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The National Youth Agency

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**The National Youth Agency**

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

We achieve this by:

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

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## Margaret Simey (1906 – 2004)



Since *Youth and Policy* last went to press the death occurred of Margaret Simey – suffragette, social reformer, political activist, feminist, socialist, community worker, academic, historian, writer and youth work pioneer. Somehow Margaret was all those and much more besides. In her 80s she became a national figure when, as chair of the Greater Merseyside Police Committee during the 1981 Toxteth Riots, she rightly questioned the one-dimensional explanation for its' occurrence by the Chief Constable and Home Office. Both individuals, one suspects, assumed Margaret would tamely concur with their account and blame the community for what happened. To the fury of the establishment and yellow press, she refused to toe the party line and courageously spoke out on behalf of a community she had lived alongside for 50 years and proudly served as a councillor. Her public position surprised nobody who knew her or her record. As she said of herself 'I am a dogged woman. I never condoned violence but I warned of it. I saw people being neglected and disenfranchised: a community being subjected to dependence.'

Born in Glasgow in 1906 and educated as a boarder at St Paul's Girls' School, London, Margaret 'moved' to Liverpool in 1918 when her father became principal of the College of Commerce. St Paul's educated the daughters of the aristocracy and wealthy, but at 18 she opted to escape that milieu. By then a suffragist she moved to Buxton and set up a club for working girls predominately from mining districts, imported to become parlour and chamber maids. Although as 'home sick as them' Margaret was 'determined that their sex was not going to determine their fate. To impress on them that they were capable of managing their own affairs – that is true democracy'. The next move was to Liverpool University from which she graduated in 1928, the first woman to secure from that institution a degree in the Social Sciences. She once admitted she could have achieved better grades had she not spent every available hour running clubs at the Victoria Women's Settlement as an apprentice to that redoubtable pair, Eleanor Rathbone and Elizabeth Macadam. After graduation, Margaret became the North West District Organiser for the National Association of Girls' Clubs. In doing so she became part of a team of talented, exceptional women who did so much to create not merely a national network of girls' clubs but the conceptual base upon which secular youth work flourished. It was an exhausting and gruelling job criss-crossing an area stretching from the Scottish Border to Cheshire: visiting existing clubs, establishing new ones and initiating training programmes.

This involvement made her a lifelong supporter and advocate of youth work, settlements and community work. Almost eighty years after she began her youth work 'career' Margaret was invited to Manchester Town Hall to give the keynote address at the opening of the

Community and Youth Workers' Union archive. For those present it was a memorable occasion. Her speech was incisive, exploiting the lessons of the past to enhance the vibrancy of contemporary practice. For her youth work was not created to manage and control young people and nor was its purpose to slot them into a world full of inequalities but rather to 'help them prepare themselves for a life worth living'.

Four years ago a *Youth and Policy* editor interviewed Margaret Simey. It was almost impossible to get Margaret to look back, she clearly preferred to ask questions rather than answer them and constantly quizzed the interviewer about her work and the challenges of contemporary youth work. Clearly, the natural cast of Margaret's mind was to grapple with the complexities of the present and project into the future revealing that her enthusiasm for reform remained unabated.

Little over a year before her death Margaret delivered the annual Duncan lecture in Liverpool. A colleague describes the event thus:

*The hall was full and the stage held a number of speakers, in amongst them sat Margaret. She did not sit and whisper to her neighbours nor did she run through her notes as many of her fellow speakers did. Rather she sat and actively listened to each contributor, nodding her head in agreement to particular points, and demonstrating her respect to each of those who spoke. When Margaret rose to address the audience she at first seemed frail and tired but as she spoke this fell away and her presence and voice filled the hall. She referred to how service providers only saw her age and various ailments and how she demanded to be treated above all as a human being with a future and a life to live. That evening she spoke enthusiastically about her life's work not as something negative but as something positive; this had provided her with curiosity, experience, insight, knowledge, humour and humanity – all qualities which she had clearly used to the full and shared with others, that night – and throughout her life.*

In one of her many books, Margaret Simey wrote of Josephine Butler, one of the outstanding social reformers and feminists of the 19th century, as someone who had 'acquired a well-educated mind and developed a personality of exceptional sparkle and grace'. Those who knew Margaret Simey would surely echo this judgment when contemplating her. Youth work has lost a great pioneer and intrepid supporter but thankfully she has left a magnificent legacy to remind us of her contribution.

# A Fab Night Out

## Under-18s discos/club nights and the night-time economy

*John Tierney and Kate Thraves*

*This paper draws on and develops ethnographic research carried out by one of the authors. The research focused on under-18s discos/club nights<sup>1</sup> in four separate locations: two were profit making events held in 'normal' clubs, whilst the other two were non-profit making, and held in a local authority leisure centre and a university students' union building respectively. In addition to the ethnography, a sample of 120 pupils aged 14 and 15 years, attending a number of schools, completed a questionnaire. The intention was to develop an understanding of under-18s discos/club nights in terms of their relationship to the night-time economy. The place of alcohol in these events was of particular interest to the researchers.*

**Keywords:** *Underage drinking, night-time economy, risk and protection*

### Something to do

The offending and anti-social behaviour of young people is a common theme in the audits of crime and disorder that local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) are now obliged to carry out<sup>2</sup>. As an aspect of this, audits and subsequent strategy documents frequently refer to the need for 'diversionary activities' to be provided in the evening, particularly for those in their early and middle teens. That young people in this age group have 'nothing to do' has, of course, been a familiar complaint over the years (from the young people concerned as well as from adults). From the perspective of CDRPs, and adults in general, the provision of 'something to do' will help break the perceived linkages between hanging around, boredom and misbehaving. None of this is new. The notion of 'hanging around' has a powerful symbolic resonance, especially if 'street corner' is appended to it, which itself has a distinguished pedigree in the annals of criminological theory.<sup>3</sup>

Over the years, all sorts of 'constructive' activities aimed at reducing offending behaviour have been tried, taking in table tennis in youth clubs, football matches with police officers, and all-night basketball tournaments. For adults, and especially parents, such activities have to be controlled and safe, meaning that they are organised by responsible adults. Young people themselves have also been enthusiastic supporters of 'something to do', though they, of course, are motivated by the desire to have a good time, rather than by the promise of a reduction in offending. Thus, apart from anything else, what is on offer has to be attractive to the young people concerned, and this clearly depends upon social and cultural contexts. Two agendas, therefore, have to be satisfied, one emphasising control and safety,

the other, having a good time. In this paper we discuss an activity that ostensibly satisfies each of these agendas and, therefore, appears to be an ideal solution to the problem of having nothing to do.

Under-18s discos/club nights are 'organised' by adults and, as evidenced by their growing popularity, are certainly attractive to young teenagers. For the latter they provide an opportunity to meet up with friends, and a social space free from the constraints of home and school, within which they can locate, explore and experiment with their identities as part of their transition from childhood to adulthood. Under-18s discos/club nights offer a similar cultural experience to that available to their older counterparts who participate in the night-time economy. This is most obviously the case with those profit-making club venues that explicitly seek to reproduce the experience of a 'real' club night, including the policing of the event by 'real' door staff. The one ingredient missing is the sale of alcohol within the venue. However, as the research reported here indicates, this does not prevent drinking taking place; indeed, for many of the young participants the consumption of alcohol is *de rigueur*. We need to examine the nature of the night-time economy in order to understand why.

## The night-time economy and young drinkers

Recently there has been a spate of research on the night-time economy (see, for example, Hobbs et al., 2003; Hollands and Chatterton, 2001; Quilley, 1999; Skelton and Valentine, 1998). Studies have linked its development and rapid expansion over the last twenty years or so to public-private entrepreneurial partnerships involving local authorities and a service industry built upon consumption and leisure. These partnerships were formed with the intention of breathing new life into Britain's post-industrial urban areas and 'Cities are reinventing themselves as sites of consumption and leisure' (Zukin, 1995: 34). In more deprived areas of the country this process was aided by various government-funded initiatives aimed at promoting urban regeneration. As one recent study puts it:

*The bulk of investment in the night-time economy is centred on the 'business of pleasure'...and is characterised by a flow of capital aimed at the development of licensed premises. That the focus of this capital is predominantly upon city centre sites is, we found, typically lamented by the police yet largely welcomed by the town planners, whose primary aim is to regenerate the city and preserve the city centre as a focus for public usage.* (Hobbs, et al., 2000: 708).

However, this study did note that there were concerns among town planners that relatively few planning applications were being submitted from other economic sectors. Since the study was carried out, these concerns appear to have been on the increase (see, for instance, *Guardian*, 2004).

A further consideration is that the decline of a manufacturing base, together with contingent cultural dislocations (for example, a more 'privatised' family life), had a significant social impact in terms of traditional forms of alcohol consumption. By the 1970s this was manifesting itself in a shift away from a mass market based upon local pubs and a male, manual working class, towards the consumption of alcohol in the home (Coffield and



Gofton, 1994; Brain, 2000). According to Brain, the brewing industry responded by turning its attention to the source of a new mass market:

*It started to target a new generation of youth drinkers, both male and female, who demanded a greater range of alcohol products and different kinds of drinking venue from the traditional pub ... These young consumers lived out their lives in a post-industrial world and were developing new leisure patterns and identities in the sphere of consumption. (Brain, 2000: 1).*

The end result in many of Britain's towns and cities is the now familiar concentration of bars, clubs and high-volume pubs, catering primarily for an 18-30 year old age group. It is an environment where 'consumers are encouraged to become inebriated' and 'intoxication is the norm' (Hobbs, 2002: 59). While planning professionals and local CDRPs may dream of a diverse, sophisticated and relaxed leisure zone (and perhaps draw on fond memories of pleasant evenings spent in warm Mediterranean towns), the reality is that in Britain's town and cities the night-time economy is alcohol-based, youth oriented, monocultural, largely unregulated, and often dangerous (Tierney and Hobbs, 2003). It is an aggressively marketed, multi-billion pound industry, in which local venues, as well as individual towns and cities, compete with each other for a share of the market, and for larger cities the competition is now international in scope. The targeting of young drinkers has clearly been a marketing success:

*In the interwar period in the UK young people aged 18-24 were the lightest drinkers in the adult population and the group most likely to abstain...By the 1980s, those aged 18-24 years had become the heaviest drinkers in the population, and the group least likely to abstain. (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2000).*

## Events for under-18s

Although young people in their early and middle teens are denied entry into the adult night-time economy, under-18s discos/club nights provide a dress rehearsal, especially in the case of 'real' city or town centre clubs, where the explicit aim is to replicate, albeit without the sale of alcohol, an adult version of this segment of the night-time economy. However, being designated as an 'under-18s' event means that 17 year olds will generally treat them with disdain, as something for kids, and even some 16 years olds may be wondering whether it is time to move on, upwards. As a result, participants tend to be in the 13-15 year old age range (as were those spoken to in this research). From the perspective of parents, such events are attractive because they are 'organised'. The implication is that their children will be able to have a good time in a relatively risk-free environment, because there are adult authority figures charged with ensuring their protection. Parents know where their children are, and when an event starts and ends. However, whilst they may be aware that these are not the same as pre-teens 'lemonade and party poppers' parties, parents may still be surprised by what happens before, during and after these events.

## Observations: city centre clubs

*I come here to get drunk and pull the boys...you can't do that as well when you're not*

*dressed up nice, and this is a place where you dress nice.* (14 year old girl).

*I come here to get the girls. There are so many of them that are really up for it...they all dress up and look dead gorgeous.* (16 year old boy).

*Hey blondie, fancy a shag?* (15 year old boy, after pinching the researcher on her behind).

Each of these clubs is situated in a city centre 'entertainment quarter', and aims to reproduce the atmosphere and buzz of a normal club night. The clubs lie at the opposite end of the spectrum from more traditional events held in neighbourhood venues such as schools, church halls, or community centres where teachers, the local vicar, or a posse of volunteer parents will keep a watchful eye on proceedings, and the young participants lack the anonymity experienced in a city centre. Held fortnightly in one club, and weekly in the other (for up to 500 and 300 participants respectively), the under-18s events lasted from 7.00 p.m. till 10.00 p.m., at which time the young people spilled onto the streets, and the clubs opened for adult business. Queues formed early at each venue, and the vast majority of youngsters appeared to be aged 13 to 15. The surrounding streets were lined with bars, pubs and clubs and, as this is a Friday evening, even at this early hour the neon signs were blinking and the first 'happy hour' booze was being dispensed. Most of the girls wore low tops, short skirts and high heels; the boys, roomy Ben Sherman-style shirts. A large proportion were smoking cigarettes, and many were taking surreptitious swigs from soft drink bottles being passed around. In one queue, a group of boys were sharing a bottle of White Lightening cider, still in its off-license bag; none appeared to be over 14. No security checks were made as the queue entered the larger venue, though door staff were positioned at the entrance. At the smaller venue female and male door staff searched the participants when they entered, and there was a breath check for those who appeared to have been drinking, though, as the manager said: 'It gets increasingly hard to prove, as the kids are well practised in chewing gum and spraying body spray to hide the scent of alcohol.' And he added:

*Vodka mixers is a popular drink to have beforehand, as it is hard for us to identify it in appearance and smell ... the regulars have figured us out and slyly plan every move to perfection when it comes to alcohol.*

The layout inside the clubs is based upon maximising the space to dance, or at least stand around, and most of the youngsters just danced and had fun. On the first visit to the larger club, though, there were a few cases of vomiting, two boys were escorted out for smuggling bottles of vodka into the club and, more seriously, an ambulance arrived to take an inebriated girl to hospital and a stomach pump. Sometimes there is trouble at these events:

*We know that alcohol-related trouble will arise on nights like this. However, we put in as many measures as we can to try and control them and minimise the risk...I won't tell you that the under-18s club nights are in any way reminiscent of a proper kids' disco, coz they're not...but these kids are going to drink anyway. All we can do is minimise what happens after they have drank.* (Club manager).

*We've only had about sixteen of these events so far...there has been trouble, you*

*know, just like on normal club nights, but nothing we can't handle. Only twice has an ambulance been called coz someone's pissed, and there's always going to be a handful that gets chucked out for either smuggling in the booze or starting a fight. Or merely just being in too much of a bloody state. (Club owner).*

The young people that the researcher spoke to had no qualms about referring to their drinking. For example:

*I've been here every week since it started, all my mates do. If we didn't come here on a Friday night, we'd just go down to the park near where we live and drink there...we drink on a Friday night wherever we are, don't we Paul? (15 year old boy).*

*My parents know I'm here, which is a good thing as I don't like lying to them too much. They'd kill me if they knew I drank before I came, but they can't find out as I'm most pissed at about eight o'clock. (14 year old girl).*

In the girls' toilets there were familiar conversations about pulling boys, and sometimes about getting home:

*I'm not going to pull him till we are out of here, coz I know that Becky will go crazy with me. I've told my mum that I'm staying at Kelly's anyway, so I'll have to see what happens. (15 year old girl).*

Occasionally, the girls would discuss their plans for changing back into the outfits they wore when their parents saw them leave the house:

*If we go to MacDonaldis after, while the boys are getting food we can go into the toilets and change, coz my dad's picking us up at eleven, so we'll definitely have time. (14 year old girl).*

A doorman remarked on another aspect of the night:

*All the young girls are, like, coming on to us all night, seeming much more desperate than the usual girls who try and chat us up...but this is where we draw the line...we give nothing back...they're kids...mind you, a lot of them don't look like bloody kids, I mean, the way they dress and all that, you could easily mistake them for twenty.*

The door staff in the clubs are the same ones on duty when the over-18s arrive, and have the usual sanguine attitude:

*We do the same job, whoever the customers are...if a kid verbally abuses us, or causes trouble, we'll tell them to fuck off...if they want to come to a club and act like adults, they will be treated like them too. We don't go soft on them coz they are kids.*

At the end of the evening the young club-goers moved along the streets in large groups, loud and boisterous. Around them were throngs of older revellers. Many of the youngsters headed for various fast-food outlets. An Asian assistant in one commented:

*They are just as pissed as the older lot. Just as loud, just as abusive, and seem to produce even more mess and sick on the pavement outside...these kids don't have any respect for adults. It was only a few hours ago that a lad who couldn't have been more than fourteen came in and told me that I was a 'smelly Paki' and that 'my chips were shit'.*

On one evening there was an outbreak of 'trouble' following an under-18s club night in the smaller city. At 10.00 p.m. a crowd of 80-100 youngsters left the club and made their way to the nearby bus station. A few scuffles broke out, then very quickly groups of boys began running around the bus station and nearby streets. Some had armed themselves with wooden fence posts, and bottles were thrown. There were no police officers on duty outside the club, or at the bus station, though a police van containing one officer arrived five to ten minutes after the trouble started. It is impossible to tell how many of those directly involved, if any, had been drinking that evening. However, one important aspect is that these club nights attract young teenagers from a wide catchment area around the city, and inevitably local rivalries among people from surrounding villages and housing estates are brought into the city centre. It is reasonable to conclude that the volatility of these events will be increased when the young participants have been drinking.

## Observations: students' union and leisure centre

The under-18s discos held in the students' union attracted up to 600 youngsters, and were run as non-profit making events by an entertainment organisation. They were also officially supported by the local police. Police officers and special constables as well as private door staff provided security. Interestingly, police support was motivated by a desire to 'give the kids something to do', presumably in order to keep them out of trouble. The researcher's first visit, however, happened to coincide with a visit by a senior police officer, who had been invited to attend because of a large amount of trouble a fortnight earlier. More alcohol than usual had been smuggled in, some participants were abusive towards staff and a window had been broken. Similarly, the discos held in the leisure centre were organised as a non-profit making community service, involving a partnership of the police, council leisure services and individuals living in the area. An explicit aim was to reduce incidents of youth nuisance and anti-social behaviour in what is a semi-rural area.

In the build up to the disco in the students' union there was an obvious police presence on the streets, and a watchful eye was kept on a nearby off licence. Anyone thought to have been drinking was stopped and searched, any alcohol found was confiscated, and the individual concerned was not allowed to enter the building. This did not deter some would-be participants from pushing bottles into their trousers, and the researcher was approached by a group and asked if she would purchase alcohol for them (being offered five pounds for her trouble). They are all searched and checked for the smell of alcohol prior to entering. A recent innovation (because of a 'handful of cases' of drug possession) was the presence of a sniffer dog. Free transport was available after the event for those wanting to travel back to surrounding areas. Although problems did occur, there was clearly a high level of security at these events, though this is not always appreciated:

*It's fun, we always have a good time...but there are so many pigs around, we feel like little kids being watched all the time. (14 year old boy).*

A special constable, who had helped police these events since they began, acknowledged that there were problems associated with underage drinking and young troublemakers, but felt that these were generally dealt with prior to an individual entering the building. He was much more critical of commercially run events held in private clubs, feeling that they

were insufficiently policed, that the regulations are more lax, and that those in charge of such events do not take a direct, personal interest in the safety of the participants. Security was even more obviously in evidence for the discos held in the leisure centre. A number of police officers and special constables were present before, during and after the event. Leisure centre staff searched everyone before they entered, confiscating not just alcohol, but cigarettes and chewing gum too. Given the location, the involvement of a range of adults from the local community, including parents, the strict rules, and the age range targeted, (specifically 12 to 16 year olds), these events were much closer to a 'kids' party' than a 'grown up' club night.

## Questionnaire

During the course of the research a questionnaire was completed by 120 14-15 year old pupils at six schools in the smaller city. 82.2% said that they had attended some form of organised under-18s 'disco' within the past year. The most common venue was a sports/leisure centre (49.5%), followed by a club (34%), a bar (23.8%) and a village hall (23.8%). 63.5% said that they had consumed alcohol before the event, and the majority (47%) said they purchased it from an off licence. The two other sources were older friend/brother or sister (17%) and home (16%). The most popular drink was 'alcopops'. 68% of those who said they drank also claimed to smoke. In response to the question about how they travelled to the venue, 59% said by bus, 40% by car, 10% by taxi and 11% walked (some ticked more than one box). 42% returned home by car, 28% by bus, 20% walked and 12% used a taxi. 49% said they felt that alcohol can make people more aggressive.

## Underage drinking

'Underage' drinking is discussed here in terms of its social, not its legal, significance. It is, of course, not new and, looked at objectively, is not necessarily harmful to the individual or others around them. However, the increases in amounts of alcohol consumed by those under eighteen in recent years, together with changes in modes of consumption, do require some attention.

There is a growing body of research on underage drinking (see, for example, Newburn and Shiner, 2001; Plant and Plant, 2001). A recent study of types and amounts of drinking among 11 to 15 year olds in England and Wales (National Centre for Social Research/National Foundation for Educational Research, 2002), found that between 1990 and 2001 average alcohol consumption among this group increased from 5.3 to 9.8 units per week. Of the 87% of boys and 88% of girls aged fifteen who said they drank, an average of 13.8 and 10.7 units of alcohol per week respectively were consumed. Importantly, the research also showed that most of the drinking takes place on Friday and Saturday nights – so called binge-drinking. One dimension to this is the increasing popularity of flavoured alcohol beverages (FABs), or alcopops. In 2001, 68% of youngsters who said they had consumed alcohol during the past week drank alcopops, compared to a figure of 37% in 1999. The research links this partly to the growth in popularity of a second wave of FABs – ready to drinks (RTDs) such as *WKD* and *Bacardi Breezers* – seen by young people as more

sophisticated than the original alcopops. An additional factor is that FABs/RTDs are much more easily appreciated by young taste buds than are other, traditional, alcoholic drinks (Brain, *op cit.*).

Drinks such as FABs, RTDs and 'designer' lagers are marketed by the brewing industry to appeal to young people. A number of brand-specific websites now exist, which seek to promote these drinks as lifestyle accessories. The *WKD* website, for instance, contains a whole range of promotional features, including a message board with a selection of enthusiastic e-mails purporting to come from young drinkers. According to the website, £20 million per year is spent on advertising this vodka-based drink. Along with other brewers, the company also exploits the popularity of mobile phone text messaging among young people. In 2002, Beverage BrandsMobile marketing agency was employed to introduce a competition targeting 18-25 year old football fans. Bottles carried a tear-off text sticker and, at a cost of fifty pence, drinkers were invited to text in a reference code with a chance to win various prizes. The inclusion of an 'opt-in' database allowed information on consumer behaviour to be collected, with a view to future communications from *WKD* to the consumers. A future marketing strategy is to add postcodes to the database, which can then be used in relation to regional promotional events (New Age Media, 2002). Interestingly, many of the young people spoken to in our research mentioned mobile phones, though as a trusted security device, for example: 'If I'm in trouble, or my parents or friends want to contact me, they know not to worry as they could call me on my mobile.' Of course, this is not to suggest that the brewing industry is targeting underage drinkers (a voluntary code exists to prevent this). Yet, given the mode of advertising, it would be difficult to argue that young people aged under eighteen were somehow immune to the attractions on offer.

## **Under-18s discos/club nights, the culture of drinking and risk**

For those in their early to middle teens who attend under-18s discos/club nights, the social world of the adult night-time economy is, because of their age, out of reach, yet tantalisingly close. These events, especially those held in real clubs, function as a rehearsal for the future. The replication of an adult club night – minus the sale of alcohol – is the avowed aim of the owners of the clubs. This includes encouraging club loyalty and the youngsters' continuing patronage when they are older (membership schemes allow a birthday card and promotional literature to be sent to a young person's home when they reach their eighteenth birthday). Under-18s discos/club nights have to be seen within the context of the night-time economy as a whole, where intoxication is encouraged, if not demanded. This is the key reference point for youngsters still at the dress rehearsal stage. The connection between the consumption of alcohol and having a night on the town is so embedded in the collective conscience, so utterly taken-for-granted and accepted, that it is now as unremarkable as dressing up or spraying on deodorant. The normalisation of alcohol use is part of a gradual, and in retrospect profound, transformation in the lifestyles of young people in Britain over the last twenty years. One result is that the issue of alcohol use has entered into the process of growing up at a much earlier period in a young person's life than has hitherto been the case.

For parents of young teenagers, the belief that an under-18s event is 'organised' is a reassuring factor, particularly when it is given added legitimacy by being advertised in their son or daughter's school. Our research, however, indicates problems and ambiguities relating to notions of risk, trust and protection. This is most obviously in evidence in those cases where a youngster becomes seriously inebriated:

*It's nonsense this idea that kids are going to drink anyway, so the best option is to give them somewhere to go. They will drink to a greater extent if you create for them a club-themed party night. My daughter was not safe that evening. Not only did she get very drunk and ill, but her friends were in no state to realise and help. It could have been fatal. (Mother of a 14 year old girl who was hospitalised).*

*I must admit I've often disallowed some of the youngsters into my cab, as have many other cab drivers, because they're often so drunk I don't want any sick in my car. It's not our job to make sure they get home okay because they are kids. If anyone looks like they are going to puke, there's no way they'll get into a taxi, whoever the bloody hell they are.*

However, the risks are not only present for those who happen to become obviously inebriated. Although under-18s events are 'organised', the way in which they are organised does vary, and the way in which they are policed is particularly relevant. The provision of appropriate guardianship, based upon the notion of a 'duty of care', should be of central importance. Some events have a broad constituency of adults involved (for example, those held in schools), whilst others have a narrow constituency (for example, those held in city centre night clubs). In the case of the latter, policing responsibilities, at the door and inside the club, are in the hands of door staff, the same staff on duty for adult club nights (Lister et al., 2001). On the streets, these responsibilities lie with the police, and the problems multiply when large numbers of people are walking around in search of take-aways, taxis, toilets, companions, or another drink. However, research shows that in practice only a small number of police officers are routinely available to police the night-time economy in Britain's towns and cities, resulting in leisure zones that are to a large extent unregulated (Hobbs et al., 2003, op cit.). Research also shows that because of perceptions of danger associated with alcohol-related intimidation and disorder, many older adults are reluctant to venture into town and city centres during the evening at the weekend, leading to a weakening of indigenous, informal networks of social regulation (Deehan and Saville, 2000). To a significant extent, then, the task of maintaining nocturnal order has been subcontracted out to door staff. A further consideration is that a town or city centre location ensures a degree of anonymity absent in localised settings, which provides an opportunity for young clubbers to enjoy a temporary relaxation of the normal constraints on behaviour, as well as simply making the purchase of alcohol easier.

## Conclusion

We began this paper by suggesting that activities aimed at providing young teenagers with 'something to do' have to satisfy two agendas in order to gain approval: one emphasising control and safety (adults), the other, having a good time (participants). Under-18s discos/club nights appear to fit the bill precisely. They also have additional advantages over other

types of activity, in that no special talents are required (unlike, for instance, sporting events), no one within a given age range is excluded, and in general no public funding is required. Appearances, however, can be deceptive.

This research has focused on the consumption of alcohol within the context of under-18s discos/club nights, which themselves have to be seen within the context of the night-time economy as a whole (though it is acknowledged that other aspects, such as sexual behaviour and illegal drug use, are also important). These events do not conform to the stereotype of a kids' party, especially those held in town and city centre clubs, where organisers endeavour to replicate as far as possible the experience of an adult club night. The key difference is an absence of the licit sale of alcohol, though a significant proportion of participants are able to circumvent this by obtaining alcohol prior to the event. As research indicates, alcohol consumption has become increasingly normalised among young teenagers. The boundaries between 'junior' and 'senior' experiences of the night-time economy are dissolving, and notions of 'childhood' are becoming more problematic:

*The category of child/youth is dissolving into adulthood and erasing social and spatial relationships between childhood and adulthood based purely on hierarchy and difference.* (Valentine, 2000: 262).

There are worries and ambiguities here concerning issues of risk and protection. There are unanticipated and, perhaps, unrecognised, problems linked to wider social, economic and cultural changes. However, there can be no return to 'lemonade and party poppers' kids' parties: the genie is out of the bottle. When young people in their early and middle teens look towards those who are a little older, towards those who are allowed access to the adult night-time economy, they see that what they do, apart from anything else, is drink alcohol. It is an economic sector dependent upon alcohol. The danger is that many of the individuals constituting its market become dependent upon alcohol themselves.

## Notes

1. Although the term 'disco' may seem out of date, it is still widely used in the context discussed here, and it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between 'disco' and 'club night'. There are different understandings that cannot be neatly aligned with particular social or generational groupings, though a detailed discussion of these understandings is unnecessary here.
2. Under the terms of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, CDRPs are obliged to carry out three-yearly audits of crime and disorder. The audit is used as the basis for prioritising problems of crime and disorder and developing appropriate strategies for tackling these problems.
3. See, for example, Whyte, W.F. (1955) *Street Corner Society* and A.K. Cohen's (1955) 'corner boys' in *Delinquent Boys*.



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# Reaching socially excluded young people

A national study of street-based youth work

*David Crimmens, Fiona Factor, Tony Jeffs, John Pitts, Carole Pugh, Jean Spence and Penelope Turner*

Reaching socially excluded young people

A national study of street-based youth work



The National Youth Agency



*"When you've worked in an area for some time, you get known and then you get trusted. This credibility extends beyond the young people you've actually worked with to the others on their networks; young people you've never met ... This only happens because you're there, because you've been there."*

This research, undertaken by a team from the Universities of Durham, Lincoln and Luton, addresses the question of the role of detached and outreach youth work in the post-1997 policy environment of outcome-driven youth initiatives, and in particular, how mainstream detached and outreach youth work might articulate with the Connexions Service to facilitate the involvement of socially excluded young people in forms of education, training and employment which are both relevant and accessible.

The research aims to explore the nature and range of street-based youth work with socially excluded young people in England and Wales, to identify the effectiveness of agency strategies and practice interventions, and to establish how street-based youth work can best contribute to the Connexions Service and its key partnerships.

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# Youth Work and Managing Behaviour

**Graeme Stuart**

*Managing behaviour has always been a vital part of youth work and helps to protect the safety and wellbeing of young people. Based on interviews with 20 young people and 15 youth workers and focus groups with 16 youth workers in New South Wales, Australia, a range of strategies used by youth workers for managing behaviour are identified that could be placed on a continuum from coercive to non-coercive. Coercive strategies included physical restraint, calling the police and exclusion. Non-coercive strategies included building relationships, using group dynamics, negotiation and mediation, establishing clear boundaries and structure, and preventing problems from escalating. Potential principles for behaviour management in youth work are identified that emphasise the importance of building good relationships with young people, using non-coercive strategies, assisting young people to learn from their experiences; creating a positive, welcoming environment; operating from a position of power-with; and having adequate resources and staffing levels.*

**Keywords:** youth work, behaviour management, control, power, nonviolence

In order to promote the safety and well-being of young people, youth workers need highly developed skills in promoting safe, inclusive, considerate behaviour and responding to unsafe, discriminatory, inconsiderate behaviour. Youth workers need to be able to ensure that, at least in their youth services, young people are safe and protected from harm; are not victimised, bullied or harassed; marginalised groups are able to access services without fear of discrimination; and young women are safe and have their needs met in male dominated youth services. Because many young people using youth services have experienced abuse, family conflict, domestic violence, behaviour 'disorders' and/or drug abuse, there is an increased likelihood of violent or abusive behaviour (see for example Indermaur, Atkinson and Blagg, 1998; Salmelainen, 1995; Standing Committee on Community Affairs, 1995; Standing Committee on Social Issues, 1995) and so behaviour management skills are particularly important.

Unlike formal education where there is extensive literature on behaviour management and discipline there is little literature addressing the skills needed by youth workers. Although many approaches to managing behaviour in school classrooms are based on coercion and control (Charles, Barr and Senter, 1999; Docking, 1980; Rogers, 1997), other approaches are based on meeting the needs of young people, building community and cooperation (see for example Glasser, 1992; Kohn, 1996; Porter, 2000). Because of the nature of youth

work and the relationship between youth workers and young people, these non-coercive, cooperative strategies are more likely to be consistent with good youth work practice. However, if youth workers are to avoid more coercive strategies there needs to be much greater discussion of the range of strategies available to them.

This article discusses strategies for managing behaviour used by youth workers and suggests six principles that could underpin behaviour management consistent with good youth work practice. It draws on results relating to behaviour management from research exploring the implications of nonviolence for youth work practice in Australia (Stuart, 2003; Stuart, 2004). During the research, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 young people and 15 youth workers in New South Wales. The interviews were semi-structured and explored levels of violence and discrimination within youth service, and strategies for managing behaviour. The young people and youth workers came from rural, regional and urban areas, and a mixture of service types (eg accommodation services, recreation services, alternative education programmes). The youth workers had been working with young people for 2–15 years, with ten of them having ten or more years experience. Fourteen of the young people, aged 14–19, were current users of youth service. The other six young people, aged 19 or 20, were ex-users of youth services. Focus groups were also held with 16 youth workers. (Names of young people are in italics, while names of youth workers are without italics. All names are pseudonyms.)

The interviews and focus groups, suggested that youth workers do not have a common language for discussing managing behaviour. In the interviews only one youth worker, Ross, had used the term behaviour management, and then only being specifically asked about it as a term. His response indicated that some care was needed: 'That implies power straight away, you know, "I'm going to manage your behaviour."' In the focus groups, participants varied in their reactions to the term. Like Ross, some of them reacted negatively. They felt it had connotations associated with control and behaviour modification.

**Rebecca:** *I think it sounds like that someone is in control of somebody else, and to me that's not comfortable.*

**Claire:** *And it doesn't imply any negotiation or anything. As you say, it's more of a controlling thing, 'We're going to manage your behaviour.' Its not like we're going to work together.*

Others reacted more positively equating it with terms such as time management.

**Jacki:** *I don't see it as a controlling thing. Management doesn't, to me, feel controlling. It's about managing something, whether it's good or bad. I don't see it as a negative... It's not saying controlling a behaviour, controlling a situation.... You manage your service, you manage your daily budget, so management to me doesn't feel like a negative or control.*

Some participants preferred the term *managing behaviour* and believed that the negative connotations were not as great but others still thought that the word *managing* still had 'an element of control.'

Part of the concern about behaviour management might grow from the historical association between youth work and attempts to control young people, particularly working class males (Maunder, 1984; O'Connor, Wilson and Setterlund, 1998; White, 1990). Sercombe et al. (2002) argue that 'state responses to the youth problem in Australia have swung between welfare and justice, control and care, treatment and punishment' (p. 86) and at present, there is a resurgence of a social control agenda (Delaney, 2002; Loughman and Sanders, 2002; Sercombe et al., 2002; Smith, 2003). In particular, youth workers are being urged to accept more controlling or punitive roles, such as crime prevention, curfews and street clearing exercises, 'breaching' young people who fail to meet the expectations of government departments, and controlling young people's use of public space and shopping centres (Bessant, Sercombe and Watts, 1998; Sercombe, 2000; Sercombe et al., 2002; Turner, 2002).

Jeffs and Banks (1999) argue that controlling young people should not be the main focus of youth work and that 'work with young people which sets out specifically to tackle offending and delinquency, to control rather than to educate, swiftly ceases to be youth work' (p.107). At the same time, they argue that youth workers must exercise some degree of control within their youth services in order to 'create an appropriate learning environment, promote equality of opportunity and ensure the safety and well-being of young people' (p.94).

Despite the concern about the term, there was no other commonly accepted term and so *managing behaviour* has been used in this article for strategies preventing disruptive or inconsiderate behaviour, responding to it when it occurred and promoting considerate, safe and nonviolent behaviour (Porter, 2000).

The youth workers and young people interviewed identified diverse strategies for managing behaviour. These strategies could be placed on a continuum from coercive to non-coercive. Coercive strategies such as physical restraint, calling the police and exclusion, involved 'doing to' young people rather than 'working with' them (Kohn, 1996) and took away their choice or control. Non-coercive strategies, such as building relationships, negotiation and establishing boundaries, involved 'working with' young people without dominating or forcing them to adopt specific behaviour, providing choice and increasing their awareness. These non-coercive strategies were more consistent with youth work practice based on voluntary participation, informal education and building caring professional relationships with young people.

## **Coercive Strategies**

There were a number of examples where youth workers had verbally abused, pushed, hit or physically threatened young people. In all cases, such behaviour was condemned as being inappropriate. The coercive strategies for managing behaviour discussed below – physical restraint, exclusion and the use of the police – were identified by at least some of the youth workers and young people as being appropriate.

### ***Physical restraint***

Physical restraint was generally seen as appropriate when there was risk of harm to young

people or others. Megan, who generally opposed physical restraint, gave a detailed account of a case where she had felt compelled to physically restrain a young person. She believed that, as a direct result of her actions, 'boy did I get a lot of kudos around here, and nobody was necessarily going to mess with me again.'

**Megan:** *He just sort of lost it. Picked up the bin, started throwing the bin; picked up the table, started throwing the table. So obviously my immediate concern was to get all the other young people away from him, and to make sure that they were safe.... And he swung at one of the kids, and then he, and I'm not even sure whether it was a swing at me or it was a swing at whoever, but basically (laughs) he almost got me. And I put him in a lock and put him down, face down on the pool table. And I was like, 'Oh my God,' and he was like, 'Oh my God'... I just kept talking to him while I still had him in the lock, and said, 'Look, I can't let you go until I know we're safe, we're all going to be safe.' And he was ranting and raving, and sure enough he calmed down.*

Other youth workers said they would not use physical restraint. Katie said she did not agree with it and personally would not physically intervene, while Ross did not believe physical restraint 'helped at all.'

**Ross:** *I've never met anybody you physically back them into a corner and physically restrain them and that calms them down. It tires them out, but it doesn't actually help them learn a different way.*

While the young people rarely spoke about physical intervention, there were indications that at least some of them would support it. Speedy was quite angry about a situation where another young person had hit him and the youth worker had done nothing to stop it happening. He clearly felt that the youth worker should have physically intervened. Some of the young people even suggested that youth workers should allow troublemakers to be beaten up by other young people.

**Burnsey:** *I reckon they should let the people doing it get the shit kicked out of them.*

## **Exclusion**

Exclusion of young people from services was widely used as a way of managing disruptive, violent or unsafe behaviour, and included short periods of 'time-out,' longer suspensions, permanent eviction, and the non-acceptance of referrals. For the youth workers, whether or not young people should be excluded from youth services and in what circumstances was an ongoing dilemma. The young people were polarised in their attitudes. Young people who were currently using services, saw it as quite appropriate, whereas ex-users believed it should only be used as a last resort.

The young people currently using services were mostly younger and had a fairly simplistic perception of exclusion. They believed that people should be thrown out when they used alcohol and other drugs, got into fights, did not follow the rules, threatened others, made people feel unsafe, or damaged property. For these young people, particularly the younger ones, the first response to a problem appeared to be exclusion.

**Graeme:** *So what should youth workers do with people who don't respect the place?*

**Burnsey:** *Throw them out.*

**Kill:** *Chuck them straight out . . .*

**Burnsey:** *Never to come back.*

Young people who were ex-users of youth services mostly opposed exclusion although they believed that there were times when it could be appropriate in order to protect the safety of others. They were all over 18 and most had reflected on their experiences in youth services. They were concerned that exclusion was a major step, and that it did not help address the issues leading up to the eviction. *Isabell* suggested that banning a young person from a youth centre or a shopping centre did not solve anything and was likely to create 'more fear and resentment.' She saw eviction as saying, 'We're not going to deal with you, you're in the too hard basket.' *Jane* also saw exclusion as a negative response.

**Jane:** *It's wrong. I mean in a youth service, people are there because it's their only outlet normally, and there's nowhere else to go. So if they kick them out, then where has that young person got to go, apart from somewhere to do damage?*

At the same time, *Jane* recognised that there were times when the safety of other people meant that exclusion, preferably short-term, could become necessary.

**Jane:** *If you suspend them, if they've done something wrong, like for a week it gives them time to go away and think about what's happened and kind of sort it out in their own mind and then come back and work through it again.*

Exclusion was a significant dilemma for the youth workers. Although all of them had used it as a strategy, often on a regular basis, there was a common belief that young people were excluded too quickly and that the ones who were excluded often needed the most assistance. The attitude of youth workers towards exclusion ranged from those who opposed it except as a last resort, to those who used it on a routine basis. Exclusion from youth accommodation services posed greater dilemmas than exclusion from youth centres or other youth services. Although *Jake* and *Joanne*, both of whom worked in accommodation services, believed that eviction could be appropriate and had evicted residents in the past, they also suggested that the threat of eviction could be a form of violence.

**Joanne:** *What I really discourage is the using of, 'You will be evicted.' The threats of --- Because that's violence as far as I'm concerned, it's abusive. We all know they have nowhere to be. So I think that's abusive in that regard.*

**Jake:** *I think evictions are almost a form of violence as well, in the sense of threats to evict and things like this, unless you are fair dinkum, for want of another word, about that and why, and you've got just reasons, and you've gone through the processes, warning letters, etc. etc.*

Because of the lack of options available to young people in accommodation services, eviction was seen as needing to be a last resort, and was mainly supported when the safety of other young people or staff members was at risk. Eviction in such circumstances could mean that young people had to sleep on the street or were placed in an unsafe situation. Robyn suggested that young homeless people often had histories of violence, mental illness or a drug and alcohol problem, and that instead of excluding them, youth accommodation services needed to be resourced so that they could deal with these issues. At the same time, the youth workers were very aware of the need to protect other residents and staff.

Despite concerns about eviction, only Ross had worked in a service that had a policy of no exclusions.

**Ross:** *What we did was we were really up front with young people and said, 'Your tenure here [in an accommodation service] is secure. What you chose to do with that is up to you, but bear in mind that these are the consequences if you decide to hurt another young person, or hurt the building...' We followed through on those consequences which was, 'OK you've totally demolished our hallway, we have to call the police. I will sit with you, however, while the police are here, and I will sit with you while you are charged for malicious damage to property, and then we'll come back and we will have dinner...' It really required everybody to be working from the same philosophy. And I was really staggered by the decreases in violence, as young people actually started to hear, 'All right, they're not going to just, you know, reject me immediately. They're going to continue to support me, and that's because of who I am not because of what I do.'*

Jake, however, believed that eviction was a necessary bottom line and became appropriate when 'the safety and security of people is at such risk,' that not to evict a young person could lead to someone else being 'seriously hurt' or totally interfere with the functioning of the service. As an example, he discussed a service that he believed faced major problems because of its policy of no exclusion resulting in them 'having a lock down situation where the kids took over the office, locked the worker out of the office' and the young people were 'running around with knives.'

Exclusion from youth centres, alternative education programmes and employment services was more likely to be supported. In these contexts, exclusion was used in two ways: as a choice between safe, nonviolent, non-disruptive behaviour and exclusion; or as a punishment for, or 'consequence' of, inappropriate behaviour. *Curley* and *Speedy* suggested that Jason reminded participants in an education programme that they had a choice between doing their work or leaving, that it was a genuine choice and that it worked well as a strategy. When exclusion was presented as such a choice, the focus was generally on excluding behaviour rather than the young person. Once the behaviour stopped, the young person was welcome to come back.

**Miranda:** *What I'd try and do is like, 'You can't do it here, and, you know, if you want to talk about it fine. Otherwise leave because if you're going to do this behaviour that's your choice, but you can't do it around here...' It's about, 'No, this is a place where you come because you want some time out, you want your own space and you need to respect each other. If you can't respect each other's space here, you need to leave.'*



At times, youth workers might not have formally excluded young people but encouraged them to stay away for a while.

**Robyn:** *Look, we really can't afford to keep replacing windows, we have this tiny little budget, and you know I'd appreciate it if maybe you'd just keep a low profile for a while and come back when you're prepared to not do that to the building.*

Exclusion also occurred when youth workers made the decision to exclude a young person as a punishment or consequence. Ken spoke about having to 'pull the supervisor role' and exclude young people when they had damaged the youth centre or threatened the safety of others. Wayne had banned a number of young people because he was 'prepared to get rid of one kid here if 30 kids are going to have a good time.'

Exclusion as a choice was largely a preventative measure: young people could decide to change their behaviour and stay in the centre, or they could continue with their current behaviour and face exclusion. Exclusion as a punishment or consequence was essentially a response to behaviour or a sanction applied by the youth worker following certain behaviour. Where young people had helped develop the expected standards of behaviour, had a choice between following the agreed behaviour or leaving, and could return when they wanted, exclusion could be seen as a more non-coercive strategy. Where young people had no say in the exclusion and it was used as a punishment, it could be seen as a more coercive strategy.

In practice, exclusion lay somewhere between the two extremes. For example, young people may have been given a number of opportunities to change their behaviour but eventually youth workers imposed exclusion for a certain period (e.g. a day or a couple of weeks) rather than until the behaviour stopped.

**Megan:** *Like if a kid is just, constantly acting up, you know, they're upstairs, they're loud, they're constantly hassling people on the pool table... What we do is then we just take them aside and, 'You're really starting to annoy, keep your voice down, dah de dah, look you know how it works.' We watch them for the next half an hour, if it, you know, rears up again we can just go, 'Oi, Tony cut it out.' 'Yeah yeah yeah.' 'We're watching you Tony.' 'Yeah, yeah.' And then they'll go into it and then we'll just go, 'Not tonight. You've done it with us.' And the idea is to keep humour in it as much and to keep it light as possible. (The previous comments have had a fairly light tone.) We don't go, 'Oh for God's sake, I've had enough, get out of here' (said aggressively)... And you see what they're also aware of, is that the more they argue, the longer it goes for. So if they start to persist and start to chuck up a stink, it's like, 'You're really pushing this, you keep this up it's no go tomorrow and won't be allowed in 'til Friday.'*

## **The police**

Another more coercive strategy for managing behaviour was the threat or actual use of the police. Police were used in three ways: as a threat, as back up for youth workers or as a consequence. The actual or potential threat of calling the police was surprisingly common. Even approaches that on one level were relatively non-coercive sometimes involved the

potential for police involvement. If coaxing young people to stop negative behaviour, focusing on their positive behaviour and encouraging them did not work, *Amanda* suggested that youth workers should call the police. Miranda discussed a situation where a young male dropped in with some beer. She adopted a non-confrontational approach, asking him to leave because of the alcohol and inviting him back the next day. When he refused, she eventually said, 'Look, I'll have to call the police, I don't want to do that, there's no need to do that, all you need to do is leave.' Although she attempted a non-coercive approach, behind it lay the threat of police involvement.

The police were sometimes used as back up in potentially dangerous situations such as incidents involving weapons, physical attacks or the potential for significant violence. Sole workers also called the police when there was no actual violence, or even immediate threat of violence, but when young people refused to leave a service or were drunk.

*Robyn: One incident that comes to mind where a young woman and her partner came in to our service and they were exceedingly intoxicated. I think they started just falling into things and things were getting broken and then it got a bit escalated and they began to intentionally smash things... But their state was such that there was no possible way to have a rational discussion with them... It was a question of, other people who were in the building getting them away from where the action was happening so they didn't get hit by flying glass. And calling the police, because I didn't have the ability to deal with it as a single person in the building, single adult in the building, and really leaving it in the hands of the police.*

As well as calling the police to respond to a situation, youth workers sometimes used the police to press charges against young people as a consequence of their behaviour. The most notable examples were situations where, instead of evicting young people from accommodation services, the police were asked to charge them with an offence.

Despite numerous reports highlighting tensions between marginalised young people and the police (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1989; Standing Committee on Community Affairs, 1995), only one of the young people and none of the youth workers, expressed concern about this use of the police.

*Jane: If you involve the police, it basically, a lot of the time in a lot of specific areas, would ruin anything you finally worked towards. 'Cos a lot of young people don't trust the police.*

## Non-coercive strategies

Non-coercive strategies supported young people, gave them choices and assisted them to adopt behaviour that was considerate and did not disrupt others. The focus was usually on creating a positive environment and preventing disruptive, violent, unsafe or disrespectful behaviour. Strategies included building good relationships with young people, understanding and working with group dynamics, negotiation and mediation, establishing boundaries and structure, teamwork, and preventing problems from arising or escalating.

## ***Building relationships***

Building relationships was seen as assisting in managing behaviour as well as being vital to youth work in general. While the young people did not talk in terms of building relationships with youth workers, they did suggest that good youth services depended on workers who cared about young people, were friendly, related well to young people and were supportive. Good relationships increased the likelihood that non-coercive strategies would be successful. Ross believed that having a very strong, well-defined relationship was vital to working with young people, because it meant they were more likely to listen to youth workers even when extremely angry. Jake suggested that youth workers needed to build a positive relationship so that young people would not say, 'Fuck it, who gives a stuff,' but instead be willing to make a commitment to the service and the staff. Without this commitment, young people had little to lose by being disruptive or inconsiderate. Curley spoke about his respect for Jason and the importance of this.

**Curley:** *I've got a lot of respect for Jason. He's done a lot for me and for Speedy. He's done a lot to respect. I've got that much respect for Jason. If he asked us to do something for him, we do it for him. In return, we'd get something.*

**Graeme:** *So what do you think would happen if you didn't respect him? Then what would it be like?*

**Curley:** *I wouldn't turn up; I wouldn't do nothing for him. I wouldn't – If people don't have respect for me, I don't have respect back for them.*

Having good relationships allowed youth workers to adopt a 'low key, gentle response'. For example, Amanda suggested that youth workers could remain calm, focus on the young person's good behaviour and 'coax them to not do what they are doing.' Low-key or non-coercive responses were often connected with increasing young people's awareness of the impact their behaviour had on others and attempts to elicit alternative forms of behaviour. Rose believed that youth workers could address pertinent issues by mingling with young people, engaging in relaxed, casual conversations and 'educating by stealth.' Justin argued that some of the young people might not have had many people with whom they could discuss situations and so this was an important role. He suggested that youth workers could assist young people to identify their feelings and to consider options. 'You can go and smash this window if you like or there's a punching bag out the back, or there's a soccer ball.'

## ***Using group dynamics***

Youth workers needed to understand and be mindful of group dynamics and relationships. Hence, some youth workers believed that it was important that the dynamics and structures of groups be monitored and managed carefully so as to prevent disruptive behaviour.

**Jake:** *But soon as your numbers start to go up when you've got extremely challenging young people, one or two just tips, can tip the scales dramatically, because it just becomes, yeah, just becomes too many balls to juggle for the worker.*

Some youth workers used diversionary tactics when the group dynamics were becoming potentially violent, disruptive or unsafe. Particularly with boys, using physical activity such as football or punching bags was seen as a way of 'transferring energy' and getting them 'worn out a bit'. This strategy, however, was not only used for boys. Jess and some of the girls Rose worked with found it helped if they 'put on the gloves and punched the boxing bag.' At other times, youth workers diverted them non-physically through other activities or just by diverting their attention: 'Oh, guys, can you come over here and give me a hand.'

Youth workers also needed to recognise, however, that young people could also have a positive impact on one another.

***Jake:** They [dominant players within the peer group] can actually start to positively affect the behaviours of younger members or less dominant members within the peer group who would normally be unworkable, I suppose, within a group setting. But by getting the peer group, or getting the dominant players within the peer group on side, they can be of real support because what they do is actually help check that young person's behaviour and they start to bring it within the norms of that group.*

## **Negotiation and mediation**

Negotiation and mediation are important conflict resolution strategies that play an important role in managing behaviour. Although the young people did not use the term 'negotiation,' they wanted youth workers to listen to their story, pay attention to their perspective and to take it into account. This arose particularly in relation to the music played in youth services. At the time of the interviews, Eminem had recently released a high-selling, controversial CD that some people found offensive, sexist and homophobic. Although the CD was popular with many of the young people interviewed, some of the youth workers were concerned about the content of the lyrics. Young people were particularly angry, however, when youth workers did not negotiate about whether or not his music could be played. At a more structured level, mediation could be used not only in conflict between young people but also between young people and staff, or young people and people from outside the service.

## **Establishing boundaries and structure**

The youth workers and, to a lesser extent, the young people believed it was important that youth workers set clear boundaries and expectations so that young people knew the limits to behaviour. Some of the youth services had rules on the walls or written contracts which young people signed.

***Megan:** I think the big thing too is that we set up a membership process... After we've seen them for a little while, we then sit down and have a chat and get them to fill out a membership form... It also has our rules if you like, or membership obligations is what we call them, and that outlines for them what is acceptable and what's not.... So if their behaviour starts to act up or they do something or if they do have a go at a kid, we*

*always ... say, 'Come on down, let's have a chat about this.' And that's when we can bring that out, and it's like, 'Well you actually agreed to this, what now don't you think is acceptable about this?' And so we talk it out with them.*

Other youth services did not have a formal process but nevertheless made their expectations clear to young people.

**Jake:** *Explaining the boundaries very clearly from the start with the young people. Explaining how we work, explaining the commitment we can give, and are willing to give, but also explaining the bottom line. So you start to build up the culture of the place.*

Youth workers also believed that, when they were faced with negative behaviour, it was important to reiterate their expectations and the rules of the service.

**Miranda:** *I maintained a steady voice, like and I maintained a strong position. And I didn't engage – he was going, 'Blah, blah, blah' and just yelling and raising his voice and I didn't engage in that. I was just saying, 'Look, OK that's fine. I understand you'd like to drink, it's no problem, but you can't do it here. That's all I'm saying.'*

Some of the youth workers also emphasised the importance of structure for both youth workers and young people in providing high quality service.

**Megan:** *When I first got here, I sort of put some things in place. There was no structure here, the kids had no structure, there wasn't any consistency in opening hours. Sort of things that might frustrate kids. So if your doors aren't open when they think they're going to be open, they're going to get angry, if they're in the middle of a crisis.*

While Ken believed that structure was important, he also thought a balance was needed.

**Ken:** *You can't be too structured because of the nature of the young person we're dealing with. They have exited school early, dislocation blah, blah, blah. And as a result the structure has to be there and visible but not necessarily too tight, too bounded.*

## Preventing problems

Although preventing problems from arising or escalating could be used within a more coercive approach, it was particularly important within a non-coercive approach. Prevention was used mainly to promote a positive environment, stop smaller issues from escalating into bigger issues and address external issues that could lead to disruptive or violent behaviour. At times, all that was needed was for the youth workers to be present.

**Wayne:** *Just being there. Sometimes you might be at the other end of the room or the other end of an area where it's happening and you just present yourself, without even saying anything.*

When intervening more actively, it was important that youth workers did not respond

aggressively but rather responded in ways that decreased the tension and defused the situation.

**Kat:** *Like if the young person is angry at you and you just yell back at them, you know, it keeps the cycle going. But the youth workers who stand back and just take a breath and don't respond to it and the young person thinks, 'Why am I yelling,' and then they say, 'Are you OK now?' Or you know just something pretty casual that acknowledges that they're angry.*

**Rose:** *It's hard to be angry at someone who is not mirroring that, who's not being angry back at you. Who lets you be angry and then says, 'Well you can still come back here.'*

While preventing issues from escalating was considered important, particularly by the youth workers, some of the young people complained that youth workers came in too quickly or too hard when they were just mucking around.

**Boris:** *He was on the ground and he was just saying, 'Yeah, we're only sparring, there's nothing wrong, we're not fighting with other, we're only mucking around and having a few little punches.' We had gloves and that on, and we nearly got kicked out for that. And like that's not right, 'cos you're only mucking around, you do it out on the street or anything. As long as he don't care, he don't want to press charges or anything like that... But what happened, we were having a spar in here and he was lying next to the thing, he weren't crying, there was no blood or anything like that. And he got up and said, 'We were only sparring' and the youth worker said, 'It happens again youse are out.'*

Other young people thought it was appropriate for youth workers to intervene.

**Graeme:** *Just say you got into a play wrestle, here. You're just mucking around. Should the youth workers do anything or should they just let it go?*

**Curley:** *Oh they do tell you like to quit it.*

**Graeme:** *Do you think that's the right thing to do, or would it be better not to worry about it?*

**Curley:** *No, it's the right thing to do.*

**Speedy:** *Just in case it turns into a fight.*

For youth workers it presented a dilemma of deciding when to intervene and when not to.

**Rose:** *Boys just wrestle. I know, it's pretty much a boy thing too. That they do push and shove, and they wrestle and they jostle and that's part of being a boy from what I understand, and what I watch... It's OK for a bit of horseplay but if the other person is going, 'No I don't like it,' then maybe you need to intervene or put some education in place around that, that if somebody's getting hurt or doesn't like it, then you're responsible for stopping it.*

In order to be able to prevent the escalation of behaviour and to gain the trust of young people, youth workers needed the experience and skills to deal with a wide range of issues. The youth workers also emphasised adequate funding and staffing levels to allow youth workers to prevent the escalation of situations. They were particularly concerned about the potential for harm to youth workers and young people when there was a sole worker.

**Katie:** *I think, probably solo and isolated workers is a really big issue at the moment. And that's an issue that really needs to be addressed... There's lots of workers who are working by themselves and they have 60 young people and if a fight breaks out, what can you do? But if you have other workers who's there, then they can kind of assist in that situation.*

The physical environment and what Kat called the 'feeling of the place' also played a major role in preventing the escalation of violent, unsafe or disruptive behaviour.

**Kat:** *But the actual place when you looked around, it wasn't homelike, it was too institutional, place falling apart, the shower – it was all inappropriate. Male and females, only one toilet, had to share the same bathroom, and like the toilet was only the one door, with the showers. You could see through the slats in the doors for the showers. They also had a shower curtain, see through of course, but it was three quarters high with black mould and yeah it was just disgusting. And you wouldn't want to be there. Of course you wanted your drugs just to get out of it. Refuges I've been in that have been homelike and well cared for, even when they get angry, it might be a slam of the door and that's it. It somehow makes a difference.*

## Power

The major difference between coercive and non-coercive strategies for managing behaviour lay in the nature of the power upon which the strategies were built. Coercive strategies were based on power-over and attempts to control young people. Non-coercive strategies were based on power-with and attempts to involve young people in creating a positive, nonviolent and safe environment. According to Starhawk (1990), power-over is linked to 'domination and control' (p. 9) and is ultimately backed by force. Power-with is linked to 'social power, the influence we wield among equals' (p. 9) and is based on respect, influence and empowerment.

The issue of power is unavoidable in youth work and needs to be dealt with explicitly (Sercombe, 1998). Youth workers need to recognise the nature of power involved in their relationships with young people and how they exercise power. The youth workers and young people interviewed believed that youth workers needed the power to ensure that their youth services were safe, nonviolent and effective. While the interview participants did not use the term, the notion of power-with was consistent with their descriptions of the way in which youth workers should use power. Although youth workers and young people are not 'equals,' working from a position of power-with encourages youth workers to explore ways in which power can be shared with young people. For example, participants believed that youth workers need to set boundaries without dominating, coercing or forcing

young people and that, in doing so, they could still be respectful, cooperative and aware of building positive relationships.

***Rose:** You know, you don't have to come at it from an 'I'm in charge angle' I think that's really important when dealing with young people. That I'm in charge angle just sets up the power imbalance and it also encourages somebody to challenge that. And if you're talking about young people who are challenging anyway, you might as well paint a target on your chest, as far as I'm concerned... But I think it's your language. I think it's just your demeanour and the whole approach you have to a situation of setting out 'this is our expectations....' 'This is how we do it here. This is how it is if you want to stay,' you know, so you can make it a bit more relaxed and casual than confronting and oppressive. You don't have to be oppressive in the way you do it. It's just about your personal approach to the way you talk to them... You can just do it in a way that's a bit more relaxed than saying, 'I'm in charge and we do it this way.'*

## **Towards behaviour management for youth work**

In Australia, youth work developed on an *ad hoc* basis from its roots as a voluntary, practical movement (Australian National Commission for UNESCO Youth Research Project Sub-Committee, 1976; Bessant, 2004; Sercombe et al., 2002). Historically there has been little emphasis on formal qualifications or articulating its theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, and there have been elements of anti-intellectualism within youth work (Bessant, 2004; Jeffs and Smith, 1987; Maunders and Broadbent, 1995; White, Omelczuk and Underwood, 1991). With the increasing emphasis on social control and coercion, it is vital that youth workers engage in critical reflection, identify appropriate models of youth work and articulate the features of good youth work practice. This article concludes by suggesting six principles that could underpin behaviour management for youth work.

First, strategies for managing behaviour need to assist youth workers build good relationships with young people. Building relationships with young people is at the heart of youth work. Fewster (1990) suggests it is only through relationships that 'we come to know our qualities, potentials, vulnerabilities and, ultimately, our humanness and our mortality' (p. 25). He goes on to argue that relationships should not be just another intervention technique but rather opportunities for both young people and youth workers to learn and grow as equal partners. Sercombe (1997) suggests youth work is based on a professional relationship that is 'intentionally limited' so that young people can safely tell secrets, expose 'less savoury aspects of their character or behaviour,' or reveal their 'ignorance or insecurities' (pp. 19-20). The relationship should be 'deeply ethical in nature' (p. 21) and youth workers need to act with integrity and establish clear boundaries so that young people can safely place their trust in them. As the interviews suggested, building positive relationships assists youth workers use non-coercive strategies for managing behaviour.

Second, as far as possible, youth workers should use non-coercive strategies for managing behaviour. If youth workers are to build strong relationships built on mutual trust, coercive forms of behaviour management are inappropriate. In addition, despite some trends towards compulsion and coercion, youth services primarily promote the voluntary participation of



young people and, unlike schools, there is generally no compulsion to attend (Davies, 2000; Smith, 2003; Stuart, 2003). In such a voluntary context, coercive forms of responding to behaviour are likely to be counter productive. Recent reports in New South Wales have challenged two of the main coercive forms of behaviour management identified in the interviews. The Community Service Commission (2001) investigated the use of physical intervention in supported accommodation services for young people, while the NSW Ombudsman (2004) explored exclusion from services for homeless young people and adults. Both reports raised serious concerns about current practice and highlighted the need for alternative strategies for managing behaviour. Non-coercive approaches based on meeting the needs of young people, cooperation and building community may sometimes need to be backed up by more coercive approaches, but such measures should only be a last resort.

Third, the major focus of behaviour management should be assisting young people to learn from their experiences as well as protecting the safety and wellbeing of all concerned. Banks (1999) argues that 'education is both the process and the purpose of youth work' (p. 7) and responding to unsafe or inconsiderate behaviour can be a powerful educative tool. An example could be if young people came back drunk to an accommodation service, it could be seen primarily as a discipline issue and the response might be to exclude them from the service. An approach more consistent with informal education might be to see it as an opportunity to talk about alcohol or keeping agreements, and to demonstrate conflict resolution skills. If they do it again, it could be seen as an opportunity to explore what can be done when people do not stick to commitments they make. In addition it might be possible to discuss why young people are treated differently from adults (e.g. in relation to alcohol), how young people could be protected from harm while still protecting their rights, and so on.

Fourth, youth workers need to create a positive, welcoming environment in their youth services. Rather than just reacting to behaviour, youth workers need to be proactive and create an environment where problems are less likely to arise. One of the youth workers interviewed, Katie, said, 'I never had anyone raise their voice towards me, or threaten me, or anything like that.' Even when working with young people who were creating significant problems in other youth services, she had few problems. She appeared to have an ability to create an environment where young people were more likely to behave nonviolently and considerately. A significant factor is the way in which youth workers view young people. Do they see them as 'young people experiencing difficulties' or 'difficult young people'?<sup>1</sup> In the interviews, the youth workers who adopted more coercive strategies were more likely to believe that at least some young people need to be controlled, that inappropriate behaviour need to be punished and were less understanding of the context of behaviour. Those who adopted non-coercive strategies were more likely to have a deep respect for young people, value their input, understand behaviour as a form of communication and take into account the context of behaviour.

*Ellen: I think it's interesting, the exclusion ... seems to be just based on the young person and their behaviour, and not about how they've been responded to. Like I get that sense, that there's all this problematic behaviour that you're being hit with, that you've now decided we've got to exclude him or her. And it's always the sum of that behaviour rather than that behaviour and, 'Well, how have we responded so far*

*and is there a different way we can respond? Are there certain circumstances that are exacerbating this behaviour or stimulating this behaviour...'* It was very easy for staff to say, 'He's a problem, he needs to go somewhere else.' To then start exploring with them, 'Hang on, what are the problem behaviours? When do they occur? How are you responding to them? Have you responded to them in this range of ways?'

Fifth, youth workers need to operate from a position of power-with rather than a position of power-over. Conflict will arise and, in order to work from a position of power-with, rather than imposing 'solutions' to conflict, youth workers need to adopt a cooperative approach to conflict resolution. They also need to create an environment where young people know their views are taken seriously; they have meaningful input into decisions; and their skill, experience and wisdom are recognised. By focusing on power-with, youth workers are likely to be discouraged from attempting to coerce young people and encouraged to work with them.

Finally, youth services need to have adequate resources and staffing levels so that youth workers are able to adopt non-coercive behaviour management. In particular, sole workers have far fewer options for responding to unsafe or violent behaviour and may feel they have no other option than to use more coercive strategies.

## Conclusion

Because of historical and current attempts to control young people, some youth workers appear to be uneasy about discussing behaviour management. There can be a tendency to see behaviour management as a form of control undermining young people's independence. The interviews, however, demonstrated that it is possible to manage behaviour in ways that are respectful, empowering and build good relationships with young people. Rather than being nervous about managing behaviour, youth workers need to recognise it as a vital part of their work, discuss it widely and develop a clear philosophy and practice of behaviour management.

## Note

1. I would like to thank the anonymous referee who drew my attention to this distinction.

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# Constructing 'Youth' in the UK and Greece: Young homeless people and the meanings of youth

*Eleni Skoura*

*This paper will deal with the ways in which 'youth' is being socially constructed in the UK and Greece. By examining the empirical material from interviews with key informants and young homeless people in the two countries, the author will discuss the themes of dependence and independence, power and powerlessness, youth as a positive power and youth as 'danger'. This series of juxtapositions and dichotomies characterise the conceptualisation of youth in both societies, revealing the ambivalence in the status of young people vis-à-vis society and a subsequent curtailment of their citizenship status.*

**Keywords:** *youth, Greece, UK, social construction, homelessness*

## Definitions of Youth

What is meant by 'youth'? The attempt to define this life stage is a difficult one. Age alone does not seem to be satisfactory in encapsulating what is increasingly perceived as a complex process. For example, the teenage years might serve as a convenient definition of adolescence; however in real terms the characteristics of this period of life might extend at either end. Positions claiming adolescence to be an artificial stage created in the western world, do not appear to be particularly convincing. Coleman (1992) argues that although admittedly this period of life is affected by social and economic factors, as well as the cultural and historical context, some form of transitional stage from childhood to adulthood is common to most societies.

In recent sociological approaches, youth is mainly encapsulated as a process, as a transitional period. For Jones and Wallace, youth is the period of transition from dependent child to independent adult; 'a process of definition and redefinition, a negotiation enacted between young people and their families, their peers and the institutions of the wider society' (Jones and Wallace, 1992: 4).

Bob Coles (1995) considers the concepts of childhood and adulthood as they are delineated through welfare measures in the UK. Children are deemed to be dependent upon adult society, they are seen as vulnerable, in need of protection, with welfare policies designed accordingly to secure them against exploitation and to support their physical, emotional, social, moral and educational development. Adults, on the other hand, are regarded as full citizens, as independent and responsible human beings. They are expected to provide

for themselves, they are held responsible for their own actions, and they are consequently accorded different rights and responsibilities. Thus, youth is characterised by ambivalence of status, a period of life between childhood and adulthood.

From this perspective, young people are regarded as both independent, choice-making human beings, but also as dependent upon their family or the state for support and guidance. The rights and responsibilities of full adult citizenship are bestowed on them gradually, subject to their age and status (whether, for example, they are in education or employment). The legal definitions of childhood, youth and adulthood present a complex array of definitions, which have been developed by the different institutions of the state, for different purposes and at different moments in history.

This interplay between dependence and independence has wider implications for the construction of youth in welfare and political terms, and these are the dimensions of youth that will be examined in this paper. The ambivalent position that youth holds can be seen as a status characterised both by a sense of 'power' (maturity, independence, self-determination) and of 'powerlessness' (inexperience, dependence, immaturity).

On the one hand, young people are seen as the future, as the ones who can bring about social change, and as a political force that can radically change the world. On the other hand, it is also young people who are seen as a 'dangerous class', as violent and threatening towards society. MacDonald argues that the 'underclass' debate in the UK is in large part a debate about youth, as it primarily targets 'the irresponsible, welfare-draining single mother and the feckless young man' (MacDonald, 1997: 19). This association of youth with a threatening 'underclass' particularly affects young people from groups that have long been victim to stereotypical images of 'danger' and widespread criminal activity, such as ethnic minority groups, asylum seekers and immigrants. As Dean (1997) puts it, 'childhood' seems to be appropriate for the needy and vulnerable, whereas 'youth' is usually the term used to describe the disruptive and dangerous. In much media and political debate the terms 'teenage', 'adolescence', 'youth' and 'generation' have been trapped in a negative discourse, usually describing troublesome young men. An example relates to recent media attention on groups like 'chavs', who with their trademark wear of hooded tops and baseball caps are portrayed as threatening and anti-social. Both the terms 'childhood' and 'youth' are potentially used in order to describe the same young person, but carry different meanings and connotations as to the attributes of the young person.

This contradiction in the status and qualities of young people was evident in the words of the respondents in the research study which informed this article. What appeared to be a common underlying theme in the series of contradictions surrounding 'youth' was a constant interplay between 'power' and 'powerlessness'. This revolved around three main themes:

- youth being in between childhood and adulthood,
- young age as an advantage or a disadvantage,
- youth as a positive force or as a social threat.

In the following sections the focus will lie with each one of these dichotomies, in an

attempt to shed light on the ways in which these assumptions affect social citizenship for young people.

## Methodological Issues

The research was part of the author's PhD project at the University of Kent. The research project included semi-structured qualitative interviews with key informants and young homeless people aged between 16 and 25 in London and Athens. A qualitative approach was used as the main research questions dealt with the ways in which young people understood their circumstances, voiced their opinions and discussed issues relating to citizenship.

'Youth' in this project refers to the age between 16 and 25. This age group alone cannot describe 'youth'. However, these age boundaries have been widely used in (mainly British) research regarding youth, reflecting the significance of this age group in terms of relevant social policies. Sixteen signifies the legal age at which one can leave home, whereas twenty-five operates as a constructed 'barrier' to adulthood (reflected, for example, in welfare benefits legislation and discount entitlements).

Overall, nineteen key informants were contacted in Athens and ten in London. The key informants were from relevant agencies, working directly or indirectly with young homeless people. Especially in Greece, professionals were contacted in a variety of settings, a combination of accommodation projects and other support services (eg. soup runs, grassroots voluntary groups). The sample is small and as such cannot be considered as representative of professionals in each country. In terms of young homeless people, twenty-four were interviewed in Athens and seventeen in London. The interviews were based on a pre-planned 'guide', outlining a number of themes and specific questions that would be included in the interviews.

An immediate challenge with the interview questions was the language difference. Some concepts presented difficulties. For example, 'home' could come to mean 'place of origin' for a British interviewee, something that would not be the case in Greece, as the direct translation of the word would make it relate more to a 'house'. For that reason, the word 'σπιτικό', which better encapsulates a notion such as 'home' was used.

Difficulties arose regarding sampling techniques. As knowledge of youth homelessness was so limited for the Greek part of the study, it appeared that a snowball sampling technique was more appropriate than purposive or theoretical sampling. Key informants served as intermediaries for arranging interviews. Such a process required a lot of flexibility on behalf of the researcher, as access to young homeless people was laden with difficulties. This is a population that is evasive, often non-visible, and one that cannot be accurately delineated in terms of definition and measurement. Therefore, the sample in this research cannot be claimed to be representative of the total young homeless population in the two countries.

The limited amount of knowledge surrounding the very nature of youth homelessness as a general phenomenon in Greece dictated the broader scope of the research sample. The widely used distinction between single homeless people, statutorily homeless and rough

sleepers, stemming from the relevant legislation in England, has not been used in this research, as it does not apply to the Greek case.

The research concentrated on nationals of each country because the focus of the study was the relationship of young homeless people with the wider welfare system and their sense of social citizenship. The examination of this theme presupposed that the young interviewees had an experience of the country's welfare system. In that respect, although youth homelessness in Greece also incorporates great numbers of young immigrants and refugees, such a group is not included in this research project. One would hope that the distinction drawn in this research does not obscure their serious plight.

## Childhood and adulthood

Childhood, as every other age relation, is a social construct. The notion of childhood as socially defined emerged through the work of the French historian Ariès (1973). According to his analysis, the concept of childhood as a discrete life stage emerged in Europe between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries (Goldson, 1997). By the middle of the eighteenth century, adults were beginning to think about themselves as fundamentally different kinds of creatures from those who were their children. The child was no longer thought of as a little adult. Childhood was perceived as a special and vulnerable stage; adulthood was defined in reverse terms. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the advancement of the industrial revolution further contributed to the restructuring of childhood. Developments such as the introduction of child-labour legislation in the 1830s, the reconceptualisation of juvenile delinquency in the 1850s and the introduction of compulsory schooling in the 1870s contributed to an extension of childhood as an age stage and led to the transformation of children from wage-earners to school-pupils (Hendrick, 1992).

Childhood has been shaped by dominant paediatric and psychological theories of child development and remains an essentially protectionist experience (Jenks, 1996). Children, due to dominant psychoanalytic psychology and child-guidance philosophy, are perceived to be vulnerable, dependent, innocent, malleable, subordinate, and in need of adult guidance (Goldson, 1997). This also takes institutional forms, with children being dependent on adults. This relationship of dependence is naturalised and is presented as entirely benign and serving the child's interest.

What this amounts to is the negation of a full citizen status for children; their power and participation within society is filtered through adult involvement. This attitude has been challenged by writers such as Overtrop (1991, quoted in Goldson, 1997). He outlines the dependent status of children towards adults and questions the ontological argument supporting this unequal relationship. Instead he claims that the relationship between adults and children is mainly regulated by power and interest; children have no claim to equal treatment because of their age.

A shift towards a discourse of rights has contributed to a consolidation of children's rights, embodied in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and UK legislation such as the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. The underlying theme in



all these acts and declarations is that children have individual rights and a voice that should be taken into account in the decisions that are relevant to their lives. Such an emphasis on rights attempts to balance the underlying inequality of status.

It would appear then, that adulthood would be the reverse of childhood; adults are responsible, mature, self-supporting, bestowed with rights and responsibilities, and recognised members of society with decision-making power. Again, the position of adults is by no means fixed and stable; their citizen status is a product of economic, political and historical factors. Nevertheless, the prevailing language around adulthood recognises values such as self-reliance, independence and responsibility as fundamental components of the 'adult' individual.

Youth stands in the middle of these two social categories, in a position of uncertainty and ambivalence. Young people of the age group that concerns this research (16-25) receive mixed messages regarding their social status, their entitlements and the expectations bestowed on them. One of the key informants, a manager of a hostel for young homeless people in London, expressed this reality in his words:

*I think becoming a teenager [...] you don't fit in. You've got certain parts of society that will see you as a young adult, other people see you as a kid, so...it's difficult, it's a known conflict area...*

This lack of clarity was present in the words of key informants and the young homeless people themselves, as they constructed 'youth' in various ways. First of all, young homeless people were to a great extent constructed as 'children' by key informants in both countries. In accordance with the childhood model of explaining youth homelessness, as outlined by Brandon et al. (1980), the young homeless were seen as needy, immature and impulsive. In Greece, this mainly took the form of recognising young people as in need of adult protection and guidance. Key informants in Greece stressed the need for family support at that age as fundamental for their development:

*In young people you see that they really need that interest [from the family], they are desperate for it. In these cases, they either come from broken homes or their parents have new partners. Usually it is also young people who have been in care. They need their families at that age and whilst they could be doing something with their lives, they don't have the necessary support. (Social worker in Athens)*

*You can see that the young people here need their families, they don't say bad things about them. They need their parents, especially the mother. (Social worker in Athens)*

In the UK, the picture drawn was, often, one of immaturity and impulsive behaviour:

*I think young people do stuff and make decisions on whims without thinking about long-term effects of what it is they decided to do. (Manager of a hostel for young offenders, London)*

*I mean, young people are young people, there will always be that kind of aspect of they*

*want, whatever it is that they want, they want it yesterday.* (Manager of a hostel for young people, London)

This difference in the approaches of key informants appears to reflect the dominant discourses surrounding youth in the two countries. In Greece young men and women are rendered 'invisible' within the family unit by policy and welfare measures. There are no specific benefit entitlements or provisions targeting young people in their own right; they tend to acquire benefits 'by proxy' through their parents. The prevailing norms and cultural values are reflected in the words of these key informants, as family support is deemed to be paramount in securing the young individual. The assumption is that the right place for young people to be is with their families, it is considered to be naturally so. Thus, youth is treated as more akin to childhood, as a state of neediness and vulnerability.

This could imply a more sympathetic view towards the young homeless, as they are portrayed as the casualties of broken homes. This is echoed in relevant newspaper accounts of the phenomenon of homelessness in Greece. The tone adopted in relevant articles (mainly published in the mid 1990s, coinciding with the opening of the first hostel for the 'homeless' by Athens City Council) is one of deep concern and sympathy. Relevant titles capture this tendency: 'Cardboard boxes for beds and fear as a pillow: more and more people- mainly young ones- caught in the harsh world of homelessness' (Ta Nea, 13/10/1995), 'The kingdom of despair: Omonoia, the square of the destitute in the heart of Athens' (Eleftherotipia, 10/9/1997). A possible result of this more sympathetic stance, is a greater likelihood that young homeless people in Greece will be deemed to be deserving of assistance. This creates an advantage for this age group within a welfare system that is highly discretionary in its delivery of services (Ferrera, 1996; Petmesidou, 1996). This trend will be further highlighted in the following section in the discussion about the construction of youth as an advantage and as a disadvantage.

Nevertheless, this definition of young people as 'children' (even, for example, when 'youth' refers to people aged over 20), can have further consequences in terms of appropriate responses to their social need. Although one can argue that in some respects, young people can be perceived more favourably within the Greek welfare system, this does not signify a greater degree of options and opportunities available to young people in general. The equation of youth with a state of dependency and neediness could also be perpetuating the negation of an independent individual status for the young. It consolidates the wider family-centred policy provision, which emphasises the supremacy and desirability of traditional family life as the ideal (Petmesidou, 1996). This carries with it a potential risk of stigma for those who do not fit this ideal model, as would be the case for the majority of young homeless people. Thus, this tendency runs the risk of perpetuating an inability to treat young people as individuals who are able to make decisions upon their own lives, and who are justified in their wish to live independently.

If the position expressed by key informants in Greece was mainly one of sympathy and compassion, the tone adopted by key informants in the UK was less sympathetic:

*... there are some young people who I think they should really stop using drugs in their parents' house and ought to go to college and ought not to come back home at four,*

*five, six o'clock in the morning, when their parents have told them to come back at two, for example. And they should stay at home. And they should get a job when the time comes. And save their money and sort their lives out, rather than just think, oh, well, I'm big and I'm bad and I'll jump out of the window and go run away and go somewhere, find myself a hostel and I'm going to get benefits and I'm going to live off forty quid a week and problems will be solved and spend all my money on cigarettes ...* (Manager of a hostel for young people, London)

Young people in the UK are more likely to be perceived as 'individuals' by policies and public opinion than in Greece. For example, specific measures in the UK address the needs of homeless young people (such as the Homelessness Act, 2002); in Greece there is no legislation to address homelessness in general, or identify a problem such as youth homelessness, as poverty measures target the family unit primarily. Equally, benefit entitlements in the UK are directed towards the young person as an individual (such as Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance), whereas in Greece there is limited benefit provision and it is more often associated with one's employment status rather than age or social circumstances. Nevertheless, the tendency to treat young people as individuals in their own right can sometimes be associated with irresponsible or selfish behaviour. It is assumed, most often by the media, as well as policy makers, that the characteristics of adulthood are not present; instead, young people are attributed with childish qualities (albeit negative ones), such as impulsive behaviour, obstinacy and the inability to plan ahead. This implies a position that is critical of the young and their ability to make informed decisions and direct their own lives as individuals.

The equation of young people with 'children' seems to advocate the need for their containment through policies. Protection, guidance and discipline are deemed to be the appropriate and justified actions to be taken as part of service provision for the young homeless. Such a position in the UK has advanced, on the one hand, a return to a more family-centred policy context; for example, the prolonged stay of young people in the parental home, and the growing dependence of the young on the family, has been seen as a desirable development. Coles et al. (1999) make this point, when they highlight the fact that the increasing tendency for young people to remain in the parental home is not perceived as a problem to be addressed by social policy; instead, it is often hailed as a solution to many youth policy problems. On the other hand, the 'childhood' aspect of youth, and the need for controlling young people, is particularly present in discussions of youth and crime, as well as in the 'underclass' debate, which singles out young people as perpetrators and constructs them as socially problematic.

Thus, the accounts proffered by key informants in both the UK and Greece largely converge towards a consideration of youth as more akin to 'childlike' qualities. Yet the young people who were interviewed in both countries drew a different picture for themselves. The majority referred to themselves as adults, stressing their maturity and contrasting their present to their 'childish' past:

*It was an age that I spent with them [friends], when we were in a different phase, you know ... It is one thing to be 16 or 17 and another...not that I am old now ... and another to be 24, 25. Different mentality ...* (Nikos, 24, Athens)

*I don't know, by the time my mother was saying to me you have to go to school and all that stuff, I was young and stupid. I didn't know the meaning of all this, you know what I'm saying?* (R, 18, London)

Young people in both countries appeared to be espousing 'adult' values in their words and went to great lengths to present themselves as adults. They were particularly stressing the value of self-reliance, associating it with a sense of independence and maturity:

*My father told me to go and stay with them, but why should I go there? He did provide for me when I was younger, I am grown up now ...* (Nikos, 24, Athens)

*I feel ashamed to knock on my mother's door. I should be looking after her, not the other way round. She has done her bit, now it's my turn.* (Z., 21, London)

The construction of young people as 'children' with its double edge of vulnerability and neediness on the one hand, and immaturity and selfishness on the other, ignores to a great extent the views and positions of the young themselves. As has been shown by other relevant research (Carlen, 1996), young homeless people share conventional aspirations and values. In Dean and Melrose's (1996) research on the attitudes of people involved in social security benefit fraud, for all age groups the thing that would dissuade them from fraud would be a 'proper' job, that is employment with reasonable pay and status. Williamson (1997), when examining the Status Zer0 youth (young people aged sixteen and seventeen who are not in education, training or employment), connected to the underclass debate, concludes that they do not display a culture of poverty and the underclass, as has been argued. Instead, he found that most young people subscribe to dominant goals, but do not know how to achieve them, think that it is impossible to, or are pursuing other ways of getting to those goals.

Nevertheless, the factor of age is one that could not be overlooked by the young interviewees. In the replies by both key informants and the young homeless, 'youth' was a variable that affected their day-to-day life and their life opportunities. This was again expressed in a state of opposites, with young age being constructed either as an 'asset' and an advantage, or as a disadvantage, synonymous with inexperience and the lack of life skills. The following section will, thus, explore these themes in more detail.

## **Youth as advantage/Youth as disadvantage**

The second aspect of the power/ powerlessness interplay in the construction of youth in the two countries is that of young age as an advantage or as a disadvantage. Through the words of the respondents it became apparent that youth could simultaneously signify strength, availability of opportunities, hope and potential, as well as inexperience, weakness and the greater likelihood of failure.

Thus, on the one hand, youth was associated with inexperience, lack of knowledge and life skills. This was present in the words of young homeless people. Igor (aged 24, Athens), when asked about his opinion on the state, replied:

*I do not think. I am still young in the brain, I am not grown up.*

Katerina, (17, Athens), also said:

*[Things are] very difficult. I am very young and I see that everything is very difficult, even though my whole life is still ahead of me...I cannot really understand, because I am still very young, the more I grow up the more I will learn. This is what older people tell me. 'You are still very young', they say, 'you don't understand'...*

In contrast, in the responses of other young people, their youth was perceived to be an advantage. Being young meant the ability to work and support oneself and signified optimism, strength, and hope for the future:

*I am young, I have hope [...] I have energy for work. I have ideas on what to do. (A. 24, London)*

*How can it be that I am here now, sitting down doing nothing? [...] A job [is what I need] nothing else. After that nothing can stop me. (Nikos, 24, Athens)*

The above quotations raise a central issue in any consideration of youth: its association with the ability to work. This view is not only shared by the young people themselves, but is one that underpins public opinion and relevant policies. When youth is associated with able-bodiedness and strength, deviations from this assumed ideal are more prone to stigmatisation and marginalisation. Furthermore, this association affects the way in which agencies perceive and interpret youth, and could determine issues of who is 'deserving' and 'undeserving' of assistance. Thus, when youth is perceived as an advantage (as synonymous with health, ability and strength), quite often this could mean that the person should not be entitled to any form of assistance, as they are quite capable of taking care of themselves without state intervention. This was especially prominent in Greece; key informants proffered the following opinions:

*Young people don't receive any benefits and to tell you the truth, I don't think that it is necessary. For them there should be a specialised service...one that would aim to make these kids face life on their own. (Social worker, Athens)*

*If a young person, say 20 years old, goes to the Welfare office, it is very likely that they won't give him the 'emergency payment' [a one-off sum paid in cases of severe hardship], they will prefer to give it to a mother with children or to an elderly person, they think that they are more vulnerable. (Social worker, Athens)*

Eleni, 23, one of the young homeless people interviewed in Athens, also said:

*What can I say? Even the Church, they don't help. I went there [to ask for help]. They even kick you out of the place! If you aren't, say, over forty years old, if you don't have a baby in your arms [there is no help].*

These quotes reflect prevailing values on welfare provision. In Greece there has never been a solid basis of institutionalised rights, as the state traditionally has had a minimal role in

welfare delivery. Who will receive provision is more a matter of discretion, often based on a system of informal 'favouritism' and patronage (Ferrera, 1996). Within this context, young people can be seen as less 'deserving' of assistance or particular treatment, based on the assumption that they are fit, strong and due to their youth, perfectly capable -even obliged- to look after themselves. The small sample of this research does not allow us to examine in detail the way in which factors such as gender, ethnic background or sexuality affect this process in the two countries. Traditionally, the male provider model has been prevalent in Greece; however, as the labour market and family life change, the expectation for self reliance is more likely to affect both young men and young women equally.

The ambivalence that characterises attitudes towards youth becomes evident through the expression of the exact opposite view from service providers. Young people were also being constructed as vulnerable and in need of constant support (if not favouritism), over the needs of other clients of different age groups:

*The time for which they can stay here is three to six months, usually they stay for longer. Especially for young people, we make concessions, they can stay for up to a year. (Social worker, Athens)*

*The average age [of our residents] has always been around fifty and over. Now the average age has fallen. It is a new approach that we are taking, because elderly people do need help as well, but they are 'finished' to put it like that, for the elderly you can't do all that much, apart from putting them in a nursing home. Where you should be giving a lot is to young people, because if they make it, then they become productive, they become useful, first of all to themselves. And then to the rest of us ... (Social worker, Athens)*

The point raised by the above quotes is that young people's entitlements seem to increasingly become more a matter of negotiation, and less a given right at any time. Access to services and aid depends greatly on the interpretations of 'youth' adopted by professionals and agencies, and is to a great extent a matter of discretion. Such interpretations, as has been shown, are quite often mixed and unclear, attributing the same young person with opposing qualities. This is true of both countries and social welfare systems. What appears to be different is the ideological basis that justifies service provision and entitlement in each country. In the UK, the perception of youth as immature or even as a threat (as we shall see in the following section), quite often serves as the ideological basis justifying the curtailment of young people's entitlements and instead placing an emphasis on their obligations. On the other hand, in Greece the absence of an institutionalised form of social citizenship for those under 25, allows grounds for individual interpretations of 'youth' and its needs. Consequently, young people's social citizenship is mainly associated with the construction of 'youth' as in need of protection and guidance. The 'childhood' aspect of youth becomes reason for intervention and service provision. However, even when this is the case, with young people becoming the focus of attention and of favouritism, this does not equal a concrete base of social rights that are institutionalised and consolidated.

## Youth as a positive force/ Youth as 'danger'

Youth has a long history of being constructed as a societal force, either as a positive one, which can bring about change and progress, or as a dangerous one, which might prove uncontrollable, problem-causing and socially harmful.

Youth has often been constructed as the changing force of society. In Greece, the Prime Minister (leader of Nea Dimokratia, currently the ruling party), Mr. Karamanlis, in his speech to the Young Conservative Conference (2/3/2001) addressed his audience with the following words:

*Give your hands to all the young people of our country, regardless of their ideological stance and chase the future together. Make it your goal to prove every minute that youth does not become subordinate, does not get trapped in moderation, dependence and misery. You are the voice of Greece. Don't ever let that voice go silent.*

Similarly, in the official website of PASOK, (the governing Socialist Party until early 2004), the language used for the young is one related to hope and the future:

*The youth of today is our natural ally. The young generation, that lives in a competitive environment, in a world of few opportunities, [...] the young generation desires change, wants modernisation, wants to create ruptures.*

In the UK, the preoccupation with the 'underclass' idea has been evident in academic texts. As mentioned earlier, young people are often portrayed as problematic and troublesome. Nevertheless, this has not been a new idea, as even in the nineteenth century, societal fears about the dangerous class concentrated on working class youths and criminal activity.

The Home Office identifies youth crime as one of the most serious social problems for Britain. Preston-Shoot and Vernon (2002) document a shift in youth justice policies throughout the 1990s in the UK, with increasing emphasis being placed on a punitive approach and a move away from a concern about the rights of youth suspects. In recent political rhetoric in the UK, this tendency is evident. The Labour Party's Election Manifesto (2001) identifies young men in particular as the majority of persistent offenders. The Conservative Party in its pre-election manifesto (2001) also marked out the problem of youth crime:

*A hard core of persistent young offenders commit a disproportionate number of crimes. They offend again and again, laughing at the law and making their neighbours' lives a misery.*

Youth has also been associated in recent years with anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour, according to the Home Office, includes a range of problems - noisy neighbours, abandoned cars, vandalism, graffiti, litter and youth nuisance. According to the British Crime Survey (Home Office, 2001), one in three people cited teenagers 'hanging around' on the streets as a big problem. Tabloid newspapers often refer to young people as 'jobs' and 'teenage thugs', when reporting on youth crime and anti-social behaviour.

The introduction of Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 targets mainly young people and further contributes towards understanding youth as a 'problem'. According to the Act, these orders will be routinely made for the middle and older age groups of juveniles and young people (e.g. 12- 17 year olds), as such individuals may commit serious acts of anti-social behaviour without adult encouragement or involvement. More recently, the Government's white paper 'Respect and Responsibility- Taking a Stand against Anti-Social Behaviour' (2003) mentions that more than half of all ASBOs are made against 10 to 17 year olds.

The 'criminalisation' of young people in the UK in the media and legislation can be contrasted to the discourse surrounding the issue of youth justice in Greece. Recent proposed changes in the legal framework for young offenders in Greece, signify a move towards a more sympathetic treatment of young people (aged 8 to 18) who break the law. The new proposed legislation will abolish the use of the term 'juvenile criminals', will put emphasis on preventative measures and will introduce more lenient punishments for lesser crimes. The philosophy behind these changes is based on the belief that legislation dealing with young offenders should refrain from being stigmatising and punitive and should instead promote prevention and protection (Greek Ministry of Justice, 2003). One should note, however, that there are concerns relating to a less sympathetic attitude towards young offenders from ethnic minority groups, with figures suggesting that they receive custodial sentences more often than their Greek counterparts (Livaditis et al, 2000).

These considerations constitute another facet of the 'power/ powerlessness' interplay in the lives of young people. In the UK, the portrayal of young people as potentially 'dangerous' attributes them with a negative sense of power, one that is associated with destruction, unlawful behaviour and contempt for mainstream values. Nevertheless this is also an aspect of powerlessness for young people; the perpetuation of stereotypes concerning youth can create prejudice and misconceptions against the young, which can lead to stigmatisation and exclusion from services and wider social opportunities. Jones (1997) has made this point, by stressing that when moral panics emerge, the focus tends to be with the problems caused to society by a specific group rather than the problems society creates for them. This, Jones (1997) claims, is especially true for young people, who are more often portrayed in negatives terms, a tendency that seems to occur when young people become publicly visible.

In the case of Greece, a political rhetoric which emphasises the dangerous aspects of youth is limited (this relates specifically to Greek young people; there is growing uneasiness surrounding issues of young immigrants/refugees and crime). However, juvenile delinquency does feature in academic discussions relating to social exclusion (see, for example, Panagiotopoulos, 1996). This emphasises the disadvantaged position in which young offenders find themselves *vis-à-vis* society and institutions, rather than portraying them solely as perpetrators of crime and social disorder. Equally, in the research conducted by the author on youth homelessness, there was an absence in the words of respondents in Greece of an association of young people with delinquent or anti-social behaviour.

This could be due to the prevailing cultural beliefs held about young people and family life in the country. In Greece, as the case is for the European South in general, there is limited expectation that young people will leave the parental home at an early age (see Holdsworth,



2000; Berthoud and Iacovou, 2002). In Southern Europe, as mentioned previously, there is a tendency to perceive young people more as children and part of the family unit (or in the case of young homeless people, as the casualties of disrupted family life), rather than decision-making adults with accountability for their actions. Therefore, young people in general and the young homeless more specifically, can be rendered 'invisible' in a country like Greece. Social and cultural processes maintain the young in the social background, whilst the focus (as well as the emergence of potential moral panics) rest with other social groups in need of welfare provision within Greek society (for example, immigrants, substance users). This lack of visibility leads to another facet of the 'powerlessness' aspect of the construction of youth, namely the limited negotiating power of young people towards services and the potential inaccessibility of agencies and services for those affected.

## Conclusions

'Youth' is being constructed as a set of juxtapositions, mainly centred around the interplay between power and powerlessness. As shown above, 'youth' is being portrayed as being in an ambivalent position of power towards society in general and towards welfare agencies in particular.

The examination of the ways in which a concept such as 'youth' is being constructed in the two countries demonstrates the significance of definitions and interpretations in shaping policy responses and practices. This tendency is present in both the UK and Greece, even though the two countries have very different welfare traditions and subsequent responses to a problem such as youth homelessness. The very recognition of this problem is affected by preconceptions and beliefs surrounding youth.

This ambivalence in the meaning of 'youth' seems to perpetuate an unclear relationship between the young person and the welfare apparatus. Quite often, the way in which 'youth' is being understood and defined affects the accessibility of services for this group and their eligibility for assistance. For example, when 'youth' comes to be treated as a synonym for power and ability, then the young person is not deemed to be deserving of assistance. Conversely, when 'youth' is associated with vulnerability and the need for protection, then young people are perceived as more 'deserving' of help and often they are seen as having priority over other client groups. This ambivalence in terms of the social rights of the young is not only present at the level of relevant legislation and policies; more crucially it also informs attitudes and decision-making processes on the level of service provision.

The above observations point towards the need for a reconsideration of what determines service provision. We need to remain aware of preconceptions that perpetuate a dependent relationship between the service provider and the service recipient. In fact, powerlessness for young people can also stem from limited access to services and an overall weakening of social rights. Policy responses and services should strive to respond to need and maintain a balanced outlook towards a social issue- in this case youth homelessness. Youth policy and provision should promote equal access, opportunities and an inclusive environment for those threatened or affected by homelessness.

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# Curriculum Debate: The Youth Work Curriculum as Process, Not as Outcome and Output to Aid Accountability

*Jon Ord*

If ever I needed any reminders of just how contentious the concept of curriculum was in youth work, *Youth and Policy* Volume 84 containing responses to my original paper 'The Youth Work Curriculum and the Transforming Youth Work Agenda' (Ord, 2004) certainly provided me with one.

I thought it only right and proper that I replied to some of the criticisms of that paper, as well as continuing the debate, not least because I think my original argument for process as a necessary condition of the youth work curriculum is still valid.

## A response to Tony Jeffs:

Dear Tony,

I read with interest your reply to my paper, and certainly no offence was taken. I would refer you to my reply below:

### ***The Taming of the Tiger: The 'Youth Work' Curriculum***

I was stuck with the task of trying to establish what the 'bottom line' was for Jeffs. What exactly is it that 'sticks in the craw' so much about the concept of curriculum in youth work? Jeffs is quite willing and able to equate youth workers with 'teachers' a parallel which I think only helps to further the confusion between formal and informal education. My suspicion is that many youth workers would have more 'affinity' with the notion of curriculum than they would with seeing themselves as 'teachers'! However I am not going to take Jeffs to task over the concept of teaching as I think quite rightly he has a particular notion of 'teaching' and his articulation of the dynamic role of an 'informal' teacher is clearly not inconsistent with the principles and practices of youth work. But the question remains, if he is so willing to think of youth workers as teachers why is he so unwilling to entertain the concept of curriculum in youth work?

I think the answer lies in his misconception of curriculum. Unfortunately he too conceives of curriculum as product. He states quite clearly that 'curriculum is the course to be run. It has a beginning, middle and end – it clearly has an outcome' (Jeffs, 2004:57). I argued that curriculum as product is the dominant 'ideology'. Curriculum is a contested concept and is not exhaustively defined as he describes. I would argue that curriculum as process does have an educational tradition. (Stenhouse, 1975, 1980, 1983, Rudduck, 1995). Furthermore curriculum as process does not presuppose a destination. More importantly curriculum as process is integral to the curriculum that has been produced in the field of statutory youth services (Ord, 2004).

A model of curriculum as process, was initially put forward by Stenhouse, in 'An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development' (1975). Stenhouse was an educationalist who, though writing about schools and formal education, had progressive views about curriculum. He died before the education reform act of 1988 and no doubt would have been appalled by the imposition of a national curriculum with rigid prescribed outcomes. He proposed that a curriculum based on a process model is more suited to education concerned with the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Unlike the acquisition of information and skills, knowledge is often controversial, and understanding can always be deepened so on both counts the achievement of pre set objectives or specific intended outcomes is less appropriate.

Interestingly there are also parallels between role of the youth worker and how Stenhouse saw the role of the teacher in the process model. He conceived the teacher not as an expert, but as a 'senior learner capable of offering something of value to the junior learners with whom he works'. The process model 'implies teaching by discovery or inquiry methods rather than by instruction' (Stenhouse, 1975:91). The teacher is therefore active in the learning environment, engaged in a process which, while having defined purpose, does not necessarily have specifically definable outcomes, at least not prior to its initiation.

Applying this principle to youth work, a youth worker might be working with a group of disengaged young people who are on the margins, involved in petty crime – in modern parlance they would be 'NEET'S' (not in Employment, Education or Training), and be a priority for intervention from a number of services. What objectives or outcomes would it make sense to set for an intervention? It would make no sense even to begin to specify outcomes to work with the group, until a worker could establish relationships with the group and engage them in a process. Applying the process model, it would not be necessary to set any pre-specified outcomes. Any talk of outcomes before engagement would be putting the cart before the horse.

Clearly there is a political context to the production of curriculum. 'An expectation to produce a locally agreed curriculum was placed on statutory youth services by Ofsted' (Ord, 2004:45). However I would take issue with Jeffs' analogy of this expectation as: 'jumping off a cliff to escape a tiger' (Jeffs, 2004:56). This both misrepresents and devalues what actually happened in the field. What Jeffs fails to appreciate is that the 'expectation' did provide an opportunity. Gone were the strict dictates of curriculum as outcomes, and though they would be subject 'at some point' to an inspection and comment by Ofsted, the lack of prescription did provide a space for documents to be produced and agreed locally. It is true that the documents would never have been produced without the pressure from Ofsted; that youth workers had never conceived of curriculum in relation to youth work before, that the long tradition of youth and community work bears little relation to curriculum, and youth work had survived previously without it. But just because youth work had never utilised the concept of curriculum does not mean that the curriculum documents that have been produced are worthless or that it is a bad thing that curriculum 'has gained currency amongst youth workers in the field' (Ord, 2004:50)

The curriculum documents have been produced in the 'space' provided by the lack of prescription from Ofsted, the NYA, and central and local government. This is evidenced by

the diversity of the documents in use. More importantly the curriculum documents became the arena within which arguments about what the work was about could take place. For example, I remember having a conversation with an officer from West Sussex in which he was describing how, now that they had anti racist work clearly identified in their curriculum document, it made it easier and more legitimate to undertake such work. He continued to explain how the new battle ground in West Sussex was now work on homophobia, the importance of which had not been agreed locally and was yet to be explicitly referenced in their curriculum.

Contrary to Jeffs' and Robertson's (2004) arguments, it is legitimate to describe the curriculum documents as 'bottom up'. In an important sense they are. For example between 1990 and 2003 Kingston Youth Service has had three distinct documents; all levels of the service were involved and consulted in their production. The ideas, concepts and frameworks utilised came from the knowledge and experience of the workers in the service. No external agency or organisation was used or referenced in the drawing up or agreement of the curriculum. All the decisions on content and format were taken locally and importantly, no external prescription, advice or guidance was either taken or needed. They were ratified by elected members and that has the advantage of adding legitimacy even though on occasion it can create problems.

Perhaps the litmus test for curriculum is who has the final say on content. The case of Somerset youth service can elucidate this point. Somerset has devised a 'curriculum development matrix' (CDM) (Somerset, 1999). It has the benefit of being able to plot the level of participation of young people in any given youth work session. However, Ofsted claimed that, 'the understanding and effective use of the CDM by youth workers varied widely and many found it too complex and mechanistic' (Ofsted Somerset, 2002 [b]). Clearly Ofsted would like it to see it changed. Somerset have introduced a curriculum strategy within their action plan to improve the understanding of their matrix, and have commissioned research into its effective use, but the CDM remains intact. The level of ownership and local agreement is strong enough to withstand the criticism, and it would appear that those within the service disagree with the Ofsted claim.

The youth work curriculum is clearly not 'bottom up' in the sense that the idea of curriculum or the importance (nay necessity) to have one came from the field, but it is 'bottom up' in terms of both what the curriculum has come to mean in practice and that there is ownership of the documents by youth workers in their locality. They are not as Jeffs describes them, anathema, at least not to practicing statutory youth workers.

Curriculum exists in the interface between youth work and the wider 'modern' world. Youth workers do not necessarily need a curriculum to talk to or agree with each other about the work (though I think it can help with this as well) but curriculum has gained a currency in the environment of partnership and modern local government with an emphasis on professional transparency, inter agency working and accountability.

That, I think, is Jeffs' real 'beef', not with curriculum, but with modern local government. It is patronising and disingenuous to describe local authority youth workers and managers as merely 'jumping through the required hoops' (Jeffs, 2004:55). There are many who choose

to battle on in a difficult context of competing priorities and agendas and who do make a difference to the lives of young people. Curriculum has not hindered that process. In one sense it has assisted it because it has enabled youth workers to have something to back up what they do, which has local agreement, with both youth workers and local politicians, as well as having national endorsement from Ofsted. This has helped erase the rather vague image of youth workers as people who 'just hang around and chat to young people with no particular purpose in mind'.

The question is, can a curriculum for youth work authentically describe the vibrancy and dynamism of the work. I argued that a sufficient condition of this would be an explicit reference to both product and process in equal measure. Jeffs informs us that youth work has a long tradition which does not refer to curriculum. But history shapes the future it does not define it in its entirety. Youth work in the statutory sector has changed and, like it or not, curriculum is a part of it. We can either complain from the sidelines or be part of the debate and influence the kind of curriculum we need.

As meaning is founded in use (Wittgenstein, 1958), a search for an authentic curriculum therefore must look to the use to which the statutory youth service have given curriculum. Importantly it is a distinct and unique meaning. It is a holistic concept which describes the whole of youth work. Unlike Wylie and Merton (2002), whose curriculum is a partial curriculum: 'the term does not describe all of youth work.'(2004:66). For a curriculum to be authentic it must reflect the 'meaningful' curriculum that has been produced in the field, as well as accurately reflect and describe youth work itself; a necessary condition of this would be an incorporation of the youth work process.

It is on this point that I must now return to Merton and Wylie.

***Response to Merton and Wylie: What exactly did happen to 'Process' ?***

Merton and Wylie (2004) claim I make three key points. But I think that misreads and selectively interprets my article. I suspect those points are the ones that it is felt can most easily be countered – perhaps regarding a slight historical inaccuracy. I should like to make it quite clear that I am making one central key claim:

*That the concept of youth work curriculum (Merton and Wylie, 2000; DfES, 2002) does not sufficiently account for the central 'process' of youth work and is therefore fundamentally flawed.*

Interestingly this point is not new. Bernard Davies in his paper 'Whose Youth Service Curriculum' (1991) made the same point in response Michael Howarth's original attempts to define 'curriculum as outcomes' (NYB, 1990). His central point echoes my key claim that the youth work process is being undermined by the formulations of curriculum whereby: '“outcomes” were talked up, [and] “process” was systematically (and at times quite disparagingly) talked down or even simply ignored' (Davies, 1991:5). Importantly at the time Davies argued for 'vigilance' and 'resistance' to this systematic undermining of core principles. This is as relevant today as it was in 1991.

Process is an accepted educational principle of youth work (Smith, 1988; Deer-Richardson



and Wolfe, 2001; Jeffs and Smith, 1996; Young, 1999) and as I have outlined above, has a philosophical and educational validity in the work of Stenhouse. Yet though Merton and Wylie make cursory reference to it in their reply to my original article 'yes, you see, we do recognise the process!' (2004:65), they have chosen to supplant it in their conception of curriculum with the notion of 'pedagogy of educational groupwork'.

I argued that this represents a fundamental change in their conceptions of curriculum, from earlier notions such as that found in 'Developmental Youth Work 2000' (Wylie, 1997). But they have kindly drawn our attention to other material which they have produced which also evidences this claim. For example in 'Effective Youth Work' (DES, 1987), they describe youth work in a way which gives centrality to both processes and products of youth work, giving significant reference to the importance of the youth work relationship, as well as implicitly recognising the centrality of process.

Smith describes 'Effective Youth Work' as 'one of the last English government reports to promote open youth work' (Smith, 2003 [b]:1). Davies summarises 'Effective Youth Work' as showing:

- *That what is distinctive about youth work is its process*
- *That it is neither possible nor desirable to prioritise between 'content' and 'process'*  
(Davies, 1991:6)

An emphasis on 'pedagogy of educational groupwork' as opposed to the products and processes of youth work would certainly appear to be a significant recent change.

Merton and Wylie's response to my claim that educational groupwork was not a legitimate methodology for youth work has been to refer me to work of additional authors such as Batten, Button, Klein and Milson. I do not regard this as a sufficient explanation of what Merton and Wylie mean by educational groupwork in the context of a contemporary curriculum for youth work. The question still remains. Why is the term educational groupwork utilised instead of the first principle of youth work, the 'process'?

Do Merton and Wylie regard them as synonymous and identical? Do they think educational groupwork sufficiently accounts for the 'process' of youth work?

If they do regard them as synonymous why the preference for the term educational group work? If they are identical why has educational group work supplanted the accepted and embedded concept of process in the principles and practices of youth work?

If Merton and Wylie do not regard educational groupwork and process as synonymous, what is additionally provided by educational groupwork which is not accounted for in 'process'? What cannot be accounted for by process which is explained more fully by educational groupwork?

## **Specificity to 'Outcomes'**

I can only assume that the terms are not regarded as synonymous and that the preference

for educational groupwork and the reason behind this preference is the following key difference. Unlike the traditional youth work process, pedagogy as educational groupwork has what I would describe as: 'specificity to outcomes', i.e. the outcomes are specifically related to the inputs. Merton and Wylie are keen to avoid the claim that they are advocating an outcome or product model of curriculum 'we consider such a mechanistic and routinised approach would be the kiss of death of youth work' (2004:65). Yet I see little within their writing, or in the Transforming Youth Work agenda, which explicitly highlights a methodology like the original process of youth work which necessarily has the outcomes as indeterminate at the outset and is open ended in its conception.

I am not saying that all youth work is indeterminate. Some of the work is very clearly outcome focused. Perhaps youth work needs to be even clearer about articulating its outcomes. Nor am I saying that the process of youth work is aimless and that youth workers do not need to be clear about the outcomes that emerge from the process. But what I see occurring in the new agenda is a wholesale emphasis on outcomes to the detriment of the process, and a formulation of a methodology in pedagogy of educational groupwork which is determinate and specific in the relationship between inputs and outcomes. In their attempts to 'tighten up' the work and make the relationship of youth work to its outcomes more distinct, Merton and Wylie have 'thrown the baby out with the bath water'.

If this is not the case, why have Merton and Wylie chosen to utilise 'Assessment' as the third part of their curriculum progression. Assessment only makes sense if it is assessing the content which has been inputted into the youth work session, and delivered through educational groupwork.

## Process Outcomes as Indeterminate

Process explicitly has the possibility of being indeterminate. It does not necessarily know what is going to arise out of it. It is creative and dynamic; there is a freedom to it. Brent (2004) eloquently articulates the subtle interplay of product and process, as well as how powerful outcomes arise out of the youth work process which could not have been foreseen, at the outset, in his account of 'The Arch' (2004:71)

The work starts with an idea based on a perceived need to acknowledge the death of young people connected to the centre: 'So the idea grew of converting a scrap of land outside the centre into a garden of remembrance with at its centre some kind of monument'. The idea grew and they: 'employed a sculptor with a wide brief to design and construct, with the young people, something for the garden'

The process was participative and young people become involved in the embellishment of the arch. 'The project took on its own energy'. The process of working on the arch became a vehicle for grief itself. For 'one young man, whom I had seen self-anaesthetised by drink and drugs at the funeral of his brother,... It was the first time I think he had properly grieved'. The project took on a meaning for the young people that could not have been predicted at the outset. It became their project and their expression: 'it was young people who explained about the deaths and the purpose of the arch'.

How does one even begin to apply Merton and Wylie's description of curriculum to this piece of work. What was the 'content'? Was it the idea to produce a monument? Was it the monument itself? Was it the number of deaths associated with the centre, was it the unresolved grief? What assessments of the delivery of educational groupwork are being made? Yes, a group of young people are being worked with, but not in a crude sense of the delivery of content, the effectiveness of which will later be assessed. Perhaps most importantly, outcomes of the project emerged out of it and many, in particular the level of genuine grief that was articulated through the construction of the arch, were certainly not intended or conceived of at the outset.

The truth is the Merton and Wylie model of curriculum (2002) does not adequately explain or do justice to, both this type of youth work, or many others like it. That is because it is work which involves a process; in the example of the arch a very powerful process. The process was initiated with the idea of producing a monument and this process was followed through with some skilful intervention of youth workers.

The outcomes are not achieved with any degree of specificity to the content or the inputs. They are often not planned at all. For example, the grieving that was enabled through the production of the arch was neither as a result of the educational groupwork nor the provision of any content. It emerged out of a process, not least because of young people's own commitment to and involvement in the project.

Residential youth work also illustrates the indeterminate nature of the youth work process. It offers an invaluable and distinctive process by providing the experience of living together in a new and perhaps challenging environment. This is in itself a sufficiently good reason for undertaking youth work with a group of young people in a residential setting. The variables which the process offers between young people and workers, amongst the young people themselves and between young people and the environment provide limitless 'grist for the mill' in the process of personal and social development. Who knows what opportunities taking young people out of their own environment will 'throw up'?

One may choose to focus the learning specifically and organise the process to maximise specific learning. For example: If you want to confront the sexual stereotypes between a mixed group, you may choose to organise a programme which challenges the boys' perceptions of the girls, and emphasise the need for the boys to undertake traditionally female tasks such as washing up and cooking. Or if you are working with a group of drug users you would want to emphasise abstinence as a prerequisite and perhaps organise a programme for generating 'alternative highs'.

But should a pre requisite of undertaking a residential necessarily be that the workers' have specified an intended outcome? The workers would have relationships with the young people they are taking on the residential and will therefore know them as well as some of their agendas, and no doubt they will have tried to do some work with them before going about what they wanted to 'get out of it'. Clearly there would be an issue if the workers had no idea why they were going, but there is a wealth of difference between having a general aim and the work being purposeful and having a specific intended outcome. More importantly if a youth worker was so concerned with the achievement of pre set objectives

and intended outcomes they would miss numerous opportunities for learning which would arise spontaneously out of the process.

Perhaps the importance of the youth work process is best exemplified by looking at that often 'mis-used outcome – the growth in confidence'. How often have youth workers stated 'young people grew in confidence' as the recorded outcome of their work with young people after a particular session, as a result of undertaking an abseil, or assisting with the coffee bar, learning new skills like DJ-ing or cooking, or learning how to produce a C.V.? How authentic are these claims in relation to confidence? One could be forgiven for thinking that confidence is the kind of thing that young people are filled up with, like empty vessels with a deficit of the right substance and youth workers can quite readily give them a top up! Not that I blame youth workers, they know that what they have done has been worthwhile, but they are told they need to produce a specific outcome of each session.

Confidence and self esteem are the most elusive and complex of human characteristics. How difficult it is to have a genuinely 'grounded' level of confidence that can withstand the regular knock-backs of everyday life, never mind attempt to confront the many hardships with which young people are forced to grow up. Genuine self esteem is what young people need, a depth of belief that they have a worth that is not dependent on having the latest trainers or jeans, haircuts or shirts.

How does one instil that kind of confidence? The answer is it is very difficult. But over time engaging in a process with young people youth workers can 'be with young people' through ups and downs of their daily fortune and misfortune, pointing out the positives, supporting them through the negatives, challenging their perceptions of themselves, allowing them to see the injustices of which they are victim. Gradually, slowly 'a depth of confidence' may emerge, not one that is dependent on the support of others but one that is based on a belief in themselves.

## The Importance of Relationships

In my original article I argued strongly for the importance of relationships within the youth work process and that this was fundamental to both explanations of, and the effectiveness of, youth work practice. I gave what I thought were well worked examples of how the quality of relationships affects the quality of even the most pre-planned and specific of youth work settings like a drug education awareness session. These examples were dismissed 'as set up by him [Ord] as straw men to be dismissed' (Merton and Wylie, 2004:65). Merton and Wylie should refer to 'some of their own work', 'The Revised Ofsted Framework for Inspections' (Ofsted, 2001[a]) for further reasons why the centrality of relationships within conceptions of youth work should be reinstated.

Assessments of the quality of the relationships youth workers have with young people are an integral and important part of youth work. So much so, that they are an embedded part of the revised Ofsted Framework for Inspections (Ofsted, 2001 [a]). Reports on youth services will specifically and consistently make comments on the relationships youth workers have with young people as part of their assessment of the 'Quality of Education Provided',

in how they ‘...establish and sustain positive relationships with them...’ (Ofsted, 2001 [a]:8). Some recent examples include:

**Quality of Education Provided (point 2)**

*In most provision youth workers had good relationships with young people (Bradford Ofsted Report, Ofsted, 2002 [a]).*

**Quality of Education Provided (point 4)**

*Staff were caring, patient and committed to the development of young people. Their relationships with young people provided a firm basis from which they could challenge and encourage (Cornwall Ofsted Report, Ofsted, 2001 [b]).*

**Quality of Education Provided (point 4)**

*Experienced and tenacious staff, including many who work part time have, over time, developed very good relationships with young people (Manchester Ofsted Report, Ofsted, 2003).*

**Quality of Education Provided (point 3)**

*Relationships with young people were always good. Outreach and detached youth workers were particularly skilful in engaging with vulnerable young people and developing a level of trust that enabled them to offer support and guidance to those at greatest risk of social exclusion (Wirral Ofsted Report, Ofsted, 2001 [c])*

Some reports also make reference to relationships when assessing the ‘Educational Standards Achieved’, for example in the inspection of Wirral Youth Service:

*In all projects and units, their relationships with youth workers and with each other were very good (Wirral Ofsted Report, Ofsted, 2001 [c]).*

Merton and Wylie make us aware that they ‘successfully managed the Inspectorate’s youth work team between 1985 and 1994’ (2004:1). So as former inspectors I am sure they are aware of the importance of relationships in assessing ‘quality of education provided’ by youth workers. Again this raises questions as to why relationships do not figure prominently in their recent formulations of curriculum. If relationships are sufficiently important to be identified by Ofsted as bench-marks of the quality of education, why are they not sufficiently important to be identified in their concept of curriculum?

As Smith (2003[a]) has also argued there is a move away from relationships in the conceptions of youth work within Transforming Youth Work, as ‘workers face losing “relationship” as a defining feature of their practice’ (Smith, 2003 [a]:48).

## **The process as young people’s passage ‘through’ and ‘over’ time**

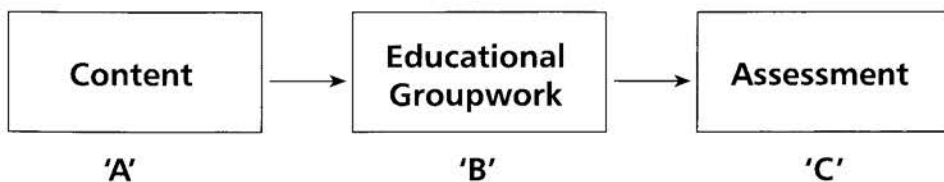
An important though often implicit and understated aspect of the youth work process which also needs to be emphasised for its lack of acknowledgement within Merton and

Wylie's notion of pedagogy of Educational Groupwork is 'time'. The youth work process necessarily takes place over time. The youth work process cannot be understood and therefore youth work itself cannot be understood without reference to a concept of time – not the time spent with youth workers in terms of the number of sessions or hours in some crude calculation; but genuine appreciation of a 'development through time'. Youth workers work with young people discovering aspects of both themselves and their past and perhaps helping them to come to terms with both who they are and where they have come from. They explore issues in the present and responding to what is relevant in their daily lives as well as helping young people formulate plans for the future. Only a concept of 'process' can account sufficiently well for this concept of personal and social development over time.

Importantly, though the quotes from Ofsted are in their own right powerful indictments of the importance and centrality of the youth work relationship, they also offer further evidence of the continuity of the youth work process over time. Relationships can only be achieved if care and commitment are demonstrated to young people, patience and tenacity are required by the workers, and a quality of support and guidance is essential. These factors underpin the formation of relationships and can only be achieved over time. Relationships are necessarily 'built over time'. Trust is hard won and easily lost. Only a concept like process can account for this dynamic.

## The Paradox of Process

Another reason why I contend that Merton and Wylie prefer educational groupwork to process would be that it enables them to have a structure of the learning which is 'linear'. Their curriculum (Merton and Wylie, 2002) equates with a notion of a specific progression. Whilst they maintain 'we do not think, as he [Ord] suggests, that we are proposing a strict application of the outcome model' (Merton and Wylie, 2004:65), I see no other way of conceiving of their curriculum. They have a starting point 'A' with the specified 'Content', through the provision of 'B' the delivery of 'Educational Groupwork', and arrive at an end point 'C' with the 'Assessment'.



The learning in youth work is generally not like this. I am not saying that it isn't ever, but importantly much of the most important learning through personal and social development isn't. This is why the process is so important. Within the notion of process, outcomes are 'emergent'; they emerge out of the process and are not necessarily related to any one particular intervention or series of interactions. Learning in personal and social development is certainly not linear. Outcomes cannot be reduced to specific inputs. In Ord (2004) I used the example of the human kindness which illustrates this point. However, as this was dismissed (erroneously I would argue) by Merton and Wylie as a 'straw man' let us

reconsider the example illustrated above of 'confidence'.

Whilst it makes sense to say a youth worker is working towards building the confidence of the young people s/he is working with, how would we apply Merton and Wylie's concept of curriculum as Content, Pedagogy of Educational Groupwork and Assessment to this legitimate youth work aim? What would the content be like? What miraculous educational groupwork session could 'produce' confidence? Yes a youth worker could do the sorts of things that are intended to 'build confidence', and over time, all things being equal, they should. But there is an important distinction. Confidence is not a tangible 'thing' which is taught. It is not produced through the subtle manipulation of group dynamics. It can't be assessed like the skill of DJ-ing.

Confidence is not a skill at all, though it often implicitly, and sometimes explicitly (Berry, M. 2001; Huskins, 2003), wrongly referred to as one. That is the problem. Confidence is a human attribute, or characteristic, not a skill. According to Ryle (1949) this would be described as a 'category mistake'; a conceptual error, based on a misconception of what it means to be a person, which belies the problem. It makes sense to say in a given situation one is feeling confident or not. One may say one is either a confident 'person' or not. One can learn to be more confident, but one does not acquire that confidence like one acquires skills. The same models or methods of teaching the acquisition of knowledge or skills cannot be applied to learning in personal and social development. The benefits of personal and social 'development', which are characteristics of a person cannot fit into a model of learning skills.

Confidence emerges out of the youth work process; it is not reducible to its inputs. Brent (2004) echoes this conception of learning in his description of 'The smile'. Kelly first attends the youth club as a 'shadowy appendage of her boyfriend. She looks miserable and unhappy, ... Gradually she gets to talk a bit... she starts confiding to one staff member' (2004:70). Kelly begins to explain her problems concerning her school, home life, eating, 'Problems for which we have no solutions.' Youth workers attempt to formally intervene to find her a flat, but this does not appear to be the real issue and it is quickly forgotten. Over time she begins 'to smile' a transformation appears to have taken place and 'she throws her self into the life of the centre'. 'There has been no product, no target met, no plan completed, yet all the evidence points to there being a profoundly important personal outcome for Kelly.' (2004:70) To what can the smile be attributed? This is the important point. It makes sense to talk of youth workers taking an interest in her well being, offering her support etc., in a broad youth work sense, within the concept of a process of engagement. It certainly does not make sense to start reducing the outcome to any one or a number of interventions.

This conception of the process is evidenced further by the recent analysis of self esteem contained in 'Self Esteem and Youth Development' (Richards, (ed.) 2003). This is a collection of papers from the seminar held at the Brathay Institute which contains analysis of, and responses, to Emler's research: 'Self Esteem: the costs and causes of low self esteem' (Emler, 2001).

Guidance is offered against the search for immediate outcomes in relation to objectives

such as self-esteem:

*When we adults attach ourselves too strongly and focus too closely on the behavioural outcomes then we fall into the trap of missing the relational opportunities offered by process work which is fundamental in enhancing self esteem (Smith, B. 2003:83)*

Likewise in relation to facilitating changes in self-esteem the importance of the relationship is highlighted:

*the major factor that enables positive change to take place is the quality of the relationship between teacher and pupil, young person and youth worker (Peel, 2003:57).*

The lack of specificity of process to its outcomes, the indeterminate relationship between what the youth worker does and the young people's learning, exemplified by the examples of 'The Smile', the analysis of 'confidence', and the recent work on self esteem, is described by Smith as 'incidental'. 'A central consideration has been the apparently incidental manner in which learning may occur in informal... situations' (Smith, 1988:127).

This indirectness of end product or outcome to the youth work process has always been seen implicitly as a problem. Smith (citing Brookfield, 1983) is quick to assure critics that the indirectness is not accidental and that the learning arises from 'much that is purposeful and deliberate' (Brookfield, 1983:12-13). The youth work and informal education field has always been defensive about this state of affairs and the educational merits implicitly have been downgraded as a result of this lack of specific relationship between input and outcome; as is evidenced by the currency of terms like 'woolly' to describe the work.

Far from being a weakness the 'indeterminedness' is a necessary condition of 'process' learning in much personal and social development. In fact as well as being indeterminate, paradoxically for the process to be successful, it is often necessary to specifically NOT focus on the end point or the desired outcome to enable its achievement.

In our example of building confidence or in the example of Kelly's smile, the focus is on 'the person', not the end point of increases in self confidence or the production of a smile (or for that matter increases in Kelly's well being). The relationship is developed, the engagement with the person is genuine, interventions and interactions purposeful and meaningful and over time outcomes emerge. Importantly it is only possible to achieve those outcomes if one doesn't focus directly on them. Clearly the interventions and interactions must be the kind of things that would ultimately support the development of those characteristics but the outcome is incidental to the process of achieving it, and it occurs specifically because one does not focus directly on its achievement.

This kind of philosophical paradox is not new. A number exist which appear to underlie the circumstances of 'being human' (or our phenomenology), which illustrate this point. For examples John Stuart Mill was the first to identify a paradox in relation to the achievement of happiness:

*But I now thought that this end [one's happiness] was only to be attained by not making*



*it the direct end. Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness[....] Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness along the way[....] Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so (Mill, 1909:94).*

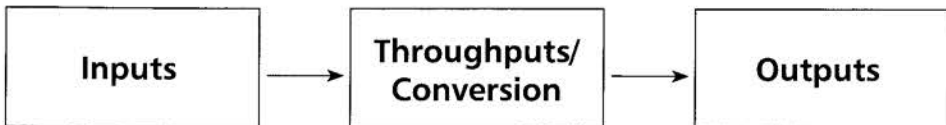
Similar paradoxes exist in relation to success, self-realisation, hedonism etc. The point is that in certain aspects of our humanity whether it be happiness, well being, success or confidence, the achievement of it arises incidentally, as a result of engaging in a process. The process is instrumental in bringing about the end point but the focus is not on the end point in its achievement.

Thus the youth work process can be seen as paradoxical; not therefore as loosely articulated and lacking in clarity, but in actually accurately describing something uniquely and necessarily human. If Brent (2004) had specifically set out to make Kelly smile, or achieve 'a profoundly important personal outcome for Kelly', it would have been impossible to achieve as focusing on that end would have derailed the process, not least because a lack of genuineness would have been apparent to Kelly.

## Curriculum as Output

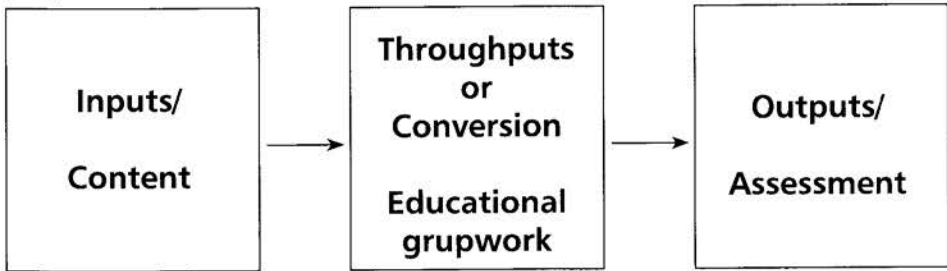
Why did this model come to be utilised as a conception of curriculum? In my article I concluded that it must have been the DfES that put pressure on the NYA, and this appeared the only plausible explanation for the change from process to product based curriculum. But clearly Merton and Wylie are adamant that this did not happen: 'this charge is close to being actionable' (2004:64). That it is solely the enterprise of the NYA, I find even more perplexing. Why should the body promoting and supporting youth work be reformulating the work and removing one of the key principles: the process. Perhaps the answer lies in a perceived need to make youth work more accountable.

There are striking similarities between Merton and Wylie's model of curriculum and the models of performance management utilised to aid accountability. For example through Systems Management Theory (Cole, 2004) which utilises a model of production, which in its simplest form can be shown as:



This theory has its origins and is embedded in the practices of private sector business management. It is a way of framing the management of production to maximise performance. That is, input of raw materials is converted through manufacturing into outputs or products for sale. It has been applied to the public sector in an attempt to improve performance and accountability; and applied specifically to youth work through the work of Ford Management Partnership (2003). Importantly it puts an emphasis on the progression of inputs through to outputs upon which accountability rests. One can quite easily see how Merton and Wylie's conception of curriculum (2002) as content, educational

groupwork and assessment is comparable to this model:



The content is inputted into the youth work session, converted through the delivery of an educational groupwork session into outcomes in terms of increased knowledge or skills, which are subsequently assessed. For example: in a sexual health awareness session, the content of knowledge and skills about how to use condoms is inputted into a groupwork session and converted into increased awareness in young people about contraception, as well as a concomitant output of a reduction in teenage pregnancies.

Interestingly in utilising ‘assessment’ instead of outcomes in the their curriculum, this enables Merton and Wylie, and subsequently the NYA and DfES in practice, to introduce assessments of outputs, as well as outcomes, initially in the guise of accreditation (DfES, 2002) and latterly the assessment of the amount of time a youth worker has with each young person; as ‘contact’.

Merton and Wylie say they want to avoid ‘some kind of Fordist production line with a fixed body of knowledge, skills and intended outcomes’ (Merton and Wylie, 2004:66), but that is what their curriculum has ended up looking like. This I would contend is the real story of the youth work curriculum and the Transforming Youth Work agenda: that youth work has ended up with a model of curriculum which is not based on the educational principle of ‘process’, but is founded on a model of performance management. In their attempt to ‘win sufficient resource from the public purse’ (2004:66), they have formulated a methodology of youth work, which relates inputs more directly to outputs and outcomes, and enables greater accountability. They have not as they would claim ‘put the learner – not the worker – at the centre’ (2004:65), they have actually put the manager centre.

## Conclusion

Merton and Wylie are adamant that they have remained true to the core principles of youth work proclaiming that, ‘Effective youth work practice is an expression of human artistry deploying both imagination and radical feeling... [it] entails nimble footwork to build on the ebb and flow of young people’s interest and enthusiasm’ (2004:66). They also assert that ‘some of the better youth work is done “on the wing”’: that is improvised from the day to day situations in which youth workers and young people relate and interact’ (2004:65).

Like the laudable ‘Youth Work Values’ the ‘Local Authority Pledge to Young People’ contained in Transforming Youth Work (DfES, 2002: Annex 1 and Annex 3), Merton and Wylie’s commentary is not inconsistent with certain principles of youth work. However, it

should be remembered that despite these statements, based upon which Merton and Wylie would have us believe there have been no significant changes to the conception of youth work, this is not the case. What is at issue is both the 'methodology of youth work' and the methodology contained within the 'curriculum'. We now have a prescribed curriculum which does not make any reference to the process of the work.

In addition according to Merton and Wylie we now have two distinct types of youth work:

- Youth work based on Merton and Wylie's Curriculum
- Youth work 'on the wing'

This is a simplistic and erroneous distinction and does not do justice to the reality of youth work in action. For example which category would Brent's 'The Arch' (2004) fall into? Is it 'curriculum' or 'On the wing'? Answer: neither provides a sufficiently good account. That is because 'The Arch' is purposeful youth work, which has the elements of process and product embedded within it, and like a lot of good youth work it will have both planned and spontaneous interventions.

Interestingly according to the definition of curriculum (Ord 2004), which is based on the curriculum documents in use in the field, 'The Arch' is encompassed by curriculum and that is because the definition of curriculum in use is a holistic concept, a necessary condition of which is the youth work process.

It is unclear exactly what Merton and Wylie regard as youth work on the wing, but if it is seen in contrast to their curriculum it will be the less explicitly planned and targeted work. Perhaps they are utilising the notion of work 'on the wing' to avoid the criticism that they have entirely removed 'open' youth work.

We do not need a new distinction at the heart of youth work between 'curriculum youth work' and 'youth work on the wing'. All youth work is purposeful and involves a process, and the process accounts for both planned and unplanned work:

*Process: one of the strengths of youth work is a dynamic nature which allows youth workers to respond appropriately to the needs of young people through a range of planned and unplanned approaches*

(West Sussex Youth Work Curriculum, 2000:8)

And importantly where is 'youth work on the wing' in the Transforming Youth Work agenda (DfES 2002)? To divide youth work up into two specific types is a dangerous precedent. One thing is for sure, once we only have a partial, product based model of curriculum for youth work, which is based on planned content and assessed outcomes and outputs, embedded in a government document with no explicit reference to open and process based youth work, this will have significant detrimental effect on the nature of youth work in the future.

Merton and Wylie admit that 'There is a danger that any attempt to conceptualise the curricular tasks of youth work risks misrepresenting its approach...' (2004:65). Unfortunately I think in their case it is clear that this has happened.

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# Essays in the History of Community & Youth Work

Edited by Ruth Gilchrist,  
Tony Jeffs & Jean Spence

Any profession that fails to learn from its past is doomed to repeat its mistakes. Community and youth work has made a huge contribution to the wellbeing of communities but, with a few honourable exceptions, it has failed to produce its own histories. By neglecting to record its successes and its failures, it has left itself vulnerable to those who would foist on it warmed-over policies that have been tried and found wanting in the past.

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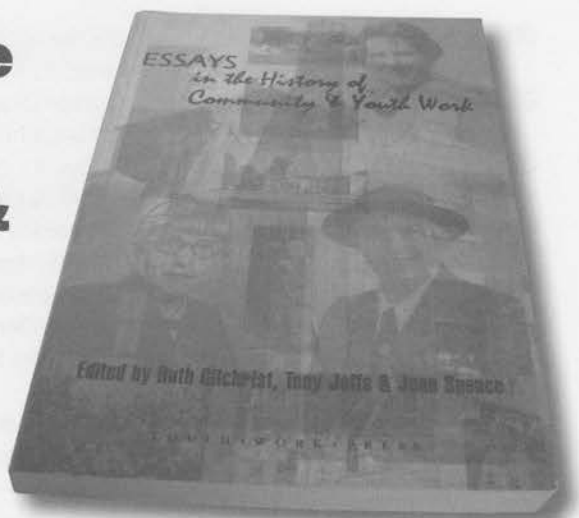
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# The Youth Work Curriculum and the Abandonment of Informal Education

*Naomi Stanton*

Jon Ord (2004) succinctly describes the political history and development behind the youth work curriculum that has led us to the position we are in today. I agree with Ord that the curricula developed in practice thus far are often somewhat different to the product-obsessed models thrust at us by the Government and The NYA, but I would question whether any curriculum is 'healthy' for youth work. Only by succumbing to the idea of curriculum at all have we reached a point where we are expected to collate measurable outcomes. We have effectively told those in power that we are willing to compromise the informal educative values of youth work. Summing up Jeffs's response to Ord's article: we have given up without a fight, some of us have even jumped right in. In voicing frustrations about the restrictions of formal schooling in America, Nocenti (2004:42) exclaims 'You have to betray the system. . . You have to operate as a saboteur in the system'. Perhaps some of us in the field of youth work should heed such advice.

The lack of attention to informal education in Ord's original article reflects its diminishing significance in youth work. Many youth work practitioners and academics no longer consider informal education to form the value-base of our methods. Informal education had been swapped for this idea of the youth work 'process' which, as acknowledged by Ord, has not been well explained. 'Process' is linked with the notion of 'the relationship', but surely youth work is about more than just the ability to foster a relationship with a young person? It is dependence upon such ambiguous concepts that suggest the need for curriculum in the first place.

Youth workers are compromising the values underlying their practice and submitting to the Government Agenda primarily because of funding. This is why The NYA's published thoughts on the youth work curriculum have moved ever closer to those being enforced by New Labour until, as argued by Ord, they seem to have become identical. Local youth services are creating curricula as a means of measuring their success in order to please Ofsted and secure Government funding; but measurable education implies formal education. A common excuse among ground level youth workers for the acceptance of curriculum is that it enables them to justify themselves as educators. This seems an easy way out of the necessity of explaining the complexity and values of informal education as a valid educational method. Yet introducing aspects of formal education into youth work threatens its holistic core.

## What is education?

To understand the role of curriculum in education, one must first understand the term 'education'. True education, which must be distinguished from the mere acquisition of knowledge, inspires explorative thinking. Therefore to have a pre-conceived depiction for the learner's response defies it.. Jeffs and Smith (1999: 12) state that 'Education is concerned with all aspects of thinking.' According to Kelly (1980):

*[E]ducation must be centrally concerned with the development of those qualities in mind that enable the individual to make critical judgements, to reach informed opinions and, in general, to think for himself . . . [F]or an act of teaching to merit the description of education the teacher must regard it as being of value and must intend that, ultimately if not initially, the pupil will see it in a similar light . . . [S]uch value shall be regarded as intrinsic to the activity and shall not be defined . . . in terms of instrumentality to some extrinsic end or purpose. If these criteria are not met, it is argued, that what is occurring may be instruction or training or socialization or even indoctrination, but it is not education. (Kelly, 1980: 8)*

Dewey (1956: 36) refers to the interpretation of education from its Latin meaning: 'The statement so frequently made that education means 'drawing out' is excellent, if we mean simply to contrast it with the process of pouring in'. It is questionable whether curriculum allows for such 'drawing out', or whether it is more concerned with the 'pouring in' of knowledge. Inflexible curricula assuming specific behavioural and emotional outcomes may restrict rather than aid education. But in educational policy the idea of education, as a measurable empirical 'science', has become increasingly popular and this is now affecting youth work.

## Models of Curriculum

Ord considers the four models of curriculum identified by Smith (1996; 2000): 'curriculum as syllabus', 'curriculum as product', 'curriculum as process', and 'curriculum as praxis'. The first two are only compatible with formal education and therefore not appropriate within youth work. The second two are more problematic in relation to the informal educational approaches of youth work.

### ***The 'Syllabus' Model***

The syllabus model or 'subject curriculum' at its most basic is the traditional form consisting of a syllabus of subjects, in which each are usually taught separately by different specialists. Smith et al (1957) summarise the criticisms of this model which 'ignores the interests and activities of the learner' (p. 245), 'fails to develop habits of effective thinking' (p.249), and is 'divorced from current and persistent social problems' (p.248). In defence it has been argued that the syllabus model provokes certain questioning and that 'children express their interests in the questions they ask' (Smith et al, 1957: 251). However it can only inspire limited questioning on certain accepted topics and such a rigid model of curriculum does not allow for such questioning to fall outside its boundaries.



### **The 'Product' Model and the Core curriculum**

The 'behavioural objectives' or 'product' curriculum model came into vogue during the 1960s and has had a long-lasting effect on curriculum theory and practice. It is this approach which inspired Nocenti's (2004:42) characterisation of the education system as 'compulsory, factory-farm-style McSchooling.' Although initiated as a movement away from the idea of 'education as content' (Kelly, 1980), it continues the obsession with content and remains restrictive in that it prescribes learning outcomes and disregards individuals. The product model assumes that the learner's reaction to education can be fully predicted beforehand:

*[It] is said [that] we need a curriculum in which detailed lists of objectives are set out. Such objectives are to be the statements of what learners are to 'think, act, and feel' as a result of a course of instruction. They must be precise, unambiguous, and measurable (Socckett,1973: 150).*

It is debatable whether such an endeavour to dictate the learner's thought processes, actions and emotions is 'education' and whether the restricted acquisition of information is not merely a manipulation of required thoughts and actions. As Kelly (1982: 121) argues, 'the notion of an educational objective might be a contradiction in terms'.

In the 'behavioural objectives' a 'hierarchy of goals' is used to set 'intended learning outcomes' for education, starting with knowledge acquisition, ending with the ability to evaluate. A second dimension involves the different categories of behaviour to be predicted: 'the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor' (Kelly, 1982:93). Reinforcement incentives condition what are deemed to be appropriate learning responses. Such a closed rigid structure is nearer to indoctrination than to education and is therefore invalid for informal educational youth work (Kelly, 1982; Smith, 1994).

The strongest criticism of the behavioural objectives/product model relates to its reductionist explanation of human behaviour. It acknowledges neither human complexity nor the issue of values that face all people. It denotes humankind as determined, lacking in free will and analyses people 'scientifically' as if they were mere objects.

*To adopt this kind of industrial model for education is to assume that it is legitimate to mould human beings . . . according to certain clear-cut intentions without making any allowance for their own individual wishes, desires or interests (Kelly, 1982: 99).*

The idea of 'core curriculum', central to the language of curriculum in youth work, is a branch of the behavioural objectives model. The core curriculum can be manipulative or person-centred depending on its application. Early core curricula were concerned with the 'concentration' of subjects. This involved identifying certain 'central subjects' to be taught, around which fitted the 'subordinate subjects' (Smith et al, 1957). Later developments of the core curriculum became more concerned with communicating common social values, as societal problems became more apparent and 'a conception took place which visualised the school as an instrument for deliberate social reconstruction and reintegration' (Smith et al, 1957: 314). This approach is implicit within the youth work curriculum where healthy, but also socially acceptable, behaviours denoting 'citizenship' are promoted to young people.

Although it values and attempts to implement through its 'processes' key aspects of liberal democracy, the core curriculum remains distinctive from truly flexible, open forms of education because it has a structure around the social values that those in power see fit to impose. The flexible content of the core curriculum is determined by structural change rather than by the individual needs of learners. Through embracing 'common values', it disguises a lack of flexibility regarding individual specialisation. Teaching is primarily task-orientated rather than process-orientated; the presence of democracy in the curriculum is only due to it being a prioritised social value and the required outcomes are ultimately of social conformity.

### ***The Process Model***

According to Kelly (1982) the process curriculum replaces pre-specified objectives with the principles underlying education. Such principles are integral to process rather than product. Probably the earliest example of the process or 'activity' curriculum is 'The Dewey Laboratory School' founded at the end of the nineteenth century. Dewey valued experimental learning, and believed that education should not be separate from the real world. He rejected traditional education which required learners to engage in passive listening rather than action on instinct, and which conceived learners as a uniform mass rather than as individuals. Dewey promoted an educational style centred around the learner and allowed 'the introduction of more active expressive, and self-directing factors' into schooling (Dewey, 1956: 29). He fostered an 'organic connection' with experience which nurtured motivation in children to learn (Dewey, 1956: 24). Dewey's intention was to embrace the activities of children and to give them 'direction'. He favoured an educational process as an 'organic whole' where, for example, children learnt to read and write as the need arose within their developing activities. This is sympathetic with youth work values as 'Youth workers should relate to young people first and foremost as individuals' (NYB, 1991: 19).

Dewey's programme is appropriate to informal education in its emphasis on education through application to the real world, without ulterior motives beyond learners' needs. His approach cannot involve pre-planning because it focuses on the child at present. Although the values of the activity curriculum are noticeable in his theory and practice, Dewey rejected the notion of curriculum altogether for its restricting features. Applying Dewey's arguments to youth work, rather than obsessing about curriculum styles, we would question whether we need curriculum at all.

In some examples, the process curriculum has used content as a method of raising questions and enquiry (Stenhouse, 1975). This was apparent in the ideas of Josephine MacAlister Brew (1946), a pioneer of informal education and youth work, who believed that it was possible to use any subject to communicate an educational message. She considered the subject matter as a vehicle for education, deeming the topic itself irrelevant (Smith, 2001). The process model of curriculum makes it practicable to 'reconcile the idea of rational curriculum planning with that of education as a continuous lifelong process to which terminal goals cannot be attributed' (Kelly, 1982: 116).

Although this model was devised for schools, it does not fit well with formal education; it is incompatible with examination procedures for example. There are no specific learning outcomes, no emphasis on syllabus or objectives; it is 'essentially a critical model, not a marking model' (Smith, 1996; 2000). In youth work, on the other hand, a programme

of activities is often present as part of planning and content but the informality of the educative situation allows this content to be used as a vehicle rather than as the focus of education.

### **The 'Praxis' Model**

Smith recognises potential in the process model for informal education, but proposes a more suitable fourth model that is 'a development of the process model': curriculum as praxis. Smith differentiates praxis from process curriculum as holding values of 'collective human well-being' and 'the emancipation of the human spirit'.

*The praxis model of curriculum theory and practice brings these to the centre of the process and makes an explicit commitment to emancipation. Thus action is not simply informed, it is also committed. It is praxis. (Smith 1996; 2000)*

The commitment to emancipation does not justify, rather it contradicts curricula imposing social values upon young people. For Smith, an educator utilising a curriculum approaches learning with a 'proposal for action', but

*Informal educators do not have, and do not need, this element. . . Rather, they have an idea of what makes for human well-being, and an appreciation of their overall role and strategy (Smith 1996; 2000).*

Whilst curriculum theory and practice make sense in relation to related concepts such as 'class', 'lesson', 'course', these are only appropriate to formal schooling. The impact of using such concepts on the informal educational situation is therefore, according to Smith, to formalise it:

*[W]hen informal educators take on the language of curriculum they are crossing the boundary between their chosen specialism and the domain of formal education . . . [W]e should not fall into the trap of thinking that to be educators we have to adopt curriculum theory and practice. . . Education is something more than schooling. (Smith 1996; 2000)*

It could be argued that education has been destroyed by the formal structures of the school and that informal education encompasses the true characteristics of education. The current demand for proof of effectiveness through the measurement of outcomes in both the formal and the informal setting requires us to sacrifice holistic education for a quantitative scientific approach akin to indoctrination and unworthy of the title 'education'.

## **What is informal education?**

Informal learning involves unplanned, incidental, even accidental, learning in everyday experience. Informal education involves an educator creating an environment to facilitate informal learning rather than leaving it to chance. Traditionally, youth work has adopted informal education as its main method of working with young people. Jeffs and Smith

(1999) define it as follows.

*It is the process of fostering learning in life as it is lived. A concern with community and conversation; a focus on people as persons rather than objects; a readiness to educate in different settings. (Jeffs and Smith 1999:7).*

The use of the adjective 'informal' derives from the setting, voluntary participation, and the absence of curriculum in informal education. Insofar as it is purposeful, other major characteristics include dialogue as 'an invitation to critical thinking' (Jeffs and Smith, 1990:9). Such education should be intrinsic to everyday life experience and hence, 'informal educators work where people are' (Jeffs and Smith, 1999:6). 'Another essential of informal education is that one should use the language of the people, and be both clear and homely' (Brew, 1946:40). The nature of language used and setting created by the educator are essential in ensuring people are comfortable enough for dialogue to take place. Because informal education is non-compulsory, the educator must be an 'interesting', 'warm' and 'engaging' person that people want to learn from and with (Jeffs and Smith, 1999). These characteristics work together to create a context for informal education to take place.

## Curriculum and Informal Education

The dilemma in applying a curriculum to youth work is that it replaces informal education. If all the characteristics of informal education are to be adopted by the educator, then the use of an inflexible curriculum with a pre-determined structure is impossible. Jeffs and Smith (1990:11) state that 'A concern for staying with the developing understandings of the participants is central to informal education'. Curriculum does not allow for this. By implementing a curriculum many of the values of informal education are compromised and its true meaning lost.

Brew (1946:30) believed that 'the true educator can teach most things through one subject'. It could be argued here that a true educator could then educate around learner-defined needs through any subject, including those restricted by a curriculum. However a curriculum intrinsically forces the educator to consider ulterior objectives above and beyond those defined by the learner. Informal education should be 'natural and spontaneous' (Jeffs and Smith, 1990). Merton and Wylie (2002) argue that 'a curriculum does not preclude spontaneity: rather it helps the spontaneous, intuitive action to find its place within an overall direction' (Merton and Wylie, 2002: 7). They suggest that via curriculum, needs can be categorised into learning areas when they arise and are thus justified or 'given direction'. However, a learning need arising that does not fit into the curriculum is potentially disregarded; Because of the unexpected way a new unforeseen need can be made known to the informal educator and the immediacy with which it must be addressed, curriculum is obstructive to informal education.

*Within this style there is no fixed body of knowledge necessary to be passed on. Learning begins with that which immediately confronts the learner. It is not imposed externally through a curriculum. There is encouragement for divergent and creative thinking and a general striving for whole-person education. Emphasis is placed on discovering and learning things by experiencing them (Rosseter, 1987:53-54).*

Informal education involves experiential learning. The educator does not impart knowledge but facilitates through dialogue the learner's critical thinking in relation to their needs. A curriculum cannot be applied to natural conversation, the tool of informal education. As stated by Dewey (1956), education is concerned with 'drawing out', curriculum is concerned with putting in.

## Three Modes of Education

Education can be split into three different types: formal, informal and non-formal. Formal education is the easiest of these to define and the least ambiguous. It is that education with a structured curriculum, taking place in a formal setting where attendance is compulsory. Informal education has often been misunderstood and non-formal education is often not known. They can be defined as follows.

*[I]nformal education is the lifelong process in which people learn from everyday experience; and non-formal education is organized educational activity outside formal systems. (Jefferis and Smith, 1999:118)*

Informal education has often been mistaken as any education occurring in an informal setting but this is often actually non-formal. Informal education is a process that creates an appropriate environment for assessing and responding to the learner's needs, whereas non-formal education would be that education in an informal setting that has pre-planned content and potentially a curriculum.

*Formal education is linked with schools and training institutions; non-formal with community groups and other organizations; and informal covers what is left, e.g. interactions with friends, family and work colleagues (Jefferis and Smith, 1999:118).*

This suggests different settings for the different types of education. However it is often not as clear-cut as it might seem here; the different types of education can overlap. For example, the formal and informal can merge.

*It is difficult to make a clear distinction between informal and formal learning as there is often some crossover between the two. The setting itself is not necessarily a defining element: some informal learning takes place in formal educational environments (such as schools) while some formal learning takes place in an informal local setting (such as church or village halls) (McGivney, 1999:1).*

Rather than justifying the use of curriculum or other contradictions in informal education, this description of the possible overlap suggests that formal education can take place in the informal setting of a youth club. If curriculum is applied to youth work, then education becomes non-formal, even formal. The current emphasis upon curriculum poses the danger of youth centres, clubs and projects becoming formal settings where, although attendance is voluntary, participation in curriculum is compulsory, education is structured, ulterior motives are present, and many of the pre-existing values of youth work are lost.

## The Youth Work Curriculum and National Agenda

The Government acknowledges the unique element of youth work in comparison with other services for young people and regards it as beneficial: 'Only the youth service has as its primary purpose the personal and social development of young people' (DfES, 2002: 6). However having recognised the potential of youth work, it then attempts to impose controls upon it, and thus undermine the essence of it.

The curriculum as described by Merton and Wylie (2002) and the DfES (2002) sets objectives or pre-determined outcomes for youth work: 'The more clearly we can specify the ends, the better we will be able to choose the means for achieving them' (DfES, 2002: 11). At least these 'ends' are to be set at local level:

*It is not appropriate to lay down nationally what constitutes a curriculum for the diversity of youth work across the country. But each local authority and national voluntary youth organisation should have a document which sets out the curriculum framework for its youth work. (DfES, 2002: 27)*

However there are requirements for content, such as 'an emphasis on promoting active citizenship and engagement with democratic and political processes'. Meanwhile, the focus on individual needs should lead on to 'reflect wider social issues' (DfES, 2002: 11). There is a strong focus on citizenship, and the acknowledged needs such as 'employability' and 'drugs and alcohol education' seem to fit nicely into it as means of eradicating anti-social behaviour and ensuring that 'every young person participates fully in society and the economy' (DfES, 2002: 3). Merton and Wylie (2002) reiterate the aims stated by the Government in 'Resourcing Excellent Youth Services' (DfES, 2002) including 'assessing progress' and 'outcomes' of youth work. Yet it could be argued that one of the values of youth work lies in its egalitarian approach of not assessing the progress of young people and thus not creating divisions by highlighting differing levels of ability and achievement.

Merton and Wylie defend the curriculum that pre-specifies learning outcomes.

*The specification of learning outcomes can provide . . . a means of explaining the processes and benefits of informal learning to young people, policy-makers and other stakeholders. A curriculum can render transparent what sometimes seems to be the invisible art of youth work. (Merton and Wylie, 2002:7)*

The argument returns to the idea that curriculum can justify the youth worker's role and hence, public funding.

But how can a curriculum justify the educational style it contradicts? Surely, there would be more credit in explaining the nature of informal education than adopting a formal educative tool to defend it. Brent (2004) argues that the introduction of scientific methods of measurement such as outcomes and performance indicators 'have robbed youth work of its ability to express and explain itself on its own terms and in its own more subtle vocabulary'.

Merton and Wylie (2004) claim that they are not proposing a 'mechanised routinised

approach' to implementing a youth work curriculum. Perhaps then they should consider why people are misinterpreting their proposals; 'Towards a Contemporary Curriculum for Youth Work' certainly comes across as valuing pre-specified objectives and rigorous assessment of the progress of young people. By acknowledging that 'some of the better youth work is done "on the wing"' and is 'improvised' (Merton and Wylie, 2002:6), they merely demonstrate that they are distracting the practitioner from such 'better youth work' with their proposed framework. You cannot put a youth worker under the influence of a curriculum that measures their effectiveness, and yet claim to value the spontaneous nature of good youth work. Such spontaneous work is destined to be disregarded by the worker seeking to meet the demands of curriculum. As Robertson (2004) recognises, the instances of incidental learning that used to be the core of youth work have become mere 'by-products' in the journey toward specific outcomes. The curriculum puts pressure on the worker to respond first and foremost to its stated priorities and not the needs of the young people. As Brent (2004) asks: 'Whose success is it, the youth worker's, or the young person's?' What exactly does the curriculum measure?

Merton and Wylie (2002) describe what they consider to be the strengths of a curriculum for youth work.

*A curriculum offers purpose, structure and focus to youth work activity where it can be lacking. It can introduce important considerations such as breadth, relevance or differentiation for individual needs and progression as young people develop (Merton and Wylie, 2002: 7)*

The problem with this is that if youth work is to remain as informal education then structure is a hindrance. All spontaneous learning needs are relevant to the young person concerned; a curriculum merely filters out the needs irrelevant to that curriculum. As far as differentiating between learning needs is concerned, a curriculum only allows prioritisation according to that curriculum. A curriculum is more controlled, more monitorable than the individual worker's discretion, but no part of the situation in which the corresponding needs arise is taken into account in differentiating between and prioritising needs. Contrary to Merton and Wylie's suggestion, informal education lacking in curriculum is concerned with young people's progression and development; it simply chooses to remain informal and accepts that certain aspects of humanity cannot be scientifically assessed through reductionist means.

It has been suggested that a youth work curriculum simply provides a testable model for educating young people in a context where '[Youth Workers] have not developed literature-based models of learning' (Newman and Ingram, 1989:26). This is incorrect. Youth work theorists have provided models of learning (e.g. Kolb's Learning Cycle, [1984]) without resorting to curricula, but these models have not been adopted as the basis for assessing the value of youth work. Newman and Ingram argue that by rejecting curricula and other structures as a reaction against more formal styles of education youth workers have isolated themselves:

*The time has gone when the Youth Service could survive by ignoring the rest of the world of education. What is important is how it responds to changes, as this will*

*determine whether the characteristics which make it unique will continue to be available to young people* (Newman and Ingram, 1989: 41).

However it is the lack of curriculum and formal structures which form a substantial part of the uniqueness, values and success of youth work as informal education. The Youth Service can certainly interact with other educational agencies, and often does so, without abandoning informal education and its refreshing uniqueness from other forms of education.

The curriculum style currently being set for youth work is not even one of the most flexible radical forms. It imposes outcomes, acting then as a means to an end. Curriculum is necessary because Government requires it, and there are simply not enough informal educators refusing submission to such policy. The only potentially appropriate curricula are the self-directed models set at ground level and moving at the learner's pace. However, all forms of curricula restrict informal education and response to spontaneous needs to some extent and ought to be more correctly categorised within the framework of non-formal education. Although the process or praxis curriculum does have some potential to allow youth work to continue functioning as informal education, such models for curriculum development actually contradict the accepted definitions. They are more concerned with direction than specific content. Many curriculum theorists opting for a more flexible style of curricula use the term 'organic' in its definition (Newman and Ingram, 1989; Hunter and Scheirer, 1988 cited in Jeffs and Smith, 1990). However there is nothing organic or natural about the imposed structure that is generally understood as curriculum. Newman and Ingram (1989: 1) acknowledge that curriculum is constantly being redefined and that 'The trend has been to widen the meaning of the word'. Perhaps it would be more appropriate for youth work to reject the notion of curriculum altogether than to redefine it: 'if curriculum is process then the word curriculum is redundant because process would do very nicely!' (Smith, 1996; 2000).

## **A Youth Work Curriculum in Practice**

In a study I recently carried out on a local authority youth service, I examined the effect of a recently implemented curriculum on young people and staff. The study involved an analysis of the curriculum document, a questionnaire survey of the views of young people and interviews with staff in one school-based unit of the service, two focus group discussions with young people using the unit, and an interview with a youth service manager.

It could be observed from the service's curriculum document that local youth services are being forced to find a compromise between informal education and the need for evidence of educational success. Thus Resourcing Excellent Youth Services (REYS) has had a major impact in the design. For example, REYS states that 'The youth work curriculum includes the totality of experiences, opportunities and challenges provided . . . through an organisation's method, structure and programme' (DfES, 2002: 27). The eight curriculum areas devised in this local authority seemed to cover all possible needs that could arise for young people. However, specified outcomes from each curriculum area are described as 'possible' in a bid to use the curriculum to support the use of informal education. As required by REYS, 'citizenship and engagement with democratic and political processes' is a key area (DfES,



2002: 11). However the aim is to implement curriculum in response to the identified needs of young people and the stated values are in line with article 12 of U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child: it is intended that young people are continually involved in determining how the curriculum is implemented in each unit of the service. Some forms of accreditation are suggested in the document under the relevant curriculum areas (e.g. first aid courses) but generally this local authority curriculum is intended as part of a process and as a means of planning and reflecting on work with young people.

The service's curriculum document shares some common features with other examples and also has some differences. For example the ten areas outlined in the Torbay curriculum framework (2003) are similar to the eight areas of the curriculum under examination. However, while the possible outcomes identified by the local youth service which I studied relate just to young people's development and not to any impact on community or society, Torbay also state specific overall 'societal' outcomes. The main priority in the former is the personal development of the young person without much consideration of the benefit to society as a whole (though this may have informed some of the possible outcomes, it is not the targeted outcome itself). The development of the young people may affect their community but this is not the objective of the curriculum. This is closer to an informal educational approach where the focus is on the individual; the learner may contribute to society as a result of education but only where it stems from an identified personal need, the benefit to society is not the aim of the process.

Although the curriculum of the youth service studied seems to primarily focus on the most prevalent needs of the young people, it does have a motive to mould them into 'socially acceptable' adults, influenced by the demands of REYS for youth services to emphasise 'active citizenship' (DfES, 2002: 11). As Lawton (1975) suggested, the main purpose of curriculum is to communicate appropriate social behaviours and values down the generations. The question is, who defines these 'appropriate' behaviours and values?

From the 208 questionnaires completed by young people accessed via the school in which the youth work unit was situated, leisure activities were most desired. Least popular were youth forums, community involvement and youth achievement awards. Yet the highest priorities for youth work from the Government are participation and citizenship (e.g. youth forums and community involvement) and accreditation for young people (e.g. youth achievement awards). One of the focus groups of young people stated that they valued participation but 'don't like it that citizenship is imposed' upon them.

The main point made by the youth work manager during interview was that curriculum was needed to 'defend' a profession that had been badly justified thus far. She felt that due to some bad practice as well as an inability to explain the work, curriculum was essential now to justify the youth worker's role as an educator. It is true of any profession that the quality of its work is uneven across the field. Curriculum has been adopted in response to 'bad practice' and to guide 'good practice' in order to improve the overall quality. The manager made it clear that she values informal education and had attempted to design a curriculum that will allow it to continue. There is some potential for this as the areas cover all issues that could arise. However as acknowledged by the youth workers at ground level, 'The worker has a choice – respond to the young people then apply it to the curriculum, or act on the curriculum and attempt to apply it to young people'. A worker may feel pressured

to respond to the curriculum before the young people; they cannot ignore the fact that it is there to assess their practice.

The part-time staff interviewed in the study believed that they personally implement the curriculum only as it corresponds to young people's needs. One of the young people's focus groups supports this as they said that the areas most relevant to them were covered in the most depth. However the workers did admit to feeling some worry about how they use the curriculum. The pressure to plan more structured activity around the curriculum areas was criticised by one of the workers due to 'the unpredictability of needs'. The youth work manager stated that the curriculum should not change their work, a position adopted by the National Youth Bureau in the context of the First Ministerial Conference held at the outset of Government attempts to impose a curriculum on the Youth Service:

*[T]he task is not so much a case of 'inventing' a curriculum, but rather of examining and evaluating [youth work] practice in order to identify and state clearly its unique contribution for the future. (NYB 1990: 29)*

Although the workers in my study believed that they have not allowed the curriculum to affect their work to a great degree, they did feel it had lowered the quality of their reflection. If the 'quality of evaluation is compromised' then the curriculum is defying its intentions. By improving overall 'scientific' evaluation, individual workers are losing the quality of reflection they had from reviewing their work as a whole; instead they are subdividing it into 'boxes'. However not all units of the service were previously engaging in any written reflection, so it might be that overall having any such procedure in place is an improvement.

The eight curriculum areas do seem to encompass all the needs of young people. Those who completed the questionnaire rated all of them as approximately halfway between 'not important at all' and 'very important' on average while the young people in the focus groups found all of them important (bar one area per group). But leisure activities were the most popular provision with 78% of young people desiring day trips and 64% leisure facilities. All other suggestions for provision and activities scored less than 38% except for the 70% desiring an internet café. Holiday activities and residential trips were followed by dance, drama and sports in popularity. 86% of the suggestions made by the young people in the 'other, please state' sections of the questionnaire were strictly leisure activities.

Although recreational activities can have educational value of their own, the informal educator often uses them as a vehicle to foster an environment for informal education, where young people are comfortable and their needs can be assessed. Rather than being a separate curriculum area, such activities are the vehicle for education around all of the other areas. The REYS document states that youth work 'may use the arts or adventurous activities as vehicles for learning' (DfES, 2002: 6). Informal education is 'the process of fostering learning in life as it is lived' and 'Informal educators work where people are' (Jeffs and Smith, 1999: 6-7). Thus leisure activities enjoyed by young people are an ideal setting for informal education as they are unthreatening and part of everyday experience. They can act as relationship or rapport building exercises between the youth worker and the young people prior to informal education, or they can create the atmosphere and situation

where informal education occurs as needs arise and are addressed. Torbay Council's (2003) 'Informal Learning Activities' curriculum area is perhaps the most appropriately named.

During a recent Ofsted inspection of the service studied, a dominant question arising from the inspectors, both in focus groups with staff and on unit visitations, was that of how the youth worker knows they are effective without measurable evaluation procedures and accreditation for young people. A question in response is how can scientific controls be applied to a holistic phenomenon? They cannot. Brent (2004) states that 'Accreditation should not be confused with achievement. Better things can happen than gaining a certificate!' and reminds us that youth work is an ongoing process: 'the outcomes . . . have not ended – they will run on through those young people's lives'.

## Conclusion

The most important feature of 'curriculum' is its purpose to ensure that quality, worthwhile, and relevant education takes place. Ideally curriculum would not be necessary, but in the current political climate, curriculum has become an accepted part of most forms and methods of education. Proof is required of effectiveness of all services receiving Government funding, and by many other sources of funding. A 'curriculum' is one means of monitoring education, and serving as documented evidence. However in controlling education, it also restricts it.

Curriculum allows for outside influence, ulterior motives, and the imposition of national policy agendas; thus the learners' needs cease to be first priority. Curriculum serves as a tool for manipulation and a means to an end. It is not primarily an educational tool; it is a measurement device. Without curriculum and the predetermined definition of outcomes, education is considered unregulated and unaccountable, giving the individual educator the opportunity to manipulate unseen, to their own ends, should they choose to do so. Such a criticism is often made of informal education, but curriculum is not an appropriate answer. Curriculum was designed for use in formal education, which is specific and controlled.

The 1989 Ministerial Conference document discussing a core curriculum for youth work acknowledges that 'A significant number of young people felt a reduction in their choice of learning as a consequence of the national curriculum' (NYB, 1990: 46). It was felt, across the field, that the youth service should not impose the same restrictions. It can be argued that where a strict curriculum is enforced, education cannot take place. However, despite this criticism, rigid forms are widely used. There is potential for flexible models of curricula such as the process model to work educationally but such models have been largely abandoned within formal education. The praxis curriculum as defined by Smith (1996; 2000) has some potential for application to informal education and the youth work setting but in some senses, the use of the term 'curriculum' is hardly necessary for this approach.

Curriculum has been applied to youth work to ensure Government objectives are met. Its benefit to the youth worker is that it enables them to justify their role and status within the educational sector, something they may be constantly defending to other educational practitioners. However if a youth worker is committed to an informal educative delivery style, this would be more effectively done by explaining and justifying informal education

rather than undermining it. The values of informal education may be lost by the constant attempts to control, justify, and measure it, instead of celebrating its unique qualities from other forms of education. As curricula are increasingly applied to education of an informal nature, it is likely the values of informal education will be sacrificed, and questionable whether true education will remain.

If youth work is to continue to value informal education as its predominant method of work, then the notion of a curriculum for youth work is an oxymoron. Curriculum is restrictive whereas informal education is not. It is a high priority of informal education to reject curriculum. Youth work is becoming less about the needs of the individual and more concerned with national agenda. So the youth worker is faced with a decision: do they choose to submit to national policy and abandon informal education, and with it the rare affinity they are able to have with young people? If so, youth work will take a new form that is separate from informal education. Alternatively, do they continue to embrace informal education and fight to maintain it as a priority for youth work? Too many workers are quietly attempting to fit it around the requirements placed upon them from above. The youth worker's unique, somewhat equal, trust relationship with young people, free from ulterior motives unlike that of the teacher or the social worker, is in danger of being lost. Surely if we submit to even small compromises of our flexibility in a culture that prizes the scientifically quantifiable, more such demands will simply be imposed upon us.

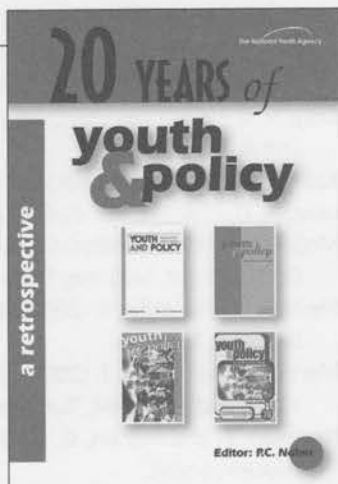
Youth work has now succumbed to the pressure to adopt curriculum as an evaluation procedure thus giving Government agenda a powerful influence in its work. The purposes and some of the consequences of curriculum remain the same however mild the particular example. The Youth Service no longer has the personal needs of young people as individuals as its priority. The youth work curriculum framework imposed by the REYS document is not even one of the most flexible forms of curricula (e.g. the process model), it promotes the setting of 'specific outcomes' for our work (DfES, 2002). The only logical conclusion to be made is the stark reality that youth work is abandoning informal education as its method of work with young people. It now remains to be seen whether in our attempts to keep the funding, we will also keep the young people.

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# Curriculum in Youth Work: An old debate in new clothes?

*Bernard Davies*

## The current debate: where is the history?

The debate on 'curriculum' sparked in recent issues of *Youth and Policy* by Jon Ord's cogently argued and well researched initial contribution (Ord, 2004[a]) has sometimes been testy, even to the point of prompting a veiled threat of libel action! It is nonetheless to be welcomed, not least for Ord's uncompromising reassertion of process as central to youth work.

For me, however, the exchanges so far have lacked historical penetration. Ord (2004[a]) states explicitly that 'the notion of curriculum in youth and community work does not have a long history' while Jeffs (2004) and Robertson (2004) confine themselves to some passing anecdotal references to the past. All, including Merton and Wiley (2004), date the emergence of curriculum into the youth work discourse from the late 1980s and the then Conservative government's attempts through a series of ministerial conferences to persuade youth workers to adopt a 'core curriculum'. Here, apparently, was one of those historical moments after which nothing was quite the same again.

If all we are discussing is the use of the term, then strictly speaking all this is true. However, implicit in the exchanges seems to be an assumption that until twenty or so years ago a practice shaped by principles and approaches associated with 'curriculum' was unknown to youth work. For the conceptual framework of curriculum to take hold, the argument seems to run, outsiders – particularly centralising politicians, civil servants and directors of national agencies – have needed to intervene, often clumsily, in the process. In so doing, they have imposed wholly alien ideas on a resentful and resistant Youth Service.

But is this true? Were the key premises and constructs underpinning 'curriculum' really so foreign to youth work thinking and action in the 1980s? A more extended and critical reading of youth work's past reveals a rather more complicated and contradictory picture. This suggests that:

1. From its very early days the practice of youth work has been explained, justified and shaped by implicit notions of 'curriculum'. They are no less powerful for being implicit.
2. The most important changes in this area of practice and provision have concerned who (which agencies and institutions) have had the power to define such 'curricula', and in whose interests; how (through what dominant processes) they have expected this to be implemented; and how far young people's definitions can gain greater leverage and impact on these processes.

3. The challenges, even threats, to some of the core features of youth work posed by these shifts of power certainly need to be clearly understood and resisted. No less important, however, is the need to guard against mere dogmatic rejection of all that has happened and is happening. Instead youth workers and their managers need to use their confidence in youth work's distinctiveness and effectiveness to identify and exploit what is positive within the changes.

These are the core issues which this article will attempt to unpack.

## Model-centred youth work – curriculum prefigured?

Youth workers have not been the best at recording what they do or why. As a result, objective evidence to support my arguments is not easy to provide: indeed, some of my main starting (and ending) points are explicitly personal. In the mid-1960s, my colleague Alan Gibson and I wrote *The Social Education of the Adolescent* (Davies and Gibson, 1967). This text is undeniably a product of and for its time, and can now therefore be treated as an historical document. Amongst other things, it sought to reflect back to youth workers some of what we saw as youth work's dominant ideas and practices. In what Jeffs (1992) has described as 'a remarkable decade in the historical development of the youth service', we saw what we called 'model-centred' youth work as one of the main and most contentious targets for change.

Our critique started from the proposition that, too often, youth work methods were 'model-centred'. They were dependent on 'a battery of verbal formulae' (for example, 'planning your winter programme') which had created such 'a wide ... stock of ready-mades (that there (was) no need for tailoring'. Such approaches, we argued, rested on a belief that there existed 'a model (of work) which not only exemplifies what the young should become, but also to some extent prescribes how they should be helped towards it.' Boiled down to its basics, such models entailed adults 'suing their own ends, pushing their own interests, advocating their own ideas and views of the world.' What is more, they were doing this 'in a setting purporting to be for the benefit of young people' where 'the young person would seem entitled to expect much less pressure and adult organisation of that time than in fact he (sic) often encounters.'

How widely these generalisations were true for 1960s practice is now hard to establish. However, there are at least two (albeit only circumstantial) pieces of evidence. Firstly, only ten years before, a new high profile youth organisation, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme had been created. Though the Scheme's sponsors have always argued that its application is infinitely flexible, its basis was (and is) a 'modular' curriculum – 'four sections of activity, in which standards are set and achievement recorded for each of (three) levels. Secondly, at the very start of the decade, the highly influential and authoritative Albemarle Committee report (1960) commented on how it had

*been struck by the great number of occasions ... on which words such as the following have been used as though they were commonly accepted and valid currency: 'service', 'dedication', 'leadership', 'character building' ... (Such terms) recall the hierarchies, the less interesting moments of school speech days and other occasions of exhortation. (Emphasis in the original).*



The critique of model-centred youth work offered in *The Social Education of the Adolescent* seemed to touch some highly sensitive nerves, particularly on the voluntary sector wing of the Youth Service. For example, one commentator suggested that without such models to guide them youth workers could end up being scared into a state of inertia. More specifically, to offer just one by no means exceptional illustration from the time, the National Association of Boys' Clubs (NABC) specifically included within its purpose for boys' clubs:

*To belong to a group of boys of about their own age with whom they can follow virile pursuits and strive for the outward looking and adventurous ideals for which boys and young men aspire; ... (and) to play games enthusiastically and, if possible, well.*

It is true that at no point in these or other statements at the time did the term curriculum appear. Nevertheless, in retrospect, in the arguments of the defenders of 'model-centred' approaches it is possible to identify elements of most of the different conceptions of curriculum outlined by Ord (2004). Certainly, these included, as they always had, attention to building caring and supportive relationships with young people – in effect 'curriculum as process'.

However, vigorous defences were also mounted of a provider's right, indeed duty, to have their work shaped primarily by their personal beliefs and values, by their (class) criteria of good and proper behaviour, and by leisure interests which they saw as uplifting and enlightening in their own right – regardless of who the actual young people were. Within such a stance, the two other curricular perspectives outlined by Ord are clearly recognisable, indeed often predominant:

1. 'Curriculum as syllabus', involving the transmission of a range of specified content – not just soft skills such as 'sportsmanship' and 'self-discipline' as laid out in the NABC quotation but also, often, harder activity skills, specific religious beliefs and practices and given definitions of social roles – for example, as workers, parents, citizens of an empire, and as men or women.
2. 'Curriculum as product', requiring that aims be set, plans (here expressed as 'programmes of activity') be drawn up and implemented and outcomes measured – for example, via success in *activity competitions*.

All of this suggests that Robertson (2004) is wrong when, in defending youth workers' commitment to 'listen to young people and not impose our views of what their lives should be like', she implies that such approaches have been challenged only relatively recently and only because governments have imposed curricular frameworks on the work. Such impositions, clearly apparent in the 1960s as an inheritance from their past, have always been liable to block, dilute or divert a listening practice, even if it took until the later 1980s for 'curriculum' itself to dare speak its name.

## The struggle for person-centred practice

What particularly lacks historical perspective is the implication which could be read out of Robertson's comment that 'listening' practice is a self-evidently 'natural' and 'inevitable' feature of youth work. Insofar as such a practice actually exists today, it does so because, at key moments in their history, youth workers have articulated what it requires and then

struggled to legitimise and apply it, often against powerful resistance. One such 'moment' was the 1960s, which is perhaps why Jeffs, as we noted earlier, regarded this as such a remarkable decade.

Here, as ever, context was all. When he published his autobiography in 1962, Ray Gosling was a 23 year old former teddy boy who had already lived through the rise and fall of an alternative town centre 'youth venture' run by young people themselves. As he has recently reminded us (Gosling, 2004), for him and many of his generation these were their times, embodying 'the dreams of youth at the very beginning of the world ... the first murmuring, almost incoherent muttering stumbling teenage fumbblings towards the Great Rebellion that was to change the world as it had been'. What, looking back over forty years later, did Gosling see himself and his generation rejecting, rebelling against?

*... back then we'll said NO to family, past, church, tradition, work as nine to five, as factory fodder; say no to the Lord and no to the Vicar and no to ownership. Yes, no to that for that enslaves and no, no, no, no, as to 'getting on', 'doing well'.*

In such a climate, the exhortation of their elders on which the *Albemarle Report* had commented had become less and less acceptable to the young, especially when the adults concerned came from very different class and cultural backgrounds. Indeed, on this, too, *Albemarle* was equally forthright. It started from the explicit proposition that youth work organisations were failing to 'connect with the realities of life as most young people see them; (that) they do not seem to speak "to their condition"'. It then explained this gap as emanating from a 'mistaken' way of expressing the aims of the Youth Service since 'for many young people today, discussion of "spiritual values" or "Christian values" chiefly arouses suspicion.'

*Albemarle's* more positive 'take' on these issues was to advocate a variety and flexibility of provision. But – having 'not yet encountered a young person except at the receiving end (of the Service)' – it also insisted that 'the young must participate'. Moreover, in strikingly contemporary language, it concluded that this could not be 'sufficiently guaranteed merely by club and unit committees or youth councils'. More important, it required that young people, as 'the fourth partner', take on 'responsibility and leadership'.

The alternative to the dominance of model-centred ways of conceptualising youth work suggested in *The Social Education of the Adolescent* had strong echoes of this perspective. This called for the development of 'client-centred' ways of working – perhaps, today, more comfortably labelled (young) person-centred. This was a practice to be 'decided primarily by the requirements and expectations of the young people with whom an adult is **actually** working, according to the circumstances in which these young people **actually** find themselves'. (Emphases added). To support this starting point, the book also argued (in retrospect, somewhat over-optimistically) that such a practice, to be effective, needed to be rooted in a highly disciplined approach resting in particular on an understanding of young people's situation 'enriched ... by the accumulated experience of practitioners and by the work of the human scientists' (Davies and Gibson, 1967).

To put a more contemporary gloss on what this 'discipline' might require, in their preparation and planning and/or 'on the wing' (DES, 1987) youth workers would need to

proceed by asking such questions as:

- Who are *these* young people? As individuals and, usually, as peer group members, too? What are their levels of confidence and self-esteem – in their relationships with their closest friend or friends; within their peer group; with adults, especially with us, the youth workers actually in touch with them?
- Are we deciding that some *adult intervention* in these young people's lives is justified? On what evidence? How motivated are they likely to be for such a contact?
- What are the most appropriate ways of *personalising this first contact* – tailoring it to who they are and where they have reached in their (personal and group) development? Where could this contact best happen? Who should try to make it? Male or female? Black or white? Gay or straight (if such choices are available)?
- Within what '*activity*' or other context?
- Could *connections* be made between these starting points and any suggestions for moving on beyond them – for trying to *prompt some additional developmental opportunities* for these young people? How might this be attempted? How motivated would these young people be for this? What inputs might be needed to create/increase this motivation?
- Within all this, how best to tread the delicate line between supporting and increasing, and certainly not undermining, *these young people's independence and control* over their own lives?

*The Social Education of the Adolescent* did go on to acknowledge that, in the complexity of human interactions, model-centred and person-centred frameworks could not be treated as if they were mutually exclusive. Some overlap was inevitable if only because the personal beliefs and attributes of the worker, to say nothing of the expectations and sanctions of the wider society, would always influence what was done – often strongly and sometimes decisively. Nonetheless, a bottom-line principle for the youth work advocated by the book was that 'the potentiality and needs of the young people themselves must now receive the major emphasis' – with the 'now' making it clear that much practice was regarded as still falling short of this standard.

As the flip-side of the defence of model-centred approaches, such propositions were also often attacked. More traditional Youth Service interests in particular saw them as a typical concoction of a period already being labelled as 'permissive'. As such, they were dismissed as 'value-free' and so morally bankrupt, and as likely to encourage a practice with few worthwhile or discernible (?measurable) results.

The way in which Robertson is able to offer up 'listening' youth work as the self-evidently preferred youth work approach perhaps indicates how far youth workers have come in the past forty years (at least on paper) in overcoming the resistance of the 1960s sceptics. However, as such progress is never inevitable, it would be risky to assume that responsive person-centred principles are now finally embedded in their practice.

As Jeffs and Smith (1989) pointed out some years ago, even those committed to such principles can be faced with tricky dilemmas – for example, in seeking to safeguard person-centredness within 'issue-based' youth work aimed at raising young people's consciousness of oppression and discrimination. This risk here is of

*... a drift towards the attempted imposition of the practitioner's point of view rather than an exploration and development of the young people's. It is the contemporary equivalent of the character-building tradition of Baden -Powell and his ilk.*

More immediately and threateningly, however, the often very powerful critics of person-centredness have not just melted away. As we saw repeatedly under Thatcher and as Blair reminded us earlier this year, the so-called 'permissiveness' of the sixties has remained an easy political target, together with so many of the progressive social policies and institutions which it helped to generate.

## **The power to define: from *noblesse oblige* to New Labour modernisation**

The conclusion to be drawn from all of this is surely that person-centred practice will need to continue to be explained and defended and awareness and understanding of it constantly refreshed. Indeed the changed political landscape – particularly in this context the changed locus of power in determining the meaning, content and processes of youth work – make this task very urgent.

Forty years ago, control of these definitions, including the precise nature of youth work's implicit 'curriculum as syllabus' and 'curriculum as product', were still lodged mainly with the sponsors and managers of a range of charitable organisations. Their roots lay in the *noblesse oblige* assumptions of a century or more earlier, when the only viable and acceptable way of making an effective collective response to something like young people's leisure needs, especially when it required their voluntary participation, lay in the responsibility of the haves, the privileged, to and for the have-nots.

Out of these obligations emerged what came to be known as 'youth leadership' – a phrase which clearly signals some of the practice's underpinning values and intentions. The charitable organisations sponsoring this provision did not lose their power to define the nature of this work overnight, nor did they surrender it willingly. During the first half of the twentieth century, though with only minimal effect, the state tried more than once to secure a foothold. Even the 1944 Education Act, though seeking to establish a more explicit (central as well as local) state role for developing the Service of Youth, left behind a very delicately balanced set of power relations within a (notional) statutory-voluntary 'partnership' (see Davies, 2002).

As the King George Jubilee Trust Report (1955) put it, this partnership:

*... looked like losing its balance. The field the voluntary bodies had made their own over more than half a century was, it seemed, being recklessly overrun by official provision and statutory requirements.*

*Albemarle* tipped this balance even further in favour of the state. In particular it required local authorities to 'supplement (the voluntary organisations) with their own services', thus giving a clear endorsement to the state as direct provider. Indeed *Albemarle* saw the state's essentially secular input, to be delivered by the seemingly more neutral 'youth work', as a

vital corollary of its concerns that the Youth Service's 'curriculum' connected convincingly with 'young people's condition' as this was then evolving.

By the mid- to late 1970s, control of the terms of the curricular debates on 'mainstream' youth work had moved even further, in fact decisively, away from the voluntary sector and to the state. By then for example '(local) authorities are willy-nilly going to be the main pacemakers' (see Davies, 1999[a]) – a situation, though hard to grasp today, which meant that within a generation, the Youth Service's internal power relations had turned a full circle. Moreover, once Thatcher and subsequently Blair lost faith in the ability of the local state's to deliver crucial national agendas focused on 'areas of high social need' and 'social exclusion', the central state increasingly asserted its role very directly, even eventually over something as previously marginal as the Youth Service.

These shifts in definitional power go far to explain both the aborted attempt to establish a core curriculum for the Youth Service in the 1980s and the re-emergence of this pressure since 1997. Oversimply, the premises underpinning the overall social policy responses of New Labour asserted that:

- The services of 'the welfare state' have been operating within ideologies and institutional frameworks which have remained substantially unchanged since they were established in the 1940s.
- As a result, their staff (workers and managers) have been stuck in outdated attitudes and with cumbersome and fragmenting practices.
- As a result, these services are insufficiently effective – that is, failing to give value for money.
- In addition, because they have been dominated by the interests and definitions of priorities of the providers – particularly the professionals – they are insufficiently responsive to users' needs and demands.

It isn't necessary to endorse New Labour's actual policy prescriptions to accept that this analysis contains important elements of truth. As many of us knew only too well at the time, all was very far from well in many of those pre-New Labour, or indeed pre-Thatcherite, welfare state institutions so crucial to the lives of, especially working class people. Specifically in relation to the Youth Service, though the battles to 'fight the cuts' certainly had to be fought, they diverted energy and motivation from addressing much needed internal changes. For example, during the 1980 and 1990s too much practice comprised little more than time-filling, line-of-least-resistance recreation offering young people few if any developmental opportunities or challenges. Particularly perhaps as a disabling left-over from the 'liberalising' sixties and early seventies, too many youth workers operated as if they were 'free-floating agents who, self-evidently, must be achieving 'good' and 'progressive' things simply because they get on well with young people'. By not making themselves sufficiently accountable to the interest groups who really mattered – particularly young people – they 'left too many flanks exposed to the devastations of the radical right' (Davies 1991) – and its New Labour inheritors. Youth work had a number of major blank spots needing to be tackled *proactively* – particularly about society's key social divisions and their implications for its policies and practice.

Albeit with some very different starting points, once in power New Labour turned its critical

spotlight on the Youth Service much more quickly than anyone could have predicted. Though not the most carefully judged or reflective of comments, in an early meeting with youth workers Kim Howells, its first minister of youth, made no bones about how he saw the Service:

*It's the patchiest, most unsatisfactory of all the services I've come across. I've never met such down-at-heart 'can't do' representatives as I've met of youth services throughout Britain. (Davies, 1999[b])*

This patchiness, 'the great variation in (its) provision in the country', was picked up again by Howells' successor George Mudie in his Foreword to the first comprehensive audit of the Youth Service (Marken et al, 1998). This became, in effect, the new Government's leitmotif for the Youth Service in its early years in office.

As is New Labour's wont in dealing with such situations, it has sought change at the levels of both strategy and delivery. It confronted the Youth Service's patchiness together with what it saw as a concomitant lack of coherent purpose by forcing it to engage with Connexions – a national agency purpose-built to be both accountable for and sharply focused on some key Government priorities. At the same time, via the wide-ranging *Transforming Youth Work* initiative, it sought to exert leverage on practice by converting into a national requirement the ad hoc development of local Youth Service curricula which had followed in the wake of the ministerial conferences. In this way, the 'secret garden' once entered and tended only by privileged elites and regarded by national policy makers as wholly out of bounds has, for youth workers no less than teachers, become a wide open political parkland.

It is important to acknowledge that, whatever its gaps or weaknesses, the historic voluntary sector 'settlement' for youth work had a number of advantages. For example:

- Patronising and unself-critical though it often was, it generated a great deal of vital caring provision valued by many of its users. Secondly,
- Especially in smaller local organisations, 'managers' who knew and trusted each other, not least because they shared a class background, were able to work through more informal and personalised processes and procedures. Once youth work came to rely on state support and sponsorship, it inevitably became entangled with the more impersonal and remote bureaucratic structures of decision-making and accountability required of bodies responsible for spending public money.
- Balances of internal power within the 'traditional' voluntary sector had been far from equal – for example between different national voluntary organisations or between management committees and workers (paid and volunteer). Nonetheless, not only were the lines of communication between these different 'interests' relatively short, but also with managers often working on the front line of delivery, crucial overlaps existed between them which have been increasingly difficult to reproduce within state-sponsored youth work.
- State sponsorship has brought to youth work (relatively speaking) substantial and critically important additional resources. However, these have given the state the power to determine not just the operational and the organisational but also the strategic and the national – something which even the 'standing conference' of the large national youth voluntary organisations could never do. This not only carries the risk of a top-

down imposed uniformity. As current experience is clearly showing, the resultant practice is likely to be as dependent on model-centred programmes and approaches as it ever was in the past.

## Transforming youth work: the struggle for person-centred practice continues

All this makes the *Youth and Policy* debate's predominant focus on 'curriculum' – on what it means and how it can be justified – seem dangerously distracting in the present political climate, especially given its very limited interrogation of youth work and Youth Service history. For me, from such starting points, a number of other focuses seem much more pressing.

As a baseline – and even though it might appear simplistic and even naïve – in the defence of person-centred practice it seems crucial to start by emphasising that, at the level of policy-making as well as face-to-face, practice is not value-free. In a period when they are being disparaged and demeaned in unprecedented ways and to an unprecedented degree, such a practice, unambiguously, places the highest value on young people, their experience and their perspectives on their lives. In doing this, it locates them rather than the perceptions and priorities of often self-interested and powerful adults at the very heart of decisions on how practice should be developed and implemented.

Secondly, in a period when young people seem to be valued only for what others, especially powerful adults, want them to *become* (workers, parents, citizens – even though they are citizens already), such person-centred practice inescapably confronts a very different reality. This is shaped by the fact that they *are*, they are *now*, with lives which, for them and many others, already have great meaning and, again, value in their own right.

Thirdly, but no less importantly, and in support of Ord's core theme: at a time when policy makers are so concentrated on content ('how much information on the risks of drugs have you covered this week?'), and/or on outcomes ('how many NEET young people have you re-engaged this month?'), working in person-centred ways inescapably compels a focus on process. For, as Brent's practice examples vividly illustrate (Brent, 2004), youth work can only ensure that its explicit curricula are relevant and its outcomes owned by young people if it sustains a conscious negotiation of the hidden curriculum – of the interactions between worker and young person and young person and young person. Without such a negotiation it is questionable if what is being delivered can be youth work – and certainly whether it is person-centred youth work.

Finally, because the creation and then survival of such a process-led, person-centred practice cannot be treated as inevitable, as always the wider external pressures on youth work and the Youth Service require continual negotiation. In some cases, this can be too uncritical, even line-of-least-resistance and therefore unacceptably compromised, putting at risk hard-won, person-centred positions and practices.

However, for me, what is happening here is very far from one-dimensional. I certainly do

not recognise Jeffs 's description of current practitioners as 'the lazy, the ill-educated, the uncultured and the nervous' (Jeffs, 2004). Not only is this unacceptably dismissive and disparaging of the workers and managers I meet who are daily struggling to contain and even avoid the bottom-line compromises. It also underestimates their efforts, positively in young people's interests, to exploit the inherent contradictions in all state policy – today illustrated most starkly perhaps by New Labour's simultaneous obsession with the young's 'anti-social behaviour' and its creation of a range of new opportunities for them to play a role in service planning and delivery. (See for example, Oldfield and Fowler, 2004).

Albeit, again from a highly subjective perspective, all this requires me to consider the possibility that, though not without costs, some liberating and 'progressive' responses are developing out of the state's further penetration into youth work activity and its deliberate provocation of some long-overdue reappraisals. And so, after a half century of involvement in youth work and the Youth Service, I feel able to say that I am now meeting many more youth workers and youth work managers who, however tentatively experientially:

- just assume a need to articulate to each other and to fellow professionals what is distinctive about youth work;
- are actually struggling to do this, not just as an academic exercise but as an integral and essential part of their daily practice – and whose confidence in their ability to do so is growing;
- in the context of offering safe and fun meeting spaces, are at the same time being assertive about the centrality of offering young people personally developmental opportunities and outlets in systemic ways;
- simply take for granted their need to be accountable for their practice – and not just to the bewildering array of funders on whom they rely but especially to young people.

To further these advances, perhaps current notions of curriculum need not after all be merely distracting and could actually be helpful. For one thing, what is written down makes itself much more accessible to demands from others for explanation and justification than that which – as in the past – is simply assumed to be part of the 'natural' way of the world. For another, as Ord (2004[b]) argues, once a commitment to, for example, proactive anti-racist practice is embedded in an agreed written policy, though also constrained by the words, practitioners are also protected and so liberated by them, especially when what they seek to do is risky or contentious. Finally, given our 1960s and 1970s experience, can youth workers (and above all youth work academics!) really argue any longer that they don't need the discipline of making explicit what it is they are seeking to do, and why?

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pp 74

Dave Ireland

As it says on the cover, this is a book about innovative work with young people in rural areas. It comes ten years after the publication of the influential *Nothing Ever Happens Around Here* (Phillips and Skinner, 1994) which examined the then largely unexplored territory of rural youth work. This publication revisits the landscape and concludes that considerable development has occurred in the last ten years or so. Changes exceeded only by the dramatic changes to the countryside itself, brought about by the decline of agriculture, the rise of leisure tourism and the ravages of BSE and Foot and Mouth. This book pays homage to *Nothing Ever Happens Around Here* and is timely given the recent media kerfuffle about the imposition of a 9pm curfew on young people under 16 in the small Cumbrian market town of Wigton. Much was made of the fact that the town's one youth facility shuts its doors at 8.30pm, leaving young people to do what they will do in such circumstances, which upset other people (did I hear the word 'mayhem' used in the radio report?). I pictured youth workers tuned in country-wide thinking as one, 'Hasn't Cumbria lost its discrete local authority youth service...?'

*Who says nothing ever happens around here* sets out to 'identify, describe, evaluate and disseminate recent innovative rural projects', thereby encouraging youth work agencies to follow suit and enable more young people to manage life in the countryside. It is really a write-up of qualitative research using young people to evaluate the projects through talking with other young people. Eight projects were selected for evaluation, from Cumbria itself, Dorset, North Yorkshire, Somerset, West Sussex, Worcestershire and two from Gloucestershire. Selection was based upon a definition of rurality and variety of practice and by the writers' own admission, there are big gaps; nothing from East Anglia, for example, nor from the far South West.

The eight successful projects were invited to a residential weekend where the young people from across the country and their youth workers got to know one another. They got stuck in to some team building and learned the rudiments of qualitative research. Because the exercise was to be strong on peer evaluation, the young people agreed what questions they would ask and practised mock interviews with each other before returning home. The research itself, to provide a snapshot of each rural project and record what young people thought of them, was conducted over a six week period, using young people as primary researchers. A second residential was held to present findings. Here the writers noted the benefits of the exercise thus far, particularly in the increased confidence of the

young researchers, but also in the evidence that there was some very innovative youth work which was highly valued by the young people. In keeping with current good practice, the important work of the young researchers was accredited through an OCN award. The writers analysed the young people's findings and made a determination whether each of the projects could be described as innovative. Here I had a few problems. There is some excellent work going on, undoubtedly valued by the young people who demonstrate a degree of autonomy that might never have happened without the intervention of skilled and resourceful youth workers. My problem with *Who says nothing ever happens around here* is that the writers cast a very uncritical eye over the projects. It is all a bit too good to be true for me. From the wonderful first weekend get-together through to the projects all meeting the criteria for innovation with flying colours. The young people appear to be unconditionally supportive of the projects and their youth workers. It all left me feeling a bit queasy.

Clearly the intention here was to conduct thorough research – the writers also visited projects to talk to managers and young people – but the evaluation of the projects is relatively weak. There is a lack of evidence to support the claim for rigour; no questionnaires are reproduced, for example. That itself would have been handy for replication. A sharper analysis of each of project's weaknesses – there must have been some, surely? Might have taken away the sugariness a bit and given us a more rounded picture.

I am led inevitably to the conclusion, probably wrongly, that the uncritical nature of the reports lies with the research questions and the method of asking. Clearly conducting peer interviews can make for rigorous and ethical qualitative research, but the lack of any background information, including questionnaires, sample response forms and analysis of the findings leaves me a bit suspicious. The writers do not merely gloss over the possible limitations of peer research; there is no mention of them. Proper evaluation requires transparency and the risk that there might be some uncomfortable reading. The writers refer to a 'warts and all analysis' of work found in another publication, but fight shy of it themselves in this book.

Other little niggles with this book include the fact that no contacts are given for the projects involved. The writers are also a bit po-faced about whether it is 'ethical' for youth workers to work with young people who aspire to leave the countryside. Most young people raised in the sticks I know cannot wait for a dose of the big smoke and good luck to them. Whether they come back or not is up to them and we have no right to get snooty with those who decide a country life is not for them.

So what do we learn from *Who says nothing ever happens around here*? Quite a lot, actually in spite of some moans and groans, but not enough, in my view, to make this a book which can be taken seriously as good evaluation of youth work. It does describe some interesting and innovative rural projects, but fails I think, to do the projects justice, through a slightly fawning attitude to young people's involvement. The book holds participation above the demand for rigorous research and leaves the impression that the two are incompatible.

**Dave Ireland, Cornwall.**

Denise B Kandel (Ed)

***Stages and Pathways of Drug Involvement: Examining the Gateway Hypothesis***

Cambridge University Press, 2002

ISBN 0-521-78969-9

£18.95 (pbk)

pp384

**Hamish Murphy**

This book is a rigorous, albeit academic, examination of the 'gateway' hypothesis, a theory which has exerted an undue influence, in my view, over policy and practice within the alcohol, drug and substance use fields. Put too simply, the hypothesis ascribes to some drugs a 'bridging' role whereby their use is a precondition for progression to more harmful substances. Cigarettes and alcohol, the hypothesis states, if taken up in adolescence, provide a necessary prerequisite for later cannabis use and this in turn then usually used before moving on to harder drugs. For obvious reasons, this simple proposition has gained ideological power within right wing and religious groups, particularly in North America, to deter young people from smoking and drinking. Perhaps accepting a dominant anti-drugs culture in the USA, this book sidesteps any ideological considerations and perpetuates the message that drugs are bad. We know in the UK that this one-sided, 'just say no' liturgy has little effect as young people witness an adult world saturated with legal and illegal substances, only too aware that most drugs have a legitimate medical use and many can bring pleasurable effects. This book does not fundamentally question the availability and use of drugs though most of the authors recognise limitations within the 'gateway' hypothesis itself.

The book does well to combine the work of 26 authors in 16 chapters, arranged into 6 parts. This transdisciplinary approach, as one author describes it, assembles studies from psychology, health, social work and pharmacology, collating a rich variety of research applied to mainly humans, though some relate to animals, stretching from longitudinal to immediate impact, examining behaviour and attempts at changing behaviour. Early on, the hypothesis itself is challenged – there appear to be patterns, trajectories and stages in drug use but the hypothesis only goes some of the way to explaining these. The middle chapters address how preventative measures attempt to divert young people at key stages in this perceived progression and how these impact on both behaviour and the theory itself. Whilst those involved in initiatives to reduce drug use amongst young people will find these evaluations illuminating, again the hypothesis only provides limited insights into the impact of interventions on patterns of behaviour. These are seen to succeed when early use is disrupted so that diversion from tobacco or alcohol stunts the progression to harder drugs.

Towards the end, statistical approaches are explained and explored before biological and experimental research is provided. With no mention of ethical issues around animal testing, to assess the hypothesis, rats were administered tobacco in adolescence and then, in adulthood, provided with access to opiates. Besides triggering concerns around forcing drug dependency on animals and evoking mental pictures of spaced out rodents, wired up to mini CD players, this experiment brought unexpected findings due to differences in sex and circumstance. Some rats were put under stress through forced immobilisation whilst others, we assume, were only caged and so this seemed to show that males are more likely

to use opiates if they are light smokers in their youth and are not under stress. Whereas the use of opiates in adult female rats appears to be unaffected by levels of smoking in adolescence and conditions of stress. I provide this example since the final chapter, a summary of the book's findings by the editor, tries to reframe the hypothesis in the light of the contributing chapters. It concludes by suggesting greater support for the hypothesis might come from a better understanding of the neurobiological effects of substances, a call for more animal experimentation, though conceding that the hypothesis should restrict itself to sequencing, patterns of progression, association and linkages between the usage of different drugs. The book is careful to confirm that there appears, as yet, to be no provable causal link between adolescent use of soft drugs and later adult initiation of hard drugs. These studies are mainly perspectives on recent behaviour by drug users in the States with only a few of the authors raising issues around societal conditions. Maybe there's as much hope for an understanding of patterns of drug use in examining the blend of legislation and ideology that determines both adolescence and the status of substances themselves.

Overall, the book is intellectually challenging since it assembles, predominantly, findings from research which are presented in a relatively inaccessible way for those working with young people around drugs issues. Its innovation comes from the rich variety of perspectives on this single hypothesis but those interested in the volume's message would be advised to skip the intricacies of each chapter's findings and read the conclusions. At a time when we are told that two million ecstasy tablets, a class 'A' drug, are being used each week in the UK mainly by young people, the book seems to overlook the ideological message it portrays – avoid drugs and find ways to divert young people from their usage. The use of hard drugs by young people in such quantities and regularity, though worrying, should not lead researchers to just ask 'how' drug use progresses but 'why' drug use has become such a phenomenon. To be fair, some discussions consider reinforcement and conditioning and other publications do address more sociological explanations. However, this book proves exhaustive in addressing one hypothesis whilst remaining frustratingly inadequate in explaining substance use and offering better ways of intervening to help young people.

**Hamish Murphy is Principal Lecturer in Youth and Community Studies at North East Wales Institute of Higher Education in Wrexham and designed their B.Sc. (Hons.) in Substance Use Studies.**

Nina Behiel, Fiona Mitchell and Jim Wade

**Lost from View: Missing Persons in the UK**

The Policy Press 2003

ISBN 1-88-134-491-0 paperback

pp. 63

**Tracey Hodgson**

**L**ost from View claims to be 'The first study to directly report the views of missing people themselves' and seeks to explore the 'missing phenomenon' of those who chose 'to go missing and those who have been compelled to do so'.

This analysis of data on the population of missing people reported to the NMPH charity (National Missing Person's Helpline). It explores the 'motivations and experiences, the outcome of missing episodes, and policy responses to missing people'. Each year, the NMPH receives nearly 10,000 missing person reports. During the year of study 1,611 reports became cases actively worked on by the NMPH. *Lost from View* acknowledges that this approach provides a profile of the demographic characteristics of a large number of missing people. However as the authors stress it will lack the detail regarding the individual circumstances that create the 'missing people'.

Whilst a great deal is known of the experiences of young people who go missing far greater gaps exist regarding our knowledge of what happens to their adult equivalents. As the authors note this has been a 'sadly neglected area'. Also this group have attracted far less attention from policy makers compared to young runaways. However this situation is now beginning to change. Intervention is raising issues that have wide resonance, cutting across a range of policy areas including the family, education, the police, health and social care. There remains however 'no overall strategy to ensure the integration of policies and services for missing persons'.

Statistics allow for the classification of missing people according to characteristic groupings of: age; gender; health and disability; type of residence prior to going missing; employment status and income; and the number of times individuals may have previously gone missing. The report considers the reasons for being missing to be 'complex and multi-layered' and the experiences of those who do so 'as diverse as the reasons for their absences'. Three fifths of the adults are missing for more than two years. It defines missing along a continuum from 'decided through drifted to unintentional and enforced', simultaneously moving from 'intentional to unintentional.' It briefly outlines research which has 'sought to map the characteristics of missing people – adults'.

When considering prevention policies it acknowledges the limitations for 'in some circumstances, prevention may not be possible and leaving may be a perfectly rational response to a situation perceived to be intolerable'. Sources of help are identified, although the study notes 'while away, missing people tended to rely more heavily on informed support from friends'. Suggested preventative practice covers pilot projects involving peer counselling; family group conferencing to combat conflict; and programmes offering access to advice and support at an early stage of personal crisis. Mediation services are highlighted and the authors suggest these may have a crucial role to play in reducing the incidence of this problem. Support for families is also considered along with the possibility for the development of 'Reconciliation and Return' programmes. Adults and young people alike, the authors argue, need 'signposting' towards those statutory and voluntary services that can assist them before going missing becomes a serious option.

Importantly both the 'positive and negative aspects of being away' are explored. The positives include the chance to make a fresh start; time to think; the acquisition of greater personal independence; and at least some relief from the pressures that create the tensions in the first place. The negatives often include loss of family contact; emotional distress; isolation; and, for many, difficulties linked to the need to survive in a hostile environment.

Chapter five explores the consequences of being missing and rightly concludes that although some may have very good reasons for refusing all contact with their families, others may well potentially benefit from renewing contact if advice and mediation are available to help them do so. Also it is noted that the provision of safe refuges is important especially for those at greatest risk, including young runaways. The report reminds us that crucially Section 51 of the 1989 Children's Act makes provision for the development of refuges, exempt from the laws on harbouring, that can accommodate young people for up to fourteen days while further arrangements are made for their future. Unfortunately these provisions have been under utilised and, currently, only one refuge exists in central London.

Finally the authors call for a coordinated response, a single comprehensive database, and a national lead, arguing that missing persons issues require a coordinated response from central government to provide policy direction and ensure the needs of missing persons are properly reflected in initiatives made by government departments. This has been promised by the government – so we must wait and see what emerges in the coming months and years.

**Tracey Hodgson is currently a youth worker with a young women's project. Previously she managed a unit offering accommodation to the young homeless.**

G. I. Maeroff

***A Classroom of One***

Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2003

ISBN 1-4039-6085-2

**Don Blackburn**

This book is presented as an examination of the expansion of distance education using digital technology. The dust sheet blurb describes it as – 'a complete snapshot of the entire world of online learning'. Overall it is a book that sets out to convince us that 'on-line learning' in higher education is set to replace other more traditional forms of education.

The approach taken by the author is enthusiastically evangelical about the use of digital technology. This has resulted in a rather irritating style that consists of a significant amount of assertion and hyperbole. To be fair, there is a small amount of interesting detail in the text such as the involvement of the US Army in distance education, and the development of electronic forms of delivery by those universities involved in the programme. On the other hand there are some glaring gaps. It may be the fact that it is an American text that explains the lack of detail relating to European higher education for example in the UK, the experience of the Open University. The author sees mainly resistance and reaction from academics and appears convinced that there is an unspoken conspiracy among self interested teachers to resist this brave new world.

In places the argument is simply contradictory. For example, on page 3 we read that



– ‘the Internet ranks among the most formidable foes ever to confront the intransigence of traditional education’. A significant range of other comments similarly paint higher education staff as opposing the use of digital technology in education for their own ends. This ignores both his own evidence of widespread use by universities and other education institutions, and the reality of substantial and extensive use of IT in virtually all universities.

However the problems with the book are not limited to the author’s support for the use of technology in universities and other institutions. One of the key problems is the restricted version of education presented here. Education is apparently a didactic process in the main, supported by discussion, but fundamentally about instruction. The model of learning that underpins the discussion is one of instruction, with a model teaching situation seen as a teacher and one learner. This is a fundamentally flawed view of learning, in that it is a restriction of the many diverse and social ways wherein we learn. It has resulted in the book largely focusing on delivery methods, ironically paralleling some of the methods that the author criticises – such as lecturing. This emphasis on didactic processes severely limits the discussion.

Equally, and ironically, the book presents a limited view of technology. The author regards technology as a means of delivery of information, rather than perhaps being more intimately related to the process of learning. Books did not simply transform the method of delivery of information; they fundamentally altered the way that we think about language and communication. So technology in this sense is not something separate from the business of being human, it is a fundamental part of it. Education is not simply a kind of spectator sport made more efficient by the use of technology. Education is many more things and human beings have a range of ways of engaging with the process of learning, including using all sorts of technology.

This limited view of education is particularly apparent in the final chapter when the author attempts to engage critically with the view that on-campus higher education helps to develop rounded individuals who may be better citizens as a result. He is right, in that many students’ experience of higher education is neither liberating nor liberal. A limited version of higher education that is increasingly dominated by restricted funding, uncritical training and the commodification of learning materials, is not capable of delivering a transcendental experience. However, his argument simply assumes that what is under consideration here is the social interaction of a University. He contrasts this with the apparently reasonable point that people interact in their everyday lives and that on-line higher education would not interfere with this normal social activity. This completely misses the point that being in an educational context, should support and promote learning in ways that do not usually occur in everyday interactions that are often anti-intellectual and limiting.

I have no particular objection to seeing the use of any technology in support of education. The detractors of technology in education are often as potty as those who uncritically advocate the wholesale acceptance of every new piece of kit. I can remember the opposition to the introduction of ball-point pens into schools on the grounds that if children did not learn to write with fountain pens their writing would be blighted forever. No doubt the inventors of the quill had an equally difficult battle to persuade some people of the benefits it offered.

The paucity of many of the claims about on-line learning is quickly exposed in considering a range of even quite pragmatic careers. Would you like to be operated on by a surgeon who has qualified by correspondence or 'on-line learning'? Is philosophy learnt through instruction? Teachers through the millennia have used the latest technologies to support learning where appropriate. Printing was a very useful development from the point of view of enabling learning, but that didn't stop teachers talking to their students.

The main problems with 'on-line learning' are not related to the use, nor the refusal to use, digital technology, but the uncritical and unimaginative use of most of it. The evidence is not that there is a massive conspiracy to resist the use of computers by 'self-interested' academic staff in universities. It is rather that the massive increase in the purchase of technology by universities has taken place without an appropriate curriculum debate. The marketing hype (represented in this book) that surrounds computer technology, has resulted in universities spending significant levels of resource on equipment that is largely used as a glorified typewriter.

I must confess to some interest in this area, often being accused of being a technophile and enjoying the world of gadgetry. In addition, the history of distance learning is a long one; scholars have carried out correspondence with others ever since writing was invented – there must be an interesting story to tell there. I am willing to be convinced that the history of the use of technology in education and that of distance education could offer some fascinating reading. However this is not the text to offer either of those possibilities.

**Don Blackburn University of Lincoln.**

Steven Walker

**Social work and child and adolescent mental health**

Russell House Publishing, 2003

ISBN 1-903855-22-5

pp161

**Ian Warwick**

**T**he expansion over the past ten years of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) alongside an increase in multi-disciplinary working has seen many more social workers involved in caring for young people with emotional, behavioural and psychiatric problems. Some have moved into the expanding CAMHS teams as social workers, some have transferred into health service posts and yet more have found their existing roles, in all areas of social work, have expanded into addressing the wider needs of children and their carers. Some of the social workers who work with child and adolescent mental health problems have been fortunate enough to study on a qualifying programme that prepared them for this work; most have not. Walker's book goes a long way to filling the gap. This text transfers to child mental health all the issues that belong so strongly in the social work context. As the title suggests this is – a straightforward guide to the application

of social work knowledge, theory and values to the child mental health context.

The book begins by setting current services in a historical perspective and continues in the first chapter to provide the reader with the law and policy directives that influence provision of services. Having established the legislative framework the following chapter critically appraises the knowledge on mental health disorders common to children and adolescents. In the third chapter Walker outlines risk and resilience factors that form the basis of a comprehensive assessment. Within these opening three chapters Walker establishes the core issues before moving on in the second half of the book to bring to the fore the social work perspective.

Starting with 'Culturally Competent Practice' he gives good attention to the differential presentation of child mental health across different cultures. This chapter is complemented later by 'Socially Inclusive Practice' in which he revisits issues for Black children and discusses the trauma experienced by asylum seeker and refugee children. There is the inevitable chapter on multi-disciplinary practice that highlights the difficulty for social work to establish itself as an equally credible approach in the CAMHS teams. In between these chapters Walker compares the application of different social work interventions to case scenarios. Systemic, psychodynamic, behaviourist and task-centred approaches receive short shrift thus preparing us for Walker's penultimate chapter.

Walker highlights the lack of both user-focussed research and user-focussed practice in child and adolescent mental health. He proposes a number of changes to current practice that might be more productive than either the traditional medical or social work interventions have been. The chapter includes specific ideas that could be put into practice that would empower children and their carers.

This book will be excellent for staff moving into child and adolescent mental health work and in particular it will be invaluable on social work courses that include child mental health within their overall mental health training. The author provides the reader with a range of up-to-date statistics and useful tables. Importantly the book addresses key issues confronting us today, such as the needs of asylum seeker children and the high rate of suicide among young gay people. This text will hopefully also make a useful contribution to the development of service user involvement in evaluation and development of practice.

**Ian Warwick Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Work University of Huddersfield.**

Helen Colley

***Mentoring for Social Inclusion: a critical approach to nurturing mentoring relationships***

London: Routledge 2003.

ISBN 0-4015-31109-8/0-415-31110-1

**Kate Philip**

The publication of this book is certainly timely for youth mentoring appears to be at something akin to a cross-roads at the moment. In the last few years it has become a highly popular form of intervention with young people at a time when other approaches to work with this age group have become less secure. An element of youth mentoring is evident within a raft of government policies that set out to work with young people deemed to be socially excluded. Yet while there is a deluge of handbooks for mentoring, models for national frameworks and claims for the 'success' of the concept, few of these take even a cursory glance at the underlying principles or venture to assess the plethora of meanings of 'mentoring'. Fewer still examine critically how thinking about mentoring is nested within discourses about young people. Thus claims for the success of mentoring remain poorly backed up by evidence. This book sets out to remedy this by reviewing the literature on mentoring and the work in the field with young people. It also offers a careful and considered analysis regarding key ideas relating to young people and their place in society.

The book is divided into three sections, a device that enables the author to build up her analysis. The opening section explores the development of mentoring and relates this to themes of globalisation, transition and the youth labour market. Current policies on social inclusion are critically considered and linked to these themes. This is followed by a discussion of the meanings and definitions of the term – mentoring. One of the most interesting aspects of this discussion is the unpicking of what Colley terms 'the myths of mentoring', an aspect that offers a welcome challenge to some of the more romanticised assumptions about mentoring that litter much North American work on the idea. She very neatly links this to contemporary discourses about youth and develops a refreshing discussion about power and relationships.

Having set the scene in the opening section, Part II focuses on a mentoring scheme introduced under the Youth Start Initiative and managed by a partnership between a university and a TEC. This scheme encouraged disadvantaged young people into work and as part of this programme offered participants the option of a weekly meeting with a mentor. Colley traces the development of the scheme and suggests the model of mentoring it used was one of 'engagement mentoring'. Case studies are employed to describe and analyse the experiences of young people, mentors and managers of the programme. These powerfully demonstrate the limitations of this scheme as it attempted to impose particular goals on the mentoring relationships. Thus participants, far from being passive recipients, actively sought to make sense of their dealings with the scheme and in some cases, to subvert it in order to try to meet their own needs which lay outwith the narrow limits of the intervention. At the same time the mentors became trapped into censoring aspects of their own experience in favour of reinforcing the overarching aim of employability and presenting the 'appearance of a normative' role model.

The following chapter traces the career of one mentoring dyad which is then used to ground a critique of feminist models of mentoring which privilege the 'caring' role without taking account of 'control'. For me this chapter raises a number of questions about the transferability of the model of 'engagement' mentoring into other forms where a less coercive or prescriptive agenda is in place. Some examination of feminist models of friendship and of the potential of collective forms of mentoring to challenge dominant

discourses and to validate the experiences of partners in mentoring would have been a bonus to this discussion. Nevertheless this chapter offers fascinating insights into the complexities and frustrations of mentoring.

Colley then takes a feminist approach to exploring notions of empowerment and control and draws on the work of Foucault, Walkerdine and Bourdieu to examine the implications of the findings that emerge from the case studies. She points to a need for greater clarity in the use of the concepts of 'cultural capital' and 'social capital' in any discussion of mentoring.

The final section explores the implications for policy and practice and while this is a very useful section and takes a no nonsense approach in pointing out that whatever the limitations of mentoring it is now an established element of work with young people and likely to remain so. In this scenario there is a need to ensure that policy, practice and research are grounded in clearly thought out principles and theoretical rigour.

Colley brings her own background in career's guidance and academia, as well as her strong feminist perspective, to bear on this book. She weaves these different strands together to skilfully present a rounded account not just of the history and current thinking on youth mentoring but of the social and political context within which it has developed. As a result this book is stimulating on a range of levels and encourages the reader to explore the ideas and issues further. It poses challenges not just for the 'mentoring movement' but for all those concerned with young people at academic, policy making and practitioner levels. It is an excellent and accessible read full of ideas and consequently should appeal to a wide audience. The focus is on 'engagement mentoring' but the questions posed apply to a wide range of mentoring models. Nevertheless I would have welcomed more discussion of how this does interact with other models of mentoring, particularly those which go beyond one-to-one relationships.

**Kate Philip, The Rowan Centre, Department of Sociology and Anthropology,  
University of Aberdeen.**

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The Harvard system should be used for references ie. author's surname and year of publication in brackets, with page numbers where appropriate eg. (Smith, 1994:25); 'as Smith (1994:25) suggests ...'; or 'Smith's (1996) argument is ...'

Each publication cited in the text should be listed alphabetically and in full at the end of the article. In multi-authored articles, the names of all authors should be given in the reference list. In the text use the first author followed by et al. Please check that all references are included and complete before submitting manuscripts.

The following style should be used in the reference list: For example:

Book:  
Smith, M.K. (1996) *Local Education: Community, conversation, praxis*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Article:  
Wylie, T. (2004) 'How Connexions Came to Terms with Youth Work', *Youth and Policy*, 83: 19-29.

Report:  
Thompson Report (1982) *Experience and Participation*, Cmnd 8686, London: HMSO.

Abbreviations which are commonly understood can be used, but please spell out in full, with the abbreviation following in brackets, the first time they are used.

Please limit the use of supplementary notes as far as possible. Notes, numbered in the main text and detailed at the end of the article, should be included in the word count.

The editors reserve the right to make minor modifications and edits in the manuscript. However, any in-depth editing will be discussed with the author.

### Reviews

Books for Review. Suggestions for future review material and names of possible reviewers should be communicated directly to Tony Jeffs (tony.jeffs@durham.ac.uk)

Reviewers should follow the style outlined for Articles in their manuscripts.

**Youth & Policy** is devoted to the critical study of youth affairs and youth policy and youth work.

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