK government's approach to public service reform (Cabinet Office 2006) which promised to expand and intensify the use of the private and voluntary sectors, customer choice and 'competition and contestability' mechanisms across all sectors of welfare. Cumulatively the changes have been formulated to move local and central government from being 'service providers' to becoming 'enablers'. At a macro level this has led, as intended, to heightened competition between agencies and a decline in the influence and importance of those bodies that once served as collective forums and points of common reference as well as providing youth work with a communal voice. Nationally and locally we see commissioning and bidding creating distrust between agencies and secrecy regarding aims and intention. On the national stage and in the local arena 'it is the Wars of Kites and Crows fighting in the air' we witness as agencies and groups are impelled to scrabble for advantage one over the other to survive. Inevitably state funding (including National Lottery monies and cash channelled through QUANGOs) has been evermore distributed according to competitive market orientated mechanisms. It has led to the rise of large agencies with the power and influence to secure contracts at the expense of small, usually community based, 'rivals'. Now we are seeing the emergence of predators from the private sector ambitious to secure the more profitable contracts. At a micro level marketization has re-shaped youth work not merely by requiring agencies to meet targets rather than address needs, but by re-framing the contours of practice. Workers, in order to get funding, must persuade young people to be complicit in their bids. They must cajole them into preparing business plans, submit competitive bids, push themselves forward and sell themselves. In adopting the social norms of the entrepreneur and market-trader, ends are valued above means, the morality of possessive individualism is internalized, and people behave in less co-operative and other-regarding ways.

As a consequence of these shifts youth services have now largely lost faith in association – one of the three central features of youth work identified by the Albemarle Report (1960). Perhaps the most visible sign of this was the movement away from club into more task-focused work. As a result, there was an important shift in group work undertaken by workers. It became less oriented to the needs and processes of the group (or club or unit) as a whole and instead focused on the achievement of learning or behavioural changes that benefited individuals. In other words, it lost much of its communal quality and emphasis on club and group life (see Robertson 2000; Smith 2001; and Jeffs and Smith 2002). There was also a shift away from conceptualizing the work as a form of informal education and the adoption of more curricula-based – and necessarily formal – approaches. Crucially, there has been an undermining of the voluntary principle which for 200 years provided a unifying feature; a characteristic that set youth work apart from almost every other form of intervention in the lives of young people. Within the last two decades it has become apparent that some policy makers and youth organisations, big and small, have become content to either redefine youth work to include work with young people where they are

compelled to attend, or to talk about utilizing 'youth work' approaches with such 'clients'.

Youth work to 'positive transitions'

The shift from voluntary participation to more coercive forms; from association to individualized activity; from education to case management (and not even casework); and from informal to formal and bureaucratic relationships has tipped the balance away from the orientations and practices that have been central to the development of youth work in the UK. Significantly, the focus on accreditation accelerated the movement away from informal education towards formal education, formation and training. The overall effect has been a radical reshaping of work with young people within state-sponsored sectors. Instead of youth workers we more commonly find practitioners – with various titles – who lay claim to an expertise in working with, on and alongside young people. They are hired by agencies seeking to manage young people's behaviour and to promote 'positive transitions'. Within the English children's trust frameworks these workers often have new job titles like children and youth worker, youth development worker, youth support worker and adolescent worker. Within schools and colleges they might have behaviour management, mentor or extended schooling in their titles.

The concern with transition of particular kinds is at the heart of the youth strategies that appeared in Britain in 2007. For example, the Scottish Strategy comments:

> *The outcomes we seek from youth work are the same as we seek from schools, that is, that young people become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens, and that they make a successful transition to life after school, taking advantage of and sustaining opportunities in education, employment or training.* (Scottish Executive 2007: 12)

The last part of the sentence is telling – and it reveals the underlying emphasis in terms of the transition required. 'Managing transitions' was also viewed as central to the common core of training advocated by the writers of *Every Child Matters* for those working with children and young people (HM Government 2003: 93). However, it is in the English national strategy (HM Treasury 2007) that the notion of transition gets its fullest endorsement.

> *Adolescence is an exciting time of life, characterized by new opportunities and significant change. It is a distinct developmental stage in which dramatic neurological changes affect brain function and behaviour. It is also a crucial transition period in which young people take increasing responsibility for themselves, their relationships and the decisions about their lives that shape their future prospects ...*
>
> *A wide range of factors influence young people's transition to adulthood. They include:*
> - *their experience of the education system and labour market;*
> - *the society and culture in which they grow up;*
> - *their relationships with parents and families; and*
> - *their experiences with their peers and in their leisure time.* (HM Treasury 2007: 3)

The argument is basically that transitions have become more complex, lengthier and riskier (see Arnett 2006; Bradley and Devaddason 2008; Bynner 2005; Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Jeffs and Smith 1999; Webster et al 2004) – and that young people need to develop resilience to cope. This, it is suggested, can be developed through academic achievement, positive parenting and social and emotional skills. Involvement in 'positive activities' can help the first of these – but it can particularly assist, it is claimed, in supporting 'the development of resilience through building social and emotional skills' (HM Treasury 2007: 18).

This 'positive transitions' model is basically a spin on the 'youth development' model that has developed in the United States – and fits in with the interests of a more intrusive state. While there is considerable confusion around the term 'youth development' and something of a tendency in the United States for it to be used as a 'catch-all' for various forms of youth-related service (see Delgado 2002), some fairly distinctive traditions of practice have emerged over the thirty to forty years that the term has been in professionalized usage. There is a strong problem-orientation in much of the discussion of practice and recourse to programmatic activity and competence. It draws especially upon social psychology to legitimate activity (in contrast to many British traditions of practice which have tended to look to social, political and religious aspirations to underpin intervention). For example, the National Youth Development Center defined youth development as, 'A process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent' (1998: 1). In more recent literature (following Pittman 1991 and others) much is made of 'positive youth development' and of viewing young people as partners in the work rather than as being problematic and in deficit. For example, the National Youth Development Center, again, suggests that 'positive youth development' addresses the broader developmental needs of youth 'in contrast to deficit-based models which focus solely on youth problems'. However the reality is predominately a focus based on somewhat mechanistic calculations such as those of the Search Institute which claims to have identified the 40 assets, internal and external, embracing eight categories (support; empowerment; boundaries and expectations; constructive use of time; commitment to learning; positive values; social competencies; and positive identity) that must be provided either by the family, community, schools or youth-serving agencies (Newman et al 1999). The model may seek to distance itself from 'youth problems' but it remains in essence one that seeks to identify 'deficits and counter these by the injection of a mix of activities and pre-packaged programmes (Hirsch 2005; Barber et al 2005).

The discourse of youth development, positive or not, has been part of attempts to advocate and professionalize youth services in the United States (Stein et al 2005). Although it should be noted, in passing, that such endeavours have provoked opposition (Pittman et al 1999). It has though played into governmental concerns about 'at risk youth' and has set itself apart from the more associational forms of language and practice within traditional youth-serving organizations such as the YMCA, boys and girls clubs, the Boy Scouts and settlement houses (Delgado 2002: 34). Indeed much of the literature and practice is predicated upon an assumption that for 'at risk youth' unsupervised and inadequately managed association is dangerous and should be curtailed (Osgood et al 2005). This linked to a belief that

regular involvement in 'youth recreation centers ... that provide low structure and lack skill-building aims .... facilitate deviant peer relationships during adolescence and persistent criminal behaviour into adulthood (Mahoney et al 2001; Dishion et al 2001). Overall, the predominant focus has been 'almost exclusively on the individual' (Delgado 2002: 48), or on managed and monitored activities that leave scant 'space' for unsupervised socialising or peer inter-action. The language and direction of much of the Connexions, *Transforming Youth Work*, *Youth Matters* and national youth strategy agendas display a marked similarity with 'conventional views' of youth development and their distrust of associational work and unregulated leisure for lower class youth if not for their more prosperous peers. They utilize what is, essentially, a deficit paradigm. Like conventional youth development, they broadly follow a public health model that 'identifies, isolates, and then treats the subject in order to restore him or her to good health, meaning adjustment to the dominant culture' (Lane 1996: 17). The concern to keep young people in, or return them to, 'good shape' in the first *Transforming Youth Work* paper (DfEE 2001), the particular focus on personal and social development in the second (DfES 2002), and the assessment model utilized and promoted by English Connexions Services (and their successors) and Youth Offending Teams play strongly into a focus on the sort of 'at risk' indicators that run through much of the youth development literature. The emphases in conventional youth development on organized and 'progressive' activity, on building relevant 'youth competencies' and on outcome (National Assembly 1994; H.M. Treasury 2007) are in line with requirements for curricula and accredited outcomes (Ord 2007). As such they reflect on the part of a sizeable constituency of policy makers, funders and youth policy analysts severe reservations regarding the value of social group work and association (see for example Margo et al 2006; Feinstein et al 2007).

The changing pattern of state-sponsored practice

This focus on youth development and positive transitions, and the concentration on securing specified changes in the behaviour of targeted groups of young people provided much of the rationale for the repositioning of youth services that has taken place. Youth work has traditionally operated in the 'middle territory' between social work and school-teaching (Kornbeck 2002: 49). The embracing of a youth development paradigm has allowed state-sponsored services for young people to move from the margins of both social work and schooling into much more of the mainstream. It is common, for example, to find youth development workers (however they are named) to be part of multi-disciplinary teams. The key organizational settings for state-sponsored provision and services for young people are now schools and new 'joined up' services. In England, the latter has taken a specific form – the largely social work-dominated children's trust; while the former is a mix of activity provision under the guise of extended schooling, and more pastoral and supplementary work within the school day. Similar tendencies have appeared in Scotland.

There is no distinctive place in this for youth work as we have come to know it. Pockets of wisdom and practice may seep into the new format but they will be dominated by the language and practice of these other traditions. As a result, the identity of state-sponsored workers has changed, and will continue to alter. The youth support worker and adolescent worker roles are different from that of the youth worker. They draw upon practice wisdom

and theories of assessment and intervention most commonly found within the case management traditions associated with social work (Kornbeck 2002). In a similar way, the professional identity of many other workers involved in alternative education programmes and schools is becoming wrapped up with those of trainers, teachers, counsellors, life coaches and personal development practitioners within formal education. Significantly, though, the notion of youth development provides a focus, language and orientation that allow the youth support/management role and the development and training role to meet. Thus they become two sides of the same coin. The result is something approaching the German model of social work with, on the one hand, what are effectively case workers/managers and, on the other, social pedagogues who are more likely to utilize group work and have a greater focus on learning (Smith 1999/2007; Cameron 2004). However, while the roles may meet, the orientations appeal to different bodies of theory and practice – and as result we see contrasting professional identities and approaches developing and in use.

During what might be termed the post-Albemarle decades five key models of practice have emerged within state-sponsored work. As we go down the list we tend to move from more targeted and case-oriented work more into the realm of social pedagogy – but workers on both sides of the divide within state-sponsored work will tend to be involved to some degree in aspects of all five. The models are:

- *'Monitor and support'* refers to the classic activities of casework and case management – and which found particular expression in England within the role of Personal Advisers within the Connexions Service. It entails regular contact with named individuals, 'meaningful' or 'sustained' interventions and recording and reviewing progress.
- *'Contact and refer'* where the worker makes contact with the 'hard to reach' or those deemed to exhibit particular problems or to be engaged in 'risky behaviours' (such as NEET – not in employment, education or training; or early sexual activity etc.) and then refers them onto another agency. They may even complete, in England, a CAF assessment (Common Assessment Framework).
- *'Manage and divert'* is a central model and bridges both case management and the activities of social pedagogues. It can be found in the activities of workers in schools and colleges, for example, minimizing bad behaviour by offering alternative strategies and activities e.g. canoeing instead of maths. Equally, it can be seen in the work of those operating within integrated children's trust teams (and their equivalent in other countries).
- *'Promote and deliver'* involves encouraging particular behaviours and goals, and the undertaking of particular packages of activity and learning that relate to those behaviours and goals. Within the current context the focus for intervention is largely defined by government policy and tends to fall within what might be called formation rather than education (see Doyle and Smith 1999: 53-62).
- *'Entertain and protect'* sums up the educare/leisure model appearing in extended schooling and elsewhere. Here the focus is largely upon providing a service to parents and carers – an extended form of daycare – and of offering positive activities in the hope that young people might be kept away from harmful influences, within either the home and community or both, for a designated period of time.

One of the noteworthy aspects of the movement into social pedagogy (as against social

education) is the extent to which practices can be embraced that look more strongly to formation rather than to education. In other words, work can tend to be less open-ended and more oriented to 'delivering a message'. This said, embracing notions of social pedagogy can or does have the undoubted advantage of linking activity to a long established tradition of European practice. One benefit is that within the tradition there has been a strong strand of thinking and practice that has looked to the social as the aim of pedagogy – as well as saying something about process. A pedagogy for sociality (or community) looks to relationship, associational life, and engagement with local social systems. Unfortunately this has not been a significant feature of recent British discussion. Debates have been largely located within the more individualistic and deficit frameworks of contemporary social work, social care and schooling (Smith 1999/2007).

Youth work and civil society

Youth work across the UK, and not unexpectedly given its history, is now largely the domain of groups and organizations within civil society – most notably religious organizations and local community groups. It still appears at the edges of, or in enclaves within, state-sponsored provision – but has become difficult to sustain on any scale within the funding requirements in force.

Provision within civil society is often either overlooked or seen as peripheral by policymakers and commentators within the field – as an examination of the various national youth strategies that appeared in 2007 reveals. However, the scale and nature of the work requires serious consideration. Three things are especially striking. First, within many churches and faith groups there has been a deepening and accelerating interest in work with young people. For example, by 1998, the English Church Attendance Survey found that some 21 per cent of churches had a full-time salaried youth worker. This figure may have included some priests and curates who had youth work as their prime responsibility – but it is nonetheless very significant. The most recent figures suggest there are around 5,500 fte youth workers employed by churches and Christian agencies, more than the statutory youth service (Centre for Youth Ministry 2006). There are also said to be around 100,000 volunteers. Churches have become the largest employer of youth workers in the country (Breirley 2003). This development has been accompanied by a similar growth in the literature of the area; some interesting explorations of theology; and the expansion of specifically Christian youth work training. Within Protestant churches this development is, to a significant extent, associated with the rise of evangelicalism since the 1960s. One of the most important aspects of this is that the money to employ workers and fund the work is generated almost wholly from within the Church. As a result, this work is not susceptible to the same sort of lever-pulling as those receiving state funding. Crucially, its language and forms retain continuity with what we have explored here as youth work. Furthermore, a strong emphasis upon calling and service remains part of practice. However, this is often at a cost. Pay is frequently low when compared with the state sector, and conditions can be variable. Unfair expectations are often placed upon workers not merely relating to the commitment in terms of hours worked but also with regards to the capacity to attract new young members for the congregation. This sector is not without its tensions, however within it are to be found extensive pockets

of creative youth work (see Doyle and Smith forthcoming).

Second, there has been an important growth of interest in, and practice around, Muslim youth work. For some years there has been work going on – for example around mosques and various youth associations – sometimes associated with different political groupings. However, in recent years, with much larger numbers of Muslims becoming youth workers, and with an acceptance that significant areas of provision didn't address the needs of different groupings of young Muslims, there has been both a developing literature and some important innovations in practice (Khan 2006; Fulat and Jaffrey 2006). Within this sector are encountered all the contradictions and tensions commonplace within Christian and Jewish youth work. Again workers find that employers may seek to focus the attention of workers upon prioritising the needs of the Mosque over those of the young people, or that the work fosters theological tensions (Cressey 2007). However overall the evidence points, once again, to this being an area of practice that like other faith based initiatives often provides greater opportunities for innovative practice than many state funded programmes.

Third, there appears to have been a reawakening of interest in youth provision by local community groups. In part this is a result of the withdrawal of state youth service provision in the form of clubs and centres – and the consequent lack of local 'things to do'. However, other forces have been at work including the emergence of tenant management organizations (TMOs), initiatives such as New Deal for Communities and the popularity of funds to provide small grants to community groups (see, for example, Richardson 2008). The results have been patchy, but there is growing evidence, for example, in the form of demand for training in London for tenants groups wanting to run youth groups and in the forms of activity that appear when money is made available locally, that there is a developing interest in local spaces for young people (Richardson 2008: 78-80).

Youth workers have rightly tended over the years to be suspicious of the quest for immediate outcome. As Brew (1957: 183) put it, 'A youth leader must try not to be too concerned about results, and at all costs not to be over-anxious'. Informal education and the forms of 'being there' for young people that are involved in youth groups and clubs are based, essentially, in hope and faith (see Doyle and Smith forthcoming; Halpin 2003; 2003a). Such an orientation is more likely to find a home within religious and community organizations and groups than within the target-driven culture of state-sponsored provision and some trust-funded work. However, it is possible to identify the benefits of local youth work. These can be grouped around five main headings. Locally organized, community-based provision offers:

Sanctuary. A safe space away from the daily surveillance and pressures of families, schooling and street life is one of the fundamental elements of successful neighbourhood youth organizations (see McLaughlin et al 1994; Doyle and Smith forthcoming). Hirsch (2005) found such organizations were attractive to young people in significant part as they provided a second home. They are often places where workers care and young people are valued, respected and have choice (Spence et al 2007: 43). This is all the more significant as current policy concerns with 'joined-up services' and with monitoring young people are eroding such space within state-sponsored provision and public space.

Enjoyable activity. This activity ranges from hanging about with friends through participation in arts and sports to organizing the group itself. As Spence et al (2007: 134) concluded 'It is the open informality of youth work which encourages the engagement of young people who refuse other institutional participation'. Ahmed et al (2007: xi) similarly found that the young people in their study 'especially valued creative and informal approaches, which enabled them to have a say'. Studies of those participating in more open forms of youth work have consistently shown that young people value especially the space for social interaction and for hanging about with friends and peers (earlier research includes Bone and Ross 1972; and DES 1983). However, a significant number of young people seek out, welcome and benefit from involvement in more focused activities and the opportunities for enjoyment and development they offer (Feinstein et al 2007). Structured programmes of activities are not without problems though. As Hirsch (2005: 135) found, they have the potential to diminish the quality of interpersonal relationships, and can lack fit with the culture of settings. When there is too much focus on what others judge to be what young people need to learn, it 'can easily turn into a deficit organization, which is not what young people need or expect in these settings'.

Personal and social development. Social and personal development is seen as a core purpose for youth work by many commentators (see Merton et al 2004). The annual reports of clubs and projects are often illustrated by little case studies of work or of changes in individuals; and the language of workers is full of reference to personal development (see Spence et al 2007; Brent 2004). However, for those using local groups, opportunities for personal development are seen as an important aspect of their participation only by a small, but still significant, proportion (see, for example, Gillespie et al 1992: 66-7). Assessing the impact of the work in this area is fraught with difficulties – and suffers from a certain amount of exaggeration where a target-driven culture dominates. However, there is evidence of personal and social development from reflective personal accounts (see, for example, Rose 1998; 127-33: Williamson 2004) and survey work and interviews (Merton et al 2004). Merton et al's evaluation of youth work in England found that around two thirds of young people in their survey claimed that youth work had made a considerable difference to their lives (2004: 46-51). The little long-term cohort research that we have confirms that involvement in uniformed groups, and church clubs and groups 'tend to be associated with positive adult outcomes (Feinstein et al 2007: 17). In contrast, this same research found that attendance at what were described as 'youth clubs' (defined as out-of-school-hours clubs for young people, 'typically run by local education authorities' but separate from schools (op cit: 6)) tended to have 'worse adult outcomes for many of the measures of adult social exclusion (op cit: ii). Results that echo those of earlier research undertaken in the United States (Osgood et al 1996) and Sweden (Mahoney et al 2001). These results may well reflect to a significant degree, the social background of those using these different forms of provision – but there could also be issues around the nature of the provision itself (see below).

Relationship and community. Local groups and organizations provide settings where friendships and relationships of different kinds can flourish and grow. Central to this is the relationship between workers and young people. In terms of mentoring, neighbourhood-based youth work can compare well with other initiatives; 'the exceptionally large amount of time spent together, the willingness to have fun as well as educate, and the involvement

of staff with the youth's family' all contribute (Hirsch 2005: 132). Furthermore, they are settings where young people 'connect with broader social institutions and the wider adult community' and provide non-familial settings in which 'societal rules for conduct are learned and integral to their emerging sense of self' (Hirsch 2005: 54). In other words, their associational nature helps to cultivate social capital and community (Smith 2001; Robertson 2005).

Appreciation. Local activity involving local people is often better regarded by young people than provision linked to schools or state institutions. As McLaughlin et al (1994: 5) found in their study of the role of neighbourhood organizations in the lives of 'inner city youth' in the USA, they were more likely to appreciate the realities of young people's lives and interests. Too often programmes and initiatives from 'outside' disappointed as they were 'developed by people unfamiliar with the daily rhythms, pressures and ferocity of the inner cities' (op cit).

The benefits associated with youth work based in civil society raise serious questions around the direction of much state-sponsored provision and current policy preoccupations. These ways of working entail long-term, open-ended work more closely defined by local needs and local people. They tend to look more to relationships and the enjoyment of each others company (conviviality). Such work is also more communally-focused and associational. Furthermore, those involved – both young people and workers – are often suspicious of state involvement, especially where it takes the form of specifying content and monitoring the individual young people involved. This is not to say that everything in the garden is rosy. Workers within civil society have to work with the orientation, purpose and concerns of their organizations. In the case of some religious organizations, for example, this involves a disposition to proselytizing and acting upon young people on a scale comparable to that of the worst excesses of state-sponsored work (Howard 1996). Furthermore, workers' calling and commitment can be exploited. Many have little formal management, support and supervision (Ahmed et al 2007: 90) – which can be put to advantage by some, but provides major problems for others.

Renewing youth work

The current shifting orientations in work with young people across the UK have, on the one hand introduced significant constraints to the ability to engage in local, open and relational practice. On the other, the movements have opened up new spaces for exploration and engagement, and reopened some old ones. In a number of important respects the withdrawal by the state from significant arenas of youth work has highlighted, and possibly contributed towards, something of a renewal of practice. While there has been short-term hardship and closure, not having to attend to the 'dead hand' of narrowing state targets has allowed some groups and organizations to return to youth work.

There is, we believe, still some room for groups of workers and for individuals within state-sponsored arenas to develop open, relational work with young people. Those operating firmly within civil society also have considerable space for innovation and exploration – but face different issues. Here we want to highlight some of the opportunities and issues.

First, we have found that workers and managers generally impose boundaries on the work that are over-cautious in terms of what might be possible in their situations. There are all sorts of reasons for this including the fear of being reprimanded, the desire for an easy life and the scale and complexity of the policies, procedures and paperwork that confront them. However, if we can get over these, there is often imprecision and slackness in systems and organizations that can be exploited to make space for more open and relational practice. For example, the lack of a management framework within some faith groups can be used to open up space for such practice. Similarly, the long line of reporting, the need in each layer of a bureaucracy to present its work in the best light, and the amount of effort involved in channelling 'wayward' workers, can also operate in the favour of those wanting to push and test boundaries (see Smith and Smith 2008: 133-154).

Second, many of those working with young people have lost touch with, or not been introduced to, the rich tradition of thinking, practice and example that has developed within youth work. The scope of training has been narrowed with diminished opportunities to study the historical origins and philosophical core under-pinning practice (Jeffs and Spence 2008). Newer generations of workers with young people have been increasingly socialized into defining their identity and activity around the narrowing concerns of the 'positive transitions' agenda, and more programmatic and outcome-oriented ways of working. Employer-controlled Foundation degrees and the expanding range of 'on-the-job routes to qualification' deliberately set out to lower horizons and replace education with training. While some may find comfort in these more formulaic approaches, many others, in our experience, find such ways of working unsatisfying and worrying. They are looking for something more.

Third, there is increasing evidence that the dominant managerial orientation to social policy involving central target setting, and the delivery of services through a mix of state, non-profit and commercial operators may be starting to run itself into the ground (see Seddon 2008). This can be seen, for example, in the developing debate around primary schooling (fuelled in part by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation/Cambridge University Primary Review); the inability of the National Health Service to convert increased resources into a comparable improvement in health care (Wanless et al 2007); and the growing opposition to excessive testing in secondary schools that has already led to reforms in Wales and Scotland. Just as the central planning model for economic policy fell apart in the late 1960s, now major cracks are appearing in the 'delivery' model for social policy that has dominated the last decade or so in the UK. Both state and business have failed to develop and provide social and educational services that actually address people's needs and aspirations. Policy for poor communities, and those deemed marginalized or disadvantaged:

> *... tends to be driven by a deficit model that focuses on the deficiencies of individuals and communities, rather than building upon the individual, associational, and institutional assets and networks that already exist.* (Sirianni and Friedland 2001: 11)

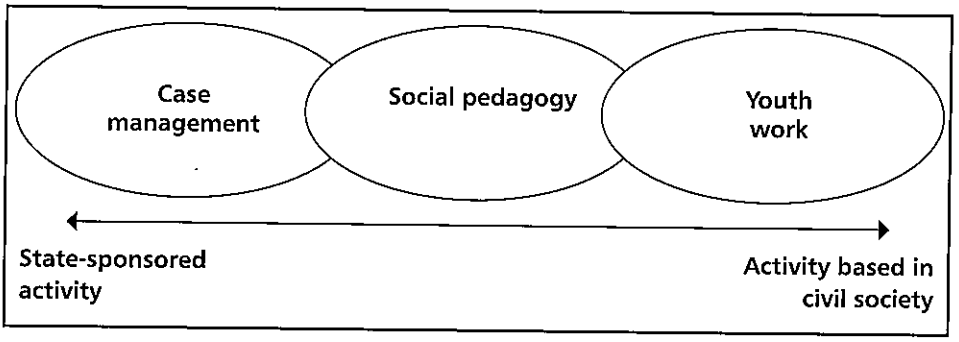
In the end deficit models of welfare and education fail. They cannot do what is necessary to effect lasting change. They do not engage with people in a meaningful way. Unfortunately, as McKnight (1995: 106) has comment, 'As the power of profession and service system ascend, the legitimacy, authority, and capacity of citizens and community descend. The

citizen retreats. The client advances' (quoted by Sirianni and Friedland 2001). The current situation in welfare and education has the look of a 'tipping point' – a moment when thinking and actions cross a threshold and rapid change occurs (Gladwell 2000).

Fourth, in the current context small disruptions to systems, micro-actions, and locally improvised initiatives can bring about significant gains (Sirianni and Friedland 2001; Speth 2005). We may well be approaching a moment when 'little things can make a big difference' (Gladwell 2000). By making the case for more open, local and relational ways of working, offering different examples of practice, and emphasizing the crucial significance of civil society there is a chance of wider change. We know, for example, that when considering social innovation the most lasting and largest impacts are often not the result of organizational growth. Rather they 'come from encouraging emulators, and transforming how societies think (with new concepts, arguments and stories)' (Mulgan et al 2007: iv).

Last, if we reflect on the current shape of practice then it becomes clear where the opportunities for making space for more convivial and engaging work appear.

Figure 1: The emerging shape of UK practice



We can find the state operating within all three of these realms – case management, social pedagogy and youth work – but the focus of activity is increasingly around the first two. Similarly, organizations based in civil society function across the range – but their work with young people tends toward youth work and variants of social pedagogy. There is room for innovation across the spectrum – and in some unlikely places. For example, we know of fascinating work within prisons. On the whole though, in the current policy context, those engaged in case-management are more likely to have to work to specified procedures, to monitor young people in more depth, and to operate in ways that do not allow for voluntary participation on the part of young people. There may well be gaps and niches where more engaging practice can flourish – but the overall opportunity is limited.

The emergence of a bundle of practices that can be described as social pedagogy provides openings for those wanting to build more localized and engaging work. There are areas of overlap with youth work as we have described it here – but the setting, sponsorship and orientation of the work does tend to set it apart. There are constraints for those we might describe as social pedagogues – for example, the requirements placed upon those operating within schools (see Jeffs 2007; Smith 2006) – but there is room for manoeuvre and opportunity. In the case of colleges and schools, this flows in part from the relative

lack of central direction up until now, and the desire on the part of principals and heads to utilize any means to improve educational performance, student behaviour and the image of the school with the parents and carers of potential, and current, students. However, there does appear to be extra mileage for those within schools, colleges, alternative educational provision and children's trusts in appealing more strongly to the leading ideas and orientations of the social pedagogy tradition. This includes a concern with relationship, sociality/community and group (see above). As such there is always the potential for developing work that is associational and that can become part of civil society.

While there may be significant opportunity within organizations that are part of civil society, there are also major challenges. Here we want to focus on two. To begin, there is the ever-present question of funding – and the requirements that flow from accepting money from different sources. A number of large and medium-sized voluntary organizations have fallen into the trap of becoming predominately service-delivers for the state. This has had a detrimental impact on their independence and integrity. As Leather (2007) has reported the vast majority of charities 'delivering public services' feel unable to make decisions without pressure to conform to their funders' wishes. Many report that their activities are determined by funding priorities, rather than the charity's mission (Poole 2007). Even small amounts of state funding can consume considerable amounts of a local agency's time and skew the work. The task of raising money begins to consume ever more of the workers time at the expense of face-to-face work. A voluntary project in which one of the authors is involved currently has an annual budget of £400,000 accrued from 38 different sources. All of these have to be 'bid' for, most impose conditions regarding how the money may be used, the majority require evaluations and evidence relating to 'outcomes'. Few of the funders allow for this cash to be allocated for the maintenance of the building or payment of administrative staff consequently the project struggles to survive even though in terms of 'measured outcomes' and 'contacts' it would be judged a success. Other pressures exist in smaller organizations. In faith groups there can be conflicting expectations around the work from those that largely fund it – local members of the mosque, temple, church or synagogue. There are also issues around the length of time money is given for and the scale of the resources on offer. As Scott and Russell conclude it is therefore increasingly required of voluntary organisations that they

> *re-evaluate whether the contract culture is compatible with social values, public service, flexibility and reciprocity; and whether it is possible to reconcile the managerialist approaches associated with contracting with broad-based governance and community participation.* (2001: 61)

In addition, workers operating within local religious and community settings typically have always to be explaining and exploring the nature of youth work with the membership of the organization and with the wider constituency. Their task as educators does not stop with young people. They need to attract volunteers and help to provide a framework for their growth and practice; establish the work as worthwhile; and open up opportunities and relationships for young people in the organization and the wider community. In a very real sense such youth work isn't only an expression of civic society, but is also concerned with strengthening and extending civil society.

Conclusion

As noted earlier recent government policy documents have barely discussed youth work as an entity option. Driven forward by a fear of being perceived as soft on crime, soft on young thugs, soft on anti-social behaviour (a Frankenstein monster of their own making) and a need to achieve self-imposed educational targets based upon narrow academic and behavioural criterion the government has lost what little faith it may have once had in the value of youth work and informal education. A social policy agenda, set with one eye upon securing the approval of the *Daily Mail* editor and assumed readership, has no room for the seemingly vague outcomes promised by traditional models of youth work. Indeed at various times ministers have articulated their impatience with both it and informal education, and their doubts as to their worth. Indeed as we have noted previously it is not simply that politicians and their advisors believe youth work is of limited value, but that with regards to the most troubled and troublesome youth, damaging. Therefore in the short run it is probably beneficial for youth work to slip the leash of state funding. Certainly there is not much likelihood that it will, for the time being, prosper as part of the statutory welfare sector. The historical relationship based upon mutuality and collaboration between the state and voluntary sector going back to the early years of the Second World War has ended. The state will fund work with young people but not youth work for the moment. The raising of the school-leaving age to 18, the growth of mass higher education and the demographic shifts that must only work to further marginalise young people in relation to the political agenda all conspire to make survival less rather than more likely.

What is happening to youth work is not unprecedented. It has been pre-figured by the destruction of adult liberal education, which last year alone lost 1,500, 000 students (Hook 2008). The survival of both youth work and liberal adult education now primarily depend on the voluntary sector and autonomous groupings. However, whatever its strengths in terms of the capacity to relate to organic communities and foster the development of innovative modes of practice, the former ultimately cannot deliver in relation to social justice and the formation of a more egalitarian and fairer society. Only a system of collective invention based on a fair and equitable tax system will achieve that end. In order to introduce the radical shift in the loci of public services to achieve this, as Moore (1995) has suggested, positive support is needed not merely from the those likely to directly benefit – the 'clients or direct consumers' – but from the wider community of citizens. To secure such support there needs to be public engagement and the sort of democratic deliberation that encourages individuals and communities to adopt an informed and socially aware perspective regarding the benefits of a welfare or social intervention. In lieu of that happening it is inevitable that the structures created to service a different era will fall apart. A professional education system designed for a post-Albemarle, post-Maud environment will recede and youth work training will, as is already occurring, further Balkanise. Voluntary, especially the religious groupings, will go their own way and the rump of the statutory sector will be integrated into training for Children and Young Person's services (Jeffs and Spence 2008). Likewise with regards to the infra-structure, form is like to follow function. Just as the Welsh Youth Agency and Scottish CEDC were dismantled by governments that viewed them as no longer fit for their purpose so in England it is unlikely the JNC, NYA and Regional Youth Work Units will survive for much longer in their present form. The lines of demarcation are being re-drawn and the ramifications of this will be substantial.

All is not lost. Certainly as du Maurier reminds us 'we can never go back' but we re-build and rescue what is worthwhile if we so desire. The implications of our analysis are fairly clear. Individual workers and managers, by deepening their appreciation of youth work, being open to the call of community, and having an eye for opportunity, can push boundaries. They can develop more relational and open forms of work with young people. The space to do this varies with the setting and with how far agencies have been pulled into practice that is concerned with monitoring, management and the achievement of centrally-defined outcomes. Individuals can also choose not to work in organizations that seek to act on young people and undermine their privacy. However, there is only so much that individual workers and managers can do. They need to join with others to engineer more substantial change. This might take the form of small groups or teams of workers developing new initiatives or attempting to safeguard existing groups, projects and clubs that offer sanctuary, relationship and hope to young people. Hopefully, more will choose to take their place in civil society – by looking for the opportunity to develop work within local groups and organizations, and by organizing through unions, professional groupings and the movements that still play a significant part in youth work. There is a long agenda for action here including:

- Campaigning for work rooted in local communities, civil society and democratic endeavour.
- Opposing mechanisms and approaches that demean children and young people and subject them to unwarranted surveillance and control.
- Revealing the bankruptcy of the delivery model of social provision and its accompanying machinery – commissioning, service level agreements and the like.
- Arguing for funding and working arrangements that move beyond a narrow, outcome focus.

These are all parts of the larger challenge to cultivate the civic and democratic renewal necessary so that people may better share in the common life. But we can only start from where we are and ultimately put our trust in relationship, conversation and association. Then all sorts of things are possible. Or as Hazlitt assures us the 'future flies before' and we alone 'can impregnate it with life'.

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