# youth
# & policy

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# UNSUITABLE TO WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE:
## The pre-employment screening of youth workers

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The purpose of this paper is to explore the development of policies for the screening of applicant youth workers by reference to their previous criminal records. The inclusion of the 'police check' as part of the recruitment and selection of youth workers started in 1986 and is, today, an integral part of those procedures. The conventional wisdom is that 'we must do all we can to minimise the risk to children' posed by all child-care workers, and the 'police check' seems to offer a fixed reference point that helps weed out the unsuitable worker. The authors contend that the 'police check' is not necessarily as helpful a device as it might appear and suggest its very existence throws up a number of unintended consequences that have little to do with child protection, but are arguably instrumental in excluding potentially good workers from the youth service, and even detering some people from applying for posts for which they would be quite suitable.

The priority given to the safeguarding of children and young people from abuse and exploitation is a correct one. That priority, however, should not preclude an examination of the rights of people applying for work with children and young people who may have a criminal record. The authors consider the origins of the policy of pre-employment screening and subsequent policy formulation, the practice of such screening arrangements and the nature of decision making, and some policy proposals that will be implemented in the near future.

The authors accept that privacy and information privacy cannot be an absolute right of all citizens in all circumstances, and we acknowledge the work of Etzioni in this area, when he argues the need for limits to privacy based on four criteria:

- *when there is a clear, well documented threat;*
- *when other measures to counter that threat are insufficient;*
- *when intrusion of privacy is made it is as minimally intrusive as possible; and*
- *when the undesirable side effects of privacy intrusion are dealt with.*

(Etzioni 1999: 12-13)

There is now clear evidence that children and young people are abused in institutional settings like schools, youth clubs and childrens homes (see eg Kirkwood 1993, Waterhouse Report 2000). Etzioni's first two criteria can be argued to have been met;

police to local authorities and the VOCS. The successful candidate for a youth worker post is appointed subject to this communication system being activated and a satisfactory decision being made on the information forthcoming. The successful candidate is expected to give written consent to allow the police to disclose what they hold.

In giving this consent the applicant usually also makes a self declaration of any convictions or cautions and a secondary check on his or her honesty can be made at the same time; a mismatch between the declaration and police held information can lead to further questions being asked. It should also be said, however, that the consent given is hardly a 'true consent' given freely, because the candidate knows the job offer will be withdrawn if the consent is not forthcoming.

Although the circulars list the posts that require a 'police check' there is flexibility built in, that requires local authorities to make a final decision on exactly which posts should be checked. The guiding principal is that there should be 'substantial level of access to children which may also be unsupervised, and will be regular and sustained' (Home Office et al, 1993: para 15)

In practice it is contended that authorities are very cautious and prefer to include in as many posts as possible in order to 'cover' themselves. In West Yorkshire a civic theatre was found to be checking all its bar maids on the basis that they occasionally had all-children matinees; hardly substantial unsupervised access. The Home Office itself reported that 'there is evidence that the system is being misused to obtain checks on individuals whose access is more limited '(Home Office, 1993: Annex C paras 6 and 10)

Worse excesses have been revealed when workers have been checked where there is no access to children at all. The Governing body for social work education warned universities that:

> *Although the circulars relate only to work with children, the evidence is that local authorities and other agencies will make checks in respect of all students on placements and that there is considerable variation in the decisions they make*
> *(CCETSW, 1993 : para (a))*

The 'variation in decisions' referred to is also a pointer to the lack of consistency in what is defined as 'a relevant offence' to be taken into account in the screening process. Whilst there is little disagreement about offences against children being 'relevant' offences, there is widespread disagreement as to what other non-child

protection offences should or should not be taken into account. The police for their part have always held that it is not their role to select only the offences which they think are 'relevant', and that the correct practice for them is complete disclosure of everything, on record :

> *(police) limitation on disclosure would share responsibility for the employment decision between the (police) ... and the employer. This would lead quickly to difficulty in cases where an undisclosed offence appeared with hindsight to have been relevant to subsequent events. Such sharing of responsibility for the employment decision is entirely unsatisfactory*
> *(Home Office 1991 : para 147)*

Confronted with the complete record, employers are expected to decide what is 'relevant' and what is not. It is at this point that the variation comes in and especially in relation to those offences not directly concerned with children. In this way some employers have moved the 'goal posts' to include, say, drug offences, because they represent a poor role model for young people. Shoplifting and other dishonesty offences are included in for the same reason. As far back as 1989 the Director of Social Services for Kent was saying that, as far as he was concerned, *any* offence of any kind might prohibit employment with access to children ('Jobs with young closed to offenders' *The Guardian,* 30 Aug 1989).

The problem of how to achieve consistency was always going to be present when the circulars had simply 'devised a system' and left what discretion there was in the hands of the employers. The Home Office, and other central Departments, as originators of the circulars have been powerless to even know how decisions were being made, let alone how the different authorities - in excess of a hundred - could be 'policed'.

Research carried out at the University of Plymouth revealed the degree of variation between Social Services Departments (SSDs) when it came to selection decisions based on disclosed conviction records:

> *At (one) end of the continuum, SSDs may reject otherwise suitable candidates on the basis of a single offence that did not relate to children and took place several years ago ... on the other hand some SSDs appear to lose sight of child protection altogether*
>
> *(Smith 1999)*

Variation between authorities was widespread, and most of them had no written policies on how they implemented the circulars.

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In her research Smith presented some fictional case studies to local authorities and asked them to make the employment decisions based on the information progressively disclosed to them, including information on criminal record histories. Six local authorities revealed that they would employ a person to work with children despite that applicant's conviction for indecently assaulting a child (see also 'Indecency offence no bar to job in social services' *The Guardian,* 12th January 2000).

The variations between 'hard-line' and 'liberal' employers, and the 'closed' nature of decision making often unguided by any written policy means the candidate is in an unenviable position. He or she will be uncertain of which way the decision will go, how it will be made, and what rights of redress (if any) they might have. The same criminal record might be acceptable to one authority, but not to another.

A government report has gone further to suggest that this variability might even be exploited by some paedophiles who could target the more liberal employers as a way into work with children:

*inconsistency causes a lack of fairness in a number of ways... it can also have the perverse effect of causing potential abusers to work their way round the country in the hope of finding the weakest route.*

*(Better Regulation Task Force 1999; para 4.3.4)*

An allied problem to employment selection and police checks is that of the higher educational institution who has admitted a student to a course of study in youth work or social work. At the point of admission a conviction history may have been declared which the educational staff believe to be non-relevant, but which is later considered to be highly relevant when it comes to an agency placement during the course. Conflict between the educational institution and the agency as to what constitutes a 'relevant offence' may make for an interesting discussion, but at the end of the day, the agency has the power to decide, and the educational institution could be left with a student on a course that they cannot complete because no one will give them a placement. More formal partnerships in recent years between academia and practice should result in a diminution of these problems, and even agreed written policies, but the potential for tension may remain.

The inconsistency between local authority decision making is clearly an issue in itself, but other more fundamental questions arise during this pre-employment screening exercise. The lack of accountability of the decision makers and the lack of transparency in their decision making both give rise for concern. The ease with which an ex-offender can be excluded from employment which others believe they are eminently suitable for must question our commitment to combat social exclusion.

In effect an applicant is on trial again for something that may have been settled years earlier. The difference is that this time they are unrepresented, the decisions are made by unknown local authority officers, behind closed doors and not in open court, and the punishment is not this time a sentence of the court but, an exclusion from employment and the opportunity to earn an income. The number of people being vetted in this way is increasing dramatically. The 1985 Review anticipated a need to 'police check' about 100,000 child care workers a year (Home Office/DHSS, 1985: para 6.20) ; in 1993 checks were running at over 600,000 a year (Home Office, 1993: para 23), and estimates of over a million a year in the near future have been made (Home Office, 1999(a): para 4.7).

A further dimension is the decision making based on what has been called 'other relevant factual information' held by the police; this can be information not related to a conviction record at all (Home Office et al, 1986, : para 16). Examples of this · sort of information were included in the 1993 Home Office consultation paper on police-checks (see below) and included the fact that an adult had been abused themselves as a child; the information was disclosed on the basis that 'abused children have a higher chance of becoming abusers themselves in adulthood' (Home Office 1993: para 18; see Rivera and Widom, 1990 for a refutation of this thesis).

We should also note a race dimension to the 'police check'.. It is now well documented that black people are over-represented at all stages in the criminal justice system and as such are more likely to have a criminal record and a more severe sentence than a white person (see eg. Hood, 1992). We would contend that the black person now possibly suffers secondary discrimination in terms of pre-employment selection made by the 'police check'.

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978 recognised the principle that, given time, offenders should be able to live down their past and consider old convictions 'spent'. Earlier we noted the exemptions built in for child care workers, but the principle of having your past crimes and misdemeanours 'officially forgotten' remains an important one. A court hearing may be a public forum reported by the press and other media, but the concept remains that from being a matter of public record at one point in time, a criminal record is entitled to have a veil of confidentiality drawn over it when it enters the national collection of criminal records. The 1974 Act recognises this by making it a criminal offence, for someone with official access to criminal records, to make an unauthorised disclosure of those records. What is required is some agreed formula along the lines of the Etzioni concept that permits a limit to privacy in order to safeguard children.

### The Future of the Police Check

Despite the number of difficulties associated with the police check it is clearly a mechanism that is here to stay and looks set for an even wider role in the near future.

In 1993 the Home Office conducted a review of how police-checks were working (Home Office, 1993) and after due consultation and consideration produced proposals on the way forward. The White Paper 'On the Record' proposed a new three tier system of police-checks with 'enhanced' checks for youth workers, social workers and other child-care workers, 'full' checks for other workers in'sensitive' employment and Criminal Conviction Certificates for *anyone* going for *any* employment. To contain the rising numbers it was decided to introduce a fee for each check in order to concentrate local authority minds, and to introduce a new Criminal Records Bureau to take the workload off the police (Home Office, 1996).

The Criminal Records Bureau was to be a privatised arrangement that would be a self-funding agency. To see if such a privatised scheme would be publicly acceptable, there were a series of official leaks to the press that trailed the White Paper (see eg 'Ministers Plan Record Sales Agency' *The Guardian*, 16 January 1995, 'Tories Secret Plan to Sell Off Police Records' *Sunday Times*, 5 February 1995). Although it might be argued that this was a 'commodification' of peoples personal histories, these 'soundings' stirred up no major disquiet, and the Conservative administration put the statutory framework in place in Part V of the Police Act 1997.

It was left to the new Labour Government to decide on implementation of the Police Act Part V, and after some hesitation they decided to proceed with it, and even to add to it. The Protection of Children Act 1999 enabled the proposed Criminal Record Bureau to have access to the Department of Health's 'Consultancy Service Index' and the Department for Education and Employments 'List 99'.. The private company Capita eventually won the £400 million, 10 year contract to run the CRB which is expected to start work in mid-2001 (Home Office, 2000).

The 'Consultancy Service Index' (now renamed as the Protection of Children Act List) and the 'List 99' are complementary databases to the criminal record collection and are made up of contributions sent in by local authority employers. They contain information about unsuitable individuals who should not work with children whether or not they have been convicted or cautioned; they have usually been dismissed or resigned in unfortunate circumstances but no legal proceedings have necessarily ever been instigated. The'Index' and the 'List had been around for some years, (see eg. Home Office, 1993 Annex B and C) but the Protection of Children Act 1999 put them on a formal basis and opened them up to the Criminal Record Bureau, which would now act as a 'one-stop-shop' for information (see also DoH, 2000).

Future plans to make children and young people safe include proposals to make it an offence for anyone with a criminal conviction involving children to even apply for a course or a job with access to children (Home Office/Scottish Office, 1997; Home Office, 1999a). At the time of writing (November 2000) the Criminal Justice and Court Services Bill containing these proposals was still going through parliament (see Thomas, 2000). Further plans aimed to raise the age of consent for sexual relations between workers and the young people they work with up to 18. Any sexual relations between staff and young people - even if they are over 16 - would in future be an offence of 'abuse of trust' (Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill 2000 ). The Probation Service has already entered into an agreement with the Employment Service to pass information through so that certain people, subject to active supervision and considered unsuitable to work with children, will not be directed towards working with children (Home Office, 1999b).

## Conclusions

The protection of children and young persons is a worthy aim and safeguards in various work places like schools, childrens homes and youth clubs are clearly necessary. The police check arrangements, however, have not been given the critical appraisal they deserve and many of the 'problems' they throw up in practice are often seen as just that - 'problems' to be pragmatically resolved.

If we stand back from the police-check, however, it can be contextualised as a 'low visibility' decision making exercise which can have enormous repercussions for would-be youth workers and which gives little in the way of redress for aggrieved parties. As an exchange of personal information (criminal records) between the police and employing agencies it deserves closer attention as an example of the increasing use of criminal records beyond the criminal justice system for employers, in particular, to make risk assessments on job applicants. With little guidance or training, the discretion given to those making these decisions can lead to contradictions and loss of civil liberties; the 'undesirable' effects described by Etzioni (see above).

The Home Office itself has admitted that 'there is a price to be paid for the mitigation of risk and in the case of vetting it involves the invasion of personal privacy and, however carefully implemented, the likelihood of some people being denied jobs for reasons which are unfair or unjustified' (Home Office 1993: para 107). For the person with a criminal record it can be seen as a continuing 'punishment' long after their formal period of punishment has been served. Advocates of police-checking would argue that it is an administrative (child) protective arrangement and not a punishment, but the nicety may be lost on the applicant who continues to feel the effects of a deliberate policy of 'social exclusion'.

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# RURAL YOUTH IN SCOTLAND:
*The policy agenda*

IAN DEY AND BIRGIT JENTSCH

Despite the complexity of rural 'problems', these are often interpreted in ways that simplify issues, so permitting potential 'solutions'. Such is the case with research on 'rural youth', where a consensus has emerged around policies to generate 'quality jobs' in rural areas. The appeal of these policies lies in their simplicity and generality, but also in their political relevance in addressing a range of rural problems. Policies addressing the limited opportunities of young people can also be presented as a means of retaining the viability and restoring the vitality of rural communities.

Most policies targeted at young people still neglect the fact that those in rural areas encounter specific problems. For example, the New Deal, which provides subsidised employment and training while promoting attainment of regular (unsubsidised) employment, although in principle extended to the whole of Scotland, but in practice is restricted in rural areas by lack of training and employment opportunities, regular or subsidised. Employment tends to be limited to low paid insecure jobs, and rural firms tend to be small, with a notable lack of training opportunities. Recent research (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000) found that rural employers were not well informed about the New Deal despite heavy promotional publicity. Many of the better informed were reluctant to participate due either to lack of in-house training or to the inaccessibility of formal training courses. Opportunities are often further limited by shortage of accessible housing and by transport problems. The initial target population for the New Deal - the young long-term unemployed - is concentrated in the Scottish cities, with about one third of this population located in Glasgow alone (Fairley, 1998). Not surprisingly, Fairley (1998) found critics questioning the relevance to rural areas of a programme so plainly 'urban in concept and design'.

There are proposals to enhance the prospects of rural youth through the promotion of employment and educational opportunities which may fill this political vacuum. One aim is to extend opportunities for rural youngsters to acquire training and educational qualifications while staying within their communities. Another is to provide 'quality jobs' to allow young people who left in search of better opportunities to return to their communities of origin. Proposals under this umbrella (Henderson and Rothe, 1997) include, for example:

- *Promotion of subsidised training with rural employers*
- *Promotion of distance learning*

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- *Financial support for travel and subsistence for rural youngsters attending training courses*  .
- *Decentralisation of public services*
- *Promotion of increased job training and career progression in rural employment*
- *Improved transport links to rural areas*
- *Promotion of self-employment in rural areas*
- *Improved access to housing for young people in rural areas*
- *Development of mentoring programmes to assist new company formation*

Unlike the New Deal, with its focus on promoting employment opportunities without much regard to the quality of work on offer, such proposals directly address the issue of employment 'quality' (Henderson and Rothe, 1997: 8) in rural areas. This agenda is informed by a landmark study stressing 'the very real issues of lack of employment opportunities and affordable housing in rural Scotland in the 1990s' (Shucksmith et al, 1996: 480). The study highlighted the problem of 'educating out', whereby rural parents seek educational opportunities for their youngsters outwith the immediate area, knowing that this will encourage them to leave their families and communities. Yet youth migration is perceived as a threat to rural communities, both undermining social support (exacerbating the social problems of an ageing community) and reducing social cohesion (threatening continuity of shared values and beliefs). Thus 'respondents in all areas were anxious to develop mechanisms to retain young people in rural communities' (Shucksmith et al, 1996: 465).

Improving the supply of 'quality jobs' in rural areas may help resolve the dilemmas facing rural families while simultaneously helping rural communities to retain their young people. Earlier research, (based on the Scottish Young People's Survey) argued that more young people would choose to remain in (or return to) their home area if given the choice. This study associated youth migration from rural areas with 'limited choice' (Jones 1992: 37) or, more emphatically, with 'lack of opportunity, reflecting constraint rather than choice' (ibid: 38). It was also argued that rural communities need to retain their young people:

> *The migration of young people from rural areas is a particular problem because they leave communities which consist increasingly of elderly people, who contribute only marginally to the local economy, but require a higher level of service provision. For communities to thrive, populations should be relatively stable and covering a range of age and economic activity.*
> *(Jones, 1992: 37)*

Jones suggested that young migrants often transferred their problems to an urban setting rather than resolving them - many young people went on to experience

problems in town. Though acknowledging the inclination of young people to seek a better life in the cities, this inclination was questioned: 'life in rural communities may seem dead-end to many, but is there any guarantee that town life is going to be better?' (Jones, 1992: 37).

Two studies sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation 'Action in Rural Areas' programme emphasised the restricted opportunities in rural areas. They suggested that finding employment per se was not a particular problem, since long-term unemployment was rarer in rural labour markets and young people found themselves out of work no more often than their urban counterparts, while returning to employment more rapidly (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000). This faster flow out of unemployment reflected the vital role of local contacts in facilitating job search in rural areas. However, the jobs found were typically low paid, undemanding in terms of skill, and lacking in promotion prospects or career structures (Pavis et al, 2000: 44). This can mainly be attributed to the prevalence of small employers, offering few 'quality jobs' and little in the way of formal training opportunities, beyond the minimum required for health and safety. Moreover, where young people were employed they often filled the most insecure positions (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000).

The lack of 'quality jobs' in rural labour markets is perceived as a major problem both for those remaining long-term (with no prospects of improvement) and for those wishing to return to their home communities after migrating to acquire better qualifications. Although research found that many students returned home for a period after graduation, this was mainly short-term, while they paid off debts and sought jobs in national labour markets. Meanwhile, those remaining in rural areas tended to experience problems in establishing independent homes, often remaining in the parental home for extended periods or relying on poor quality private rented sector accommodation in remoter areas. As rural employers also tended to be widely scattered, transport could be a serious problem in finding work. Even if available (and many parents helped with the costs of buying or running a car) employers could be reluctant to take on employees obliged to make long and complex journeys to work. If work was found, its low paid and insecure character often prevented young people from overcoming their problems with transport and housing (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000; Pavis et al, 2000).

Such findings have reinforced the case for promoting improvements in the quality of employment in rural areas. This focus at least provides a refreshing antidote to the Government's inclination to promote work as a path to welfare, regardless of quality. However, despite its merits in this respect, the case is less convincing than it appears, once due account is taken of the complexities and intractability of the problems that it claims to address.

**Retaining young people in rural areas**

One difficulty arises from the conflation of separate issues into a single agenda. The problems of young people tend to be identified with those of rural communities:

> *Lack of youth employment choice and options was perceived to be the most serious problem facing rural communities.*
> *(Henderson and Jones, 1997: 5)*

Respondents in rural areas focus on the need to retain young people within them, and the provision of greater opportunities is conceived with this purpose in mind. Hence the concern to ally training opportunities with better chances of employment, lest young people use acquired skills and qualifications to seek jobs in national rather than local markets:

> *A danger with promoting training opportunities is that, unless employment opportunities exist in rural areas, they may merely have the effect of increasing youth migration from rural areas. It is important that training and employment creation is a joint strategy.*
> *(Henderson and Rothe, 1997: 17)*

However, the interests of young people may conflict with those of rural communities per se. Young people may be better served by provision of opportunities outwith rural areas. This may be on efficiency grounds; for example, more educational opportunities can be created by expanding existing (urban) institutions than by creating new (rural) ones. It may be easier to reduce the problems young people encounter when migrating to urban areas than to try to bring educational opportunities and jobs to rural areas.

Can the problems of rural decline be tackled through trying to retain young people who would otherwise migrate? One reason retention seems attractive to rural communities lies in a concern with local tradition:

> *Migration and retention were raised as major issues by respondents in the context of social change because for many respondents the strengths of any rural community lay in the people who lived and worked in the communities, and who adhered to a set of shared values and beliefs.*
> *(Shucksmith et al, 1996: 465)*

This concern with change (and continuity) is evident in responses to the arrival of new migrants into rural areas. Migrants are often seen as a threat to rural traditions, with respondents 'deeply concerned about the effect of the sheer volume of counterstream migrants on small rural communities' (Shucksmith et al, 1996: 465). The significance of inward migration in terms of economic activity (e.g. on spending capacity) or

political vitality (e.g. through challenging deference) tends to be obscured by cultural perceptions of migrants as 'incomers' disinterested in traditional rural life and work. By comparison, the retention of young people offers the prospect of preserving conventional rural values and leaving the pace of rural life undisturbed. Nevertheless, policies to improve the economic and social life of rural areas might be better directed at attracting inward migration of 'incomers' than at trying to halt the outward migration of the young. If it is indeed the 'socially limiting environment' of rural areas that young people find 'daunting' then

> *Policies designed to preserve local communities, through the protection of traditional industry and festivals, may simply increase dissatisfaction among the young (Jones and Jamieson, 1997 ).*

Since access to employment in rural communities tends to depend strongly on the integration into 'the network', those 'not fitting in', perhaps because their parents are 'incomers' or because their behaviour is disapproved of, can face significant barriers to economic and social integration (Furlong and Cartmel, 2000). Trying to retain traditional communities may do little to reduce the unequal opportunities they offer, notably to young women seeking employment. Hence 'Policies designed for young people would not focus on retaining them in rural communities but would increase their scope for choice, and allow migrate-or-stay decisions to be based on viable alternatives' (Jones and Jamieson 1997). This may conflict with the interests of rural communities in the retention of a young population, but it seems preferable to recognise such conflicts than to presume that policies can serve all interests at once.

### Diversity

A recent report by the Cabinet Office acknowledged, 'rural areas do not all share the same characteristics: some are prosperous, others are not; and some have better access to services, facilities and higher levels of employment than others' (2000:4). Though emphasising common 'structural barriers', Pavis et al (2000) also note significant differences in employment levels, transport problems and housing problems, according to whether 'rural areas' were isolated or close to urban centres, had high levels of seasonal employment or suffered from long-term industrial decline. Clearly there are marked differences in rural areas, depending on such factors as their remoteness from cities, their access to various forms of non-agricultural employment, their dependence on tourism, and their proximity to educational and training establishments. These factors can have a significant impact on 'rural' circumstances. For example, North Ayrshire, with its proximity to training and educational establishments and employment in Glasgow, retains a much larger proportion of young people than remoter parts of Scotland (Henderson and Rothe, 1997).

Variation is also marked amongst the target population of young people in rural areas. Pavis et al. (2000) emphasised the importance of education and qualifications in differentiating between the young people in their study - with graduates orientated to national labour markets and those with low qualifications orientated to local employment. Although graduates may be obliged to look beyond local labour markets, it seems unlikely that this is entirely a function of the limited employment opportunities available there. Mobility for those with even modest career aspirations is also a common requirement for urban youth. Moreover, although Jones and Jamieson (1997) observed that migration does provide higher rewards for those with comparable education qualifications, they also found social factors influenced migration decisions, with 'stayers' usually belonging to local families and migrants more likely to come from families with a history of migration. They also found that stayers or migrants varied in their degree of attachment to their home communities. Thus enhanced provision of higher-level educational and employment opportunities in rural areas may be relevant mainly for well-qualified migrants who remain 'attached' to their local communities. Provision for 'detached' stayers might be more usefully focused on helping them to escape from their local communities.

## Costs

If the problems of 'educating out' are most severe in the remoter localities, so too are the problems of locating in them the requisite educational and employment infrastructure to prevent it. Choices involve costs as well as benefits. Enhancement of the provision of 'quality jobs' in rural areas may have negative consequences for the availability of opportunities outwith rural areas. What if educational and employment opportunities can only be improved through redistribution from urban areas - for example through the decentralisation of civil service jobs or educational institutions? Policies to promote training and quality employment within rural communities have a price, in terms of resources that could be allocated in other ways. Should we be more concerned with facilitating the choices of those who wish to remain in rural communities, even at the expense of those who wish to migrate?

Even if such policies are desirable, this does not mean that they are feasible. If the limitations of rural employment are deep-rooted then the migration of young people is likely to prove an intractable problem. Powerful factors motivate industry to locate quality jobs in urban areas, including the availability of an established and substantial pool of skilled labour and the transport and communications costs of locating in remoter areas. Some constraints may be eased by the advent of more sophisticated communications systems, including the Internet. This has already led to relocation of information processing work to rural areas - as, for example, the

processing of reports for New York professionals in Rothesey. However, while such examples hold out some hope for the redistribution of 'quality' work from urban to rural settings, they also underline the force of the market in dictating location outcomes. The power of public authorities to influence market movements is increasingly limited.

The question of costs is also significant when the level of services and provisions in rural areas is considered. In relation to health, for example, it is clear that

> *the direct costs of providing health care in rural areas are higher than in urban areas due to, amongst other factors, the lack of economies of scale, additional travel costs, high level of unproductive time, extra costs of providing mobile and outreach services and the extra costs of providing training and other support.*
> *(Roderick, 1999: 45)*

Whilst resource allocation on a per capita base would obviously disadvantage rural areas, a sparsity weighting method is applied in the allocation of resources in Scotland and Wales (Roderick 1999: 45). Whether or not we agree on the method or its results, it is clear that arguments for giving 'choice' to rural youth through enhancing 'quality jobs' (and other services and provisions) have to consider potentially significant implications for resource distribution.

## Choice

The case for enhancing 'quality jobs' is often made in terms of giving young people 'real' choices whether to remain or to migrate (or to return). Youngsters are perceived as 'forced' to leave home, 'often earlier than they would wish' (Highland Council, 1993: 3) in order to realise their educational ambitions and job aspirations. Those who migrate are denied a 'real' choice to remain (or return). The young people staying in their home communities also suffer from restricted opportunities, in that they usually cannot choose 'quality jobs'. Hence the claim that

> *ideally, young people should be able to choose whether or not to migrate away from their home communities, rather than to be forced to leave or stay. In order for young people to have such a choice, **structures for local employment and post-school education and training,** as well as housing opportunities, need to be in place.*
> *(Jones, 1997, 7-8; own emphasis)*

Offering 'real' choice to young people through the creation of viable alternatives (and not simply aiming to retain them in rural communities) has become the central plank of research on young people in rural areas (Jones, 1999a; Jones, 1999b;

Hendry et al, 1998; Jones and Jamieson, 1997; Shucksmith et al, 1996), and also figuring in policy documents such as the Rural Audit of the Rural Group of Labour MPs (Murphy and Shucksmith, 1999). Since training without the possibility of 'quality jobs' to follow might promote further migration, it has been argued that 'an integrated approach to the retention of young people is required from policymakers if those who wish to remain are allowed that choice'. (Shucksmith et al., 1996: 512). Moreover, young people are thought to require: '*support and guidance* in order to make "real" choices when confronted with the obvious tensions and dilemmas associated with the stay-or-migrate decision that all young people living in rural areas must recognise and face.' (Hendry et al., 1998, 5.1.2; own emphasis). Thus public policy is exhorted not only to create choice, but also to provide professional advice (e.g. through careers guidance) to help young people to exercise it.

The concept of 'real choice' is appealing. Who would want to deny young people the choice of whether to remain in or leave their home community - urban or rural? We are generally inclined to regard choice as positive and restriction of choice as unreasonable. But on closer scrutiny this is problematic.

Choice is complicated by the problem of ignorance - of balancing the 'benefits and burdens of the life and opportunities already known' against the (unknown) 'benefits and burdens of a life and opportunities to be explored'. The exercise of 'choice' is also complicated by the influence of powerful others with a vested interest in whether they stay or go.

There are always pressures that encourage people to act one way rather than another. For example, Henderson and Jones observe that 'more is done (through education and social pressures) to encourage young people to leave rural areas, than was done to encourage them to stay' (1997: 3). And apart from economic reasons for migration, there are other important considerations, including degree of attachment to the local community, family history, parental influence, and the location of the extended family (Jones, 1992; Jones, 1999b, 65; Jones and Jamieson, 1997; Shucksmith et al, 1996, 469).

The idea that young people are 'forced' to migrate or stay is problematic. For example, residents of rural areas are sometimes inclined to 'blame' the problems of young people (for example in finding affordable housing) on 'incomers' who (by raising the price of local accommodation) can 'force' young people out of the housing market. We need to be wary of this kind of over-simplification. Since we are always subject to social constraints, we also need to consider whether, when and why these ought to be challenged. Their existence does not in itself establish a case for trying to reduce or remove them. To adapt a well-worn aphorism, one person's constraint is another person's opportunity. Even if migration is 'associated'

(Jones, 1992: 37) with a lack of educational and employment options in rural areas, this 'constraint' may be perceived in positive terms. Thus the research evidence suggests that residents in rural communities tend to perceive migration as 'forced' while young people themselves are often very positive about their experiences of migration, and find attractions in an urban lifestyle (Shucksmith et al,1996: 467; Henderson and Jones, 1997: 3).

The argument that young people are 'forced' to migrate is also suspect on empirical grounds. The Scottish Young People's Survey carried out in the late '80s revealed that

*young people who were living in rural areas were more than twice as likely to have left home as those living in the major towns. [...] By the age of 19 years, 54% of people who had been living in remote areas at age 17 had left home (though some had returned again). This figure compares with 32% of 19-year-olds living in other rural areas, and 25% of those living in towns. (Jones, 1992: 37).*

While leaving home was notably more common amongst young people in remoter rural areas than in major towns, it was only marginally so amongst those in other rural districts. More young people in rural areas left home to continue their education (55% compared to 44% in the major towns) but this hardly justifies any strong conclusion regarding the 'force' of restricted opportunities in rural areas. The question of whether young people are 'forced' to leave (or stay) is more problematic than the 'real choice' agenda allows. Extending choice is therefore a more complex and difficult exercise than any simple equation of greater 'real choice' with increased opportunities implies.

**Values**

The 'real choice' argument tends to rely upon an unacknowledged value assumption - that young people should choose to remain in their home communities. This has been defended (Jones, 1992) on the grounds that the interests of young people themselves may be best served by remaining at home (given the risks associated with migration).

However, a case can be made to encourage young people to leave and explore new possibilities beyond their own community. Leaving home, at least for a period, may mark an important step in the transition from youth to adulthood, aiding the process of emancipation from parental authority. Not to embark on such a venture may mean a missed opportunity at an age when 'experimenting' should be part of the experience. This view seems prevalent amongst young people themselves, since younger respondents 'generally viewed their time in urban areas as extremely beneficial' (Shucksmith et al, 1996: 467) offering opportunities to experiment with youth and urban lifestyles.

It has also been pointed out that local employers value the experience young people have gained outside their local communities, which can increase their chances for employment on their return (Henderson and Jones, 1997: 21). Evidence suggests that those returning to rural communities after a period away are more likely to be balanced and tolerant in their attitudes (Shucksmith et al, 1996). A case can therefore be made for giving priority to migration over staying at home.

## Policy principles

The 'real choice' argument does not offer explicit principles on which to base claims for increasing resources for rural areas in general, and rural youth in particular. If the concept of choice is difficult to interpret, we may call upon other principles to inform policy. But it is not clear what these principles should be. Is the underlying concern about meeting young people's needs? About greater equity between rural and urban youth? Is 'real choice' a rights-based notion? Is it related to concepts of social justice? Such principles are conventionally invoked when the distribution of resources is discussed (Taylor-Gooby, 1998; Manning, 1998) and might be relevant to arguments about 'real choice' for rural youth - but no explicit links have been made.

Suppose we invoke the principle of meeting needs. One problem here is that the needs of young people are not confined to rural settings. For example, mobility may be vital for any young people with modest ambitions, not just for those in rural areas. Many urban young people live in areas where unemployment is very high, and where there are few social provisions. The latest research suggests that geographical location is less significant in shaping the experience of young people than other factors, such as gender or education (Pavis et al, 2000). Policies designed to address the 'needs' of young people in general, or to focus on the needs of young people suffering particular forms of disadvantage (such as lack of qualifications) may therefore be more appropriate than trying to address the needs of young people in rural areas.

Another principle, based on considerations of equity, implies that opportunities for young people in rural areas should be comparable to those in urban areas. But this would hardly be feasible without eroding entirely the social and economic differences between rural and urban areas. The issue of equity is also complicated by the problem of isolating particular factors, though quality of life is experienced as a whole and not in terms of particular circumstances. Rural residents themselves subscribe to this more holistic conception of the balance of advantage and disadvantage of rural living (Chapman and Shucksmith, 1996). They tended to discount the lack of opportunities in terms of employment and income generation, and offset problems of transport and work, against other virtues of living in a rural setting:

*by (these) objective standards the respondents in the study could be seen as being disadvantaged because to a large extent they were unable to share in the lifestyles of the majority of the population. And yet what was found was that for the most part respondents considered themselves to be advantaged by rural life rather than disadvantaged, because of the higher quality of life available to them, in terms of the social and moral environment, a lack of crime, neighbourliness, and so on. (Chapman and Shucksmith, 1996: 74)*

To focus selectively on particular factors such as income or employment may distort the overall balance of advantage and disadvantage associated with rural or urban styles of life.

Arguments for increased opportunities for young people in rural areas could also appeal to minimum standards. This raises two questions. First, what level of social provisions (such as education, health, housing, employment, and leisure) should people enjoy in a given society? To make a case for rural provision we would have to establish a baseline and show that rural communities fall below it. Second, what provisions above that baseline should be available in all areas of a given society, and what criteria should determine the location of provisions, such as hospitals and institutions of higher education? We also have to consider the extent to which public intervention should try to alter the geographical distribution of resources (such as employment) established through the operation of the market.

It may be possible to construct a more coherent case for enhancing the opportunities for youth in rural areas by considering the provisions they lack. Issues of lack of employment, education and housing led to the establishment of the Commission on Social Justice in December 1992, set up by John Smith, then leader of the Labour Party. The Report of the Commission stressed 'the need to spread opportunities and life chances as widely as possible' at a time when 'old evils of homelessness and pauperism have returned' (Commission of Social Justice, 1994: 1-2). However, the practical meaning of concepts such as 'deprivation' and 'poverty' is controversial. Often, residents in local areas consider themselves reasonably well off (at least compared to others even less well off), and it is professionals who label these people as living 'in poverty' (Shucksmith et al, 1996).

### Conclusion

The case for extending 'real choice' to young people in rural areas through encouraging the creation of 'quality jobs' is undoubtedly an appealing one, but it takes insufficient account of complexities and potential costs. It is not enough to identify the 'needs' of rural youth and then assume that these should be met.

In any case, the 'needs' identified by research are less clear-cut than at first appears. The problems of rural communities and of young people in those communities can easily be confused. It is important to distinguish the case for retaining young people in rural areas from that of extending their options to remain or migrate. The case for retention is pressed most by rural residents, but primarily on grounds of cultural continuity. We should recognise that the interests of residents may conflict with those of young people. We should also recognise that policies to bring 'quality jobs' to rural areas may prove expensive and ineffective given the force of countervailing social and economic factors. The diversity of rural areas has to be taken into account, since those remote areas most disadvantaged by isolation are also those where these obstacles are most severe. The diversity of young people in rural areas is also a factor, since it is mainly those who have acquired good qualifications through migration and desire to return to their 'home communities' who stand to gain most from policies to relocate 'quality jobs'. Whether meeting this desire should be accepted as a policy priority is a moot point.

The complexities we have discussed relate not only to the diversity of rural contexts and populations, but also to the problems of disentangling issues and establishing clearer policy agendas. The argument for 'real choice' has become an important policy premise but one which lacks clarity and consistency. Interpretations, in terms of not 'forcing' young people to migrate, or giving them a 'choice' to stay or go, are of questionable merit. The underlying value position - that young people should choose to remain in rural areas - seems plausible but is nonetheless contestable.

To close this article on a more positive note, we suggest that attention should shift from choice of location to concern with realising what Sen (1983) calls 'minimum capa-bilities' (mobility, shelter, communication) and the related case for meeting the educational and other needs of young people generally. This does not exclude a rural dimension, since capabilities can only be realised through variations in the commodities requisite for their attainment. The provision of training and employment opportunities to young people based on these criteria would be orientated to enhancing minimum capabilities rather than extending choice with respect to migration. This would involve a sharper focus on those young people who lose out most in the struggle to realise their potential - notably those young people remaining in rural areas with transport problems, without educational qualifications, lacking access to adequate housing, and trapped in insecure employment. The aim would be to reduce or remove these barriers to realising their capabilities rather than changing their options regarding migration.

Separating the problems of rural youth from those of rural communities allows a more positive agenda to emerge regarding the latter, as a more broadly-based

approach can be pursued. This could involve a much more positive perspective on inward migration of 'incomers' and their capacity to sustain rural economies and services. This might be less ambitious but more attainable than the ambition to retain rural youth, since inward migrants are often prepared to trade educational and employment opportunities for other qualities associated with rural life. It might also be more ambitious, in that inward migration is likely to challenge the slow pace and comfortable conventions characteristic of many (but not all) rural communities.

Finally, we would like to rescue the issue of 'quality jobs' from its entanglement with that of migration. The emphasis on the quality of opportunities is surely a marked improvement on current inclination on the part of New Labour to regard work of any sort as a panacea. Steps to improve the income and security that can be derived from work are much needed, though this need applies to urban as to rural employment, and can surely be tackled best through measures to enforce minimum standards (such as a more vigorously pursued minimum wage policy) rather than by chasing a chimera in the form of reduced migration.

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# THE DISCOURSE OF THE CAREERS GUIDANCE INTERVIEW:
*From public policy to private practice*

### LINDA STACEY AND PHIL MIGNOT

Given the current uncertainty around the future of careers guidance in the context of the new Connexions service, it may appear perverse to dedicate prolonged attention to the careers guidance interview. However, the authors hold the view that those involved in the embryonic Connexions service can learn a great deal from the careers guidance interview as a model of intervention. There are two reasons for this. First, the careers guidance interview has, over time, demonstrated a considerable degree of versatility as a medium for the implementation of public policy. The positioning of 'career' at the interface between the citizen and the state and of the individual and society, means that careers guidance is inevitably a political activity. More specifically, careers guidance has been described as a 'lubricant' of socio-economic and educational policy (Watts, 1996a: 381). Thus, as public policy has changed so too has the private practice of careers guidance. Secondly, whilst being responsive to policy imperatives the careers guidance interview has, at the same time, succeeded in retaining its popular image as an *impartial* source of advice and information. As such, the careers guidance interview would appear to provide the Connexions service with an exemplary model of intervention, given that Connexions is premised upon both a commitment to advocacy on behalf of young people, *and* the fulfilment of ambitious local and national targets for participation and attainment in education, training and work (DfEE, 2000a; DfEE, 2000b).

This article is concerned with how public policy intervenes in the lives of young people. In order to address this concern the article provides a unique insight into the private world of the careers guidance interview. It begins by examining the expectations and requirements of careers guidance from the perspectives of its policy stakeholders and moves on to consider the degree to which the discourse of the careers guidance interview is influenced by these perspectives. In so doing the authors subscribe to the social constructionist view that individual thought and action is constructed through discourse, i.e. through cultural practices which are constructed and maintained by the use of shared language and symbol systems (Gergen and Gergen, 1991). This article also adopts a critical stance by acknowledging that cultural practices, as discourses, are subject to both 'reification' and 'sedimentation' over time (Crotty, 1998). As such, it is necessary to give close attention to the familiar and to the 'common-sense' that prevails in daily life, the aim being to examine and question the discourses of particular communities - in this case the Guidance community. The careers guidance interview is therefore regarded as a

discursive act that both inhabits and is inhabited by the multiple discourses of its community. These include social, economic, educational, and political discourses. Parker (1992) has emphasised the need to delineate the wider context of any discursive act, or 'text'. According to Parker, a text provides not only an account of a specific instance, but also a reflection of the wider context within which the text is situated. As such, the text of a careers guidance interview will reflect its historical, political, economic, and social context.

**The Socio-historic and Political Context of the Careers Guidance Interview**

In documenting the socio-historic and political context of the careers guidance interview it is necessary to examine what has been written about, and by, the policy stakeholders who have an interest in careers guidance. In what follows, the discourses engendered by Government socio-economic and educational policy provide the focus of analysis.

*The 'Competitiveness' Agenda*

In the mid-1990s, the Conservative Government published two White Papers, 'Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win' (DTI, 1994) and 'Competitiveness: Forging Ahead' (DfEE, 1995a). The 'Competitiveness' White Papers were significant in that they made manifest the interpolation of economic and educational policy discourses. According to Harris (1999), contemporary education policy discourse has become progressively wedded to economic discourses. Harris argues that this movement was precipitated by the raising of the school leaving age (ROSLA) in 1972 and subsequently by 'The Great Debate' (1976), whereby educational policy discourse shifted its emphasis from humanism to 'curriculum relevance', the subtext being 'the subordination of secondary education to the perceived needs of the economy.' (Chitty, 1992: 31). Harris suggests that the discourse of 'curriculum relevance' made it possible to construct an educational discourse around the notion of 'the pupil as an economic resource' (Harris, 1999: 58), thus blurring the distinction between education and training, and giving rise to the New Vocationalism of the 1980s. The sedimentation of economic discourses within educational policy has continued throughout the 1990s, as evidenced by the 'competitiveness' agenda. This agenda gave rise to the performance model of education (Broadfoot, 1996) and the discourse of 'school improvement'. It also declared a central role for careers education and guidance:

*Careers education and guidance is more important than ever before. Young people have more choice, and the decisions they make can have a major effect on their own lives and on the competitiveness of the nation. Careers education and guidance can... help the economy. If students achieve higher standards, there will be more qualified people entering the workforce. They*

*will help improve the performance of their employers, and make them, and the UK, more competitive.'*
*(Portillo and Shepherd, 1994: 2)*

For present purposes it is important to elaborate the historical context of this statement. In 1989 the Confederation of British Industries (CBI) issued 'Towards a Skills Revolution', a report which argued that individuals should be encouraged to build up skills and knowledge throughout their working life, enabling Britain to compete in world markets (CBI, 1989). This was followed by the White Paper, 'Education and Training for the 21st Century' (DES, 1991) which conferred Government support for many of the ideas contained in the CBI report. The White Paper announced the planned introduction of training credits to enable workers to build up a personal training and skills portfolio. In common with the CBI report, it also recognised the value of careers guidance in marketing these strategies. This policy position related to the notion of careers guidance as a 'market maker':

*Towards the end of the 1980s, greater attention began to be given to developing a rational for guidance services which would be more closely in line with 'New Right' thinking. It was based on the notion that guidance could be viewed as a tool for making markets work, ensuring that the supply-side had access to market information and was able to read market signals.*
*(Watts, 1991: 239)*

In 1992, the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) in association with the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) published 'The Economic Value of Careers Guidance' (Killeen *et al*, 1992). This was followed by a NICEC report entitled 'Economic Benefits of Careers Guidance' (NICEC, 1992). The NICEC report, which was widely circulated amongst the guidance community, outlined three key economic functions of guidance:

- *supporting the individual decisions through which the labour market operates;*
- *reducing the level of market failures within the labour market;*
- *contributing to institutional reforms designed to improve the function of the labour market.*

The NICEC/PSI research was produced under contract with the Employment Department. Its message to Government was clear and can be paraphrased as follows: 'client-centred careers guidance produces tangible socio-economic benefits for the nation so continue to fund it - indeed extend it to all ages'. However, in conveying this message the discourse of 'careers guidance as an economic lubricant' was elaborated and embedded within the wider set of discourses constructed by the 'competitiveness' agenda.

*The Social Inclusion Agenda*

The Labour government, elected in 1997, has declared 'social inclusion' to be its key priority (DfEE, 1998a), and this declaration has heralded a raft of policy measures designed to create a 'learning society' (DfEE, 1999a; HM Treasury, 2000). However, the underlying policy discourse of the Labour government can be seen to have its roots in the 'competitiveness' agenda of the previous administration. For example, under Labour 'the economic benefits of guidance' has been replaced by 'the educational benefits of guidance'. However, as the foregoing has suggested, there is much evidence of the interpolation of economic and educational policy discourse. Thus, in policy terms, 'economic benefits' has become isomorphic with 'educational benefits'. In the same vein, the discourse of 'guidance as an economic lubricant' has become reconstructed to convey a concern with educational performance:

> *Good quality careers education will raise the aspirations of all young people, especially those with limited horizons. It will increase motivation by linking activities in school with preparation for life afterwards. It will therefore contribute to raising pupil achievement and school improvement, and can help ensure equality of opportunity for all.*
> *(DfEE, 1998b: 3)*

Here the various discourses of the 'competitiveness' agenda become conflated under the rubric of 'social inclusion'. In this statement 'the economy' is signified by its absence - centre stage is given to the motivation of pupils ('curriculum relevance'), individual achievement ('pupil as a resource'), and school improvement ('investment in education').

The foregoing has provided an account of the socio-historic and political context of the careers guidance interview. In so doing, a macro-level analysis has been given of social, economic, educational and political discourses. Within this analysis, the discourse of 'guidance as lubricant of policy' has been delineated. So, how is this discourse played out in terms of guidance practice? What are its features and characteristics at a localised level? In order to address these questions, it is necessary to understand more precisely the institutional dimension of guidance, given that the institutionalisation of guidance is a concomitant of its function as a policy lubricant.

*The Careers Service*

In the UK the statutory provision of careers guidance is currently delivered by the Careers Service, an institution that has been seen as having 'an essential part to play in achieving the Government's priorities' (Blunkett, 1998:1). Since its inception in 1973, the Careers Service has provided successive governments with the means

to reinforce both educational and labour market policy agendas. This has been achieved by promoting the Careers Service as an *impartial* source of guidance:

> *The purpose of the Careers Service is to contribute to the learning and prosperity of individuals, their communities and society as a whole. It does this by providing impartial information, guidance and help to enter appropriate education, training and employment*
> *(DfEE, 1998c: 5)*

The discourse of 'impartiality' projects the image of the careers service as an 'honest-broker', and careers guidance as apolitical. However, the discourse of impartiality can be seen to obfuscate the political nature of careers guidance practice. According to Watts (1996b), the institutional dimension of guidance is inevitably political as it is implicated in the dual processes of social control and social change. As such, the Careers Service exists as a partial rather than impartial institution. This is reinforced by financial control of careers services and is manifest in the organisation and administration of the careers guidance interview. For example, the careers guidance interview has progressively been targeted at specific age groups and background of client. Furthermore, the required outcomes of the careers guidance interview have also become more specific over the past decade - this reached its zenith in 1995 when 90% of young people in their final year of compulsory state education were required to have a careers action plan. The careers action plan, as a product of the careers guidance interview, attracted performance related funding provided it conformed to the specifications required by the DfEE (1995b). The use of 'hard' targets such as these have subsequently been softened at the level of the interview, but not at the level of the local management of careers guidance activities. Under the 'social inclusion' agenda, careers services continue to have very specific targets, or 'penetration' rates, to achieve in relation to particular groups of clients:

> *Careers services must focus their help on those who are disadvantaged and for whom it can make the greatest difference. This includes: those in education who have low aspirations, are at risk of dropping out, failing to achieve, or not making a successful transition to further education, training or employment; those outside education who are not settled in training or employment.*
> *(DfEE 1998c: 9)*

This public statement has been embedded and reinforced by what is commonly known amongst the guidance community as the 'focussing agenda'. In January 1998 the DfEE issued a revised set of contractual requirements for careers services which precipitated a radical shift of resources away from the silent (but at the time

of writing the increasingly vocal) majority, to the minority of young people deemed to be 'at risk' of disengaging from learning (DfEE, 1998d). This development predated the Connexions initiative by some two years and was rationalised by the assumption that better quality careers education and information would satisfy the needs of those young people identified as 'low risk', i.e. those currently participating and achieving within the education and training systems. In this sense the careers service can be seen as the pathfinder of Connexions - their 'focussing' guidelines (DfEE, 1998d, 1999b) mapped out both the inter-agency territory and the 'penetration' targets that are now associated with the Connexions Service (DfEE, 2000b).

The foregoing demonstrates that the careers guidance interview is not a neutral void or space in which the practitioner and client can meet. However, whilst it is clear that public policy orchestrates the protocols of the guidance interaction in precise detail, the question remains: to what degree is public policy infused within the private and personal exchanges that take place between practitioner and client? In what follows an account will be given of how the public context and private text of the careers guidance interview might interrelate in practice.

### The Careers Guidance Interview: from public policy to private practice

The previous section has shown that the careers guidance interview is located within a bigger picture just as certainly as the client and practitioner represent the 'I' in their own life stories. As such, the discourse of the careers guidance interview can be seen to have its own rules, given that it derives its meaning from the power relations and ideologies of its sponsors and from its own history. According to Parker, 'a discourse makes available a space for a particular self to step into.' (Parker, 1992: 9). Payne and Edwards (1996) endorse this view by suggesting that the guidance interview is founded upon both a 'professional' and a 'managerial' discourse. The former discourse promotes a humanist notion of the 'self', whereby the individual is assumed to be striving for self-development. The latter discourse promotes the notion of a rational 'self' - from this perspective the individual is constructed as a rational decision-maker and as a processor of information. On this basis the guidance process can be regarded as prescriptive - it presents the individual with a particular and limiting set of expectations and rules of conduct:

> *To successfully negotiate the guidance process individuals have to participate in, to a greater or lesser extent, the self presented to them through the practices of guidance. They have to function within the cultural values and practices of the guidance process. (Payne and Edwards, 1996: 42)*

So, how might this prescriptive process be evidenced within the text of the careers guidance interview? The notion of a 'managerial' discourse certainly resonates

with the increasingly ambitious targets set initially by the 'focussing' of the careers service, and subsequently by the Connexions initiative: the rational view of 'self' makes it possible to articulate such a prescribed set of outcomes. However, the emphasis here is still with public policy rather than private practice. In contrast, the notion of a 'professional' discourse, as Payne and Edwards (ibid) admit, is less clearly articulated but nonetheless important to delineate. Parker (1992) has suggested that a key characteristic of professional discourse is the way in which it confers the 'right to speak'. According to Parker, this is achieved via the knowledge held by the professional. In conferring the 'right to speak', professional discourse serves to undermine the client's position, thus ensuring that the balance of power remains with the practitioner. Parker (ibid) suggests that the nuances of this process can be identified by attending to the way in which the participants converse, i.e. in their use of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. Furthermore, reflexivity within the text - evidence of participants looking for different ways of expressing thoughts and feelings; repeated attempts to clarify a point - can be interpreted as a sign that the participants know that they are operating within a certain discourse. Parker suggests that this indicates an implicit understanding amongst the participants of the rules accorded to a particular discourse. As such, speech patterns can reflect the power relations and ideologies inherent in discourse.

It is appropriate at this point to present the text of a careers guidance interview. In what follows the client is keen to start the discussion. She wants to discuss her reasons for staying on at school and for her change of mind regarding future training. She interrupts the practitioner and attempts to set her own agenda, talking in a rush as if the opportunity to speak provides a welcome relief of tension.

Client:
> ... *I've totally changed my mind now. `Cos I looked at ...I had a long look and I decided what would be my other option if, em, I wasn't going to do it. I thought that because I'm doing quite well in art that I'd like to do a GNVQ in art advanced after staying at school and then maybe going to college afterwards and then I have always been interested in being an interior designer as well so I thought it would be a perfect opportunity, I mean I could stay on at school and it doesn't make me - I mean I won't have to rush into anything. I mean going to college and then I probably, knowing me I'll probably change my mind half way through - I don't want to do that. So its going to give me an extra two years to think things through and I am going to end up with, hopefully, two `A' levels for art at the end of the day. You can go on from there which I think is a much better idea. I don't*

> *really think I am going to get a 'C' in maths. I mean I will try my best and that but it's a subject that is a bit difficult. I mean I don't see the point in going into a subject that I can't, I find difficulty in.*

In this first flow of thoughts there are many examples of reflexivity in the language as the client attempts to accurately convey her feelings about her current stage of thinking. There are also signs that this reflexivity is a response to attempts to convey the thoughts in a form most appropriate for the practitioner. She might say to her friends, 'I'm rubbish at maths' but she says to the practitioner, 'I mean I will try my best but it is a subject I find a bit difficult'. Before this, she says 'I could stay on at school and it doesn't make me...'. Although we can only hypothesise about the ending originally planned for this sentence, the client can be viewed as putting constraints on the expression of her feelings. She also corrects 'I looked at' to 'I had a long look'. 'I can't' is replaced by 'I find difficult', perhaps reflecting the 'never say can't' saying of past teachers. She is also forcing art to the foreground, although her attempts to explain this 'decision' provide much evidence of doubt ('hopefully', 'I think', etc.). However this also reflects a desire to set the agenda for the interview. The client is making an effort to communicate her success and potential in art:

Client:

> *Um, I think my predicted grade's a C and I'm... he says that I can - that I'm well in reach of a B cos he said that I'm coming up with some good work and he said - at the beginning of the course I was, you know, I wasn't knuckling down to it but I've ...the last couple of months I've been really knuckling down and doing extra work and coming back after school, after school and that to, you know, just touch up on bits of work and he said he's really impressed with me and that I should be able to get a B no problem as well if I continue the hard work, so...*

In the first extract, the client was trying to make sure that the practitioner accepted that art was a good route for her to follow. In the second extract she is 'selling' her potential in the same way as she might for a job interview. She corrects a weak word, 'can' to 'well in reach of' and explains that she has been 'knuckling down'. She also emphasises that she has been returning after school to 'just touch up on bits of work' and that the teacher has been impressed by her dedication. She is letting the practitioner know that she has the potential to be successful:

Client:

> *...I should be able to get a B no problem as well if I continue the hard work, so...*

Practitioner:

*So you've done very well then... You mentioned there staying on two years, GNVQ Advanced in art*

Client:

*Well, I first put intermediate down and I spoke to Mr. D and Mrs J, and she said why don't you do the advanced? You're capable of doing the advanced with the grades that you've got down here. She said why don't you do the advanced cos it's, you know, you'll get more out of it and I said yeah, I might as well cos I hadn't thought of it cos I thought I'll just put intermediate down cos I didn't realise what , I didn't really know what the advanced, .... you know, so she said yeah go for it so I did so I should hopefully be able to stay on for two years at school and hopefully I'll know, I'll know at the end of it , what I want to do really.*

Practitioner:

*Mmmm, right, from the advanced GNVQ a lot of people don't go straight into work...*

Client:

*Yeah*

Practitioner:

*They normally go on to the foundation course, which, at the moment is only available at College*

Client:

*Yeah*

Practitioner:

*um, but it's actually on the main site - which is a one year course and it, you look in depth at various things like ceramics that ...*

Client:

*Yeah*

Practitioner:

*OK so one of the things you could do next is perhaps to use some of the information in school like Occupations, all the CLIPS leaflets, which are down in the main school library. And have a look through at the different courses for interior design*

Client:

*Yeah*

Practitioner:

*And how it says you get into interior design.*

Client:

*Yeah*

Practitioner:

*From the art foundation course, again, a lot of people will go on to higher education.*

Client:

*Yeah*

Practitioner:

*And I know that sounds a long way ahead*

Client:

*Yeah*

Practitioner:

*But you'd be looking either in terms of a degree course or an HND and a HND is normally 2 years and the degree course is 3 years.*

Client:

*Yeah*

Practitioner:

*But of course, as you rightly said, you might change your mind en route and look at other things.*

Client:

*It's just like um I feel that it's going to give me time to actually just think about it. I don't want to rush into anything. The two years at school, I'm in a friendly environment that I know and I'm not going to be rushing off to some college where it's going to be totally different to me and I feel more secure here and I'll be able, if I do have a change of mind, I know that I'll have people to help me in the right direction, to not just be stuck at college somewhere because that's another reason why I'm happy to stay on at school. And I spoke to my mum about it and she said that she, she'd rather me do this course than do accountancy because she said that she knows I struggle in maths, she said it's a better, I think it's a better career for you to take on because my mum's sister, she um works for a, well she did um voluntary work at a printing company, um design and that and she had to do like voluntary work for ages because like there was not the jobs. She said that's*

*the only problem, cos she was talking to me, and she said you'll have to, if you want to go into something like that, you can't expect to just go into a job straight away, she said you'll have to do some voluntary work and, you know, get um people just to see what you're like. You just can't go into a job. I understand that totally but it just depends what area I want to go into cos I'm quite, I'm quite um ...*

The client's agenda is not higher education advice. In the earlier part of the exchange, she is receiving it passively, demonstrating little or no interest, as evidenced by the monosyllabic replies. She only opens up to discuss her thoughts at length when the practitioner comments on her indecision. The interview is focused on higher education despite evidence that this is not where the client's interest lies. There may be many reasons for this but the move does not reflect the client's apparent concerns about academic potential, stress ('knuckling down', 'extra work', 'coming back after school') and career decision-making ('hopefully I'll know, I'll know at the end of it , what I want to do really') articulated by the client at the beginning of the interview and reiterated throughout. Rather, the practitioner focuses on the resulting success of a grade raised from a C to a B, identifies this as academic potential and links academic potential with the prospect of higher education. This contrast of interest is reflected in the final exchange:

Client:

*That's what I was a bit worried about if I'd taken, if I'd taken another two A levels along with my art 'cos art at the moment you know, got all this coursework and you have to go home and do all this coursework and then revise for a test, and it's, it's all really hard. You've got to do, give 100% in each and at the moment I'm struggling a bit but I'm trying so hard so I'll know that um if I am going to definitely go ahead with the GNVQ art, that I'll just be able to concentrate on the art. And I won't have any other disturbances which I'm quite happy about 'cos then I can just put my whole effort into the art.*

Practitioner:

*Yeah. Well I think the next stage definitely from here is really now um just exploring the different options that are available to you with art: the interior design, looking up information, and, and then next year of course, you'll be looking up higher education courses as well*

What reasons might there be for the practitioner in this interview to choose to talk about higher education rather than attend to the agenda implied by the client's focus on relief from the stresses of academic work and career decision making?

The 'managerial' and 'professional' discourses identified by Payne and Edwards (1996) will now be applied as a means of elaborating and addressing this question.

From a managerial viewpoint, this interview took place in March 1999 and at a time when Government had announced a learning participation target for 16 and 17 year olds of 90% nationally (DfEE, 1999b). Furthermore, this interview formed part of the client's entitlement to careers guidance. As a Year 11 student, the client was entitled to at least one individual interview. At the time, the DfEE specification for the Interview included the following:

> *The nature and length of [the interview] must depend upon the level of Careers Service input required. Those who are well-informed and clear in their thinking need only short interviews. Those who are ill-informed, unclear or at risk need more help. This can include low achievers, those unlikely to do well at GCSE yet considering A levels, and some of the academically able who have not thought through the implications of their post-16 choices. Teachers should be asked to refer those they are concerned about for early interview. Some may need two or more interviews.*
> *(DfEE, 1998d:10)*

As an example of 'managerial' discourse, this specification clearly relies on a rational notion of 'self': the individual constructed as a rational decision-maker and processor of information. It also makes particular demands of the practitioner: the specification clearly implies that the guidance interview will be concerned with diagnosing the 'realism' of the client's thinking. The notion of diagnosis, in-turn, implies a medical model of intervention which has been seen as problematic in the context of careers guidance (Gothard & Mignot, 1999). This is because careers guidance is not a scientific enterprise, as evidenced by the continuing concern surrounding the validity and reliability of psychometric testing (CRE, 1992). Furthermore, as the DfEE specification given above clearly indicates, the diagnosis of realism is a relative rather than objective exercise. In other words the practitioner is required to engage in a complex balancing act: the distribution of limited resources requires a judgement of how realistic one individual is in relation to other individuals. On this basis, the medical model of intervention provides a pragmatic response to managerial imperatives. It is also highly sympathetic to a 'professional' discourse founded upon the accumulation and application of knowledge.

In the context of careers guidance, practitioners accumulate and apply professional knowledge of the 'opportunity structure'. This includes knowledge of national and local education, training and labour markets. Clarke (1994) has suggested that guidance practitioners develop increasingly sophisticated cognitive maps of the

opportunity structure and that this process is mediated by their professional sociali-sation. In other words the practitioner's cognitive map of opportunities is not value-free. Rather it is influenced by the expectations of opportunity providers such as employers, schools, training organisations. Clarke (ibid) has also suggested that guidance practitioners use their cognitive maps as a diagnostic framework, allowing the practitioner to make 'shortcuts' and to process the interview more efficiently. On this basis, the practitioner's cognitive map of opportunities provides the means to construct various outcomes for the client. More specifically, the application of professional knowledge within a medical model of guidance practice serves three key purposes. First, it provides a set of criteria by which to measure the realism of the client's career ideas. Second, should circumstances require an unproblematic outcome, professional knowledge provides the means to construct a 'realistic', 'low risk' client. Third, the application of professional knowledge allows the practitioner to conform to the unspoken expectations of a client that has anticipated the rules of the medical model. These key purposes are augmented and reinforced by the Career Action Plan. At the time of the interview quoted above careers services were required to ensure that all Year 11 students received their entitlement to a Career Action Plan. It was a requirement of the DfEE (1998d) that Career Action Plans recorded the following information:

- *the client's current situation*
- *their decisions about clear educational/training/occupational goals*
- *the rationale behind those decisions*
- *the next steps to reach their goals and timing*

Given the prescriptive nature of the Career Action Plan, the practitioner is bound still further to the medical model of intervention which, by placing professional knowledge and diagnosis centre stage, shifts the emphasis of the guidance interview towards the provision of advice and information. This in turn de-emphasises the counselling dimension of careers guidance which features strongly in the initial training of practitioners (Ali and Graham, 1996; Gothard and Mignot, 1999)

Returning to the interview text given above, it is clear that the client's thoughts and feelings of uncertainty in relation to 'career' were marginalised by the guidance process. It is also clear that the professional knowledge of the practitioner progressively dominated the discursive space of the interview. For the reasons given above this can be seen as a pragmatic action on the part of the practitioner. For example, the text provides considerable evidence of professional knowledge being used to construct a 'low-risk' outcome: the client had a number of ideas which provided the raw material for this process.

## Discussion

This article has provided an analysis of the public context and private text of the careers guidance interview. In so doing it is clear that both managerial and professional discourses combine to emphasise the advice and information functions of guidance. The corollary of this is the de-emphasis of the counselling function of guidance, the implication being that the client ultimately has limited access to support in the formulation and development of career ideas and in the reconciliation of career decisions. Many guidance practitioners will not lose the irony of this position, given that a considerable amount of their professional training is dedicated to the application of counselling skills in the guidance context.

This article also began by suggesting that the careers guidance interview appeared to provide the Connexions service with an exemplary model of intervention. Given that the 'Connexions intervention' of the future will also be constructed by both managerial and professional discourses, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, the 'managerial' discourse identified in the foregoing analysis can be regarded as immutable - the 'ambitious' targets set for the Connexions service is evidence for this claim. Second, the medical model of intervention is a concomitant of the managerial view of the 'rational' client - indeed, the metaphor of the 'General Practitioner' has already been associated with the role of the Connexions personal advisor (DfEE, 2000c). Third, the 'professional' discourse identified in the foregoing analysis can, in contrast, be regarded as mutable. At the time of writing there is considerable uncertainty about the professional identity of the personal adviser. This in turn reflects the lack of clarity on what will constitute the professional knowledge of this new role. The authors suggest that this uncertainty provides a discursive space within which to redress the balance of support offered to young people at the point of intervention. In other words, there is currently an opportunity to reconstruct a 'professional' discourse that provides clients with access to the range of guidance activities as defined by UDACE[1] and SCAGES[2]. Under these circumstances the careers guidance interview would evolve and be strengthened within the Connexions service. An alternative scenario, driven by the medical model, would see the 'Connexions intervention' devolve into an advice and information giving exercise. Given the nature of the rhetoric surrounding Connexions, such an alternative must be seen as untenable.

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**Notes**
1. According to UDACE (1986) guidance encompasses the following activities: informing; advising; counselling; assessing; enabling; advocating; feeding back.

2. In order to emphasise the educational dimension of guidance, SCAGES (1993) added the following to the UDACE definition: teaching; managing; innovating/ systems change.

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# MAKING THE MOST OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

## GILL SCOTT AND JOHN McKENDRICK

Discussion over the role of formal learning in the preparation of young people for work and adulthood in Britain increasingly includes a concern that education no longer represents a guaranteed route into work or citizenship (Brown, 1995; Biggart and Furlong, 1995). It has of course long been recognised that children from disadvantaged social groups are likely to be disadvantaged educationally. Educational attainment rates and school leavers' employment rates for children attending schools serving poor areas in Scotland certainly highlight this (SOEID 1999). There is now, however, growing evidence that significant numbers of youngsters from areas of disadvantage are disaffected with formal learning at relatively early stages of their secondary schooling (Kumar, 1993; Long et al, 1997).

The public debate on the reasons for this disaffection has largely centred on problems in full time formal learning itself, or on the negative effect of poverty on many parents' abilities to support their children's learning in school. Policy initiatives that have followed such an analysis include education focused curriculum change for children aged 14+ and the family focused Sure Start Initiative, which is part of the current government's social inclusion programme. More recently, however, a wider range of partners in the learning process has been identified. The Commons Education and Employment Select Committee, for example, recommended action to try to reintegrate young people who are not attending school through a form of vocational education. There is a suggestion that employers might become increasingly involved as partners in the delivery of learning opportunities that are more appropriate to the needs of many disaffected young people (HMSO, 1998). There is little doubt that conventional classroom teaching is beginning to receive some measured criticism from within and beyond the conventional boundaries of education, and new partnerships have emerged between schools and business, community based agencies, further education colleges and training agencies (DfEE, 1996; SCRE, 1995; Glasgow Education Business Partnership, 1998; Carnegie Young People Initiative, 1998).

In all of these initiatives there is a recognition that learning cannot be defined solely as school based. Families, communities and economic enterprise all have input into the learning opportunities that exist in an area, and the initiatives represent different ways of presenting them to young people. An important part of this new agenda in education, is a recognition that there are many places where we learn, and that each takes place within a wider learning environment. However, there is a relative shortage of research into what the different agencies see themselves as

developing, and how they could contribute to a strategic approach to a wider definition of learning. Even more importantly, here, is that there is very little research into what young people make of the different opportunities, and how opportunities in one area of learning might impact on another.

## The Research

In 1998 the authors were able to gather material which throws some light on these two issues. The research examined the learning opportunities that existed in areas of deprivation within Glasgow as well as examining what young people in school and providers consider appropriate opportunities for learning in their area. It produced a rich variety of data that gives insight into learning in areas of disadvantage. The areas studied were two neighbourhoods to the west and east of Glasgow. They include two post-war peripheral housing scheme developments and one older tenement area of the city, and are Social Inclusion Partnership areas (similar to Single Regeneration areas in England). Officially designated areas of disadvantage.

Data was collected from the 123 learning providers by a telephone survey and was supplemented by a series of in-depth individual interviews with key informants from the partners involved in the commissioning process. Young peoples' views were collected via ten focus group interviews with young people defined as disaffected by the education system, and a questionnaire survey of 308 young people in mixed ability classes from S1 to S4. The focus groups were carried out with young people between the ages of 12 and 18 in a variety of settings. These included two schools, one further education college, two training agency and three youth work settings. The questionnaire survey was carried out in two schools in one of the areas (the Drumchapel Aspirations Study, DASP). The data from the survey and the focus groups allow some comparison to be made between young people in an area of disadvantage as a whole, and the specific group of disaffected youth that is the centre of much current policy discussion. The data collected between October 1998 and January 1999 has been presented in a full report. (McKendrick, Scott and Laurier, 1999; Scott and McKendrick, 1999).

It is largely the material gained from the young people themselves that will be reported here, though we begin by examining the views of providers.

## Perceptions from providers
*Existing provision for learning*
The majority of learning organisations surveyed were working on the basis of increasing support for those vulnerable to social exclusion in order to prevent rather than respond to disengagement. They were fully aware of the deprivation in the areas in which they work and felt their work was focused accordingly. They

varied in their activities from highly structured training to detached youth workers working in an informal way with young people on the streets. They included agencies in the education sector (schools, training agencies, further education), the community and community education sector (voluntary organisations, youth groups, churches, tenant/housing associations), social work and police sector, economic regeneration and careers sectors (careers service, partnership offices, business in the community) and health promotion sector.

The main barriers to learning identified by respondents included factors based in the family, community, school system and individual. Strategies to overcome these barriers often involved partnership and innovative approaches, but agencies responded according to whether they identified individual or structural factors as causal, and whether they saw themselves as developing knowledge, skills, awareness or confidence.

Areas of success in meeting young peoples' needs that are seen to come from their own contribution to the learning landscape included increasing young people's sense of self worth, reducing truancy and exclusion, and raising awareness of formal and informal learning opportunities in the area. Regular networking between the education business partnership, schools, training agencies, careers service and economic regeneration agencies had been a feature of the areas as a result of urban regeneration activities led by Glasgow City Council. A wide variety of locally based activities were enhanced by the city's Education Business Partnership which had led to a range of initiatives over the past five years to increase the profile of employment skills. However fewer partnerships were evident between formal schooling and community based learning. There were two reasons given for this lack of development; funding was often short-term, and public sector and voluntary agencies often seemed to work with a rather different ethos.

The lack of transparency of learning opportunities in community based activities and part time work amongst school age children was perhaps the biggest barrier to encouraging young people to make the most of them. The survey of services showed a similarity of identifiable skills being developed by different agencies, but no well-funded and long-term commitment seemed to exist to develop a strategy for youth and for the wider notion of education at the most local level. Most of the dynamic for networking had come in the sphere of preparation for employment rather than preparation for community roles. School based initiatives existed but were not linked to local developments and regeneration in any widespread way.

*Provision for learning for employment*
The barriers facing young people on entry to employment which learning could reduce according to projects/agency respondents, were varied and agencies

responded in a number of ways. By far the greatest number of projects reported themselves as supporting young people's overall development, including employability skills. Interpersonal skills (team work, working independently and communication skills were offered by the widest range of organisations. Key measurable basic skills (numeric and IT) were offered by a much narrower range of organisations. Understanding the world of work and problem solving skills lay between the extremes.

There were significant differences between the sectors in the types of opportunities offered. Thus, organisations concerned with education and economic development presented 'strong' opportunities for the development of most skills, but schools were not particularly well placed to contribute to the understanding of the world of work. Social work services, community education and community groups perceived themselves to be well placed to enhance young people's interpersonal skills, but did not consider themselves to be well placed to enhance measurable basic skills.

Successes noted in the development of learning opportunities as a result of particular focused work included confidence building, job awareness, and preparedness for further education. However adding elements to young peoples' school curriculum had proved easier than encouraging employers to recognise the work related skills developed in innovative projects, or to build the bridges that would allow feedback to employers on what work experience has contributed to the development of young people.

### Relationships between providers

Evidence of strong and positive relationships between agencies involved in young people and the development of learning opportunities was clear in both areas studied. Over 80% of providers were positive in their evaluation of their own future; even those on short term funding. Nevertheless developing these relationships in a strategic way seldom included the voluntary and community sector, and little was done to enable shared analyses of the problems of developing effective and appropriate services. When young people were involved it also tended to be at small-scale project level, rather than strategic level.

## Young peoples' perceptions
### The learning environment

Much of young people's lives were lived within the confines of their neighbour-hood. Essential services such as the school, leisure opportunities such as youth clubs, networks of friends and early employment experiences were all found in the neighbourhood. Each of these provided learning opportunities, and the extent to which young people viewed their neighbourhood negatively or positively was a significant factor in what they thought they could learn within its confines.

For many of the young people in this study there were significant signs of disaffection with the area in which they live. Only one fifth of the young people surveyed by questionnaire reported wishing to live in the area when they were older; one third were unsure, and almost one half did not want to remain in the area. The five per cent of young people identified in the DASP study as disaffected, and the 'disaffected youth' in the focus groups are more likely than most to expect to remain in their area when they are older. The most widespread sources of young people's dissatisfaction appeared to be a lack of things to do in the area, and a high level of violence and territorial gang fights. It is not so much that there was nothing to do, but more a sense of not enough to do and environmental constraints on their use.

Nevertheless significant numbers of young people did engage in formal leisure activities[1] and clubs in the areas studied. However, it seems that not all engaged to the same extent as the table below shows. School attendance, academic ability as rated by teachers[2] and age were factors closely correlated with participation in leisure activities.

**Table One: Participation in formal leisure activities**

|  | Per cent |
|---|---|
| ALL (n308) | 67 |
| Normal school attendance | 72 |
| Major attendance problem | 44 |
| High academic ability | 76 |
| Low Academic ability | 59 |
| S1/S2 | 74 |
| S3/S4 | 61 |

The most disaffected educationally tended to view their area negatively with many reporting it as one which fails to offer them 'things to do' or to provide them with a safe, stimulating environment in which to participate. High levels of dissatisfaction were voiced in focus group interviews by both girls and boys, and by the younger and older groups. Whilst many of them did continue to engage in the passive, sociable activities that characterise teenagers everywhere, and numerous boys admitted to being involved in fighting from early teens, there was concern expressed by both boys and girls that they could not engage in all the possible activities available to them in the area because of fears of violence.

> *The only thing to do is gang fights, go to gaol, get into more fights.*
> *(13 year old boy, school group)*

> *There's a problem with fighting. You cannae get to go anywhere.*
> *The only place I can go to is just around here.*
> *(14 year old boy, Youth group)*

But attitudes were not totally negative when participants engaged in discussions about other aspects of their community. This was a group that expected to not be able to move out of the area and they often cited family and friends as sufficiently important to want them to remain in the area, particularly the girls.

Similarly with jobs a mixed picture emerged. The DASP survey showed that young people in areas of deprivation have positive views of their future. They aspired to, expected, and had local knowledge of jobs that were of moderate/high social standing. They did not limit their horizons to the family household experience when reflecting on good jobs although gender played a significant part in their preferred options. The vast majority of young people surveyed were able to cite examples of types of work that people do in the area, even if it was a basis on which they hoped to improve. Many looked forward toward further education/ training as a stepping stone toward better employment.

Amongst the more disaffected youth in the focus groups future aspirations for employment were also generally positive, but often they were neither high nor realistic. Boys' hopes included becoming a joiner, decorator, soldier, mechanic, and most frequently, footballer; girls' included hairdressing, office work, chiropody and banking. The older respondents were more focussed in their employment hopes, and tended to cover a narrower range of expectations. They also tended to be more cynical in their outlook on what jobs would be available to them, and what the impact of living in an area of disadvantage would have on their opportunities. Indeed in some ways they expressed a fear of thinking about the future.

> *If you think about it (future) it takes longer .*
> *(14 year old girl)*

### Attitudes towards the role of learning

The young people involved in the study tended to have fairly positive perceptions of learning. They saw the values of learning as developing a range of skills for future adult activities- but this included employment, housing and family life. It was also clear that most of the young people were aware of the way in which their approach to the future was affected by a wide range of learning experiences, both inside and outside school. Family and friends, for instance, were seen by many of them as an important source of learning about life, adding to formal learning in school. But recognising the transferability of learning between areas was not so obvious. As Bentley (1998) puts it- meshing the knowledge of the curriculum with the contours of experience is difficult for young people.

Nevertheless almost all the pupils in both the DASP survey and the focus groups were able to specify a number of skills they felt they had developed in formal and

informal learning which would help them as they entered employment. These included many of the same ones which learning organisations have deemed important but there are also many skills that were valued by the young people that do not appear on experts' lists! They included politeness, friendliness, and attendance which are clearly of importance in school management, but perhaps need to be transferred into more 'employer speak'.

**Table Two: Number of skills possessed (DASP survey)**

|  | 1 Skill % | 2 Skills % | 3-8 Skills % |
|---|---|---|---|
| ALL (n308) | 30 | 27 | 41 |
| High Club Users | 36 | 30 | 34 |
| Low Club users | 16 | 25 | 59 |
| In households with adult worker | 46 | 26 | 28 |
| In households without adult worker | 26 | 28 | 46 |
| S1/2 | 40 | 30 | 31 |
| S3/4 | 26 | 28 | 46 |

The table above provides evidence of certain key factors affecting the number of skills that young people can identify themselves as having - participation in non school activities, work within the household and age/ stage in school.

Amongst the more disaffected focus group members there was a similar ability to specify skills they felt they possessed, or should possess before entry into employment and adult life. They did recognise that poor performance, attendance or behaviour at school would lead to some difficulties in entering the labour market, but they were also more convinced that there were alternative routes to employment. This could be somebody to speak for you when applying for a job, but it could also include a sound attendance record, reasonable behaviour whilst in school. These young people were aware of what employers are looking for, even if they found themselves unable to behave in ways that would provide that at school.

It was also noticeable that all the young people in the study were keen to develop further skills, although a gap did exist between more and less committed young people in that those who already possess skills would like to develop more skills in the future. High on their lists were team working, problem solving and IT; skills that many of the agencies outside school claim to be developing!

*Sites of learning*
One of the major reasons for the study in the two areas was to identify the possibilities for expanding partnerships between the formal education system and others in the development of learning opportunities for young people. The survey of agencies highlighted a wide variety of agencies providing learning opportunities. Here we will examine what young people think of some of those various sites.

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*School*

Headteachers in all the schools involved in the study reported that the vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and apply themselves to their studies. Nevertheless even the most committed pupil in the DASP study was happy to suggest ways of improving learning in school to enhance their prospects of a job when leaving school. Their suggestions included more work experience, more careers advice, and more computers.

For the more disaffected focus group members, school was not viewed as an environment in which they received sensitive support for their learning needs, and they had often experienced this from an early stage in their school career. Many of the youngsters found their school hours boring, depressing, restrictive and over-bureaucratic. They had also often found their learning increasingly difficult as they moved from primary to secondary schooling, and as they moved towards exam based assessment.

> *It's boring. I wish it started at 12 and finished at 3. I'd be there every day*
> *(13 year old boy, School group)*

> *First year was alright.*
> *(15 year old girl, Bridge project, FE School)*

> *School's just something you need to do, it's better than staying at home.*
> *(14-year-old girl, Youth group)*

The causes for such lack of enthusiasm may be complex, influenced by factors external to school, such as family poverty and disruption, peer groups and a lack of wider positive employment and environmental opportunities, but there is little doubt that many of the young people in the study identified school itself as playing a part.

Criticisms of school in learning development largely centred on difficulties in relationships with teachers. Although able to identify what they thought made a good teacher, 'Somebody who listens to you, and helps you with your work. Someone who makes you talk and doesn't shout at you', and able to identify what they saw as examples of good teachers in their own school, the overwhelming impression from these youngsters was a sense of unfairness, and stigmatisation.

> *They pick on you. For wee stupid things. They shout at you for nothing.*
> *(14 year old boy, School group)*

> *The teachers don't really like you. You get blamed for things you*
> *didnae do.*
> *(15 year old girl, Bridge project)*

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Recognition of their own role in these difficult relationships did exist, but it was largely explained as a reaction to their previous stigmatisation.

> *The only reason you shout at teachers is because they talk to you as*
> *if you're a bit of dirt*
> *(14 year old boy, School group).*

It was not simply the pupil/teacher relationship that came in for criticism. Curriculum was also seen as difficult at times. Option choice at the end of second year was singled out as an issue, when pupils might end up without the options desired, or with a choice they later regretted. They felt, however, that they received sufficient support for them to feel free to suggest changes in the school environment which could assist their learning. These included smaller classes, 'second chance' for behavioural problems, and extra school resources for developing group activities and awareness of the world outside school.

### Out of school

Significant numbers of the DASP survey participants and the focus group discussants had engaged in out of school learning centring on organised youth activities. This was explored particularly with the focus groups and effective learning activities, such as planning outings, were reported as having provided them with opportunities to participate in developing their own opportunities, along with other members of a group. They were, however, unlikely to define these as 'learning activities', and were sceptical as to whether they could be transferred to the larger setting of school.

Both the younger and older members of the focus groups valued school and non-school activities, involving direct preparation for the world of work. Particular benefits were seen to emanate from work experience, and were understood to provide young people with an essential boost to their self-confidence. They recognised that they had much to gain from initiatives that change learning environments to better attend their needs.

Whilst they were positive about the potential for school based careers work they felt that they were given insufficient opportunity to contribute to the planning of such activities. In the smaller 'bridge' projects the participants felt much more able to approach the project leader than previous education staff, and clearly benefited from the guidance and counselling support that they received in relation to personal, learning and employment preparation work.

Further projects, which stood out for crossing the 'contours of learning', are that of a local Juniors Sports Leadership Programme and a programme for 14-16 year olds run by a training provider. The training provider did attempt to encourage low

school achievers to think about their future lives, and how they might take some responsibility for their future. The Sports Leadership Programme had an additional feature of interest insofar as it appears to move between three areas of learning, (school, community and work) and gave an immediate sense of self worth by contributing to a community service, as well as developing skills and confidence that were transferable to any area of work that might interest a young person.

However there was, little evidence of school, community education, and further education or youth organisations providing time, or resources being used in an organised way to facilitate the reflection on and exchange of knowledge and insight into the adult world. Youngsters did not, for example, consider their own experience as part time workers significant for planning the future, and in some ways appear to have little confidence in their own abilities to control their opportunities.

## Conclusions

Throughout the study the researchers found young people who were enthusiastic about their futures, but concerned about their own learning experiences. There was also much evidence of professionals who are trying to engage those youngsters in learning that is appropriate to their needs, and prepares them for the variety of problems they will have to solve as they move into adulthood. However, whilst there is no doubt that there is a willingness to consider approaches within and without school that will develop opportunities, there is also evidence of difficulties in extending real learning opportunities across community, education and employment.

Learning is still largely viewed by young people and professionals as a formal activity, as something that happens within schools yet what we discovered in talking to young people and providers was that there are many other places where learning takes place. Harnessing the enthusiasm for learning that remains even amongst those labelled 'disaffected' demands that we recognise and resource this wider learning environment. The diffuse range of organisations contributing to learning within the community often prevents such a review of provision but at the level of the local neighbourhood we need to examine whether opportunities for formal leisure activity, the range of spaces and places for informal activity and the level of collaboration between service providers effectively contribute to learning as a whole within the community, and meet the needs of all the young people for whom they are intended. Recognising different types of learning also involves a transferability of learning between sectors. Only when this happens can young people and professionals begin to work across boundaries that they had previously thought difficult. Developing 'from' as well as 'into' community based activities could encourage youngsters to see 'joined up' learning across the sectors they experience.

Shifting the site where specific activities are learned is a strategy that often tends to founder because of institutional pressure to maintain responsibility for learning in a given space, and a lack of resources. In both the areas studied there are examples of innovative projects that have shifted the site of learning to better meet the needs of learners. They include sports based training activities developed with secondary schools but located in a community setting, further education based projects supporting pupils that are formally 'in school'. Within schools some pupils with behavioural or learning difficulties are transferred to personal or social development classes where integral or incidental learning has been more effective. Such projects are not necessarily punitive; many of the 'difficult' young people find the learning more congenial away from the normal class setting. They can have a number of benefits for the college, school and community based projects, as well as adding much needed diversity to young peoples' learning.

Yet achieving such change needs commitment, support and confidence. Developing initiatives at a local level could benefit significantly from wider networks and resources. In Glasgow the Glasgow Learning Alliance, for example, has contributed to a growing confidence in partnerships. Community Schools programme may prove helpful in generating further confidence, but extending learning beyond the school gates at local level remains a valuable, yet under developed, way of extending experiential learning that young people seem to desire.

However, enabling young people to recognise the array of opportunities for learning in the neighbourhood must also be tempered with encouraging them to shape and influence thinking about relevant learning. There are a number of examples of good practice in active learning, and in developing young peoples' abilities and confidence. These should be examined further, and the factors that led to their development, as well as their impact assessed, in order to assess their transferability and sustainability.

It might be useful to reconfigure resources available to support learning around the learner rather than the institution. Young people are aware of the values of school and non-school based activities, but often need support to express them, or make the most of them. Consideration might be given to incorporating youth worker skills into schools; the availability of formal learning might be extended beyond the school doors

The evidence in this study is that young people may become disaffected at an early stage, but are often keen to re-engage at a later date. Ensuring that the door is not closed to them as they approach leaving school is essential. Their involvement in learning beyond school depends on a capacity to use and develop their own

resources for finding and developing learning opportunities. Many of the seeds of re-engagement are being established at the margins of the formal education system. In the current shift in educational policy towards the ideas of community schools and learning contracts, there is much scope for local initiatives to determine the impact of national government policy but resources are needed from national sources for such development. Project initiatives of a short-term nature are insufficient. Perhaps we need what one writer calls a real shift in focus in schools policy - one where,

*The transitions we discuss - from education to learning, from being taught to becoming active participants, from a culture of numbers driven by what is easily measured to a culture of meaning rooted in a more complex understanding of how learning is nurtured - cannot be achieved by squeezing a bit more out of existing budgets and adding it to the spending pot marked 'education'.*
*(Innes 1999.p14)*

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**Notes**
1  Formal leisure refers to all activities that are organised on a regular basis. Typically these will be organised by adults and associated with a specific site.

2  Ratings for academic ability of survey participants were given by teaching staff at participating schools

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# YOUNG OFFENDERS:
*Their experience of offending and the youth justice system*

## STEVE ROGOWSKI

The post-war period has witnessed many changes in responses to youth crime. There was the rise and fall of welfare/treatment during the 1960s and 1970s (Thorpe et al, 1980). The justice/soft punishment approach followed in the 1980s (Hudson 1987); and then there was the hard punishment or populist punitiveness (Bottoms 1995) of the 1990s which is still with us in the form of New Labour's Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Goldson 1999). This latter tough law and order approach reasserts the role and capacity of custody in a range of sanctions which include, for example, curfew and parenting orders, in the hope of deterring crime. There is also an emphasis on situational crime prevention - better security and surveillance, for example. This article relates to the manner in which these policies are experienced by young people in terms of offending and the youth justice system. It is based on the results of a qualitative study of young offenders, which asked how and why they became involved in crime, and what they think is the way forward[1]. The answers are revealing: both the Tories' and New Labour's attempts to 'out-tough' the other in dealing with the issue are found wanting in this study.

In carrying out the research I adopted a cross-paradigm approach (Firestone, 1990) drawing on ethnographic (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), feminist (Reinharz 1992; Stanley and Wise 1993), and critical (Harvey 1990) perspectives. Very briefly, I was interested in, for example: the meaning which young people ascribed to events; moving the experience of women more to the centre stage; and in relating observable social phenomena to the wider social context. In pursuing this I interviewed twenty offenders and conducted three focus group discussions with some of these young people along with their friends who were also offenders[2]. It is important to emphasise that in looking at their experience of offending one must not neglect key aspects of the lives of these young people such as their experience of and relationship with family and carers, leisure and recreation, school, and employment and training. In addition, their experience of the youth justice system involves particular emphasis on their views in relation to 'race'[3], gender and class, as well as on populist punitiveness itself and on what they consider to be ways forward in tackling youth crime.

### The Experience of Offending
From the interviews with these young people it is clear that offending regularly starts from naughtiness and mischief such as climbing on school roofs, lighting fires, smoking cigarettes and generally seeing what one can get away with. As Tom put it:

*The way it started I think was at the end of [primary] school. I had a cigarette with one of mi mates. He nicked two cigarettes off his mum so he said 'try smoking 'em'. So we used to try smoking...and one time we took 'em into school and we got into trouble. It was little things like that that started it off. As soon as I started smoking I thought 'I'll try something else'.*

On occasions, 'seeing what one can get away with' can mean that the law is broken, and in this sense young offending can be seen as a normal, transient part of childhood and adolescence. For instance, concerning theft, children learn from each other how easy it is to shop-lift. This starts with 'nicking' sweets and crisps. Such escapades can be simply expressive and experimental, but they can act as apprenticeships for more serious offences. Carl and his friends, for example, moved from petty shop-lifting to more serious and sophisticated thefts from shops, such as using lookouts and leather coats with large pockets to steal videos which were then sold to buy such things as clothes and drugs. By this stage, offending had become instrumental, and it is these offenders with whom I am concerned.

Billy also began his career by stealing crisps and sweets but the routine and pettiness of shop-lifting became routine and boring. Instead he would wander around looking for cars to steal or break into in order to obtain money to get 'pissed and stoned'. 'We look for things that we can sell, stuff that's decent - cars, car stereos, alloy wheels...anything yer can get your hands on'. Sometimes 'we take 'em for a spin first and then go to a mates house and strip 'em down, and then dump 'em in the canal or set 'em on fire'. The excitement, the 'buzz' obtained in doing all of this cannot be ignored, but for Billy the main goal was to obtain money for alcohol and drugs.

For others the 'buzz' itself was the main motivational factor. Simon spoke at length and in an excited manner about how he and three friends stole a car and set off for Derbyshire. They spotted 'a Mitsubishi Shogun with an Isle of Man registration plate with the key in the door so we pulled over' and 'one of mi mates jumped out and got in' with both cars continuing until they all decided to get into the Shogun and return home. They were spotted by the police 'who put their lights on and we shot off and got a police chase, playing chicken and everything with lorries on the other side of the road! We were on pavements and everything! Knocking lamp-posts down! We had pure [lots of] police cars after us, the helicopter and everything!' They were finally caught only after they 'skidded at a roundabout', he told me laughing hilariously.

When it comes to young women, their offending similarly originates in naughtiness and mischief, with shop-lifting being common. Again it starts off as being expressive

and experimental. Sarah said, 'I nicked from shops so many times, like the Late Shop and the little sweet shop'. She then went on to steal bottles of nail varnish saying 'you go in (the shop) and nick one bottle, sniff it and you're sniffed up then so you can go in and nick twenty-five 'cos yer don't care. And then eventually yer get caught with about twenty bottles in your pocket!' More serious offences committed by these young women included assaults. Again these can be seen as being instrumental but this time in terms of righting perceived wrongs. Jane spoke of one of her assault convictions: 'I only slapped her. She was starting on him (younger brother). She was picking on 'im so I said, "Well I'm only thirteen pick on me" sort of thing. She was sixteen so I just gave her two slaps'.

Having looked at some concrete examples of offending, and despite the fact that different reasons are emphasised, associating with the 'wrong crowd' for example, it becomes clear that boredom and material gain are the two main issues linked to such behaviour. This is certainly the case as far as the older, more experienced, instrumental offenders are concerned.

In relation to boredom, typical comments were: 'Boredom. It's all to do with boredom' (Tracy); 'That's what half the things are these days, everyone's bored. There is nothing to do. There is nothing to do' (Tom); and 'There's nothing to do. Nothing at all' (Ilene). In a sense this suggests an air of ennui, a general disenchantment with life and part of this relates to the state of current youth facilities. Although some young people did engage in what might be seen as conventional or constructive activities such as playing football or watching television, for most much of their time was spent simply 'hanging around'. This may be a disturbing phenomenon for those with structured days based on work, but for many of these young people this is all they had to do following their experience of school and employment.

In relation to material gain, this can be seen in terms of a continuum ranging from those who offended simply in order to survive, through those who do it to make their lives more bearable to those who offend so as to lead more comfortable lives. Colin and Martin, for instance were in similar predicaments in that they became estranged from their families in their teens, had spells in childrens homes and then in effect found that after care and other services did not meet their needs. Both spoke of literally being forced into offending because they had no money, no food and nowhere to live. As Colin put it: 'I had to supply my own food, clothes and all that. That's why I was robbin' all the time. Too young to claim benefits. There was nothing else to do!' In a real sense therefore they committed survival offences.

On the other hand Ilene commented that 'they (young men) go out mostly for money...They, like, go on a graft, stealing from a house things like that' and then

they will ' buy themselves a couple of bottles of cider, some fags, some weed and just sit and get stoned and pissed for a couple of days, and then go out and graft again'. Such young people would be situated in the middle of the above continuum while those, like Tom, who did 'street robberies' so he could buy smart clothes, eat out and generally have a good time, would be situated at the end.

It is apparent that boredom and material gain are not completely separate reasons for offending; as Ilene's comments show they are often linked. Thus, the need for drugs and alcohol might arise from boredom which in turn means money is required to buy them, as Richard summed up the situation: 'They go out burgling 'cos they want money or drugs, that's what it's mostly for. They go out stealing cars just for the fun of it or to sell 'em on. And...they go shop-lifting 'cos they need the money [obtained by selling the goods] or things for themselves'.

Although young women's offending can be put down to similar reasons as those for young men, a key question is why they offend less. Tracy said it was to do with the fact that 'boys behave like pricks and don't grew up until they are about eighteen, and girls grew up when they are about ...twelve!' She added that boys are so 'immature...girls have got a reputation to be smart, lads have the reputation to be dickheads and they follow that through!' And Chloe also stressed the differences between young men and young women saying that 'girls are more feminine...girls are ladylike. Like nicking cars, girls don't do that. I've never seen a girl nick a car'. Indeed the young women repeatedly stressed the differences between young men and young women, with their conceptions of femininity itself having something to do with explanations about why young women offend less.

In considering some of the motivation behind young offending, it is worth pointing out that contrary to what many might expect, there was an element of social morality in these young people's thinking. Billy wanted to emphasise that 'we'd never rob poor people. Well.....we try not to rob 'em if we know they're poor' though if 'I know they are well off then too right I'll fucking do it! They've probably got insurance and all that so they won't suffer'. Equally Colin also felt justified in his offending because 'I needed the money.....I had nowhere to live and they did'. And in a different vein Warren said 'I've never nicked a car with a baby chair in it. It's not on, the baby might become ill and they'd need the car to take to hospital'.

## Family and Carers

It is important to note that many parents and carers, not least those of these young people, are not always in a position to offer children and young people an alternative to playing or 'hanging around' unsupervised. Single parents are often tied to the baby or toddler of the moment and when living in poverty, they have the stress of

running a household, raising a family and perhaps holding down a job. The children or young people want to play out or be with their friends and the parent has no option, being stressed and tired, but to agree to their demands. Thus the children can disappear for much of their free time. Such children and young people have a relatively free and unrestricted childhood and adolescence, learning to accept independence and decision making from an earlier age than many of their contemporaries from wealthier backgrounds. Even in a two parent family the bulk of child rearing and running of the home is still left to the women, despite the age of the 'new man'. The male partner is seldom a major deterrent to bad behaviour among children. Parents are not unaware of what is needed in terms of supervising and socialising children and young people but because of their often stressful lives they are not able to do exactly as they would like. Similar comments apply to those children and young people brought up in local authority accommodation by foster carers or residential social workers. Both these latter two groups face considerable pressures with, for instance, two residential social workers having to care for up to eight lively children and young people. Again all this means that the supervision and socialising is not always as they would like.

Many young offenders have disrupted family and care backgrounds and consequently they are often angry and upset about what has happened to them. For example, John's parents died in quick succession meaning he had to be accommodated in various childrens homes with only infrequent contact with extended family members. Tracy had several foster homes and childrens homes after coming into care because 'my mum was a prostitute and my grandma was a druggie. My mum used to bring back men nearly every night. And my grandma was drug taking nearly every single day'. Colin became estranged from his mother and new partner in his teens after they became fed-up with him 'being a dickhead, arguing with her, being pissed and stoned' and offending. He had spells sleeping rough and staying with friends before being accommodated in foster and childrens homes. Martin's experience was similar, while Sarah came into foster care as a child after being neglected and physically assaulted by her mother who was a chronic alcoholic, had severe financial problems and had difficulty coping with Sarah and her older brother. After being sexually abused by her foster brother she had to leave and had spells in several childrens homes.

Despite these negative experiences all these young people generally spoke positively about their parents and extended family. For example, Tracy and Sarah spoke of the pressures their mothers must have been under while they were caring for them including, in the case of Sarah, her mother's negative, abusive childhood experience when she was the only girl among seven brothers. Similarly, concerning foster carers

and childrens homes the general view was that the adults concerned were doing the best they could in circumstances which were sometimes less than ideal. When it came to offending there were few comments that family or carers could have done more other than that childrens homes should organise more activities as this would relieve boredom and hence crime. All felt that their parents, even in difficult circumstances, had done their best to stop them offending. Tom put it this way:

*There was nothing my mum and dad could do. They were dead strict and there was nothing they could do. I got grounded all the time and suddenly it came to me that if I got grounded I could just walk out. What could they do? What can anyone do if I walk out? When I came back I might get a slap, then I'd get grounded again so I'd just walk back out again. There was nothing they could do.*

Richard and Tim agreed with the latter saying his mother had 'tried everything ...grounding me, taking money off and that. It doesn't help. Like she'll ground me or something but I'll just jump out of my bedroom window. Or she'll try hiding my trainers but I'll still find 'em'. And on a different tack Billy spoke of his father always remonstrating with him: 'He waffles on at mi...just talks to yer about nothing. If I do the slightest thing wrong he'll waffle on for hours and hours. It does yer head in!'

*Recreation and Leisure*

The vast majority of these young people originated from deprived areas, living or having lived on council estates built in the 1950s and 1960s. Such areas are characterised by poor housing, a lack of community and youth facilities, high unemployment, poverty and are home to many single parent families. With parents under pressure and having little money it is not really surprising that many of their offspring spent their time 'hanging around' or 'doing nowt'. Even so this can have a form and a structure, and includes wandering around town, perhaps visiting the Careers Office, Jobcentre or Benefits Agency, talking with friends on street corners or visiting their homes, and even going to youth clubs. The young people could decide, at least to a large extent, the order of events, the sequences of the tasks and in this sense they structured their day. Jeanette commented that 'we go to Kingston Road and chill out, sometimes having a couple cans of lager' while Tim spoke of 'just messing about in town and all that.....the arcades and that'. And although youth clubs were almost unanimously condemned as being little more than table-tennis and dancing for young children, some were more positive. Jane spoke enthusiastically of her involvement in her youth club where 'we did our own rap song, me and a few friends. I've got a video of it'. She went on that everyone 'has got their own thing, own hobby' and that youth clubs needed to ensure that they had 'lots of things going on' so as to attract young people.

Comments about these young people structuring their day relate to another facet of their lives namely their use of drugs. All of them had used or still did use drugs and it worth emphasising that this was all recreational use. They did this at friends houses, in parks or simply as they walked around. The most common drugs were cannabis and amphetamines but nail varnish, as already indicated, and other solvents were sniffed. They did it 'for a laugh' as well as to relieve boredom and depression. As Colin said, young people use drugs 'if they're unhappy or stressed out or there's nothing to do.....it's stuff like that'. While John said ' I like a weed because it sets me free from being down and depressed. It brings me up and makes me feel happy'. Jane agreed, saying 'I think cannabis really does tend to chill people out. People stay at home and smoke. They buy some and chill'.

Although 'hanging around' has many positives, there are also downsides such as the fact that boredom can lead to offending as well as the use of drugs which in turn can lead to more offending. It can also lead to anger and frustration not least as far as adults are concerned. As Warren put it 'If you just hang around in a group, even in or outside a youth club, everyone's complaining. It doesn't matter where you go there's grown ups complaining. It's like now if we walk down the street with a drink, it's fucking banned innit?' He went on, like the majority of the young people to complain about current youth clubs and the general lack of youth facilities: 'You see these notices saying no ball games but where else can you do it? It's like the arcades, yer can't go in until you're eighteen years old (albeit this did not stop Tim!). And parks, they've just disappeared and houses been built!' These critical comments about current youth facilities resonates with the young peoples' view of schooling.

*Schooling*

By secondary school these young people began to realise that what school demanded and what mattered in their community or with their friends could be very different. Sarah, for example, had spent several years in a well off, middle class foster home and her first couple of years at secondary school went well. She enjoyed going, attended regularly and was making good progress but this changed when she moved to a childrens home in a more deprived area. Virtually none of the other young people attended school regularly and almost immediately Sarah's attendance deteriorated until it was non-existent. She said: 'I just don't go anymore. I became adapted to the (childrens) home. I got used to sniffing everyday with the kids and started wagging lessons then wagging totally. I just got used to it. I thought join the crowd'.

Sarah's experience was not exceptional. All the young people, although apparently enjoying and making progress at primary school, increasingly became disen-

chanted at the secondary stage. As well as truancy, a culmination of relatively minor acts of misbehaviour, such as being cheeky or swearing at teachers, can lead to suspension and ultimately permanent exclusion. Once excluded it can take a considerable length of time to get back in to school and by then disassociation from school is complete. As Tracy put it: 'I don't like school, period! I've been out a year and a half and don't wanna go back'. In fact, she had sworn at a teacher, been suspended, refused to apologise and was then permanently excluded.

Many young people did not see the relevance of school apart from the teaching of reading and writing, and interestingly none of them mentioned the need for computer skills. Colin referred to school being 'boring, teachers telling you what to do all the time showing no respect'. Tim made a similar point complaining about teachers 'picking on yer. Everyday yer go in and yer get snide remarks. It just winds yer up and yer feel like walking out and all that. I just stopped going'. Some recognised that teachers had stressful jobs to do and that because classes are so large young people do not always get the attention they need. It was Tim who also spoke of his move from mainstream school to a much smaller one for young people with special needs: 'It's just the same as normal school but the teachers 'ave time for yer there. Yer can learn more when there's less of yer 'cos there's not as many people messing about'. Carl had the same school move and made the same point, adding 'you get a lot of attention. You get to know the teachers and they get to know you'.

As for a possible link between not attending school and offending some thought this was the case with Max saying that 'they leg it all day, mix around with the wrong crowd and just go out nicking'. However, this can be seen not simply in terms of not attending school but more to do with boredom. Shop-lifting, for example, relieves boredom, providing excitement, the 'buzz', as well as, of course, material gain.

Although some positive points could be made about school, generally it was not seen as that relevant, nor was it talked about very much. Some things were alright, some bad and some times they had a good laugh. For instance Jane, although she had no intention of returning to school, could say: 'I do miss it...playing in the grounds, having a quick fag behind 't shed, having laughs, the canteen with all mi friends...And now some of mi friends come up to mi and say "hi Jane" and I can't remember 'em!' But in retrospect it was not relevant to the here and now. They were unlikely to break out of their community and obtain a good job or career. This was taken up by Chloe who thought 'you learn more from legging it. At school it was reading from books, revision and stuff like that. But it's just everyday stuff. [From legging you learn] how to survive, how to get by. And that's more important these days, innit? You shouldn't really need qualifications to get a job'.

She went on to talk disparagingly about needing qualifications to work at MacDonalds which leads to the question of employment and training.

### Employment and Training

At one level two conflicting views were presented. The first, a minority view, was that there are genuine employment and training opportunities but that many young people refuse to take them up. Jeanette and Ilene both thought this with the former saying 'nobody wants to work these days' and the latter adding 'I think most people are too bone idle to get jobs these days'. However the overwhelming majority view was that current opportunities were 'crap', a word used repeatedly. The jobs that are available like working at MacDonalds or packing are not seen as proper jobs, and what are seen as proper jobs are not simply available. Brian said: 'It's all shit packing and all that. That's why I haven't got a job. I don't wanna work for no packing firm!' And John commented that 'there's nobody that'll take me on because I wanna do construction and there's nothing doing at the moment'.

There was also a lot of talk about unscrupulous employers with even Jeanette complaining that she 'sacked it' (being a packer!) after her employer refused to pay her what he had agreed. 'I'm not working for peanuts' was her view. Similarly Brian spoke of unfair employers saying he had time off work to go to the hospital but this took longer than expected and when he returned to work he was told he was sacked. 'Stuff it up your arse!' he replied and walked out.

Training schemes , despite all New Labour's selling of the New Deal were seen as being for people 'on their last legs' (Jeanette) or as being 'not proper training...sweeping up or whatever for forty quid a week' (Brian). Warren put it this way:

> *They're* [training schemes] *crap because for one, you only get forty quid a week and you're supposed to pay gas, electric and all your shopping!* [Also] *Alison* [girlfriend] *said that what she does is just sit there doing crosswords and things. Gets paid for doing crosswords! And then they always let 'em out early. She's supposed to leave about 4 p.m. but she is normally home about half two or three o'clock! And on Fridays she gets out about twelve! And they're always in one room just sitting there having a fag. They can't be training that hard!*

Warren's friends agreed with all this saying such schemes 'treat you like a kid', 'it's not proper training' and 'you're more of a skivvy'.

By and large, current employment and training opportunities were seen as dead end, boring and exploitative. This leads to a rational questioning of the value of work namely, 'is it cushy and does it pay well?'. If there are no well paid, easygoing jobs then work is regarded as a doubtful way of spending one's time.

Despite these negative views of employment and training, some young people kept an air of optimism about the future. Billy, about to face a lengthy period in custody, saw himself eventually 'working in a garage, something like that...working for mi dad as an electrician'. Fhorid said: 'I wanna go to college. I don't wanna work in a restaurant. I wanna go to maybe university and get a good job'. Tom spoke of going into the army, while many of the young women saw themselves as going on to hair and beauty training.

Having looked at the young people's experience of offending, along with key areas of their lives, it is timely to examine their experience of the youth justice system.

### The Experience of the Youth Justice System

Young people's involvement with the youth justice system begins, of course, with their contacts with the police. Some were rather ambivalent about this saying if you were 'alright' with them they would be 'alright' with you However, for the most part there was a dislike and distrust, even outright hostility towards them. Jeanette and Ilene, both involved in the same assault, felt unfairly treated. They were initially told they would be cautioned but this was changed to being charged after the police discovered the victim's father was an ex-police officer. Colin mentioned the police 'bad-arsing'(derogatory term) him and his friends: 'Cos we've been in trouble, like, they think we can't change, you know what I mean, that we'll carry on doing it. So if anything else goes wrong they'll look at us and think we've done it. That's happened a lot'. Jane said she had 'got battered in't police station once 'cos I wouldn't take my trainers off. She picked mi up by mi hair and threw mi against a table and ripped mi feet, twisted mi feet. There were two of 'em, a man and a woman'. Tom was the most condemnatory:

> [The police are] *bastards...their attitude and everything. The way they come across and the way they give you digs. Everything! The police, I hate them...There's a police woman, ye. I got locked up for her. She had hold of me and rammed my head in a wall and everything. There's nothing yer can do, is there? I'm drunk, ye, and I'd been sniffing and she started ramming my head in a wall so I turned round and I kicked her and she got me done for police assault! And she got me and rammed my head in the wall!*

There is then a sense of injustice in that the police break the rules and get away with it. There is also a feeling that the police ' pick on people like us', young people from poor, deprived areas. Colin hinted at this and Tim said: 'They pick on us for anything really. They look at yer as villains, little criminals, if yer come from rough areas. They pick yer up for anything but if you're posh they're not bothered. They think 'cos yer posh yer don't get into trouble'.

Moving further into the youth justice system, the court itself and the legal proceedings surrounding it are seen as a means of punishing young people rather than implementing fairness and justice. Solicitors are not trusted being seen as in it for the money and in league with the prosecution who are in turn in league with the judge/magistrates. None of them are seen as being in tune with the lifestyle and pressures on young people today. Colin said that for many young people going to court was 'a laugh, [they go in there] and see all their mates'. Warren thought going to court 'gives you a rush [buzz]. You see everyone you know, your mates. It's like going to a youth club! Everyone goes to see who's up today. It's HPCT [ high performance car thieves]!' And interestingly Brian thought 'it'd be better if all the people...yer know from the estate that you'd nicked off...if they stared over yer, looking down at yer. You'd think "Oh no! I'm no going there again!"'.

As for the actual sentences imposed by the youth court, some thought they had little effect in terms of reducing offending. As Carl put it 'Like at the end of the day what's good about giving a fine to someone? A supervision order what's that? A probation order what's that? [attendance centre] that's nothing'. On the other hand, there were others who thought that, for example, supervision and community service orders were of value. The former, including those with specified activities, were seen as enabling young people to talk about their offending in a non-condemnatory way. Chloe referred to her social worker 'sitting down with me...telling me what happens to other young people when they get themselves into trouble and it made me look back at how I was'. Warren would have agreed saying 'You can talk to them (social workers) about why you do it and then they can try and help you stop. There's a big difference between being locked up on your own with no-one to talk to apart from dickheads, than being free and having someone to talk to who will try and help?' Social workers were clearly seen as being on the side of the young people offering help and advice though significantly probation officers were simply seen as 'keeping tabs on you'.

Touching further on specified activities, the young people did value aspects of them with, for instance, Billy talking of visits to prisons and talking to prisoners having 'made me think a bit'. He also spoke positively of reparation and mediation: 'If you and the owner [of a burgled house] talk about things and the owner explained how he felt, yer might think, "eh up if that happened to me I wouldn't like that"' and this would make him think twice about offending again.

When it came to custody, perhaps surprisingly one view was that such sentences might well be the answer. John said: 'Just send 'em down, send 'em to a secure unit or a boot camp for a couple of months...I reckon there would be less crime'.

Nevertheless, the vast majority saw custody as serving no other purpose than turning out fitter, more experienced offenders. Again Billy, and his comments were typical, said:

> [Custody] makes it worse. Sending 'em down that'll make 'em ten times worse when they come out. It does! Yer learn thing 'cos you're with people who've done all sorts, aren't yer? Like mi mate, he got sent down and when he came out he was twenty times worse than when he got sent down. He was really bad. It just makes em worse.

### 'Race', Gender and Class

Beginning with 'race' the overwhelming view was that black young people are treated differently, more harshly than their white counterparts. As well as a recognition that black young people receive harsher sentences, particularly custody, frequent examples were given of how the police were racist. For example, Brian described the following incident:

> I was in a car with mi mates, ye, and the police pulled us up. What did they do? They had come to check us, ye. They pulled the black lad out of the car.....didn't get anybody else out of the car at all! They checked him, just him on his own. Then they drove off. They didn't even ask the driver for his licence! They just wanted to check the black lad. They think that because he's black he's on drugs all the time.

Tom, a mixed 'race' young man saw things from a different perspective saying that 'some coppers treat you (black young people) better than white kids' adding that 'I hate black coppers 'cos they're bastards. They are worse than white ones'. He put this down to the fact that 'they've got something to prove.....that they're not gonna be easy on us fucking niggers. That's how they see it'. He also thought that white police officers treated him better than white young people because they were anxious not to be accused of racism.

Although the general view was that the youth justice system was racist as far as black young people were concerned, when it came to South Asian young people there was some feeling that they were treated better than their white or black counterparts. Chloe described an incident of two groups of white and South Asian 'lads kicking off' during which the police arrived 'and most of the white lads got dragged in the [police] van' but the South Asian '[lads got] away with it. Asian lads always get away with it'.

When it came to young women, the young men felt the youth justice system treated them more leniently and sympathetically. Carl said the police give young

men 'pure shit' whereas young women 'get treated nice'. Tim also thought young women have 'got it easy' with them far more likely to get let off with a telling off or an informal warning rather than being taken to court. And John said: 'They [the police] give 'em a brew, give 'em a slapped hand. They get treated more...they've [the police] got more time for girls than the lads'.

The young women though tended to see things differently. Jeanette received a supervision order after fighting with another young women. She thought that if a young man was involved in a fight this would be seen as part of normal teenage behaviour and the matter dealt with informally. On the other hand a young woman who did the same is likely to be judged not just for the fighting but also for transgressing what is expected from a young women, what it means to be feminine. She remarked: 'I suppose it's more serious innit if it's a girl. Girls are not supposed to fight are they?' Or as Tracy said: 'Girls are not supposed to do that sort of stuff [offending]'.

When class is considered, the young people thought that young people from middle class, wealthier backgrounds were treated differently, more leniently than 'us', people from poor, deprived areas. Ilene was convinced that 'if a poor person and a rich person did exactly the same, it'd be the poor person who'd be more likely to be sent down'. Fhorid indicated that if you came from a rich family your parents were more likely to be friends or at least acquaintances of police officers, particularly higher ranking ones. Therefore, 'if they know your dad and you get into trouble he'd [the police officer] do less than he wanted to', that is less than he would to a young person 'like us'. Warren made the following points:

*Well if they arrest yer I reckon they wouldn't cuff you [if you were a 'rich kid'] in the back of the van. They would let you sit next to them in the police car chatting to them. They wouldn't put you in a cell, they'd leave you in the waiting room. If they put yer in a cell they'll leave the door open. They'd probably let you off altogether and say 'next time I'll arrest you'.*

Continuing with this, Sarah said: 'If I swore at 'em (the police) now (while living in a childrens home in a rather deprived area) they'd just pick me up and lock me in the back of the van. But if I was up there (her former foster home in a wealthier area) they'd just ignore me'. She thought if you had rich parents this in itself would mean that the police 'treat you better'. This can be seen to link in with the earlier comments about the police focussing on young people from poorer areas. Indeed, it is worth emphasising that all the young people thought that it is young people from poor, working class backgrounds who form the fodder for the youth justice system as a whole.

## Populist Punitiveness

With reference to popular punitiveness, the vast majority of the young people were vehemently against the increased emphasis on custody. Such a strategy is seen by them as a totally ineffective, even counter-productive, way of dealing with young offending. Tracy, whose comments should also be seen in terms of zero tolerance policing and the overall get tough law and order approach, was vociferous in putting her views across:

> *If yer think about it every kid's gonna be locked up 'cos they're gonna arrest yer for every little thing you've done! And kids do everything! They might not get caught for it but they do. They do everything! Everyone between the ages of, like, twelve years to nineteen are gonna be in prison. They're gonna be locked up! It's just little things like spitting on the ground or sommat like that. They're gonna think 'fuck it!' All the kids are gonna rebel against everyone and they're gonna kick off with the coppers and beat the shit out of the coppers and they're gonna get done. Every kid's done something wrong and if you're gonna get lifted for it then...they're gonna change it back like it were in Victorian times! Yer used to hang people for everything! That's what they're gonna try and do I bet. I reckon that's what they're gonna try and do back 'ere.*

Billy would have agreed saying 'If you punish someone they'll just think, "well fuck yer!" and they'll do it again to get on their cases.' And Brian simply said if you lock someone up 'they'll do it more because it makes 'em angry.' It cannot be emphasised too strongly that almost all the young people made similar derogatory comments about the use of custody. Even John, the only one to initially advocate more tough, custodial regimes, typified by Boot Camps, eventually admitted that because offending was linked to material gain and relieving boredom, a better way forward would be to tackle these issues.

Curfew and parenting orders were similarly dismissed. As for the former, Tracy was equally condemnatory saying they would make matters worse with very few young people actually adhering to them. The majority would simply ignore them this in turn leading to more antagonism between young people and the police as the latter tried to enforce them. Chloe made the same comment saying if curfews were imposed the 'young people are gonna kick off ...if the police tried taking them home they'd kick off and get arrested. It's making matters worse' in effect leading to more crime. As for parenting classes, they were always, on occasions hysterically, rejected with, for instance, Jeanette laughing uncontrollably saying 'No, no! It's a silly idea'. The young people, again as indicated, thought their parents

knew how to bring them up, even though various pressures meant that on occasions mistakes could be made. They certainly thought their parents and carers had done the best they could to stop them getting into trouble. And Brian pointed out that 'people won't go and if forced won't listen. The only people that are gonna go are...like muppets...who think "what are we doing wrong?" They'd be blaming themselves!'

When it came to situational crime prevention, the young people made the important point that better locks on houses and other property, burglar alarms, improved street lighting, CCTV and so on could be a good idea for the neighbourhoods to benefit from such improvements. However, they also recognised that many young people would simply go elsewhere to offend and thereby crime would simply be displaced. The young people thought such measures did not address what leads young people into offending in the first place, and Warren even made the point that they could even add to the 'buzz' of offending. He felt young people would, for example, 'just do it (offend) in front of the cameras. That car we took from Blackpool, there was a camera pointing right down on it!'

Although the young people were dismissive of current government policy in relation to young offending, they did have firm views on what the ways forward should entail.

### Some Ways Forward

At the outset it must be pointed out that when examples of the intermediate treatment schemes (I.T.) of the 1970s, 1980s and even into the early 1990s were raised there was certainly enthusiasm for them. John said: 'They should do that now. [Social workers] should be paid from the government to do that because there would be less trouble if they did.' Others said, for example, 'it's (I.T.) a good idea' and 'there'd be less crime.' At one level it is not surprising that the young people should enthuse about the old-style focus on activities and interests but it must be remembered that such things do address one of the main motivations for offending, namely boredom. It should also be remembered that the more sophisticated I.T. schemes of the 1980s and early 1990s did address offending per se and that the young people did value being talked to about offending, the effect on victims, consequences for themselves and the like.

Other ways forward included the view that if, for example, school was made more interesting and relevant, and this would include smaller classes, if youth clubs and other recreational activities for young people were improved, and if there were reasonably paid employment and training opportunities, then offending would be a less attractive proposition. The young people also felt parents and carers should be given more help, support and resources. Tackling all of these issues would

mean that the motivational factors of boredom and material gain were addressed. There were numerous comments to this effect.

John asked himself the question 'What would have stopped me offending?' and answered 'going to a better comprehensive, they didn't even listen to me [and] they never gave you any help.' He added 'if there were more [meaningful] jobs obviously there's gonna be less crime. [Young people would] be going to school to learn, then they'd get a job.' Tracy said one way to deal with offending would be 'to set up things for them [young people] to do and stop 'em being bored.' Brian was succinct in saying young offending should be dealt with by 'making sure that they [young people] had lots of things to do and some money' pointing out that money itself would help relieve boredom by enabling young people to 'play bowling or something like that.' Richard was equally pithy saying offending should be tackled by making 'sure there are proper jobs and careers for young people so they have got enough money'. If there are no proper employment and training opportunities available it was emphasised that adequate benefit payments had to be made, with Colin saying he would have stopped offending 'if you get an allowance every week [so he would have been able to buy the basics of accommodation, food and] clothes and stuff like that.'

In a different vein, the maturation process was alluded to as being a factor in reducing offending. Chloe said young men would stop offending "if they found a nice girl that they wanted to settle down with.' Simon also said 'having a girlfriend and a kid' would help him settle down, with Warren agreeing: 'it's my girlfriend, Susie, that stops me getting in trouble.'

A key question arises, not least in the current economic, political and ideological climate, as to how the changes these young people advocate could be financed. Colin thought he had the answer saying that 'it's to do with the government, innit? You could tax rich people more.' This, of course, relates to inequality and perhaps surprisingly, and certainly uncomfortably for New Labour, several young people raised the issue of inequality as having something to do with young offending. John thought 'everyone should have the same amount of money' such a scenario leading to less crime not least because the 'poor' would have no need to steal. Tracy agreed, feeling it was morally wrong that some people are very rich and others have virtually nothing: 'It's like pop stars and footballers. What do they do? They run across a field or sommat...ooooh! Why do they get paid forty grand a week? It's just like the Royal family. Why should they get paid millions just for sitting on their backsides?' And Chloe made the same point as well as advocating increased taxation. 'If yer think about it ' she said 'all these millionaires could pay more [tax]. I don't know why we don't take a bit more off 'em.' Such proceeds

could be used to ensure that the education, recreation and employment and training needs of young people were dealt with. Increased help and support could also be given to parents and carers. All of this, the argument went, would mean that young offending was seriously addressed.

When it comes to ways of dealing with young offending the young people are certainly out of tune with New Labour's thinking. Put simply, rather than dealing with the symptoms of youth crime, that is dealing with individual young offenders by increasingly tough measures, a far more effective response would be to attend to issues of education, recreation and employment, together with help for family and carers.

## Conclusion

Those familiar with Parker's (1992[1974]) classic study *View From the Boys*, will find, despite his neglect of 'race' and, as he acknowledges, gender, that his work resonates with much of the above. The views of the young offenders involved in my study are similar to the views of the 'boys' in his. Such young offenders also seem to realise that society offers them little except indifference if they say and do nothing and, increasingly, punishment if they become a recognisable problem. As such they are largely uncommitted to a social order of which they are meant to be a part. There are no legitimate job and career opportunities worthy of their commitment, this in turn has a bearing on their commitment to schooling which in any case is under resourced. There are no decent recreational and leisure opportunities available to them. Although they have never received much help, they receive through the media and government plenty of noise suggesting what should be done. There is much less of the 1960s and 1970s talk of them being deprived, of needing help and support, but rather more of how bad and wicked they are, of how they need to be punished, condemned rather than understood, using John Major's words. Nevertheless, reciprocity can be found from these young people: social and youth workers with consistency and honesty will find acceptance; as will employers if they paid a decent wage for decent work; as will teachers if they had the time and resources to meet their educational needs. Even so changes at the level of the economic and political structures of society are required before the young people will notice any change in their and their families' life chances. There are those who would blame them for their behaviour or see it in terms of pathology, but the problem is lack of opportunity which relates to wider structural factors not least inequality. Even so the majority of these young people will eventually settle down and become law abiding, this being explainable in terms of a blend of experience, coercion, compromise and acceptance of conventional roles such as partner and father/mother. This is the compromise of adulthood: complying rather than being coerced, accepting inequality and ceasing resistance to the bad deal.

The foregoing ends rather depressingly. Arguably things do not always have to remain or turn out like this. At the risk of digressing, it must be pointed out that despite the influence of postmodernism, society could be changed to one based on fairness, justice and equality with an emancipatory project still being possible (Leonard, 1997). Indeed, the views of the young people presented here are much in tune with critical criminology (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973; Scraton and Chadwick, 1991) and aspects of feminism (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1990). For example, the references to the police, and by implication the youth justice system as a whole, focussing on 'people like us' can be seen in terms of critical criminology's emphasis on the political, economic and ideological structures within which the process of criminalization, especially of vulnerable and marginalised groups, occur. The comments about the differences between young men and women, the references to femininity, obviously relate to feminist theory. It is also worth noting that all this can in turn link to a radical social work practice (Bailey and Brake, 1975; Langan and Lee, 1989) in dealing with young offenders (Rogowski, 1995). Some will no doubt see all of this, including for example the young peoples' comments on taxation and inequality, as backward looking (Young, 1999). Perhaps we do have to go back in order to construct an improved future.

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**Notes**

1. It must be emphasised that although there are reference to methodological and theoretical issues in this paper, these are kept to a minimum. Rather the stress is on presenting the young peoples' views, not least because they are rarely heard. In a sense there is an element of reportage, though, of course, this can never be completely so. For those who want to pursue the methodological and theoretical issues further, see Rogowski S. forthcoming.

   It should also be noted that although there were differences and inconsistencies in what the young people said, it was possible to identify major reoccurring themes as well as the interrelationship between them. It is these that are presented here.

2. The interviewees were drawn from two Social Services Departments in the N.W. of England. They were aged 14-17 years of age and were mainly heavy end property offenders. They comprised 13 young men and 7 young women, including one each of black (Afro-Caribbean), South Asian (Bangladeshi) and mixed 'race' (white/Afro-Caribbean) young men, and one mixed 'race' (white/Afro-Caribbean) young women. The interviews were semi-structured with a total of forty-seven taking place.

   The focus groups were used to revisit some of the main issues raised by the interviews, with three being held involving a total of ten young people.

   All these discussions took place over an eighteen month period during 1998-1999.

3. 'Race' is a socially constructed concept rather than a biological category simply because there are no inherent biological characteristics or traits attributable to racial origins, hence the use of inverted commas.

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# WORKING SPACE

## A WARM, SAFE SPACE: An argument for youth clubs

### SUE ROBERTSON

Centre-based youth work has fallen out of favour over recent years. In the past decade youth clubs have been ignored and marginalised by youth service management and government alike. Yet suddenly generic youth work is being talked about, a commitment to the continuation of generic work is in the NYA's submission to the 'Learning to Succeed' and 'Bridging the Gap' documents (Youth Policy Update, 1999) and in government rhetoric (Young People Now, 2000; CYWU, Connexions Conference, 2000). In the light of both Connexions (DFEE, 1999) and the Policy Action Team report on young people (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000) now might be the time to present the case for youth club work, and in this piece I am arguing for open access youth work which does not deal with only the most disadvantaged section of young people but works with young people in a neighbourhood setting.

If we are arguing to preserve generic work we need to be clear what we mean by that and why it is valuable. The Youth Service Audit (DfEE, 1998) describes the basic youth service infrastructure as the foundation of open, non-stigmatising access from which specific project work with particular groups can develop. This is club work. Yet such work has recently not been advertised as relevant or important. For example, a recent DfEE publication (1999) included no examples of club based open youth work, while in contrast, a 1987 DES publication is full of examples of centre-based work.

There has been limited research and writing on youth clubs. This piece draws on work done by Williamson et al for the Welsh Youth Agency (1995), Ballard and Wright in Gloucestershire (1994), Furlong et al in Scotland (1998) as well as my own evaluation of the Youth Action Scheme in Gloucestershire and ethnographic research which I undertook in a youth club. The literature includes a wonderful account of a youth club from 1963 *Razor Edge* by Blandy, Rose's recent *Touching Lives* (1999), Bunt and Gargrave's *The Politics of Youth Clubs* (1980); a chapter in Button's *Developmental Group Work with Adolescents* (1974) and various articles in *Young People Now*, and *Youth Clubs UK*. Williamson's recent chapter in *The Challenge of the Future* (1997) is an important addition to this list, whilst in *Kids at the Door Revisited*, Holman (2000) demonstrates that it is possible to see the benefits of involvement in youth work in the long term. Many workers have argued this. For example:

> *The club made me more tolerant, taught mixing, I learnt to socialise, made*
> *me want to be a leader, more responsible.*
> *(Tewkesbury ex-member quoted in Ballard and Wright, 1994)*

## What Young People Want

Two quotes from the Guardian last year sum up the ambivalent attitude of a community to its young people.

> *A new bus shelter is being built in a village near Exeter so that youngsters*
> *will have somewhere dry to meet up on winter evenings*

> *A new playground in Nottingham has been designed without slides, climb-*
> *ing frames or play equipment because nearby residents were worried that*
> *older youths would hang around the site at night*

Communities on the one hand feel threatened and on the other the need to provide something. Young people are often both excluded from community discourses and seen as the problem in communities (Brent, 1997). However, they depend more than adults on their immediate neighbourhood for their social life. As such places for young people to meet should be an important part of community provision, alongside and sometimes part of, adult education, leisure centres, schools, community centres.

A variety of questionnaires conducted in the 1990s in various places asking young people why they attend youth clubs produced similar findings (eg. Ballard and Wright, 1994; Williamson et al, 1995; DfEE, 1995). Young people generally want, 'A place to have fun, to meet friends, talk with your mates and just mellow out, to get away from schoolwork and parents, a place where you are given a chance'. Young people involved in a discussion at a New Deal event in Bristol wanted the youth service to offer, 'a better place to go to, more equipment, more day time opening, teach practical skills, spend money on us, more workers'

Williamson's research (1995) which was targeted at over 15 year olds identified four needs: for association, (somewhere to go), for activities, (something to do), for autonomy (space of our own); and for advice, (someone to talk to). Young people have told me that they value the club as a warm and friendly social meeting place, and for things to do including trips away, activities, special projects, discussions and issue based work. The club provides the opportunity for participation and young people who attend clubs are involved in other community activity to a greater extent than others 'a higher proportion of youth service participants are involved in sports, arts or voluntary work than non-participants'.

## The benefits for young people

*Peer Relationships*

So if involvement is a 'good thing' what benefits do young people derive?

Popular theories on adolescence agree that it is a time when peer group influence is of crucial importance. Acceptance of peer culture expands social horizons, helps personality development and encourages the ability to act independently and try out new roles (Cotterell, 1996). Adolescence is a peak time of leisure needs and of time for leisure activities, but is restricted by lack of money, transport, parental and legal boundaries. Youth Clubs can provide a relatively safe environment from which to observe and interact with peers and to experience the roles of leader and follower.

Cotterell (1996) suggests that young people need to resolve their group identity and relationship to their peer group before they can achieve a sense of personal identity or resolve relations with their family. Companionship provides a pleasurable experience of group interaction associated with leisure activity; individuals experience a sense of belonging, acceptance, solidarity and social affirmation simply from being together. Yet the peer relationship can be one of the hardest for young people to establish. Button, (1974) argued that youth clubs can be one way of ensuring that these interactions occur. The role of the youth worker is to facilitate conversations and provide space for them but also to be a 'social architect' helping young people to come together and work in groups.

Being accepted as part of a network is a factor in the development of personal growth, of self-esteem (Cilliers, 1998) and of community responsibility (Gilchrist, 1999), and adolescence is a period when growth in the social network is needed to develop competencies for participation in adult society. Therefore, young people need opportunities for widening social networks.

In this context, out of school activities are important, giving access to young people of different ages and backgrounds providing opportunities to make new friendships and build on existing ones. This was particularly apparent in work I did within the youth service on removing barriers to participation by disabled young people which highlighted the social isolation they can suffer by attending special schools and not mixing with young people in their local communities.

People build up a personal network of supportive ties and some members of this network are needed to help bridge changing settings or circumstances. This is a role for a youth worker.

*Relationships with adults*

Youth clubs not only help widen contacts among young people but also help to structure informal social relationships between adults and young people. Most of the adults that young people meet in their daily lives are authority figures, or are seen as such: teachers, parents, shopkeepers. Young people often expect adults to treat them in certain ways - i.e. as children - and are amazed to be treated as an adult and taken seriously (Berne, 1973). The evaluation I did for the Youth Action Scheme demonstrated the positive feeling young people had about the youth workers: 'They treated us like adults, they showed us respect'.

Hendry et al (1993) asked young people to identify mentoring characteristics of non-related adults; functions were enabler, believer, teacher, supporter, and role model. Youth workers are a good example of these functions; good youth worker - young people relationships have informality, spontaneity, acceptance and commitment. Adults to talk to are important, 'for advice and understanding, someone who can be trusted'. Young people don't necessarily want hard facts or answers, and if they do there are better places to get them than the youth club, but a helpful adult to bounce ideas off and confide in: 'someone you know you can trust and won't tell' (Williamson 1995).

Youth workers can be a channel for accessing more specialist advice which increases in importance as young people move through adolescence and their needs change.

*Participation*

The need to have somewhere to go that is not too organised is frequently articulated in interviews with young people. Furlong et al (1997) reported that the young people in their study spent a significant proportion of their time 'hanging around'. Williamson (1997) suggests that young people in transition need space for reflection and self-determination plus clear guidance, support and information. In this phase they are looking to run things themselves and need 'just enough organisation' (Hendry et al, 1993). Youth organisations which try to be too controlling and aim to develop 'socially responsible' attitudes and behaviour will not attract young people as they get older or those whose lives are generally chaotic.

> *The best youth workers were seen as those who were friendly, approachable, had a sense of humour and were tolerant of the members. The worst were strict or bossy and tried to impose their own standards on the young people. (Furlong et al, 1997)*

Young people in Williamson's research said their continued engagement with youth work depended on them having a say:

*It's all based on consultation and participation here. We do have quite a lot of power. There's nothing we can't do if we really want to but it's down to us. We've done the fundraising; it's our money.*
*(Williamson et al, 1995)*

Participation by young people is in itself a learning experience, for them and often for workers. One of my early attempts at government of the club by members committee saw extremely draconian rules imposed and half the membership banned, leading to the formation of a 'non-members committee' to wrestle power back!

### The need for the long term approach
There is much discussion about the importance of youth workers' relationships with young people but developing good relationships takes time and needs continuity. Richardson (1997) stresses this as the most crucial aspect of the work but also the least quantifiable. Jeffs (1999) argues that recent concentration on short term funding has meant that workers have been unable to create long term relationships, they have to target specific groups and impose themselves on them to get outcomes. This was certainly my experience of managing a Youth Action Scheme. Young people aren't involved in setting the criteria on which projects are judged. Youth workers are being asked to work to an agenda which focuses on a small percentage of young people; mainly male and defined as 'disaffected', and this work is then measured against a variety of crime prevention methods. The educational, participative, empowering and equal opportunity focus of youth work can disappear.

My experience of club work is that youth and community centres can be a focal point in a community. Young peoples' involvement often starts with their first entrance as toddlers to the playgroup, followed by their involvement in the After School Club, the Junior Club, Senior Club. They then often return to the playgroup with their own children. That long term relationship, the ability to really get to know young people, to offer them challenges and opportunities and help them grow and move on is a particularly important aspect of local youth work. In the 1980s I worked with young people in senior club four nights a week, plus activities at weekends and residentials. When they finished school and were out of work, the centre was a focal point in the day as well. Times have changed: many 'full time' centres now are only open two nights a week (Furlong et al, 1997); resources are tight; full time workers face many pressures.

In my interviews with young people involved in the Youth Action Scheme in Gloucestershire, boredom was identified as the main reason for getting involved in crime. In my current research young people talk about needing somewhere to go to 'keep out of mischief', they recognise the problems that they can get into when

bored and looking for excitement on the streets. The recently produced 'Listen Up' Report (Home Office, 2000) found that the boys particularly wanted activities that 'give them a buzz but take place in a controlled environment'. Young people on the Gloucestershire Youth Action scheme really appreciated the opportunity to take part in challenging activities and were able to use the experience to help them reflect on their everyday experiences. Bandura (1995) demonstrates that the most effective way of developing a strong sense of efficacy is through 'mastery experiences'; young people need to find something in their lives which they can do well. Properly resourced youth clubs can provide the ideal base for activities to be organised and new skills acquired. However, as resources and staffing levels have been cut and managers have been increasing the amount of administration required it seems that fewer activities and residentials happen. There has been a trend away from face to face work by full time youth workers (Bamber, 2000).

For a long time now in youth work I have been frustrated by the focus on curriculum, on outcomes, on managerialism, on projects, rather than on young peoples needs as a member of a community. Perhaps this makes me an old-fashioned youth worker, but I would like us to give youth clubs a serious chance. Our buildings are probably inappropriate; they probably always were (Jeffs, 1997). The best youth club I worked in for atmosphere was a prefab, an old school classroom. Every night 'God Save the Queen' by the Sex Pistols was played over and over again; I can't hear that now without remembering the club. Good youth work isn't just about the here and now and measuring, its about memories and long term learning as Holman (2000) demonstrates so well.

Youth Clubs have a unique role and one that should be valued and supported as they can make a big difference in the lives of many young people and their communities. Club based work can provide the warm, safe, friendly space for young people that they say they want, it can give them real power and ownership. It can be a place where they develop new skills, try out new things, where they are seen and judged differently from the school or home, where their talents and idiosyncrasies are appreciated and where they can have fun.

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# Classic Texts Revisited

*Josephine Macalister Brew*
**Informal Education:**
*Adventures and Reflections*
London: Faber and Faber, 1946
pp 383

**MARK K SMITH**

Josephine Macalister Brew (1904-1957) made a lasting contribution to educational thinking and practice. While her focus was on young people, she located her work within a view of education that was lifelong. She refused to be contained by received compartmentalisations of education and looked to the 'highways and byways'. She argued that education should be taken 'to the places where people already congregate, to the public house, the licensed club, the dance hall, the library, the places where people feel at home' (Brew, 1946: 22). As such, the anonymous writer of her obituary believed she 'secured for herself a niche in the story of English education comparable with that held amongst an earlier generation of schoolmasters by Caldwell Cook[1]' (*The Times Educational Supplement,* June 7, 1957).

She touched a lot of people's lives through her writing, organising and speaking. She was variously a school teacher, youth organizer and then Education Secretary for the National Association of Girls and Mixed Clubs. As John Wolfenden wrote:

*Few people are blessed with her multiplicity of gifts, or with the self-discipline that harnesses these gifts to an enduring purpose. Her genuinely philosophical mind never lost touch with practical realities, her sensitive concern never lost itself in empty sentimentality, her ready tongue was never acid, except about humbug and hypocrisy. A crisp sense of humour saved both her and scores of others from becoming (in her own words) 'stuffy' or 'starry-eyed'. And behind it all was a burning devotion to young people, often astringent and sometimes even gruff, but of an intensity which, as we now would see burnt her up.*
(The Times, May 31, 1957)

One of her books, *In the Service of Youth* (1943) can be regarded as one of the first 'modern' youth work texts (Smith, 1991). Another, *Informal Education,* is the first single authored substantial exploration of informal education in the English language. Cyril Houle (1992: 285) has described it as an engaging essay, 'celebrating the idea that learning can be introduced into the lives of all adults'.

## The development of thinking about informal education

By the time that Brew came to write *Informal Education* a good deal of the intellectual legwork had been done by others. 'Modern' understandings of informal education owe much to the work of Rousseau (in *Emile* and *The Social Contract*) - and to Pestalozzi and Hebart - who took up his concerns. Pestalozzi once wrote that within the living room of every household 'are united the basic elements of all true human education in its whole range'. Montessori and others had explored various aspects of play, environment and learning. A growing appreciation of developmental stages and situations also contributed - particularly influenced by the work of Jean Piaget from the late 1920s on.

However, in terms of taking forward the thinking in the twentieth century it is the figure of John Dewey that dominates. He picked up on many of the ideas explored by Hebart and others - and infused them with his own commitments and interests. These included a concern with democracy and community; with cultivating reflection and thinking; with attending to experience and the environment. Such interests and ideas were in turn developed by a number of American writers, for example, Carl Rogers (in conceptualizing counselling), Eduard Lindeman (in providing a classic statement of adult education), and Grace Coyle (in popularizing groupwork) (see Smith, 1994). Here it is particularly worth noting the contribution of Lindeman (1926). His vision for adult education drew directly on Dewey, but was not bound by classrooms and formal curricula. It involved a concern for the educational possibilities of everyday life; non-vocational ideals; situations not subjects; and people's experience. In other words, it is education that is informal and collaborative. At one point he was to describe this orientation as 'andragogical' (in a paper in 1926 written with Martha Anderson and probably the first English-language use of the term, see Stewart, 1987: 108-9).

In England Basil Yeaxlee (1929) took up a number of these themes in what is the first full statement of lifelong education. His starting point was that 'adult education, rightly interpreted, is as inseparable from normal living as food and physical exercise'. He continued:

> Life, to be vivid, strong, and creative, demands constant reflection upon experience, so that action may be guided by wisdom, and service be the other aspect of self-expression, while work and leisure are blended in perfect exercise of 'body, mind and spirit, personality attaining completion in society.
>
> (Yeaxlee 1929: 28)

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We can see several of the themes that Brew was to emphasize being developed in Yeaxlee's work:

*Attention must especially be given to elementary and informal types of adult education. Insignificant and troublesome to the expert, these have a charm for the common man: he can appreciate them just because they are not elaborate and advanced: they meet him where he is, and do not demand that he shall - take a long journey, or make a violent and unnatural effort, to reach them. They are the only recruiting ground for higher educational adventures on anything beyond the present small scale. But also they are the only ground wherein a very large number of people will ever find themselves at home at all.*

*Much adult education will never know itself as such, and will be recognized only by leaders and teachers of real insight. It will go on in clubs, churches, cinemas, theatres, concert rooms, trade unions, political societies, and in the homes of the people where there are books, newspapers, music, wireless sets, workshops, gardens and groups of friends.*
(Yeaxlee, 1929: 155)

Yeaxlee had been involved in the writing of the famous *1919 Report* on adult education (he was later to be Secretary of the Educational Settlements Association and Principal of Westhill College). The *1919 Report* had talked of the social motives of adult education, and the social spirit in its method and organization. It had noted the 'imponderable influences which spring from association in study', and the achievements of things like the summer school movement and the opportunities they offered students 'of the informal educations which comes from sharing in a common life' (Waller, 1956: 76).

In terms of the context in which Brew wrote, two innovations within schooling also need to be briefly noted. First, she admired Henry Morris' development of village colleges in Cambridgeshire (1946: 27). 'The village college', Morris wrote, 'as the community centre of the neighbourhood... [will] provide for the whole man, and abolish the duality of education and ordinary life. It would not only be the training ground for the art of living, but the place in which life is lived, the environment of a genuine corporate life' (1925: section XIV). Second, she was aware of many of the key experiments within progressive schooling within the private sector. Of this sector, Stewart writes:

*Progressive schools have a belief that education is made for man and not man for education. Uniformly they have a fundamentally religious, if not always Christian, view of the worth of persons;*

*knowledge and competition are subordinate to the ideal of rela-
tionship; intellectual achievement is ultimately part of your way of
living with yourself and others, and even if you cannot grasp this
until much later, your school should so balance your learning and
living that you are on the way to seeing that this is a real issue. This
demands a proper respect for a range of experience - intellectual,
aesthetic, religious, moral, social, physical, emotional, and expressive.
It also requires a comprehensive view of what the curriculum
provides and what the rest of school life is directed toward.*
(1968: 362)

By the time that Brew came to write *Informal Education*, some collections
of pieces about the practice of informal education had appeared in the
States (for example Stone 1933 and Nelson 1938) - but there is no evidence
that she knew of these.

### Brew on informal education
Brew argued that there are two methods of educational approach. The
first involves 'serious study' through schools, university extension classes
and organisations such as the WEA. The second entails 'active participation
in a variety of social units' (1946: 22). She believed that education
should be taken 'to the places where people already congregate, to the
public house, the licensed club, the dance hall, the library, the places
where people feel at home' (op. cit.). Much of the book is then concerned
with how educators can 'insert' education into such units. In particular,
she is concerned with the process of creating and exploiting teaching
moments. In writing about this there is a certain ambiguity in Brew's
work. Is informal education the process of stimulating and drawing out
the learning involved in the active participation in groups and organisations,
or is it, more narrowly, the creation of teaching or instructional moments
or spaces? The latter is close to what Knowles (1950) later described as
informal adult education. He looked to informal sessions, forums and
courses: 'When a group of people come together for the purpose of
learning something simply because they want to know about it, they are
participating in what we would call an informal course (Knowles: 1950: 84).
The former is closer to the understanding of informal education suggested
many years later by Jeffs and Smith (1990, 1999) and recognizes, in particu-
lar, the power of association.

So what was distinctive about Brew's contribution? In many respects, it
was not the individual elements of her approach that were significant.
Each had been recognized by previous generations of educators. Rather
it was the way she brought these together in a persuasive and accessible
way. Here I want to look briefly at five key elements.

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*Our concern should be with the cultivation of the 'educated man'.* Our focus, according to Brew should be people's struggle to gain 'the equipment necessary for the great adventure of living the life of an educated man' (1946: 375). She suggests that probably the best definition of the educated man is that 'he is capable of entertaining himself, capable of entertaining a stranger, and capable of entertaining a new idea' (ibid.: 28).

> *If he cannot entertain himself he is a burden to himself and to others; there is no-one so boring as he who lives in a state of boredom. If he cannot entertain a stranger he is antisocial and is therefore not making the contribution to society which it has a right to expect; and if he cannot entertain a new idea, he has no place in a democracy and may some day awake to the bitter discovery that he .has sold the pass of freedom and civilization to those who benefited from his very inertia. (Brew, 1946: 28)*

All that informal educators can do is 'to help people to keep their minds receptive and then pour out to them all those varied interests which the limitless field of educational adventure affords'. Brew continues:

> *Only thus are people enabled to build up a set of values which, because it is of their own construction, will create in them not only the knowledge but the conviction that right is not right just because a community practises it, and that true progress is moral, not mechanical.*
> (Brew, 1946: 375)

*Every human activity has within it an educational value* (1946: 27). Like Pestalozzi and many educators before her, Brew recognized that the requirement for continuing education could only be met if attention was paid to experiences, events and settings of everyday life. 'Things are changing so rapidly', she wrote, 'that we may be born in one state of society, educated for another, and find in adulthood that all has changed again' (1946: 11). The child, the adolescent and the adult need both direct and indirect encouragement to examine and assess the continually changing world so that they may use their minds to the full, and to work out the best way to live.

In *Informal Education*, Brew explores the educational opportunities that lie in different areas of endeavour. She structures the book around different arenas or approaches where these moments can occur. The first, through the stomach, examines, among other things, the educative potential of meals and canteens, and of poetry in pubs. She looks to the relationship of food to citizenship and concludes that 'There can be no better way of

starting to provide food for the mind than that of linking it with food for the body, for of that, at least, we are not afraid' (Brew, 1946: 94).

The approach through the feet involves exploring the possibilities of dance, the open air and holidays. In the process, she examines personal relationships and health education and how educators can go about 'making explorations with the feet, the introduction to exploration with the mind' (Brew, 1946: 136). Approaching education through the work of the hands focuses on craft and work - and the social arrangements within which they occur. There is a focus on exploring the various influences upon people, and how they can value themselves and recognize 'their value in the small group and their importance in all the various groups into which life throws them' (ibid.: 180).

Brew devotes two chapters to exploring the approach through the eyes. The first deals with the use of posters, broadsheets, exhibitions, logs, pictures and painting. The second focuses on film. It is a strong plea to educators to recognize the worth and possibility of popular culture. She then goes on to examine the neglect of the emotions and the role of music, drama and religion. 'Emotional education', she argues, 'is very largely a matter of inducing a sense of awe and wonder, and of stimulating the imagination (1946: 254). In what way, she asks, 'can we help people to live more fully emotionally? There is no new way: 'The main method in education of the feelings is through the artistic forms of music and drama, which should lead one inevitably, though possibly imperceptibly, to the realms of spiritual experience' (ibid.: 254). The book ends with the approach through the ears - and, in particular, upon the power of discussion.

*Work with people's interests and enthusiams and, if possible, deal with things quickly and on the spot.* 'An activity which is so deeply rooted in the hearts of people is obviously a grand jumping-off point for educational programmes' Brew writes (1946: 96). Furthermore, much educational opportunity is lost because of a desire to encourage people to join classes, she suggests (1946: 32). She advises educators to deal with things quickly and on the spot, to plunge straight in at the point that has attracted people's attention, 'working either backwards or forwards according to how their interest develops' (Brew 1946: 33). In the beginning 'the important thing is to give people information on the subject that has momentarily captured their interest, or which is most talked of at the time' (ibid.: 30). At least four things are involved with this.

First, what many people most need is encouragement. Some are at home within the formal education system and can make their way comfortably. Many are not.

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*There are so many who, while conscious of a need, conscious of
what Shakespeare called 'those immortal longings', have little
help or guidance and encouragement for their rather more delicate
mental digestions. The will to learn is perhaps limited, but the
feeling for things of the spirit is unlimited.*
(Brew, 1946: 28)

Educators both need to have a care for the feelings and concerns of
those they work with, and an orientation to nurture the desire to learn.
Often educators can become frustrated by the pace and direction of
people's learning - and this can be compounded in informal education
where the starting point is less in the control of the educator.

Second, informal educators need to unhook themselves from the idea of
subjects. They do not follow a syllabus.

*Let us come out into the open and be quite honest about it, it does
not really matter what subjects are offered to people, what matters
is how they are taught. If the education of the whole individual is
to be extended, the range of subject matter is infinite. What matters is
the preservation of mental agility throughout life, and the integration
of one's information.*
(Brew, 1946: 30)

This does not mean that the informal educator avoids more formal sessions,
or does not plan. There is a place for instruction (for example, around
outdoor activities) and talks and discussions, but it should not overwhelm.
Those that want to study a subject can take a course, 'but the average
person, the ordinary man in the street, isn't a student, he is a learner; all
is grist that comes to his mill' (Brew, 1946: 32). The key issue is 'how
can education be "inserted" into existing social units' (ibid.: 42) - and that
means keeping a close eye on the character of those units and trying to
introduce topics and activities that can fit in with the flow. Here it is really
a case of the educator attending to what is happening and making use of
the situations and conversations that arise.

Third, informal educators need to keep things simple and entertaining. It
is necessary to avoid jargon, and to 'use the language of the people, and
be both clear and homely' (Brew, 1946: 40).

*Above all, further education for the ordinary person must have
entertainment value. We must get away from the idea that enter-
tainment is 'mere. There has been too much of this tendency to
regard everything that we do not happen to like as 'mere'. Quite*

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*often this dubbing of 'mere' of those entertainments, hobbies, recreations, to which we are not drawn, is nothing more than a messy attempt to claim an intelligence that is really lacking.*
(Brew 1946: 32)

The idea that learning should, for the most part, be fun; and that educators can all too easily dismiss the possibilities in activities that are labelled as 'entertainment', appear with some regularity in Brew's work. She hated snobbery, intellectual pretension and the second-rate. All too often, she believed, it was a lack of imagination, enthusiasm and ability on the part of educators that makes learning dreary or a chore. 'The *ability* to give entertainment value to instruction is usually reserved to the expert. Only the person who is on top of his subject is in a position to laugh at it, since he sees it in its true perspective' (1946: 37).

Last, listening and discussion has a particular place. It is important that people both learn to listen to what others are saying, and take an active role in learning. Here she gives some familiar advice.

*As in any other type of informal education, in order to be successful with the majority, discussion must be based on social life rather than academic interests. It needs to be conducted in fairly small groups and in comfort. Warmth and light are of equal importance, and so is a certain guarantee of freedom from interruption. Some of the best discussion groups are carried on in the corner of the canteen and, indeed, in the corner of the public house.*
(Brew, 1946: 339)

She also reminds people of the need to cultivate friendliness and goodwill, and to look for agreement (1946: 336). The possible limitations of discussion are also identified: 'A great deal of talking is merely a system of correction and of revision of one's ideas (ibid: 343). There is a need to gain fresh ideas and information through reading, using film, radio and newspapers, and gaining access to experts.

*Harness the power of association.* Brew talks of the power of activities such as sport to deepen civic consciousness, and of the need to link informal education with such interests, along with 'home interests' such as parent education, and education in other groups and associations. Examples of the latter include trade union groups, village pig clubs, old English dancing societies, public house poetry corners and so on (1946: 27). The question, as we have already seen, is how is informal education to be 'inserted' into existing social units, and 'how can those who come to

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scoff be persuaded to remain to learn?' (Brew 1946: 42). 'This does not mean that we desire to turn every association into a solemn conclave for "uplift"', she writes.

> *But it will mean that we will at least have paid more than lip service to the fact that every human activity has within it an educational value, 99 per cent of which is wasted if it is not wisely directed, and that we will at last be answering the cry of humanity through the ages: 'In God's name give us something better to do'.*
> (Brew, 1946: 27)

Three particular aspects of associations need to be brought out here. First, Brew wanted to provide a counterbalance to the powerful influence of the media - which because of their structure and form, 'tend to be authoritarian and tend to make people passive acceptors of the thoughts of other people rather than to give them practice in thinking for themselves' (Brew, 1946: 26). In associations people have to solve problems and organize things for themselves. Second, she recognized the educative power of the life of the association. Earlier, she had written: 'A club is neither a series of individuals... nor is a club a club leader. A club is a community engaged in the task of educating itself' (1943: 67) and the significance of group education remained an enduring theme in her work (see for example Brew, 1955; and Brew, 1957: 102). In Informal Education she illustrates this process with the example of participation in committees:

> *One must never forget that one of the best methods of learning to discuss and learning to agree is through the ordinary day-to-day committee work done by any organised group, whether in a youth centre, a community centre or a Parents' Association... Committee work must be learnt by all members of a democratic state.*
> (Brew, 1946: 335)

In this quote we can also see the outlines of a third aspect - the contribution that participation in associational life makes to democracy. It isn't just that groups, of whatever nature, can become, in Malcolm Knowles' words, 'laboratories of democracy' - places where people can have the experience of learning to live co-operatively. They both help to create 'habits of the heart': mores that allow people to connect with each other and the wider community (see Bellah et al, 1996) and they directly connect with wider political processes. Groups like trade unions, tenants associations and churches have a significant impact on local and national political debates.

*Informal educators need to have a wide cultural background and be*

*lively minded. They must be able to engage with themselves, others and ideas, and foster environments where people know belonging and learning.* Dotted through the book are various asides on the qualities of good informal educators. The standards that Brew sets are rightly high.

*One knows very well that in advocating a scheme of this kind one is asking that organizers of informal education shall have a wide cultural background themselves, and that they should have a wide field of experts to draw from, but in this whole matter of the education of the diffident and apathetic only the real expert is good enough, and it is versatility and adaptability which are needed in planning such education, rather than a rigid pattern.* (Brew, 1946: 33)

In other words, informal educators have to be 'educated' themselves. They also need to be 'lively minded, if unconventional'. Brew writes, 'The success of much informal education is due to the instructor who can introduce the wisdom of the serpent clad in the bright skin of flippancy. It is better that people should be shocked into thinking for themselves, than that they should never think at all' (1946: 44).

Her vision of the way in which informal education should be organized is also instructive.

*Any venture into informal education must rely for a great deal of its freshness and a great deal of its attraction on voluntary help - preferably help from the group itself as well as outsiders... We need a group of tried and tested volunteers organized around a small staff, who make every effort to create the atmosphere of a home or a club used by people rather than a special place provided for them. The group themselves can take a share in discovering what is needed, in suggesting the experts whom they wish to hear, and all can do their part in entertaining the expert and welcoming him to their midst instead of tracking him to his scholastic lair and sitting at his feet.* (Brew 1946: 45)

**The impact of the book**

At the time of publication, the book was well received (see, for example, the review in *The Times Educational Supplement* March 8, 1947). As Houle (1992: 285) has subsequently noted, 'beneath its lively and anecdotal surface, the book makes some excellent methodological points'. For quite a number of people involved in youth work it provided a way of making sense of, and developing their practice. Indeed, over the last ten years or so, I have talked to a number of former workers for whom *Informal Education* was the book that oriented their practice. A key factor

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here is the commitment that Brew made to public speaking - and the size of audiences that she attracted (often of 500 or more). She was a compelling speaker and had the capacity to make people feel she was talking to them directly (see Smith, 2001). This not only encouraged them to go out and buy her books. When reading her work people could hear her talk. Brew wrote extremely well, and was able to keep readers interest through her use of examples and her ability to bring practice alive. Her voice comes off the pages.

The quality of that voice is of great significance.

*How wittily she would have retorted to one's suggestion that she had made a notable contribution, both in practical experiment and in writing, to an uncharted field of adolescent upbringing, happily designated in the title of her book **Informal Education!** From the foreshadowings in the 1944 Education Act of some kind of continued education for young wage earners she took the keenest interest in the proposals for County Colleges.2 In countless short and longer courses, with great ingenuity in devising new methods for learning, Dr Brew tried to work out empirically methods and matter for this extension of English education. Her achievements in residential courses for girl wage earners in recent years won the warmest support from employers and education officials alike.... But as the educationalist grows solemn in his estimate of her work, the quick, teasing smile comes back, and perhaps the final memory cherished by so many at home and abroad will be of her gaiety of spirit, her compassion, and her infinite encouragement.*

(Obituary in *'The Times Educational Supplement'* June 7, 1957).

In many respects, it is the character of Brew herself that provides a paradigm for the informal educator. The qualities that shine through her writing - and that were displayed when she spoke - gave those that experienced them a concrete picture of how an educator should be. Her critical ability and depth of knowledge, her capacity to communicate and encourage, and her spirit and compassion provided both a benchmark by which to judge themselves, and the inspiration to do better.

Yet while Brew does put her subjects to considerable critical scrutiny, she does not draw upon an explicit or fully worked-through theoretical framework. Her work does not address directly, and develop, the already rich tradition of thinking about informal education. If she had made connections with the work of Dewey, Lindeman, Yeaxlee and others,

then the book would have been even more powerful in its impact. It would have been fascinating to see how she would have related Lindeman's discussion of the qualities of adult education, for example, to her own, deep, engagement with practice. This is not to say that Brew does not have a framework. As we have already seen, certain key elements can be discerned in her work - but it does take some work on the part of readers to identify these.

Perhaps the central question that lies over the book, as I noted earlier, concerns her understanding of the notion of informal education. Is it the process of stimulating reflection and active participation or is it, more narrowly, the insertion of teaching into different social situations? Brew would probably have argued that it is the former - but that there is a great danger that informal educators will neglect the need for teaching moments and for organized programmes and sessions. Interestingly, 'informal education' did not take up much space in Brew's subsequent writing about youth work (1950, 1955, 1957). It might simply be that she saw the youth service as a 'department of informal education' (1946: 7) and therefore it needed little further discussion. It could well be that her failure to fully theorise the notion meant that it did not need much discussion. It could simply be that the context in which she was writing had shifted. The need was to defend youth work as a viable form of intervention.

In some ways such criticism is churlish. Brew had made a formidable contribution to youth work and informal education. As the reviewer of *Youth and Youth Groups* (Times Educational Supplement, November 29, 1957) wrote:

*Much of what she did to help young people will never be fully known, for it was done, as it were, by stealth, in the privacy of personal conversation and often outside the official range of the service of Youth. But even if that part of her work is set aside, her publicly known contribution ranks her high among the most able, most wise and most sympathetic workers with adolescents this country has ever known.*

I would not disagree with that assessment. *Informal Education* is a landmark book. In it Brew provided a rationale and framework for the development of informal education. Furthermore, her infectious enthusiasm and attention to practice meant that her ideas were explored and experimented with by a significant number of workers. Hers was a rare talent.

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**Notes**

1  H. Caldwell Cook taught at Perse School, Cambridge and was best known for his (1917) book The Play Way. He had a vision of 'natural education in self-governing communities' but argued for a transition involving a 'partial liberation from the classroom'. For more about his proposals go to the informal education homepage (www.infed.org).

2  The Education Act (1944) included provisions for compulsory part-time education (one day per week) for those between 15 and 18 who had left school. They were to attend young peoples' or County Colleges. However, faced with resource constraints and a massive increase in the birth rate, these provisions were not enacted.

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**Felicity Shenton**

Within the field of social research considerable progress has been made in the area of research with children and young people. Using participatory research methods young people are increasingly becoming involved in the research process not simply as respondents to questionnaires, or interviewees, but as partners. There is also increasing evidence of young people being engaged in conducting their own research. Kirby's book is, therefore, a timely one.

The book is informative, easy to read, well laid out and comprehensive. It follows the research process through from start to finish, with chapters looking at deciding to involve young researchers through the research design, setting up and doing the research, to analysis and dissemination. It also looks at some of the ethical issues involved. The book offers 'Case Studies' as examples of research carried out by groups of people. Many of these are taken from Save the Children projects in this country as well as in developing countries. The case studies make the issues bring alive some of the complex issues which can crop up. The book also offers a series of 'Key Learning Points' which highlighted issues. This makes the book easy to dip in and out of if there are particular issues the reader wants information on. It also makes regular reference to the Learning Resource Materials, a Save the Children publication produced to coincide with Kirby's book. Without having access to this resource pack the frequent references to it were rather frustrating (although probably a very effective marketing ploy!).

In terms of the research process the book covered all of the practical and logistical issues encountered during a young people's research project. It comments on the difficult area of adult support arguing that there is... a fine line between being unsupportive and over- involved (p 61). It also successfully highlights some of the ethical issues and comments on topics such as the power imbalance between adults and young people which have implications for the way the research is commissioned, supported and how the findings are presented. Kirby also makes some useful points

about gender issues, and addresses the issues of culture and disability in choosing which young researchers to use. She also discusses the sensitive issue of paying young people to carry out research, and offers arguments in favour of both approaches. She does not, however address the issue of inequality, in relation to payment. That is, adult researchers get paid to conduct research, therefore so should young people.

Kirby emphasises the point that there should be purpose to the research and that, if young people are centrally involved in it, there should be some potential benefit to them. She notes that at times that young people may find the research boring and also that young people may not be around at the end of the project for the dissemination of the findings. If research has been truly participatory, and has been conducted on an issue which directly affects them, and finally if there is within the research process the possibility of some change at the end of it, then young people are unlikely to be either bored or give up before completion. It is an ethical issue which deserves some consideration. Young people surely have a right to be involved as researchers, particularly where they are researching within their own communities, and to be assured the possibility that the research will have some impact in whatever area they are carrying out research. Therefore young people in the looked after system or in a particular school who are commissioned to carry out some research need to believe that there is a real purpose for the work they are undertaking. This is not to offer any guarantees that things will be different for them simply as a result of their research findings. However the possibility must exist that the findings will be taken seriously and that they will be given appropriate consideration. Otherwise, as Kirby points out, there is little purpose to the research.

Criticism of the book lies in two areas. The first is the almost total absence of the views of young people in the book. There are one or two direct quotes but other than this there is very little information from young people about their experiences as researchers. Surely this is part of the point? Kirby does successfully highlight the increased validity that young people's participation in the research process can offer. However the same appears not to apply to the book. The second area of criticism is the emphasis that Kirby places on the need to train young people in research techniques. This smacked of training young people to do things the way that adults do them. Once again this rather misses the point that part of the increased value of engaging young people to conduct their own research is that they will bring an entirely different perspective and

have the potential to research new ideas and techniques. Training young people in research techniques carries with it the very real possibility of training out of them the very qualities that the research process requires - validity, value and truth. If there is an issue about the need for the research to be taken seriously by adults and therefore to have been conducted using tried and tested research techniques, then the need may be for adult's views about what constitutes valid research evidence to be challenged rather than the need for young people to be re-trained to accommodate adult needs. It was disappointing that this book failed to make the point.

Overall, despite these criticisms, it was a useful and thorough book which will be of interest to anyone who is considering engaging young people to carry out research.

The book offers readers a comprehensive bibliography with some useful advice about essential reading.

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Carl Parsons
**Education, Exclusion and Citizenship.**
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**David Crimmens**

Do children who misbehave forfeit their rights to education? Nigel de Gruchy representing one of the most powerful schoolteacher's trade unions suggests that they do [p 134]. In a situation where over 13,000 children are reported as being permanently excluded from school there is ample evidence to demonstrate the exclusionary impetus of schools and their increasingly demoralised professional staff. It is not, however, appropriate or correct to suggest that responsibility for the children who continue to be deprived of the benefits of a full time education, or at least full time schooling, can be laid solely at the feet of teachers leaders.

In this volume Parsons examines the realities of exclusion from school. In a wide-ranging exploration he looks at the situation from the perspective of

the individual children and young people whose behaviour increasingly leads to permanent exclusion. At the same time he raises questions about the way in which society appears to collude in the communal neglect of a significant proportion of young people with special needs. The book is arranged in ten chapters, three of which are co-written with colleagues.

It is relevant to reflect on the fact that one of the first pieces of work carried out by the Social Exclusion Unit was an investigation of truancy and school exclusion. Their report, published in May 1998, almost exactly on the first anniversary of the election of the Labour government, identifies three groups as being disproportionately likely to be excluded from school

- *Children with special needs;*
- *African-Caribbean children;*
- *Children looked after by the state.*

The Report goes on to say that Exclusion rates vary from school to school, but tend to be higher in areas of social deprivation [para 2.6], begging the question about how far the children and young people excluded from school are part of the wider socially excluded population at the core of much of current social policy. It also highlights a paradox in the way in which one public institute, the school, may effectively undermine the objective of other areas of policy.

As a whole Parson's book provides a systematic analysis of the range of factors which the author's identify as explaining the rise in numbers excluded from schooling in the 1990s. It reviews the literature and research which should underpin the analysis of the Social Exclusion Unit Report. It also provides a framework to evaluate how far the strategy, which emerges from the Report, is likely to succeed. For example, the Report recommends that there should be a one third reduction in the numbers of both permanent and fixed term exclusions by 2002 and that by that date all excluded children should receive a full-time education.

The final chapter entitled *Politics values, welfare and educational policy* attempts to link together the issue of school exclusion with wider questions regarding the social exclusion of young people. I wonder whether this may have been better positioned as the first chapter as it provides a system-atic sociological review of the social structural location of excluded young people. It locates many of the earlier analyses in a wider context which could have been used more effectively as a framework for evaluating other issues which are explored earlier. For example, in evaluating the

role of the media in addressing social anxieties about difficult young people during the 1990s Parsons identifies the question of who is to blame [p137]. Is it the children who misbehave or their parents who have failed to socialise their offspring appropriately in relation to ideas of individual pathologies? Is it the teachers, (or at least some teachers) who fail to provide sufficient interest to engage the disaffected as suggested by battalions of OFSTED Inspectors and successive generations of Ministers of State at the DfEE struggling to depoliticise schooling as a political issue? Or does the problem lie in the very manner in which schooling is institutionally arranged with continuing problems over distribution of resources and more importantly opportunities?

These issues are examined in an attempt to explain the phenomena, which lead to the exclusion of so many young people from schools in the United Kingdom. Parsons is not only concerned to explain. He also wants to influence policy makers and get them to act on the findings of the work of himself and his co-researchers. He poses the question of why it is possible for so many children and young people to be permanently excluded from an institution which is such a fundamental part of growing up in a modern society. He identifies the fact that it has been difficult to engender a constituency of political support for a mandatory framework for alternative provision for this small but signified group of young people. There is a recognition of a significant level of popular support for policies which are seen to be getting tough on youth misbehaviour in general which leads to votes for policies which are punitive and retributive and little evidence of support for preventive initiatives [p.xii]. This is particularly evident in the post-script which documents the permanent exclusion of a 6 year old boy.

Overall each of the chapters in this book could easily stand-alone. This is both a strength and weakness in the author's approach. A strength because it enables the reader to reflect on the available evidence in discrete subject areas; a weakness because the book lacks an overall organising hypothesis holding together these difficult elements.

In the final analysis I found the book more than a useful addition to the existing literature on school exclusion and related areas. I recommend that it should be widely read by students and teachers in traditionally separate areas of school education, community and youth work and social work. It will be useful reading for all those involved in work with young people including the new joined up occupations which should emerge from the

Connexions initiative. As Parsons comments in his acknowledgments [p xiv] The work is unfinished as policy and practice move on.

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Ruth Lister
**Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives**
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**Christine Nugent**

This book is essentially a recuperative project, one in which Lister seeks to rescue the concept of citizenship from the false universalism of its nineteenth century liberal tradition, and lead it into the promised land of activist collective politics in the twenty first century. Lister is a passionate scholar, whose work reflects her many years as a campaign activist with Child Poverty Action Group. One could wish for no better guide on a journey through contemporary democratic debates on citizenship and feminist theories, and where the journey seems at times to be rather arduous, this is more to do with the rather complex nature of some of the terrain, than any shortcomings in the author as guide. On the contrary, this is a clearly written and accessible text.

From the outset Lister adopts an ambitious inter-disciplinary approach, interweaving social policy analysis with insights from political, social and feminist theories in order to reassert the strategic and intellectual importance of the concept of citizenship. She ranges widely, exploring themes of inclusion and exclusion at both national and international levels. She is at pains to stress the importance of maintaining an internationalist perspective in an age of migration and global citizenship. Her aim is the development of a more inclusive concept of citizen, which is able to transcend those impoverished versions which have served down the years to mask inequalities of gender, class, race, age, sexuality, religion, disability and cultural differences. Her coverage is comprehensive and

thorough, exploring a wealth of research material and citing examples from a range of countries.

The book is evenly divided into two parts. Part one offers a theoretical framework, emphasising the contested nature of the concept of citizenship and exploring, for example, women's historical exclusion from citizenship, issues of diversity and difference, and marxist, liberal and social reformist political traditions. Part two examines the policy and practice implications of the material in part one. Thus part two explores the public-private divide, the economic aspects of women's citizenship and attempts to reconfigurate the relationship between formal and informal politics so as to create a woman-friendly political and social citizenship. The conclusion seeks to develop a critical synthesis of the conflicting political traditions of citizenship outlined in part one, and the policy dilemmas of part two, in order to be able to sketch a future political agenda for women's citizenship claims in both national and international arenas.

It is a very scholarly text, providing a breadth of empirical evidence and theoretical exploration, from a focus on citizenship politics as civic republicanism and liberal rights through the gendered politics of time to the citizen as wage-earner and as carer. Throughout the text there is a healthy cross fertilisation of key debates in feminist theories with key debates in citizenship theory, exploring, for example, conflicts between an ethic of care perspective which acknowledges women's responsibilities in the private sphere with an ethic of justice model which is associated with equality perspectives. A strength of the book lies in the comprehensive and interdisciplinary coverage it offers. A further strength is the depth of policy analysis and the author's awareness of the heterogeneity of the category woman and the significance in these debates of axes of difference and of inequality and difference? How to reconcile citizenship traditions of activist collective politics? Via a process of critical synthesis Lister seeks to resolve such conflicts and transcend the binary shackles of divided thinking. Does she succeed? I think the answer is yes, though I would have liked greater development of her ideas on the concept of power which she begins to sketch out in the final chapter.

She acknowledges the ways in which disadvantaged women, acting as citizens, provide inspirational examples of citizenship against the odds. In this context she gives examples of women's groups in working class areas of Belfast and also the work of Peter Beresford with Open Services project, looking at how people in poverty can exercise a voice in anti-poverty

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campaigns. The text is solidly grounded in feminist and social policy analysis and moves with ease from theoretical questions to activist and policy implications. Concepts of inclusion/exclusion and struggle/agency are central to her analysis of migration and the nation state.

When I began reading this text, I was not convinced that the concept of citizenship could be reclaimed for an emancipatory and egalitarian politics. How could such an intrinsically universalistic concept incorporate the shifting identities of women in the twenty-first century? Was it even worth trying to do so? This book succeeds in the difficult task of bringing stimulating and fresh perspectives to somewhat well worn theoretical and policy debates. A very welcome contribution to the field.

*Christine Nugent is a senior lecturer at the University of Portsmouth.*

Kevin Hetherington
**New Age Travellers: Vanloads of uproarious humanity**
Cassell (London and New York) 2000
0 304 33977 6 hbk
0 304 33978 4 pbk
£45.00 hbk
£15.99 pbk
pp 191

**Jean Spence**

In his Preface, Hetherington states that in this book his intention is to provide a text about Travellers which is both sociologically informative and accessible to the reader interested in the subject. He makes reference to having appeared in *Pseud's Corner in Private Eye* in 1993 after delivering a paper whose title would be incomprehensible to anyone outside the academy, as well as to most within, and still feeling the embarrassment from that, he is clearly asserting a desire to remain theoretically rigorous in his approach whilst eschewing the most impenetrable jargon of theory.

Partly he succeeds in his project. There is much in *New Age Travellers* which is challenging, entertaining and thought provoking. Hetherington has not only used the empirical data from his research but has also further investigated associated subjects in order to situate New Age Travellers in their historical and cultural milieux. From his interviews with Travellers

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and his attendance at festivals, he has identified a number of significant cultural processes which emerge from or are incorporated within the Travelling lifestyle and value base. These processes which include ideas about carnival, freedom, and the sacred and the ceremonial, are then used to explore his theoretical interest in the creation of 'social space'. He is concerned with questions of process, of negotiated and contested meanings in a social and geographical context and in the clarification of identity and values through social action and interaction. For Hetherington, Travellers are catalysts around which cohere a range of competing meanings. His exploration of the social 'performance' which is enacted around events (such as Festivals), activities, (such as work) and places, (such as Stonehenge), enables him to present an interesting and thought provoking account of the manner in which identity, community and moral and legal rights and responsibilities are articulated.

Hetherington clearly has some sympathy with the Travellers although he does not idealise them. Part of his project is to explore the difficulties which they present to the settled population and the real issues which are raised by their presence in the landscape. He provides a general historical account of travelling as a way of life and its association with Romantic notions of freedom, but is particularly thorough in his analysis of the more immediate and specific history of New Age Travellers. The focus of the book is upon their experiences and struggles particularly since the 1980s and Hetherington is able to locate and explain key moments in their evolving folklore. He considers the social and political conditions within which their infamous convoys developed and which culminated in the infamous 'Battle of the Beanfield', linking the activities and experiences of the new Age Travellers with the Miners' Strike, the Greenham Common Peace Camp and the anti-Poll Tax campaigns of the early Thatcher period. He also notes the significance of high unemployment and home-lessness amongst young people which made the travelling way of life attractive to some who did not necessarily posses an ideological commitment to travelling as a way of life or a way of being.

The materialist analysis presented in the book could possibly have been more fully developed. There is reference to the imposition of repressive and authoritarian legislation in response to the supposed threat posed by New Age Travellers, such as the Public Order Act (1986) and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994), but an extra chapter covering in more detail the relationship between the State and non-conforming or campaigning groups during the 1980s, and subsequently, would have

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added an extra and significant dimension to this book and improved it considerably. That this type of discussion appears more as a sideshow is largely because Hetherington is primarily concerned to pursue an abstract line of thought about the production of meaning. The more concrete manifestations of power and the materiality of the implementation of such power, though present, are incidental to this analytical perspective. It is because of this abstract theoretical approach that the book only partly succeeds in being generally accessible.

The title, or perhaps more precisely, the sub-title, 'Vanloads of uproarious humanity' suggests the possibility of a much more lively and perhaps more fully descriptive account of New Age Travellers, of their culture and beliefs, of their construction of community. The reader who expects this is likely to be disappointed. For the intention of the book is much more to marshal the empirical information in support of the theoretical arguments. This is not a study of New Age Travellers as a distinct community although there is a great deal within the text which is informative about their way of life and beliefs. The travellers do not emerge from this text as real living and vibrant people: it is rather the problems and conflicts which follow them which are the main focus. Although the conflicts and social action take place within the rural landscape of southern England, neither is this a book about the settled population in this area. Indeed, although much is made of the manner in which identity and community are imagined and 'performed' in the settled community in response to the presence of Travellers, there is little empirical information about the people who belong to this settled community. They are mostly present as writers to newspapers, reflecting the primary source of Hetherington's information about them. Otherwise, those who react and respond the Travellers are shadowy people. Hetherington's analytical discussion cannot but rely upon theoretical concepts and of necessity he constructs both New Age Travellers and the settled population mainly as abstract categories. Whilst the title suggests that New Age Travellers are the subject of the text, in fact, it is theoretical analysis which is the subject.

Hetherington is concerned with symbolism and the formation of identity in contested landscapes. In order to explore the issues raised by the presence of New Age Travellers he uses two main formulations. Firstly, he presents Travellers as 'underdetermined' by which he means not fully or concretely defined, recognised or categorised. As such Travellers are ambiguous and problematic to the settled population which results in their re-presentation

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as 'over-determined', as caricatures in the popular imagination. Secondly, because of this condition, the Travellers occupy a nodal but unfixed position: they are 'blank figures in the countryside' (Ch.1), 'jokers in the pack'. As such their presence disturbs the order of the everyday and causes the everyday world of the settled population to be re-formulated, re-made and re-possessed. Identity and community within the settled population is created in the construction of New Age Travellers as folk devils and scapegoats.

In pursuing his analysis, Hetherington is working with abstract conceptual thinking about social processes which are never fixed. In particular, the chapter about the construction of ethnic identity is creatively and perceptively analysed. This chapter is a valuable contribution to debates about the meaning of ethnicity, the problems posed by ethnic difference and the relationship between ethnicity and class. In suggesting that the New Age Travellers work to construct their identity as ethnicity as opposed to class, and exploring the problematic nature of this in terms of fixed ideas about ethnicity and class Hetherington raises valuable questions regarding received ideas about the fixed and 'inherited' nature of ethnicity and its association with 'race'. The best of Hetherington's efforts to present a 'proximal' and open-ended analysis is formulated within this discussion. However, in order to achieve such insight, it is necessary for him to work with concepts which are simply not immediately accessible to the general reader.

Words like 'proximal', 'liminal', and 'over/under-determination' must be acknowledged as specialist language. Moreover, Hetherington has a tendency to be cautious and somewhat repetitious in style as though he is trying to make the point absolutely clear and leave no room for misunderstanding. The book slips between the author's fascination with the New Age Travellers as a community in process and a parallel fascination with the challenges of theoretical analysis about the construction of social meaning. He is aware that attempting to achieve a balance between the theoretical and the empirical, between the specialist and the generalist text is no easy matter. His effort is to be applauded but he has not quite achieved a full integration of the two enthusiasms. Rather they seem to co-exist uneasily within this book. As such, he has not quite managed to remove himself fully from 'pseud's corner'. Perhaps he needs to be more confident in the ability of his readers to construct their own understanding from his text. Perhaps the book is over ambitious. Nevertheless, criticism to one side, this book is a fascinating read.

*Jean Spence, University of Durham*

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T. Mayer and T. Webb
**Redefining Success: groupwork with young people**
Youth Work Press 2000
ISBN 0 86155 222 9
£8.00 (pbk)
pp 100

**Sean Harte**

Webb and Mayer are experienced group workers boasting a range of practical knowledge as well as a solid grounding in groupwork theory. Together they have produced a concise guide and resource aimed towards youth workers and other professionals engaged in face-to-face work with young people.

*Redefining Success* is divided into three inter-connected sections, condensing a highly complex subject into a brief and concise introduction to groupwork processes. The first introduces the reader to groupwork, describing what it is, what it is not, and reinforcing the importance of personal development within the groupwork context. The second discusses the role and function of the groupwork facilitator providing advice and encouragement to those new to the role, whilst offering some challenges to experienced practitioners. The final section offers practical exercises to use within groupwork settings, as well as providing encompassing principles and values to encourage a successful and organic groupwork philosophy.

*Redefining Success* is aimed towards practitioners and is pitched at a basic introductory level. Throughout, great emphasis is placed upon the personal experiences of the reader who is encouraged to use these to shape their groupwork facilitation skills. The style used by the authors creates a book that is not a lifeless text to be consumed and discarded, but an educational tool with which to interact, challenge and learn. This makes it worthwhile appealing to face-to-face professionals in a field with increasingly congested workloads, difficult time-scales and strict deadlines.

Whilst offering advice for developing and expanding groupwork projects, *Redefining Success,* due to limited size and scope leaves some fundamental questions unanswered. We are rightly advised that groupwork is first and foremost a process, so this is where we should focus our attention and commitment. However, there is no indication as to how we can contrive or compensate for this in projects that are commonly looking for `real` measurable outputs, thus creating a compulsion toward a more goal-oriented focus than may be preferable. This could be dangerous for

a novice worker who has not considered how a rigid process focus may affect their prescribed work remit, and a brief discussion would have been appropriate.

Also of concern are the rigid stipulations of what constitutes a groupwork session. Mayer and Webb argue that a session must begin at a specific time, not allow for latecomers, and end collectively at a designated time. Whilst this may create an *ideal* situation for groupwork, it is neither helpful nor realistic for many practitioners who just can not afford themselves this luxury. Indeed I would have to argue that much micro-groupwork can and does occur without these limitations, and failing to acknowledge this may cast aspersions on the quality of work within the field and upon the informal education process itself.

The section on groupwork facilitation provides an excellent beginner's guide to some of the more obvious pitfalls that could undermine the process, as well as describing traits and skills which will assist your facilitation. Whilst this section will be of great use to the newcomer, it is perhaps a little basic and limited to offer much benefit to a more experienced groupworker.

The final section offers advice on how to structure groupwork sessions, develop expanded groupwork programmes, and also provides a small collection of exercises aimed at promoting positive interaction. The information is very friendly and accessible, but is again of far greater use to the novice than the adept. A list of skills underpinning groupwork is offered that is comprehensive enough to use to structure a full but brief introductory programme. The topics covered, including advocacy, awareness, communication, co-operation, self-esteem and evaluation would be useful as a training aid, particularly for those who are looking to enable peer educators who will facilitate groupwork sessions. Indeed the topic of peer facilitation is discussed in this book's appendix.

The suggested exercises, although limited in number, are excellent and easily incorporated. They can be used as given or adapted and expanded as required. The exercises given in the book add an extra dimension, as a handy resource to have on the office shelf for pre-planning sessions or in case of a last minute emergency.

Mayer and Webb are obviously enthusiastic promoters of the groupwork process. They conclude with a brief acknowledgement of the difficulties and vulnerabilities faced by those of us who work with young people. Moreover they impress upon us the benefits that can be had for youth

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work, for young people, and for society as a whole by using groupwork as a platform for change.

Overall, this book is a welcome addition to the subject. It conveys a very personal interpretation of the `whats` and `hows` of groupwork, and it does so in a highly accessible way. It is particularly useful as an introductory text for volunteers, part-time workers and those who are new to groupworking methods. The fact that the book gives specific regard to groupwork with young people makes it particularly appealing and somewhat unusual. *Redefining Success* conveys a philosophy that pro-
· motes an individual approach to groupwork. This may at first sound like a paradox, but in simple, understandable terms it explains how we can facilitate personal growth and development through the groupwork process. Groupwork is thus reborn as a medium for promoting personal and social change.

**Sean Harte** *is currently completing a degree in Community and Youth Work at Durham University. He is a part-time youth worker.*

Michele Erina Doyle and Mark K. Smith
**Born and Bred?**
*Leadership, heart and informal education*
London: YMCA George Williams College
1999
ISBN 1 870319 12 5
pp 81

CD recorded and produced by **offcuts** under the direction of Peter Cutts
**Born and Bred?**
*Telling Stories of Leadership*
YMCA George Williams College
Born and Bred? Web Pages
www.infed.org/bornandbred

**Jean Spence**

When I agreed to review this publication for *Youth and Policy*, I was interested not only in what the authors had to say about the concept of 'leadership' but also in the manner in which they had combined the three

inter-related media of printed text, CD and Web Pages. On the basis of Doyle's recent work (Doyle 1999,) and of Smith's important contributions to the literature of community and youth studies (eg. Smith, 1994) which includes the Informal Education Web Site *(www.infed.org)*, I was ambitiously expecting both stimulating textual content and a three dimensional experienceof form. I was also attracted by the title. The apparently ironic use of the phrase 'Born and Bred' suggested a democratisation of the concept of 'leadership', whilst the word 'heart' in the sub-title suggested an attempt to create a document which would itself argue passionately for commitment and leadership in everyday life.

At one level my expectations were met. This publication does represent a systematic effort to consider the question of leadership positively, to explore its contribution to the process of informal education; it does seek to combine the three media in a manner which is interconnected and open-ended; and it argues coherently for vitality, conscience and con-nectedness, for 'heart' in the work. However, the aims of the authors were more mundane than my preconceptions and my expectations were only met at a technical level.

What Doyle and Smith have produced is primarily a training package. Consequently, although the content covers the themes suggested by the title, it does so in a manner which addresses the reader as teacher to student, carrying within it a worthy rather than passionate tone. Similarly, while the connections between the three media encourage the possibility of further exploration and engagement, they are not any more exciting or challenging than could have been gained through the presentation of a printed package incorporating a range of visual and written texts.

In a manner reminiscent of Steven Lukes' essay on *Power,* (Lukes, 1974) the book presents three dimensions of leadership - the classical model; the more liberal model which they define as 'shared leadership' and a democratic model which they define as 'Leadership with heart'. The classical model with its emphasis on individual leaders and the shared model with its emphasis on the group both contain positive and negative qualities but nei-ther is sufficient as a model for informal educators who wish to pursue fully democratic practices in their work. Leadership with heart is offered for consideration as a more comprehensive and useful model. It is one which involves the worker in offering service to others, in creating oppor-tunities for association and interconnectedness and in seeking to pursue general well-being or happiness. Doyle and Smith argue that the means of

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achieving the ideal of leadership with heart are through the processes of animation, formation and education, all of which are aspects of informal education in practice.

The thesis which Doyle and Smith pursue in the booklet is carefully constructed within six short chapters divided into three parts. These cover, 'Leadership', 'Heart and Leadership', and 'Informal Education and Leadership'. The careful delineation of the meaning of leadership, its classical connotations and its significance as a shared process is a useful clarification of the main issues. Similarly, the suggestion that the continental concepts of *animation* and *formation* could be combined with *education* to comprehensively encourage qualities of leadership, provides a grounded introduction to the value of these concepts for practice. However, there was little in the text which added to my understanding of the value and processes of informal education. Much of the third part of the booklet in particular seemed to be simply a reworking of ideas which Smith has advanced elsewhere (1994), despite the 'leadership' gloss.

I agree with the authors' attempts to re-introduce the notion of 'heart' into youth and community work, and have a great deal of sympathy for their efforts to re-awaken the passion and commitment for 'service'. They have my sympathy when they refocus upon fundamental concepts such as 'spirit', 'moral sense or conscience' and 'being'. These notions are too easily dismissed within the modern professional context. Yet many of the pioneers of social, community and youth work were moved to action, and explained their own actions in these terms and it was they who set the parameters and processes within which the work evolved. These concepts have meaning in understanding the work even for those who would prefer not to engage with them. Unfortunately, Doyle and Smith do not address the historical complexities of the silencing of these matters in professional discussion. Secular 'services' with their organisational hierarchies and career structures continuously undermine the collective commitment to service as a moral process. Work which is financed with a view to the achievement of tangible 'outcomes' is seldom concerned with happiness whatever the ethical and moral conscience of the worker. A full debate about these issues would need to fully engage with wider questions relating to voluntary and paid work, to the denial of the personal and the collective dimensions within paid employment, and to the tensions within that, and to the ideological connotations of the notions of leadership within an organisational context. The presentation of the ideal of leadership with heart, however competently argued, is insuf-

ficient without a contextual discussion. I am not convinced that the argument which Doyle and Smith put forward to extend the understanding and application of the concept of leadership can overcome the power and influence of the classical meaning inherent within organisational hierarchies and practices. Nor does it carry sufficient weight to counter in practice the use of the term in the everyday life of communities. The idea of community 'leader', or of trade union 'leader' for instance might be 'classical' but they are also embedded in policies and organisational systems as well as in consciousness: they have a real material existence. Most practitioners are lucky if they can gain an acknowledgement from managers and funders of the value of 'shared leadership' as an aspect of the process of participation within their work. Leadership 'with heart' would be truly challenging! Of course therein lies its value. But for this book to be challenging, the authors would have needed to pay some attention to these issues and this would require a much broader discussion than is the intention of Doyle and Smith in this publication.

To have demanded such debates from the book would perhaps have been unfair. This is very much an introductory text. It is designed to be used within training and educational situations, introducing ideas to be debated within groups. Although this is not made explicit, to engage with it as a solitary reader is to misjudge that intention. This was confirmed for me when I listened to the supporting CD. The CD comprises a number of practitioners talking about aspects of their work in a range of informal educational projects. The book directs the reader at the end of each chapter to one or two of the tracks on the CD in order to 'ground' the points made in the chapter in actual practice. The small booklet packaged with the CD includes photographs and asks the listener to consider pertinent points relating to the content of the discussion on each track.

Listening to the CD as an individual is not really to be recommended. Although it is well produced and the content relevant to the written text, I found it difficult to maintain concentration or to focus upon the key questions because of the absence of my own group with whom I could debate the issues at the end of each section. Similarly, to 'read' the additional exercises which have been suggested by a variety of contributors to the web pages was for me a sterile activity. It would be necessary to engage in practice, to use the exercises in a real group situation in order for their significance to be fully comprehended. A more comprehensive review of the whole package would need the reviewer to use it in the manner in which it was intended.

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Indeed, the whole package is clearly designed as an aid to group work, as a working tool for encouraging the development of the qualities of shared leadership which the booklet promotes and as a means of raising conversation and discussion about the ideas which the booklet contains. Read this way, there is a coherence to the related texts which could make it a very useful tool for practical training or educational work, for animating, forming and educating within group work. Doyle and Smith have made an effort to reproduce in the form of their texts the ideals which they promote in the content, and there is a consistency within that which includes an open-endedness in process which is a glimmer of what I was hoping for at the outset. However, this glimmer is far from the 'three-dimensional' experience which I had hoped might be possible from the use of the different media to explore and engage with concepts, ideas, and practices.

In conclusion, this is a practical introductory package for educators wishing to open debate within groups and to explore with groups the idea of shared leadership. It could undoubtedly be useful for those who find the range of ideas about leadership to be significant. I am not convinced. 'Leadership' seems to be too weak a concept upon which to load so much form as well as content. The willingness of the authors to work with a range of media is stimulating but to put 'heart' into the process perhaps requires a more substantial or fundamental theme.

**Jean Spence** *University of Durham*

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*Thus, for a book:*
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