

YOUTH WORK

**CORE PURPOSE,
PRINCIPLES & PRACTICE**

KERRY YOUNG

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to create a theory of youth work that explains the distinctiveness of the phenomenon known as 'youth work'; and provides a framework for making decisions about practice and the training and development of youth workers. It does so by investigating two central questions - 'What *is* youth work?' and 'What do youth workers *do*?' and seeks to answer these in terms of an understanding of the purpose of youth work and its underlying philosophical principles.

The research builds on the premise that youth work is a distinctive form of work with young people, which makes a particular and positive contribution to their lives and development. However, a clear understanding of youth work's contribution can only be achieved through an appreciation of its core purpose, as opposed to descriptions of the forms which the work takes (e.g. club-based, detached work), the methods it employs (e.g. discussion groups, outdoor activities) or the groups of young people with whom it works.

The research has employed a qualitative methodological approach based on a combination of 'interpretive' and 'critical' perspectives, a commitment to anti-oppressive practice and set within a clearly stated ethical framework. Given the research's principal interest in the meanings and interpretations that people attach to their experience, the research method adopted for this investigation was *active interviewing* wherein the interviewer 'converses' with respondents in such a way as to offer alternative considerations and help to create the "meanings that ostensibly reside within respondents." (Holstein and Gubrium 1997) Interview data was analysed utilising thematic analysis and comparative analysis with relevant literature.

The findings of interviews with 32 youth workers and young people in 15 locations across England, Wales and Northern Ireland demonstrate that despite the wide variety of youth work settings, contexts and young people being worked with, there is nonetheless a remarkable consistency in respondents' sense of youth work's purpose, its principles and underpinning values.

The outcome of this research is a theory of youth work that clearly states 'what youth work is', 'what youth workers do' and the implications of these for youth worker training.

The hope is that, in the context of the Transforming Youth Work agenda, such a theory will contribute to:

- Re-affirming and re-vitalising youth work as a distinctive practice in informal social education work with young people
- Supporting the appropriate contribution of youth workers and the Youth Service to the Connexions Service
- Highlighting the challenges for youth worker training and development in the future.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study re-examines the fundamental purpose of youth work in England and Wales¹ and re-states its core purpose as being centrally concerned with the social education of young people, and specifically the development of their capacity to engage in moral philosophy. It explores the implications of this understanding for youth work practice and training; and locates youth work's contribution to the development of young people within the context of the Connexions Service.

The underlying premise of this research is that youth work is a distinctive form of work with young people which makes a particular and positive contribution to their lives and development regardless of the changing social, economic and political climate in which they find themselves. However, if youth work is to be preserved then its redemption is not to be found in its methods, 'curriculum' topics or 'target groups' but in a clear articulation of its 'core purpose' and underlying philosophy.

This research is timely as the Youth Service becomes 'integrated' into the Connexions Service, whilst at the same time, seeking to remain a service 'in its own right'. At this juncture, the Youth Service faces three distinct dangers.

Firstly, there continues to be a crisis of funding at local level. In itself, this is not really new. The Youth Service has long been considered a 'Cinderella' service and has spent much of the past 25 years scrambling for funds whilst at the same time agonising over the rights of wrongs of its involvement in the Youth Opportunities Programme, Youth Training, Intermediate Treatment, Youth Action Schemes, the National Lottery/Community Fund and other targeted programmes to tackle teenage pregnancy, drug misuse, disaffection, and, now, social exclusion. What is new, is that the increasingly desperate need to acquire (predominantly short-term) targeted 'external' funding lends further impetus to joint initiatives and partnership arrangements that, whilst having some benefit, leave local Youth Services vulnerable to changing political priorities; and weakens their capacity to sustain 'core' youth work provision.

Secondly, the pull in recent years (spurred on by cuts in local authority spending on the youth service - Marken, Perrett and Wylie 1998), has been for local youth services to try to convince other organisations and institutions that they are capable of helping to achieve *their* objectives

¹ Drawing on Youth Service reports for England and Wales and interviews with youth workers and young people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

and aspirations. To some extent this has been successful in that other organisations have found something worthwhile in the methods and approaches developed consistently within youth work. Whilst this has brought substantial external funding into youth services at local level (Marken, Perrett and Wylie 1998), the 'flip side' is that youth work has been progressively colonised by others who have different agendas and different criteria for success.

Thirdly, the Transforming Youth Work agenda and the allure of the Connexions Service presents the possibility not only of consolidated structural change but also, and importantly, a distortion of the very nature of youth work and the fundamental principles on which it is built.

The intention of this research is to postulate a theory of youth work that explains the distinctiveness of the phenomenon known as 'youth work'; and provides a framework for making sound decisions about practice and about the training and development of youth workers. As such, this work is centrally concerned with two questions. 'What is youth work?' and 'What do youth workers *do*?' And it seeks to answer these in terms of an understanding of the purpose of youth work as opposed to descriptions of the forms which the work takes (e.g. club-based, detached work), the methods it employs (e.g. discussion groups, outdoor activities) or the groups of young people with whom it works.

This theory will be created by elucidating the "plausible relationships produced among concepts and sets of concepts" (Strauss and Corbin 1994 quoted in Silverman 2000:78) to explain the phenomenon known as 'youth work'; and is based on the understanding that theory provides both:

- a framework for critically understanding phenomena; and
- a basis for considering how what is unknown might be organised. (Silverman 2000:78)

In so doing, it is hoped that such a theory will help to:

- re-vitalise and support the continuing development of youth work as a distinctive practice in work with young people in contemporary Britain;
- clarify the differences between youth work and other forms of work with young people so as to inform the appropriate contribution of youth workers to the Connexions Service; and
- illuminate the ways in which existing youth work training could be built on in order to enable practitioners to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to successfully undertake youth work as manifest in this thesis.

Chapter 2 contains a critical literature review with a specific focus on the question of purpose in youth work. In so doing, it draws on two primary sources:

- Government Circulars and commissioned reports on the Youth Service in England and Wales; and
- Commentaries by youth work practitioners and key commentators on youth work and the Youth Service.

The principal emphasis here is to consider the common qualities that enable all examples of the work to be known collectively as 'youth work'. That is, as a distinct activity in its own right, and one able to be distinguished from other forms of work with young people.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology to be adopted in relation to the:

- research perspective
- methodology
- research strategy
- research methods
- sampling
- analysis
- research ethics.

In the process, my intention is to understand and interpret youth workers' rationale for their work, the meanings they attach to it, the way they construct their practice and the social significance of their actions. This reflects what Tim May terms the 'subjectivity perspective' that focuses on the understandings and interpretations that people have of their social environment. In other words, the *meanings* that people give to their environment. (May 2001:13)

Chapter 4 reports on the findings emerging from the field research. This takes the form of a thematic analysis which:

- seeks to understand and reflect the informants' own views and words;
- uses manifest and explicit statements rather than inference and background knowledge about the person or situation; and
- analyses themes according to their regularity, structure or inferences. (Luborsky 1994)

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 contain a series of comparative analyses of the interview data and relevant literature (drawn from a range of documentary sources) in order to formulate clear statements about:

- what youth work *is* - in terms of its core purpose; and the principles and concepts integral to such a sense of purpose (chapter 5);
- what youth workers *do* - in terms of the context, processes and values that inform and underpin effective practice (chapter 6); and
- what knowledge, skills and dispositions youth workers need in order to undertake such practice (chapter 7).

Chapter 8 explores the changing political climate within which contemporary youth work takes place, and considers the contribution envisaged for youth work and the Youth Service within the Connexions Service.

Chapter 9 contains a brief reflection on the 'battle' over the 'core curriculum' and the conclusion to this study.

PLEASE NOTE:

This study is concerned with the core purpose, principles and practice of youth work. However, throughout the text there is also reference to the work of the Youth Service, especially as contained in quotations taken from central government commissioned reports. This is because the work of the 'Youth Service' is seen as synonymous with 'youth work' insofar as the Youth Service is seen as "the collection of institutional arrangements for the delivery of youth work." (NYB 1991:3)

2. CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There is a large body of work relating to the development of youth work theory and practice - including central government reports, reports of practice from organisations and projects, edited collections by practitioners, authored texts (e.g. HMSO 1960, 1969, 1982; Davies and Gibson 1967; Smith 1988; Jeffs and Smith 1987, 1988, 1990; Ledgerwood and Kendra 1997). An examination of this work reveals that whilst there has been an underlying commitment in youth work to supporting young people to understand and take charge of themselves, their lives and their actions in the world, there has also been an increasingly undisguised and visible shift towards focusing on young people as problems to be managed and/or solved - because they are unemployed, involved in drugs or crime, underachieving at school, pregnant, disaffected and so on (e.g. France and Wiles 1996; Williamson 1997; Merton 1998; Aarvold and Buswell 1999).

In addition, there has also been, in many local youth services, an increasing tendency towards reduction in core spending on youth work combined simultaneously with an increase in funds attracted from targeted funding sources - e.g. health promotion, crime prevention, urban regeneration, etc. (Marken, Perrett and Wylie 1998).

All of this, it is contended, adds to a continuing 'distortion' of the fundamental purpose of youth work. This current work seeks to demonstrate that, taken back to first principles, youth work is still a distinctive form of work with young people, which possesses enormous potential for making a positive contribution to their lives and development.

This critical literature review, therefore, focuses on the question of purpose in youth work. For, whilst the relevant and associated literature contains numerous descriptions of youth work in terms of methods (e.g. detached work, groupwork, peer education) activities (e.g. sports, arts), and issues (e.g. homelessness, unemployment, drugs, crime, sex), such approaches have increasingly fallen short of capturing the distinctiveness of youth work as a discrete activity.

The proposition here is that regardless of their specific focus on, for example, youth work methods and processes; 'target groups'; varieties of settings, etc. - all of these descriptions of the work have been, inevitably, underpinned by an implicit set of ideas, assumptions and beliefs

about the purpose of youth work. Consequently, the question of purpose is fundamental to any understanding of what youth work *is*, and hence, what youth workers *do*. The current undertaking is therefore an exercise in philosophy insofar as philosophy is about understanding the *nature* of things - in this instance, the *nature* of youth work.

In one of Plato's dialogues, Socrates asks Laches the question 'what is courage?' Laches' response is immediate - a man who does not run away in battle. However, as Socrates has no difficulty in demonstrating, Laches' answer is not a definition of courage, in general, but a particular example of courage. Socrates then asks 'What is that common quality, which is the same in all cases, and which is called courage?' (Plato 1970:117). In other words, Socrates is asking 'what is the *nature* of courage?' This study asks the same question of youth work. In other words, 'What is the *nature* of youth work? 'What is that common quality, which is the same in all cases, and which is called youth work?'

The objective of this literature review is, therefore, to discover what has previously been written about the purpose of youth work. In so doing, the review draws on two primary sources that explicitly shed light on the question of purpose.

1. Government Circulars and commissioned reports on the Youth Service

These reports provide a useful benchmark since all were based on extensive consultations with Youth Service personnel in both the voluntary and local authority maintained sectors; and, in the case of the Thompson Report (HMSO 1982), with young people themselves. As a result, all of these reports were as much a reflection of existing purpose and practice in the voluntary and maintained sectors of the day, as they were aspirations for future developments.

In addition, whilst these reports had much to say about many aspects of youth work and the Youth Service, for example, the structure of the service, methods, funding, staffing, training and so on, they were, in fact, crucial instruments in determining the purpose of the work and the principles which should underpin practice.

Also, since one of the main problems of trying to identify the 'common quality' of youth work is the underlying problem of the definition itself - that is, being able to decide what *is* and what *is not* 'youth work- - it seems prudent to accept, as a benchmark, what these government commissioned reports have suggested that youth work *ought* to be. Indeed, given their 'official' status, it could be argued that these reports actually represent the mainstay of thinking with

regard to purpose in latter day youth work upon which other commentators have built and elaborated.

Finally, whilst the context of youth work and some Youth Service policy statements are different across England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Becky and Perrett 1999), much of their sentiment remains the same. Indeed, the inclusion here of the experiences and perspectives of workers from Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as England (see Chapter 4), acts to illustrate the commonality not only in their sense of purpose and values but also in provision and practice.

2. Commentaries by youth work practitioners and key commentators on youth work and the Youth Service

This section of the literature review documents the range of critical interpretations offered by key commentators regarding the purpose of youth work; and surveys existing work in relation to the recurring themes and concepts which consistently emerge within expressions of the purpose of youth work.

The principal emphasis here is to consider the common qualities that enable all examples of the work to be known collectively as 'youth work'. That is, as a distinct activity in its own right, and one able to be distinguished from other forms of work with young people. In other words, to seek a definition of youth work through a close investigation of its essential nature and fundamental core purpose.

However, as Leighton has noted, 'defining purpose is a philosophical exercise and an exercise of faith' (1972:75). The philosophical exercise, in this instance, is the journey towards an understanding of the purpose of youth work based on an examination of the words used to describe it, the concepts and principles utilised and importantly, the meanings which these are given. In addition, this research embraces three 'exercises of faith'.

The first is knowing that, in this context, nothing can be proved. Words and concepts are explained and understood by way of using other words and concepts. To embark on a discussion of principles and values is to confront the fact that, in the end, one simply comes face-to-face with one's own convictions. The challenge is to express these in terms that connect with the experience of others and offer palpable meaning.

The second exercise of faith is a belief that words are not randomly chosen. Writers (and speakers) choose specific words in order to convey particular meanings. Whilst these 'meanings' may change over time with changing social, economic and political circumstances, it is nonetheless the case that a careful investigation of the elaborations, explanations and interpretations of the time can lead to a understanding of the meaning invested in particular words. In this sense, the writer/speaker can be taken at his or her word.

The final exercise of faith is the hope that such an approach will be accepted as being equally as valid as the economic, social and political analyses of the origins and development of youth work and the Youth Service that have been conducted elsewhere. (e.g. Davies and Gibson 1967; Milson 1970; Leighton 1972; Bunt and Gargrave 1980; Booton 1985; Smith 1988; Davies 1986; Davies 1999a; Gilchrist, Jeffs and Spence 2001) This is not to suggest that such perspectives are unimportant. Nor that context and history do not impact on notions of purpose. But rather that the exercise being undertaken here is unashamedly philosophical. That is, an exercise that seeks to understand the *meaning* of what has been written specifically about the purpose of youth work as opposed to an analysis of the social conditions or political imperatives which might have motivated or given rise to such statements.

This chapter is not, therefore, an attempt to review all that has been written about youth work over the past one hundred and fifty years. Neither is it a socio-political analysis of the origins and development of the Youth Service. The focus of this work is specifically the question of expressed purpose.

Consequently, the relevant literature is reviewed with regard to the principal descriptions and definitions of purpose in youth work in England and Wales from its early beginnings in the mid nineteenth century to the present day. In so doing, this chapter charts the origins of youth work from the establishment of the early voluntary youth organisations, through the interventions made by central government from 1939 onwards (in the form of Board of Education Circulars, central government commissioned reports and the Ministerial Conferences of the late 1980s and early 1990s), and more recently, attempts to configure youth work in the form of National Occupational Standards.

Beginnings

The sense of purpose of the early voluntary youth organisations has been extensively documented by a number of key commentators including Davies and Gibson (1967), Eggleston (1976), Booton (1985), Smith (1988), and most recently, Davies (1999). Their observation is that the aims and activities of the pioneering voluntary youth organisations were frequently framed in specifically religious, and often militaristic, terms emphasising qualities such as obedience, discipline, punctuality and public service.

For example, at its establishment in 1844, the YMCA adopted the following statement:

“The Young Men's Christian Association seeks to unite those young men who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom amongst young men.” (reproduced in YMCA 1987)

Similarly, the Object of the Boys' Brigade, established in 1883, is stated as ‘The advancement of Christ Kingdom amongst boys and the promotion of habits of obedience, reverence, discipline, self-respect and all that tends towards true Christian manliness.’ This statement appears on the Brigade's letterhead even to the present day, and although many changes have occurred over the years, the essentially Christian principles of the organisation remain constant. The current aims of the Boys' Brigade include the commitment to:

- help boys to feel part of the Church family;
- create in Companies a caring environment in a changing society;
- foster a trusting, friendly relationship between leaders and boys;
- help boys develop both as individuals and as members of a group;
- help boys to develop a sense of responsibility towards family, friends and society;
- help boys to live by Christian values in a secular society;
- develop boys' leadership potential in the Brigade and in society. (The Boys' Brigade 1989)

In a similar vein, the Scout Association (established 1907) and Guide Association (established 1910), both at their inception and to the present day, require their members to pledge allegiance to the Scout/Guide Promise:-

I promise that I will do my best to love my God
to serve the Queen and my country
to help other people and to keep the Guide Law.

In relation to the particular human qualities to be developed, Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scout movement, believed that the aim of scouting was to set young people on the right road to citizenship through discipline, self-reliance, self-sacrifice and patriotism (cited in Davies and Gibson 1967:41).

Davies (1999a) also noted that the Boys' Brigade specifically required its officers to "promote cleanliness, discipline and obedience, and ...encourage physical, mental and moral culture..." (Davies 1999a:9)

In more general terms, Milson (1970) commented on the weighty emphasis given, within the early uniformed voluntary youth organisations, to qualities such as obedience, reverence, discipline and self-respect. (1970:41)

However, alongside this, Booton observed the existence of the 'self-conscious, systematic practice of youth work', which according to him, began with the establishment of clubs for girls in the 1860s.

"...women youth workers refer to a multiplicity of clubs and agencies which are sufficiently similar for them to identify at a level of common understanding. To contrast these with an early account of boys' clubs work such as Pilkington's [contained in the same Volume] is to demonstrate immediately the sense of a considered practice as distinguished from mere undifferentiated *work*" (Booton 1985:39)

This observation led Booton to assert that:

"in general it is true to say that work with girls [1860-1890] was philosophically determined in conceptual terms that emphasised such things as relationships, welfare-support and frequently, a 'political' dimension to individual and collective awareness, whilst that with boys often remained at a level of amusement, 'discipline', 'training' and 'character'." (Booton 1985:21)

Therefore, as Smith (1988), Davies (1999a) and others have observed, the origins of youth work lie in a combination of the work of voluntary (often specifically religious) organisations and philanthropic benefactors whose main purpose was to provide a charitable means of association and physical activity; and to socialise young people into the prevailing social mores and political values. At the same time, there were others who acknowledged and addressed the damaging consequences of the prevailing social conditions. For example, the 'damaging consequences for young women of the monotony of the workshop life' (Davies 1999a:8). Indeed, Carpenter and Young (1986) noted that it was from a Working Girls' Club that the demand came for legislation regarding the working conditions of underground workrooms.

Yet despite these 'oppositional' stances, there remained a broad level of consistency regarding common purpose - in the sense that most organisations' sense of purpose reflected some balance between compassionate benevolence and anxiety to maintain the given social order. Davies' (1999a) summary of the main conclusion of other key commentators therefore suggested that early youth work exhibited a mixed set of motives which included:

- a sense of compassion to help those 'less fortunate';
- anxieties about the 'social and moral unreliability of *youth*';
- a determination to 'win and hold these young people to a religious faith';
- a determination to '*moralise* young people - to instil in them some *bedrock* social attitudes and habits'; and
- a political agenda 'focused increasingly on thwarting the class conflicts which were re-emerging both within and outside parliament and the threat that these posed to what was still largely seen as a given social order.' (Davies 1999a:8-10)

Moreover, these shared motives existed regardless of the fact that, as Booton observed, the organisations and individuals involved in youth work between the 1860s and 1900 tended to operate at very local levels with little communication or co-operation between them. Booton's observation was that early youth work was represented by:

"a remarkable heterogeneity of individual agencies, most of which worked independently and in ignorance of each other. There was little or no formal communication between any but the local agencies and indeed the suggestion of co-operation was often quite actively resisted." (Booton 1985:30)

However, the impact of the First World War (with the recruitment of young men into the armed forces and tensions and problems at home, including increasing juvenile crime) was to give rise to a hugely significant shift towards co-ordinating the efforts of the disparate voluntary organisations.

A Home Office committee chaired by Charles Russell recommended that juvenile organisation committees should be set up locally to "coordinate and stimulate youth provision" (Davies 1999a:15). In addition, the establishment of a national Juvenile Organisation Committee (chaired by Russell) brought, for the first time, "voluntary youth organisations into a policy-making relationship with the state." (Davies 1999a:15)

These wartime powers were formalised by the 1918 and 1921 Education Acts which empowered local authorities to make grants to clubs and youth groups, and sanctioned them to set up their

own juvenile organisation committees where voluntary organisations had failed to do so previously.

Yet, while the post 1900s witnessed an increase in youth provision and the founding of many of the foremost voluntary youth organisations (e.g. Boy Scout Association 1907, Girl Guide Association 1910, National Association of Girls' Clubs 1911, National Association of Boys' Clubs 1925), the second major push towards a co-ordinated 'service for youth' was to come as a result of concerns about the physical health of the nation and especially about whether young men were fit enough to fight for their country in what many perceived as an inevitable second war in Europe.

In 1937 the Physical Training and Recreation Act empowered local authorities to pay for facilities designed to raise the level of national fitness and on 27th November 1939 the Board of Education published Circular 1486, 'The Service of Youth', which introduced the institutional arrangement known as the Youth Service

1. Government Circulars and Reports on the Youth Service

Circular 1486 took upon itself 'a direct responsibility for youth welfare' and urged all local education authorities to establish youth committees and to seek the co-operation of voluntary organisations in providing a comprehensive service for young people between the ages of 14 and 20. This represented the first identification by the government that deliberate work with young people was both an education service and a service for which it wished to take some responsibility.

This commitment was confirmed in Sections 41(b) and 53(1) and (2) of the Education Act 1944 which placed a duty on all local education authorities to ensure that the facilities for further education provided in their area included adequate facilities for recreation, social and physical training co-operating as appropriate with 'any voluntary societies or bodies whose objects include provision of facilities or the organisation of activities of a similar character'. This, as amended by Section 120 of the 1988 Education Reform Act, provided the legislative base for Youth Service provision by local education authorities.

Between 1939 and 1982, successive government Circulars and commissioned reports all contributed to illuminating, re-interpreting and re-shaping the purpose of youth work. Therefore, the significance of Circular 1486 was not merely that it established the Youth Service as a

distinct service and part of the state maintained education service, but importantly, that it consolidated existing provision and practice by identifying the purpose of the proposed 'comprehensive service'. That was to provide for the 'social and physical development of boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 20 who have ceased full-time education.' The object of which was to help young people develop their 'body, mind and spirit'. (Board of Education 1939).

One year later Circular 1516, 'The Challenge of Youth', stated that the general aim of 'social and physical training' which 'links all youth organisations to one another and to the schools' was 'to develop the whole personality of individual boys and girls to enable them to take their place as full members of a free community.' (Board of Education 1940) The emphasis on 'free society' being pertinent given that the Second World War had commenced in the previous year.

At the end of the war in 1945, the National Youth Advisory Council's report 'The Purpose and the Content of the Youth Service' expressed the purpose of the Youth Service as to promote and provide opportunities for participating in activities which:

- are carried out in a community different in its nature from school or work;
- are voluntarily undertaken;
- are complementary to other activities; and
- are approached from the standpoint of recreation. (Ministry of Education 1945:7)

This report also commented that: "Whatever the activity, and whatever the precise motif, the lessons to be learned are the same, co-operation, tolerance, free decision and joint responsibility." (Ministry of Education 1945:10)

It is clear that, from these early beginnings, there was a sense that youth work should seek to develop young people's 'bodies, minds and spirits' in ways that developed their whole personality and encouraged the development of particular attributes and values such as co-operation, tolerance, free decision and joint responsibility. Also, from the beginning, these activities were considered to be different in nature from school and work; and were intended to be voluntarily undertaken.

Sir John Redcliffe Maud

Although not strictly a government report, the 1951 statement by Sir John Redcliffe Maud (then Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Education) was to become immensely influential under

the newly elected Conservative Government and in the years to follow. Maud stated that the aim of the Youth Service was:

"to offer individual young people in their leisure time, opportunities of various kinds, complementary to those at home, formal education and work, to discover and develop their personal resources of body, mind and spirit and thus better equip themselves to live the life of mature, creative and responsible members of a free society." (King George's Jubilee Trust 1951:13)

This statement confirmed the basis that 'links all youth organisations to one another' (Circular 1516, 1940) by bringing together and consolidating much of what had gone before. The commitment to 'boys and girls who had ceased full-time education' (Circular 1486, 1939) was combined with the requirement for the work to be 'voluntary and recreational' (NYAC 1945) to produce the idea of 'leisure time' opportunities. Maud made explicit the 'complementary' (NYAC 1945) nature of these opportunities and suggested the intended purpose of the social and physical development/social and physical training proposed. Indeed, this intention had already been partially formulated in Circular 1516 (1940) and later given substance in terms of 'co-operation, tolerance, free decision and joint responsibility' (NYAC 1945). Maud conceptualised these ideas as young people becoming 'mature, creative and responsible members of a free society'.

The Youth Service in England and Wales (1960) - The Albemarle Report

From this point onwards the exercise of defining purpose in youth work became, practically, an exercise in interpreting and re-interpreting Maud's earlier statement in the light of contemporary society and changing understandings about its impact on young people's lives.

As such, the next major report on the Youth Service, the Albemarle Report - 'The Youth Service in England and Wales' (HMSO 1960) - referred to Maud's statement with the comment that:

"We believe this statement should, to gain its full force, be seen against the contemporary background we have described - of a society at once so complex, so formal and so fluid that its conflicting pressures can substantially discourage good development. The aim of the Youth Service is not to remove tensions so as to reach towards some hypothetical condition of 'adjustment' to individual or social life. It is to help towards ensuring that those tensions which are social accidents, often both fruitless and oppressive, shall not submerge the better possibilities of children during their adolescence." (HMSO 1960: para 135)

In addition, the Albemarle Report (published in the year in which national service came to an end) expanded on Maud's notion of 'leisure time' opportunities by introducing, into the Youth Service vocabulary, the terms 'social and informal education'.

"The Youth Service is an integral part of the education system, since it provides for the continued social and informal education of young people in terms most likely to bring them to maturity, those of responsible personal choice." (HMSO 1960: para 351)

Maud's concept of 'maturity' was therefore now being explained in terms of the individual's capacity for 'responsible personal choice'.

In relation to defining the purpose of youth work, the Albemarle Committee expressed its belief that the Youth Service should provide '...places for association in which young people may maintain and develop, in the face of a disparate society, their sense of fellowship, of mutual respect and tolerance' (para 135). The Report also stated that the Youth Service should help young people to develop the capacity for 'making sound judgements' (para 136); and provide challenging opportunities for them to 'display and to respect forms of pre-eminence in fields other than the academic' (para 137) - in other words to 'satisfy the sense of achievement for which all hunger' (para 210).

The Albemarle Report acknowledged that the Youth Service's work did not take place in a vacuum but that tensions in society, 'both fruitless and oppressive', impacted on young people's lives in ways which can 'discourage good development'. However, the task of the Youth Service was seen not in terms of 'removing those tensions' but rather as ensuring that they did not 'submerge the better possibilities of children during their adolescence' (HMSO 1960: para 135).

The focus of the work therefore remained very much on the individual and his or her personal development - encouraging a 'sense of fellowship' and 'sense of achievement'; the capacity to make 'sound judgements' and personal qualities such as 'mutual respect and tolerance'. However, despite declaring its support for such principles and virtues, the Albemarle Report also commented that:

"The Youth Service should not be seen to offer something packaged - a 'way of life', a 'set of values', 'a code' as though these were things which came ready-made, upon the asking, without being tested in living experience.....If they feel the need, young people must have the liberty to question cherished ideas, attitudes and standards and if necessary to reject them" (para 141:142)

This position was a direct challenge to earlier work, documented by Booton (1985) and others, which had attempted to inculcate particular values and codes of behaviour in young people. Indeed, Jeffs' observation was that many nineteenth century clubs and youth organisations

concerned themselves overwhelmingly with 'the inculcation of intangible social and spiritual values among their clients' (1979:4).

However, this statement from the Albemarle Report posed something of a contradiction. For whilst giving the impression that all 'ideas, attitudes or standards' should be open to the process of questioning by young people, it also asserted its own set of standards in the form of the values and virtues which were seen as important to encourage.

Overall, and with respect to purpose, the key influences of the Albemarle Report were to:

- firmly locate youth work within the parameters of young people's 'social and informal education';
- introduce as central to youth work, the need for young people to question accepted ideas, attitudes and standards;
- affirm the importance of understanding youth work and young people within the context of contemporary society; and
- confirm that the desired outcome of the work should be 'mature' individuals who are capable of 'responsible personal choice'; and who exhibited a sense of 'fellowship and achievement'; the capacity to make 'sound judgements' and personal qualities such as 'mutual respect and tolerance'.

Youth and Community Work in the 70s (1969) - The Milson-Fairbairn Report

The next major Youth Service report appeared in 1969 - eighteen years after Maud's formulation of the aims of the Youth Service and nine years after the publication of the Albemarle Report. This report, 'Youth and Community Work in the 70s' (HMSO 1969), demonstrated once again that Maud's statement of aims had withstood the test of time.

'Youth and Community Work in the 70s' (HMSO 1969) remarked that Maud's definition had not 'spent its force' but needed to be given 'fresh interpretations and emphases in the light of contemporary society' (para 152). This Report maintained that:

"The primary goal of youth work is the social education of young people. Such a definition is not unimportant since, as we have seen, the aim changes as society changes. We are not so much concerned today as in the past with basic education, or with economic needs, or with the communication of an agreed belief or value system; but we are concerned to help young people to create their place in a changing society and it is their critical involvement in their community which is the goal." (HMSO 1969: para 152)

However, the idea of community involvement was not altogether new for the Youth Service. An earlier report by the National Youth Advisory Council (Ministry of Education, 1943) had

actively encouraged the development of an 'all age' community service in order to 'lead young people towards adult life and not keep them back unduly in the atmosphere and surroundings of adolescence' (quoted in Leigh and Smart 1985:9).

Nonetheless, the scope of youth work (and its vocabulary) was enlarged by 'Youth and Community Work in the 70s'. This was not only because of the Report's commitment to community involvement, but rather because of the emphasis it placed on young people's 'critical' involvement in their community, community development and political education.

Community development was described in the Report as 'the means by which a participant democracy can be fostered' and it was defined as an approach 'which helps groups to identify their own needs, to meet those needs and to contribute towards the formulation of a comprehensive and coherent policy for development'. (HMSO 1969: para 167)

In its own words, the Report was mindful of the 'thin line which divides political education from political indoctrination' and whilst appreciating the reasons for 'the little political education for young people in this country', 'Youth and Community Work in the 70s' nonetheless observed that the result was to exclude many moral issues 'from the educational process and from discussions across the generations.'

'Youth and Community Work in the 70s' commented that:

"Politics is concerned with life and how people live together. We see the new service providing many opportunities for young people to discuss matters of controversy and to share in the formation of public opinion." (HMSO 1969: para 211)

'Youth and Community Work in the 70s' also advocated young people's active participation in the learning process. That is, that youth work should encourage and support young people to 'learn by doing'; and 'exercise choice in the form and content of what is learnt'; Youth work was also charged with creating opportunities for young people where learning means 'not only the accumulation and expression of information, but more especially the formation and assimilation of ideas.' (HMSO 1969: para 172)

Here again, the idea of 'participation' was not new. As early as 1890, Maud Stanley had described in great detail the election, by club members, of 'girls' committees'; and the role and duties of such committees. Macalister Brew (1957) had also given a great deal of thought and

practical attention to the involvement of young people in 'members' committees' and programme planning. As she had observed:

"They [young people] must be involved in the making of the programmes and choices and decisions should be theirs, though they will need all the help a good leader can give in order to learn to do this both realistically and adventurously." (Brew 1957:159)

The Albemarle Report had also recommended that "young people should be given opportunities for participation as partners in the Youth Service, and particularly in the development of self-programming groups". (HMSO 1060: Recommendation 9 p 108)

Nonetheless, 'Youth and Community Work in the 70s' inspired renewed enthusiasm for young people's 'participation', the self-government of provision and the establishment of youth councils. The concept of 'critical involvement' was therefore being expressed, not only in terms of young people's involvement in their communities, but also in terms of their active participation in a 'participant democracy' and their contribution to the formation of ideas and public opinion.

However, unlike the Albemarle Report, 'Youth and Community Work in the 70s' was careful not to suggest that the processes involved, or indeed the desired outcomes, were somehow value free.

"We find ourselves unable to answer the question 'What kind of Youth Service do we want?' until we have answered a previous question 'What kind of society do we want?'. In the most stringent sense, we think that a 'value free' approach is not feasible." (HMSO 1969: para 158)

This statement therefore made a direct connection between the work of the Youth Service and the 'kind of society we want'. The kind of society to which the Report aspired was 'an active society in which all are encouraged and enabled to find the public expression of their values, avoiding the extremes of indifference and alienation.' (HMSO 1969: para 161) 'Youth and Community Work in the 70s' therefore:

- re-affirmed 'social education' as the primary goal of youth work;
- consolidated the self-government of provision as a central feature of 'participation';
- introduced the notion that 'political education' was a part of youth work through young people discussing matters of controversy and sharing in the formation of public opinion;

- introduced 'community development' as an activity for youth work through young people's critical involvement in their community, and their participation in identifying and meeting community needs;
- declared its aspiration for an 'active society' in which 'all are encouraged and enabled to find the public expression of their values, avoiding the extremes of indifference and alienation.' (HMSO 1969: para 161).

Experience and Participation (1982) - The Thompson Report

The deliberative work of the Thompson Committee took place amidst the urban disturbances of 1981. The report, 'Experience and Participation' (HMSO 1982), was published the following year and announced 'virtual unanimity' amongst those consulted by the Review Group, that:

"the fundamental purpose of the Youth Service is to provide programmes of personal development comprising in shorthand terms, social and political education....The twin aims of this purpose are thus affirmation and involvement - affirming an individual in his or her proper identity and involving an individual in relationships with other individuals and institutions." (HMSO 1982: para 7.3)

The 'experience' to which the Report's title referred was the experience of: being valued and accepted as a person; measuring oneself against others; making choices and seeing them through; enduring and living with hard reality; playing a part in a common enterprise; being responsible to and for others; receiving, giving and sharing ideas; and perceiving others' needs. (HMSO 1982: para 3.5)

In relation to 'participation' the Review Group commented:

"...the primary purpose of participation in the Youth Service is to give the young individual a sense of belonging, a sense of identity and the skills, confidence and assurance needed to participate not only in his club or organisation but also in society at large." (HMSO 1982: para 5.17)

'Experience and Participation' also made reference to Sir John Maud's 1951 statement of aims of the Youth Service. However, on this occasion the perspective taken was different from the views previously expressed. In commenting on Maud's earlier formulation, the Thompson Committee remarked:

"This definition which comprehensively recapitulated pre-war and wartime experience has insights which are of enduring value today, but it ignored too much." (HMSO 1982: para 1.7)

What the Maud formulation had ignored, according to the Thompson Report, was the social, economic and political contexts in which young people live their lives; and the powerful impact

of these on their personal development. The Thompson Report (published one year after the publication of the Scarman Report: The Brixton Disorders) listed the following as the challenges facing young people and therefore the Youth Service.

- alienation;
- unemployment;
- educational change;
- special community needs;
- racism;
- equal opportunities for girls and women;
- provision for the handicapped [sic]. (HMSO 1982: 49)

Again, however, this approach was not entirely new to youth work. As early as 1943, Josephine Macalister Brew had commented that “the real school of youth is the whole of life of society” and therefore, that any scheme for the welfare of young people should address the issues of health, employment, education for a full life, and education for earning a living side-by-side in order to answer the real demand of mankind (sic): “the demand for a purpose in life.” (1943:271)

In addition, a number of practitioners’ reports had already begun, prior to 1982, to address themselves to the changing circumstances of young people’s lives and in so doing had identified a range of contemporary ‘issues’ including unemployment, homelessness, crime etc. as critical issues confronting young people. (See for example Davies 1979; Cox 1977; Adams et al 1981.) Other reports from practitioners had also provided examples of developing thinking and practice in work with particular groups of young people, particularly in work with girls and young women, but also work with boys and young Black people. (See for example ‘Working with Girls Newsletter’; Young 1981; John 1981; NYB 1981.) What was different about the Thompson Report was that it was the first government commissioned report to place emphasis, not on the needs of individuals, but on the challenge of institutional reform.

For example, in relation to the issue of racism, the Thompson Report shifted perspective considerably from the approach adopted, fifteen years earlier by ‘Immigrants and the Youth Service’ – a report produced by a committee chaired by Lord Hunt (HMSO 1967). This report referred to the ‘culture of the host society’, ‘the culture of the immigrants’ and the ‘contrast between the two’; and considered so-called ‘second generation immigrants’ as living between

two cultures. It used this argument to suggest that the essential 'problem' was that of inter-generational conflict; and its overall intention was to promote 'integration'.

Two years later, Youth and Community Work in the 70s highlighted the need to implement the recommendations of the Hunt Report to 'take account of the young immigrants in our population' and 'keep under continuous review the needs of young coloured (sic) people' (HMSO 1969: para 8).

However, by 1982 there were different understandings about the nature of the 'problem' and how it could be approached. The Thompson Report described the Hunt Report's approach to integration as 'naive' and stressed instead the importance of addressing ourselves 'to the facts of racism' whether 'open, concealed or largely unconscious' because of the 'difficulties beyond the ordinary' which it created for young people from 'an ethnic and particularly black community'; and because of the impact on their personal development and the need to help them 'resist the disintegrating experiences to which they may have been subjected'. (HMSO 1982: para 6.43)

Yet despite the shortcomings of some of the language and the weaknesses of some of the analysis, The Thompson Report, nonetheless, shifted the focus from 'what should we do about young Black people' to 'what should we do about racism'.

The Thompson Report commented:

"Racism damages those who practise it as well as those who suffer from it. It is a deep tragedy for British society that the cultural diversity which should be a source of enjoyment and enrichment is liable to give rise to expressions of violence, harassment and antipathy which impoverish and threaten the lives of many and especially young people." (HMSO 1982: para 2.7)

The result of this thinking was the recommendation that 'The Youth Service in common with other agencies and services has a duty to combat racism in all its forms' (HMSO 1982:123). A similar approach was also adopted in relation to the development of work with girls and young women and work with young people with disabilities - the other two groups of young people specifically identified in the Report.

So, whereas the Albemarle Report (HMSO 1960) drew attention to the changing pattern of women's lives and commented that girls needed further post-school education as much as boys to prepare them for social maturity and their job of home-making; and Youth and Community

Work in the 70s (HMSO 1969) simply observed that young women were not attracted to youth clubs and 'dropped out' rapidly from the age of 16; the Thompson Report (HMSO 1982) remarked that the Youth Service 'uncritically mirrors sexist attitudes in society' which 'it has carried into elements of its practice and philosophy' and suggested that:

"Ingrained attitudes can be challenged and unconscious assumptions brought to the surface. In short, the Youth Service curriculum should be committed to the eradication of sexist attitudes." (HMSO 1982: para 6.54)

The needs of young people with disabilities were discussed, briefly, in Youth and Community Work in the 70s. However, this one paragraph was simply a (short) list of the 'special efforts' being made by some voluntary organisations and local authority services to 'help handicapped young people' (HMSO 1969: para 33). By contrast, the discussion in the Thompson Report identified the fact that 'disabilities are complex and diverse' and stated that:

"Handicap is created by situations - by the effect of the disability itself on the individual, but also by the environment in which that individual is operating and by the attitude of people around him or her." (HMSO 1982: para 6.56).

In relation to the question of purpose, the Thompson Report therefore:

- confirmed 'social and political education' as the fundamental purpose of youth work;
- broadened the concept of 'participation' to include young people's participation in society as well as their club/community;
- re-affirmed the significance, for youth work, of the changing social, economic and political context and its impact on young people's lives; and
- acknowledged the negative impact of major structural divisions in society, which can create disintegrating experiences for young people and damage their personal development - e.g. racism, sexism.

Following the publication of the Thompson Report many local youth services conducted reviews that resulted, inevitably, in policy changes and the formulation of new statements of purpose. In his review of developments in Youth Service policy following the Thompson Report, Smith (1987) observed that many of these followed the lead and vocabulary of the Thompson Report. Smith also observed that whilst the primary aims of many services were often conceived in 'individual' terms, alongside this were two further strands of emerging Youth Service aims.

"First, and this has been developing over a number of years, is an increasing recognition by the Service of the social and political context within which young people live. This recognition generally takes the form of explicitly acknowledging some of the major structural divisions in British society, especially those of class, gender and race, which help determine

young people's views and concerns and which materially affect their social and political circumstances." (Smith 1987:19)

The second strand was identified in terms of the role of the Service as an advocate both with and for young people. This, Smith described as the "movement towards recognising young people's interests and viewing the work of the Service in relation to young people in a collective sense..." (1987:20).

By 1989 many authorities had produced policies and priorities specifically relating to anti-racist work, anti-sexist work, participation and political education amongst other major concerns, for example, unemployment, substance use, police, health education and AIDS . (Smith 1989)

The Ministerial Conferences for the Youth Service (1989, 1990 & 1992)

In July 1989 the Department of Education and Science announced a series of national conferences for the Youth Service. The initiative signalled a change in emphasis from government support for deliberative work by committees to "conferences with senior practitioners designed to lead to concrete action and the implementation of agreed change by those in both local authority and voluntary sectors of the service." (DES Press Release, 14 July 1989). Later in 1989, the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Wales established a small steering committee of individuals from both the voluntary and local authority sectors of the Service to advise on the arrangements, format and content of the conferences. The conferences were to be administered by the (then) National Youth Bureau.

The first conference, entitled 'Towards a Core Curriculum for the Youth Service', was held in December 1989. Its central task was "to reach a clearer understanding about the role of the Youth Service within education provision and of the curriculum necessary to fulfil this role." (NYB 1990:65) The conference, attended by over 220 delegates from voluntary organisations and local authority youth services, confirmed that the Youth Service was education focused. However, conference participants believed that extensive consultations were needed in order to ascertain whether or not a 'nationally agreed core curriculum' could be determined.

Wide ranging consultations within both voluntary organisations and local authority services took place in the months between the first and second conference. To aid these consultations, the Ministerial Conferences Steering Committee issued a consultation document that included the interim 'mission statement' produced at the first conference and a series of questions relating to

targets, outcomes, methods and performance indicators. Written responses were invited from the field.

One Hundred and fifty-five responses to the consultation document were received. Of these, 71 were from local authorities and 84 from voluntary Youth Service organisations, local councils for voluntary youth services and other organisations who, although not directly involved in work with young people, had some interest in the development of work with them.

In general, respondents expressed broad agreement with the contents of the interim 'mission statement'. However, the term 'mission statement' was considered inappropriate and the statement itself too cumbersome and repetitive. The language of the statement was also described as inaccessible. It was suggested that the 'mission statement' be re-written as a shorter 'statement of purpose' and that greater emphasis be given to equal opportunities, partnership, community involvement, and environmental and international awareness (NYB 1991).

After two days of deliberation, the 245 delegates attending the Second Ministerial Conference for the Youth Service agreed to recommend the following 'Statement of Purpose':

"The purpose of youth work is to redress all forms of inequality and to ensure equality of opportunity for all young people to fulfil their potential as empowered individuals and members of groups and communities and to support young people during the transition to adulthood." (NYB 1991:16)

Therefore, despite suspicion about the 'distinctively managerial flavour' and 'Thatcherite family values' (Davies 1999b:133) driving the Government's commitment to the conferences, the result was, according to Davies:

"an ambitious (perhaps over-ambitious) and, in historical terms, radical 'official' declaration of intent which gave explicit recognition to young people's collective and cultural identities." (Davies 1999b:134)

The Statement from the second conference also confirmed that: "Youth work offers young people opportunities which are:

Educative:-

enabling young people to gain the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to identify, advocate and pursue their rights and responsibilities as individuals and as members of groups and communities locally, nationally and internationally.

Designed to promote equality of opportunity:-

through the challenging of oppressions such as racism and sexism and all those which spring from differences of culture, race, language, sexual identity, gender, disability, age, religion and class; and through the celebration of the diversity and strengths which arise from those differences.

Participative:-

through a voluntary relationship with young people in which young people are partners in the learning process and decision making structures which affect their own and other young people's lives and their environment.

Empowering:-

supporting young people to understand and act on the personal, social and political issues which affect their lives, the lives of others and the communities of which they are a part.

Youth work is delivered through a partnership between voluntary organisations and local authorities that provides or facilitates:

- informal educational programmes which challenge young people and enhance their personal and spiritual development, social and political education;
- places and relationships within which young people can have fun, feel secure and valued, learn to take greater control of their lives; and to resist the damaging influences which affect them;
- access to and ability to use relevant information, advice and counselling;
- responsiveness by other services to the needs of young people;
- research, monitoring and publication of social trends and legislation which affect young people." (NYB 1991:16)

In his response to the conference recommendations the Minister involved, Alan Howarth, (then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education) commented:

"The Statement of Purpose endorsed by the second conference should not be seen as constraining. It is a challenging document endorsed, after much debate, by a major gathering drawn from the local authority and voluntary youth sectors. It is the fruit of an arduous effort at definition of the general principles and priorities that might best guide the youth service. But the service as a whole, and statutory and voluntary providers within it, will rightly insist on their own freedom to accept or reject the Statement of Purpose, and interpret and redefine it in the light of their individual traditions, circumstances or needs." (NYB 1991:18)

The Minister also remarked:

"The youth service needs to be strongly positioned to play its vital part, alongside the formal education service and other support for young people. The youth service will, I fear, be less strongly placed to play this part if it is embroiled in political controversy. This does not mean to say that youth workers should not fight, on behalf of young people, for what they believe to be right. But idealism is not the same as ideology. Idealism - generous and embracing as it is - should be abundant in the youth service; contentious ideology - which is exclusive and divisive - can only be stultifying and ought to be put aside." (NYB 1991:19)

In preparation for the Third Ministerial Conference, the National Youth Agency conducted a survey to assess the impact of the recommendations agreed at the second conference held two years earlier. The findings showed that the Youth Service had very much taken the Minister at his word. Some voluntary organisations and local authority youth services had 'accepted' the Statement of Purpose, others had 'rejected' it; some had 'interpreted', others 'redefined'. For some therefore, this meant a 'no change' situation since they already had a statement of purpose - often, in the voluntary sector, dating back to the establishment of the organisation. (NYA 1992)

In addition, some voluntary organisations and local authority services had adopted the Statement of Purpose 'on their own terms' - in some instances 'using the same ingredients but with a different weighting given to the elements' in other instances incorporating their own 'fine tuning'. This included changes to the wording; additions (e.g. fun, 'where practical'); and omissions (e.g. sexual identity).

Finally some organisations and authorities had adopted the Statement of Purpose 'in its entirety' - with one respondent to the NYA survey commenting that it was 'difficult to argue with it!' (NYA 1992).

Clarity and coherence

At this point, it seemed that the Youth Service was very much where it had begun some 53 years earlier. But this was not quite so. For over the passing of time, the publication of these major reports on the Youth Service and other contributions in the field, the purpose of youth work had been continually and consistently re-iterated as being:

- fundamentally concerned with the social education of young people;
- an essential part of the political education of young people (including enabling young people to question 'cherished ideas, attitudes and standards', discuss moral and controversial matters and share in the formulation of public opinion);

- committed to young people's voluntary participation and their critical involvement in their club, community and society;
- based on the principle of 'informal education';
- informed by an appreciation of the changing social, economic and political context and the impact of this on young people's lives (including the negative impact of structural divisions in society); and
- underpinned by the principles of education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity.

At the heart of this lay a fundamental concern about the 'kinds of people' young people are, and the kinds of people they are to become. Whether expressed in terms of their 'growth to maturity' (HMSO 1960) or their 'transition to adulthood' (NYB 1991), youth work is, and always has been, concerned with the development of young people as *people*. From its beginning, commitments to 'the improvement of the spiritual and mental condition of young men' (YMCA 1844), the development of 'the whole personality of individual boys and girls' (HMSO 1940), and the desire for young people to 'better equip themselves to live the life of mature, creative and responsible members of a free society' (Maud 1951), all expressed aspirations which were centrally concerned with the values young people held and the 'kind of people' they were to become.

Indeed, as L. J. Barnes put it, the 'prime endeavour' of the youth worker is to facilitate 'spontaneous behaviour' - not 'impulsive or capricious' but...

"Our conception is [rather] of behaviour which is whole-hearted and whole-natured, as proceeding from a personality not divided against itself and not disorganised by feelings of guilt, inferiority, isolation or fear." (Barnes 1948:30)

2. Commentaries by key commentators and youth work practitioners

During the same period of time, a number of key commentators also contributed to the enlarging sense of purpose in youth work.

For example, in 1957, Macalister Brew, in her exposition on youth and youth groups, reminded the Service that:

"In all of this, of course, we must not forget the purpose of the whole exercise and allow 'activities' formal or informal, active or passive, to become, in our own minds, ends in themselves. They are, in fact, part of the means by which we try to help the young people to grow in their mental, emotional and physical capacities to become more socially competent and able to manage their own affairs." (1957:159)

In 1972, Leighton observed that youth work is about engaging in relationships with young people which enable them to answer the question 'what is the something that one must get out of life?' and in doing so we must believe that some forms of life are better than others "that health is preferred to sickness, education to ignorance, freedom to bondage." (1972:77)

So, here again, what was believed to lay at the heart of youth work's concerns was a commitment to young people becoming 'more socially competent and able to manage their own affairs'; and, that this should be underpinned by a set of values that were explicit in proffering, for example, health over sickness, education over ignorance, and freedom over bondage. In other words, a central concern for young people's values and the 'kind of people' they were to become.

Yet despite this, much of the published material on youth work focused not so directly on the question of purpose, but rather, on elaborating and illuminating the major themes as they emerged through successive government reports. The literature can therefore be grouped under the headings of these major themes as outlined above. Namely:

- Social education
- Political education
- Participation
- Informal education
- The impact of the social, economic and political context; and structural divisions in society
- The principles of education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity
- The 'transition to adulthood'.

Social education

Although the term 'social education' had been used by educationalists in the US in the late 1890s, (Booton 1985; Smith 1988), it had been used in close connection to schooling and was largely concerned with the education of 'citizens'; the complete development of the 'personality'; and the 'education of the conscience' which in turn meant the teaching of 'practical as distinguished from theoretical ethics' (Scott 1908, quoted in Booton 1985:12).

Booton therefore suggested that, in Britain, it was within youth work that 'social education has been largely defined and developed' (1985:6). Booton remarked that social education "concerns itself with the personal growth and development of the individual and the collective

improvement of human relations generally". As such, Booton saw social education as the 'curriculum' of youth work. (1985:6).

Davies and Gibson's (1967) 'The Social Education of the Adolescent' provided the first developed definition and discussion of social education as central to youth work in Britain. For Davies and Gibson, social education enabled young people to develop the "personal and social skills needed for effective participation in society" (1967:16), and provided young people with the social poise and capacity to make sense of their environment and make effective personal relationships. They identified the aim of social education as 'increasing young people's maturity for their own society' (1967:96); and commented that:

"This is maturity in the sense of a highly developed sensitivity to the requirements of others on oneself and a flexibility to express the appropriate aspects of one's individuality to meet the situation. Such maturity does not come rapidly and assumes the self-discipline and humility which comes from a careful discernment of one's own social situation and personal potentiality. What is required of social educators today is that they help young people to this self-understanding and self-expression. (Davies and Gibson 1967:94)

Davies and Gibson therefore believed that 'truly helpful social education must, of course, balance individual self-expression with the encouragement of a degree of conformity' (1967:17).

Whilst the term continued to be commonly used within youth work, it received little direct attention until 1978 when Butters and Newell developed the 'Social Education Repertoire' (SER) as an attempt to classify the different existing perspectives in youth work into one model. The different perspectives they identified, constructed from youth work practitioners' and trainers' descriptions of their work, were classified as:

- Character building.
- The three approaches of the SER:-
 - ◊ Cultural adjustment
 - ◊ Community development
 - ◊ Institutional reform; and
- Self-emancipation.

Butters and Newell asserted that, for the most part, character-building approaches in youth work had been surpassed and that the 'self-emancipation' approach had yet to be realised. Therefore, the majority of youth work approaches were modelled on, what they classified as, the three approaches of the SER.

This led to some attempts to utilise the model in the training of youth workers (Leigh and Smart 1985) and some further attempts to classify 'traditions in youth work' (Smith 1988). However, these exercises did little to provide any clearer a definition of social education than had previously existed. Indeed, Taylor (1987) suggested that Butters and Newell had grossly underestimated the extent to which the character-building approach still held sway within the majority of youth work practice.

"The compelling dilemma is that Butters' whole theoretical edifice is endangered by its foundation on the thin basis of what workers claim to be doing rather than a deep interrogation of concrete practice....In venturing an essay on transforming practice, it must be acknowledged that in the pressure cooker of day-to-day work, Baden-Powell seems to have a great deal more influence than Carl Rogers." (Taylor 1977:135-136)

Taylor's own position was that:

"A youth worker's awesome job is to socialise, or more appropriately, politicise young people into the morality of collective responsibility and obligation, into a recognition of the justice of equality between black and white, male and female, homosexual and heterosexual, disabled and able-bodied, into a commitment to the class struggle." (1987:144)

Yet, despite the perceived shortcomings of Butters and Newell's SER (1978), the term social education continued to be widely used within youth work and the Youth Service. Indeed, the Thompson Report acknowledged that "while the term social education was not normally defined, the aim of the process was clearly seen as helping the young person on the path to maturity, with participation in leisure time activity as the main agent." (HMSO 1982: para 4.7)

But the Youth Service's affection for the term social education was to be critically challenged by Smith in 1988. For whereas, in 1982, Smith had defined social education as "the conscious attempt to help people gain for themselves the knowledge, feelings and skills necessary to meet their own and others' developmental needs" (1982a:24), six years later, he dismissed social education as a "description of method" and criticised:

- the 'loose way' in which the term had been used to "embrace practices that could in no way be seen as educational";
- the general association of the term with specific groups of young people and 'low status' activities; and
- the superfluous inclusion of the word 'social' since this added nothing to the general educational aims of promoting "an internal change of consciousness". (Smith 1988:124)

Instead, Smith declared the term 'informal education' to be more appropriate and presented a discussion of the seven elements which, he asserted, characterised informal education (1988). To further develop this theme, Smith later proceeded, with Jeffs, to edit a collection by practitioners entitled 'Using Informal Education: An Alternative to Casework, Teaching and Control?' (1990a), and later wrote, with Jeffs, the more accessible and influential 'Informal Education - conversation, democracy and learning' (1996).

Yet, despite his public rejection of the term 'social education', and his somewhat mechanistic approach to the term 'informal education' (see below), Smith nonetheless continued to pursue the idea that youth work had a particular purpose. In this respect, Smith suggested that:

"practitioners should set out to enable individuals to autonomously pursue their own well-being. In particular they should seek to enlarge young people's understanding of their own well-being so that they may weigh their own needs with those of others, help them to display civic courage, and enable them to gain the knowledge, skills and disposition necessary to think and act politically.' (1988: xii)

Smith's proposition was therefore that young people should be enabled to make free reasoned choices [autonomy] to pursue what is 'good' and supports human flourishing - theirs and others [well-being] even in the face of contrary opinion or opposition [civic courage] (1988:113).

In setting this expression of the purpose of youth work against earlier definitions of social education one is left to wonder, whilst accepting the vagaries of language, what real difference exists between the sentiment of the above and the social education of, for example, Davies and Gibson who referred to the need for young people to develop:

- the "self-discipline and humility which comes from a careful discernment of one's own social situation and personal potentiality" (Davies and Gibson 1967:94);
- the capacity to make sense of their environment and make effective personal relationships;
- sensitivity to the requirements of others on themselves and a flexibility to express the appropriate aspects of their individuality to meet different situations; and
- the "personal and social skills needed for effective participation in society" (1967:16).

It seemed, that whilst the rhetoric was changing, the underlying principles and values of youth work remained much the same so that, in 1989, the National Advisory Council for the Youth Service stated that:

"The aim of social education is to enable persons as individuals and as members of their communities to take charge of their personal lives and play a responsible role in the life of the communities so that they may be able to make decisions for themselves and have a part in the

decision making processes of the community. Youth work helps young people to become critically aware of themselves and others including the wider society, and to take steps to improve their situation." (NACYS 1989a: para 8)

Beyond this point, however, the term social education did, to some extent, dwindle in usage so that by 1997 when a Working Group serviced by the National Youth Agency produced a 'Youth Service Statement of Purpose' the term 'social education' had been transformed into the term 'social development' as follows.

"Youth work supports young people in their transition from childhood to responsible adulthood, encourages their social development and individual fulfilment and helps them to engage fully in society." (NYA 1997a)

This statement also confirmed youth work's and the Youth Service's commitment to:

- equal opportunity and young people's contribution as partners in the learning process;
- young people's voluntary participation; and
- the encouragement of young people's critical and creative responses to their world. (NYA 1997a)

The switch from 'social education' to 'social development' was, however, not entirely surprising since an earlier HM Inspectors' report had, in fact, referred to the "social and personal development" of young people in the process of describing examples of 'good youth work practice' through 'informal work with young people'. (DES 1987)

Interestingly, the term 'social education' reappeared in the key purpose statement formulated during the initial work on the DfEE funded, National Youth Agency managed project to undertake the occupational and functional mapping of the youth sector. This stated that the purpose of youth work is to:

"Facilitate and support young people's growth through dependence to interdependence, by encouraging their personal and social education and helping them to take a positive role in the development of their communities and society." (Brown and Draper 1997:43)

One year later, in 1998, a general overview of youth work in the UK written for an international audience brought together the thinking of the previous two years to produce the following statement.

"Youth work supports young people in their transition from childhood to responsible adulthood, encourages their social development and individual fulfilment, and helps them to engage fully in society. It is concerned primarily with young people's personal and social

development and is critically informed by a set of beliefs which include a commitment to equal opportunity, and to young people as partners in learning and in decision making. Youth work offers educational programmes and projects that complement and support learning in school and college in which young people choose to be involved. It offers a constructive and educational use of leisure time. It helps young people to achieve and fulfil their potential and to make choices about their lives by offering them information, advice and support.” (Becky and Perrett 1999:52)

However, the ambivalence over social education did not go away and in 1999, two years into the occupational and functional mapping of the youth sector, the statement of key purpose contained in the second draft of the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work continued to refer to encouraging young people’s ‘personal and social education and helping them to take a positive role in the development of their communities and society.’ (NYA 1999)

But, again, this was not to last for not only did the key purpose statement developed in the final version of the Standards (January 2000) jettison the term ‘social education’ and the notion of ‘interdependence’, it also introduced a new aspiration for youth work - that of ‘enabling young people to gain a voice’. As such, the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work in the UK (January 2002) now states that the purpose of youth work is:

“To work with young people to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, and enable them to gain a voice, influence and place in society in a period of their transitions from dependence to independence.” (www.paulo.org.uk)

The 2002 National Occupational Standards also state that the work should be informed by youth work values and, as such, “the role of the youth worker is therefore to work with young people in ways that are:

- educative;
- participative;
- empowering; and
- promote equality of opportunity and social inclusion.” (www.paulo.org.uk)

Two things become clear from this review of the literature. Firstly, that, within youth work, social education has consistently been conceptualised in terms of both the personal development of the individual, and the individual’s contribution to collective responsibility. Secondly, that despite difficulties over the term and its usage, the concept of ‘social education’ remains fundamental to youth work in the sense that, as Booton put it:

“Social education and youth work relate together in the sense that, in Britain at least, the first is traditionally the curriculum of the second: in very general terms, one is theory, the other is practice.” (Booton 1985:6)

Political education

Another central theme consistently emerging in definitions and descriptions of youth work is that of 'political education'. This term was introduced in Youth and Community Work in the 70s (HMSO 1969) where it was considered as both a legitimate and desirable concern for youth work. The Report's interpretation of the term was essentially the development of young people's 'critical involvement':

- in their club (i.e. self-government and involvement in programme planning); and
- in their community/ society (i.e. community involvement, and a share in the formation of public opinion).

The aspiration of the Report was to foster young people's involvement in and contribution to a 'participant democracy' insofar as it commented 'politics is concerned with life and how people live together'. (HMSO 1969: para 211)

Yet, in order for young people to become 'critically involved' in their club/community or to contribute to a participatory democracy it is necessary for them to have access to the information on which to base their choices and opinions. And this was exactly Bunt and Gargrave's approach in 'The Politics of Youth Clubs' (1980) where they suggested that youth workers should enable access to all information in order to enable young people to 'judge the merits' of various arguments for themselves. However, political education was seen, by them, as being 'inclined towards that which illuminates the use of power and authority'. (1980:58)

Whilst not directly referring to 'power', the Thompson Committee recognised, nonetheless, that certain 'forces' give society its shape and direction and therefore suggested that:-

"Politics is the term we apply to the forces which give society the shape and direction it has - i.e. which tend to change it or keep it as it is. These forces are based on attitudes - of individuals and of groups - and spring from the activity resulting from those attitudes - i.e. from people acting on their convictions." (HMSO 1982: para 5.34)

The Thompson Report's commitment to challenging 'ingrained attitudes, assumptions and behaviour', including racism and sexism, can, therefore, clearly be seen as included in its definition of political education. However, the Report also addressed itself to other aspects of political action in institutional forms (e.g. voting in an election) as well as action in the community. It stressed that 'political education is not the same thing as political studies or civics though it may include some elements of civics' (HMSO 1982: para 5.37); and also that:

"The Youth Service has the potential to fulfil a much needed and vital role not only as a forum for the theory of political education but also as a scene of political activity addressed to issues which are of concern to young people" (HMSO 1982: para 5.39)

"What is required is experience of such a kind that the young people learn to claim their right to influence the society in which they live and to have a say in how it is run. It is active participation in some form of political activity, formal or informal, which really counts." (HMSO 1982: para 5.37)

"If political education is not a 'safe' thing, neither is democracy, and one will not flourish without the other." (HMSO 1982: para 5.41)

These observations very much reflected the broad areas identified by Smith (1982b) through the work of the 'Political Education Project', which operated at the National Association of Youth Clubs from 1979 to 1981. However, Smith's focus was to elaborate on the areas of political education which had been explored within youth work *practice* and as such he identified not only civics, participation and young people's issues (which could be clearly seen as reflected in Youth Service rhetoric of the day), but also two other areas (workers' issues and social movements) which, up to that point in time, had received much less attention in youth work texts and commentaries.

Participation

Participation had, of course, also been a central theme within youth work. Much of this early work had focused on issues of self-government of youth clubs/projects and young people's involvement in democratic processes - often in the form of a youth forum or council. The best known early example of member participation in youth work being, perhaps, the Bedminster Down Boys Club which attempted to "put action before words: to give the young real responsibility: to allow them to govern what is theirs to govern anyway" (Long 1978:1); and which produced reports about the structure and operation of its club 'parliament' from 1978 to 1983.

Principal organisations contributing to developments in this area were the British Youth Council (1981; 1987; 1993a; 1993b) and the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS 1979a; 1979b; 1981) who, in 1979, commented that:

"Participation has become one of the great rallying cries of reformers and revolutionaries of all descriptions. The logical outcome of true and effective participation is democracy of one form or another." (Foster 1979:1)

However, unlike the NCVYS project (which came to an end in the mid 1980s), the British Youth Council (BYC) has continued to champion the concept of participation, defining it in 1998 as containing three key elements:

- young people expressing their views, having an effective voice, being heard
- young people changing, influencing, directing or controlling their own activities or services
- young people taking responsibility for the decisions they are involved in. (1998a:1)

BYC has also continued to offer guidance on the benefits of participation and the processes involved in developing participative approaches in work with young people. Invariably, this seems to be based on a 'level or degrees of participation' model which has, at one end, "Led – [whereby] the youth worker has complete authority and the young people have no say in the decision making process" and at the other end "Self managing – [whereby] young people have effective control over the project. (BYC 1998a) This notion of young people's increasing control of decisions and resources has also been set alongside 'models of involvement' (BYC 1998b) that identify different structures for young people's involvement. Namely, consultations, advisory groups, local youth councils/forums, parallel structures (e.g. parallel to the local council), committee places, corporate strategies – with each kind of structure offering young people increasing access to decision making processes. (BYC 1998b)

The 'degrees of participation' idea was also expounded by Treseder (1997) who focused on the issue of decision making and programme planning with young people. And Baker, in his exploration of approaches to participation in youth work, shed further light on young people's contribution to corporate approaches within local authorities, and other forms of democratic organisation, advocacy and representation. Baker's observation about the different approaches to participation examined in his work was that:

"They are all different. They operate in different environments and locations – even when they start from common or similar situations, they take different paths in the light of local circumstances. They each, however, are characterised by a series of distinctive principles which are unique to youth work and which mark out the territory of the youth service. This method of working with young people is participative, where young people are partners in the service, creating conditions which encourage experiential learning and where young people are allowed to experiment and to make mistakes." (Baker 1996:3)

In addition, following publication of the Thompson Report – and possibly because of its title, 'Experience and Participation' – the issue of participation was given a new lease of life. This included the National Advisory Council for the Youth Service publishing guidelines for young people which suggested that the aim of participation should be to encourage young people to

“initiate and carry through activities and projects and to give them an effective voice in decisions about aims, expenditure and programmes” (NACYS 1988a:4). And that the ‘end result’ of participation was ‘young people representing other young people on outside bodies’ (NACYS 1988a:6). The National Advisory Council also produced guidelines for Youth Service practitioners, which stated that:

“Participation is part of a process leading to a broader and more democratic base for decision-making in our society, and thus better decisions reflecting real needs and aspirations....Participation by young people is the basis of good youth work practice and can only be achieved by involving young people from the outset in the implementation of its aims.” (NACYS 1988b:2)

The place of participation in youth work continued to be explored throughout the 1980s by various commentators who advocated different models of participation – e.g. local youth councils or youth action groups (see for example, Joseph 1984 and Killick 1986); emphasised the importance of power sharing or ‘achieving a balance of power between youth workers and young people’ (Gordon 1989:9); or highlighted the need for implementation plans and training (e.g. Smith 1986).

More recently, given the active encouragement provided by such initiatives as Best Value, Ofsted inspection and the Connexions Service, there is increasing attention on the need to consult with young people and to involve them in local democracy and the delivery of local services. As a result, a number of articles have recently appeared addressing the pros and cons of young people’s involvement in ‘local democracy’ (e.g. Davies and Marken 2000; Geedes and Rust 2000; Taylor 2001).

However, whilst Taylor insists that youth work has failed to either ‘channel the spontaneity of some or awaken the flickering interest of others in its participatory projects’ (2001:19), Davies and Marken focus on the imperatives involved in ensuring that young people’s ‘participation’ is sustainable and effective. As such, they offer support to a framework with four elements:

- Public participation - with service users as customers (defining own needs, deciding how these should be met, evaluating outcomes), and citizens (helping to plan services, allocate resources and assess outcomes).
- Rights that reside in individuals – e.g. rights to advice and information, privacy and advocacy, to be protected from discrimination.
- An open system – of access to information and public accountability.

- Opportunities for young people as service deliverers – working alongside professionals in ways that are non-exploitative, and developmental of their knowledge and skills (Davies and Marken 2000).

Informal education

Scattered throughout the youth work literature are suggestions about the principles which best support the work, or indeed are considered to be essential to the development of youth work practice. For example, the Ministry of Education (1945) suggested that youth work should be carried out in a community different in its nature from school or work; and that involvement should be voluntarily undertaken; complementary to other activities; and approached from the standpoint of recreation.

Davies and Gibson (1967) espoused the following principles:

- Accept the young person as a whole human being.
- Recognise that each individual is significant and has a right to be considered.
- Do not allow practice to be directed simply by personal values.
- Respect individuals' independence and integrity.
- Relationships should be built on trust and mutual respect.
- The worker needs to 'hold a position' on behalf of society.
- The worker needs to involve their own personality in the work - convictions, feelings, beliefs, values. (1967:164-169 & 183)

Leighton (1972) suggested that the principles of youth (and community) work were:

- Acceptance - recognising the worth of the individual and the desire to foster growth of human dignity and self-respect.
- Self-determination - taking responsibility for one's own affairs.
- Confidentiality - and trust within the relationship. (1972:90-98)

And also that the guiding principles for practice included:

- Pursuing the purpose of youth work.
- Using one's growing self-awareness.
- Starting where young people are. (Leighton 1972:99)

Later, Davies (1991) suggested that the essential principles of youth work should include, as a minimum:

- "Working in a setting which young people choose to come to, not least because it promises them a chance to relax, meet friends and have fun.
- Starting from where young people are and seeing them (rather than, say, parents or even the 'community') as 'the clientele'.
- At the same time, working as closely as possible to their peer and also other influential social networks in their lives, including 'family' and 'community'.
- Setting aims for practice which arise from a concern for, and appreciation of, the young person as a person.
- Giving major attention to their view of the world and to their accounts of what is relevant to their growth.
- Within the unmovable limits laid down by the resources of the organisation within which young people and 'youth worker' meet, seeking to tip the balances of power in young people's favour.
- Giving weight and attention to how young people feel and to the process of their experience - its social content - as well as what they know and can do.
- Within these experiences, seeking to go beyond where young people start, in particular by promoting and positively endorsing critical and not merely conformist responses to the world and their experience of it.
- Helping young people to achieve a strong collective as well as personal (individual) identity and strength." (Davies 1991:5)

However, in using the term 'informal education', the Albemarle Report was not so much identifying a set of principles but rather using the term to denote a range of 'informal' provision and activities provided for young people 'out-of-class' (HMSO 1960: para 131), thereby distinguishing 'informal education' from formal/classroom education. The word 'education' was used because youth work was seen to be about young people's 'learning'; and also because the Youth Service had been established as an integral part of the education system.

More recently, however, the term 'informal education' has been used to characterise a particular form of practice, much reminiscent of the work of Paulo Freire (1972; 1974), which has at its heart the idea of 'critical dialogue' (Smith 1988; Jeffs and Smith 1996). This (relatively speaking) more recent usage is, therefore, not merely a way of making the distinction between 'in school' (formal) and 'out of school' (informal) education. It is much more than this, for the characteristics of 'informal education' are described as:

- "1 It can take place in a variety of settings, many of which are used for other, non-educational purposes.
- 2 The process is deliberate and purposeful in that the people concerned are seeking to acquire some knowledge, skills and/or attitudes. However, such purpose and intent may not always be marked by closely specified goals.
- 3 Timescales are likely to be highly variable and often structured by the dynamics of the particular institution(s) in which exchanges are set. Most of those institutions will not primarily be concerned with education.
- 4 Participation is voluntary and is often self-generated.
- 5 The process is dialogical and marked by mutual respect.

- 6 There will be an active appreciation of, and engagement with, the social systems through which participants operate, and the cultural forms they utilise.
- 7 It may use both experiential and assimilated information patterns of learning" (Smith 1988:131-132)

Jeffs and Smith (1996) also commented that 'conversation' lay at the heart of social relationships and involved concern, trust, respect, appreciation (of the unique qualities that others bring) affection and hope (1996:30).

This represented a departure from the meaning given to the term in earlier youth work texts. For although the term 'informal education' had been used by Macalister Brew as early as 1946, the intention then was much more as an expression of the purpose of the work as opposed to the identification of particular characteristics or principles upon which youth work was supposed to be built.

"Addison once wrote: 'It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among men, and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at the tea-tables and coffee houses.' In that department of informal education known as the Youth Service many people are carrying on in this brave tradition...Perhaps nothing will matter more in the next fifty years than the ability of the common man to adapt himself to the changing world - a world in which material prosperity may just be around the corner, but where there are still vast acreages of barren land in the intellectual, emotional and spiritual field." (Macalister Brew 1946:7)

The impact of the social, economic and political context and structural divisions in society

In formulating its perspectives on the issues confronting young people, the Thompson Committee benefited from the enormous transformation, taking place at the time, in thinking and practice in the field - particularly in the development of work with girls and young women documented largely through a raft of project reports and publications (e.g. Fulham, Islington and Camden Girls' Projects; Hammersmith Girls' Workshop; North East Work with Girls Group; Wigan Women Youth Workers' Group; Dixon 1981; Jamdagni 1981; Lee-Sang 1981; McRobbie and McCabe 1981); and in the bi-monthly 'Working With Girls Newsletter' (1980-1987).

By 1986, Davies was highlighting the failure of the Youth Service to adequately respond to the broader issues facing young people in society such as unemployment, homelessness, relations with the police and juvenile justice. This position was further developed by Jeffs and Smith (1988) in their criticism of the Youth Service's attempts to confront structural problems through

“searching for non-political solutions to fundamentally political problems” (1988:34); and by individualising social problems such as unemployment, as the result of personal inadequacy.

However, during the late 1980s and 1990s these aspects of youth work thinking and practice grew considerably and led to a great deal of work on issues concerned with the changing social, economic and political context of young people’s lives e.g. unemployment, juvenile justice, health (see for example Jeffs and Smith 1987 & 1988); and broader structural divisions in society. Specifically, this included work with girls and young women (e.g. Smith 1984; Young 1985; Carpenter and Young 1986; NOWGYW 1987; Spence 1996; Batsleer 1996); work with boys (e.g. Lloyd 1985;); anti-racist youth work (e.g. Ritchie and Marken 1984; Aluffi-Pentini and Lorenz 1996); work with young Black people (e.g. Williams 1988; Chauhan 1989); work with young people with disabilities (Mayhill 1986; O’Halloran and Lisicki 1988; NACYS 1989b); and work with young lesbians and gay men (e.g. Trenchard and Warren 1984 & 1985).

Two reports of HM Inspectors - ‘Effective Youth Work’ (DES 1987) and ‘Responsive Youth Work’ (DES 1990) - provided further examples of practice in these areas of work. In the process of illustrating the range and content of youth work, these publications also affirmed the legitimacy and validity of youth work, not only with young people in general, but also with specific groups including young women and young men (both Black and white), young lesbians and gay men, and young people with disabilities. ‘Young People, Inequality and Youth Work’, a collection of work by practitioners (edited by Jeffs and Smith 1990b), provided further illustration of the range of contemporary youth work practice issues in relation to young people’s age, demography and location, gender, sexuality, race, disability and class.

Educative, participative, empowering and promoting equality of opportunity.

Whilst many local youth services and voluntary youth organisations had created, for themselves, ‘abridged’ versions of the Statement of Purpose affirmed at the Second Ministerial Conference for the Youth Service (NYA, 1992), the four underlying principles of education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity withstood the test of time (NYA 2000). Indeed, these principles have subsequently become an integral part of the youth work vocabulary, despite the change of wording by Ofsted from ‘empowerment’ to ‘enabling’ (Ofsted 1993).

Yet despite their wholesale acceptance, there has been little work, within youth work, to define the meaning of these principles, and importantly, how, taken together, they inform and support youth work practice.

At a result, the concept of 'participation' continues to be interpreted in terms of giving young people 'a voice', and particularly in three main ways:

- As a mechanism for young people's involvement in the planning of 'programme' content and methods in youth work settings.
- As a tool for involving young people in forms of participative democracy in their community (local, national, international) - e.g. through established decision making structures, youth councils etc.
- (more recently) As a mechanism for consulting young people about the need for and delivery of local services.

The 'educative' aspect of youth work had been largely developed through discussions of informal education – particularly as articulated by Jeffs and Smith (1996 & 1999a).

Equality of opportunity and the Youth Service's commitment to promote equality was pursued, during the early 1990s, through the development of equal opportunities policies. At the same time, the Youth Service also witnessed a decline in specific youth work with particular groups of young people (e.g. young women). This was offset by an increasing emphasis on work that directly addressed the emerging contemporary issues and concerns in society. For example, work in relation to teenage motherhood (e.g. Aarvold and Buswell 1999; Tabberer 2000); young people not in education, training or employment (e.g. Wilkinson 1995); young people and crime (e.g. France and Wiles 1996); disaffected young people (e.g. Merton 1998); and young people designated as socially excluded (e.g. Williamson 1997).

Finally, the issue of 'empowerment' has received little direct attention in the youth work literature. Whilst there has been some discussion in the literature relating to youth and community work training (e.g. Morley 1991; Barry 1996; Anastacio, Mayo and Turkie 1998), such work has tended to focus on 'empowerment' in the context of powerlessness and oppression. For example, Morley quotes O'Brien and Whitmore in defining empowerment as:

“an interactive process through which less powerful people experience personal and social change, enabling them to achieve influence over the organisations and institutions which affect their lives and the communities in which they live. (Morley 1991:14)

Similarly, Barry (1996) defines empowerment as “the end result of participative practices where each participant gains control and/or influence over issues of concern to them” (1996:3).

Anastacio, Mayo and Turkie (1998) identify three interpretations of empowerment:

1. There is a variable amount of power in society - 'empowerment' involves gaining the skills to participate regardless of your starting point in terms of class, race, gender, sexuality, age or disability.
2. The powerless lack power because the powerful have power concentrated in their hands - 'empowerment' involves challenging the structures of power and the dominant ideologies that legitimise them.
3. Power is 'decentered', an 'apparatus consisting of discourse, institutions, actors and a flow of events'.

"Whilst there are important reservations to be made about this type of approach, it does raise important questions about the nature of power, and hence of empowerment in the far more fragmented context of the mixed economy of welfare in the 1990s." (Anastacio, Mayo and Turkie 1998:64)

Anastacio, Mayo and Turkie's central point was that different concepts of power have different implications for empowerment, and consequently, different implications for the training and education of youth and community workers (1998).

However, expositions on the implication of 'empowerment' for youth work *practice* have been sparse in relation to their examination of the concept of 'empowerment' (e.g. Cockerill 1992).

'Transition to adulthood'

Circular 1486 (Board of Education, 1939) specified the age range of youth work and the Youth Service as young people as aged between 14 and 20. This made clear the intention that the Service was aimed at young people who were above the compulsory school leaving age. The Albemarle Report (HMSO, 1960) confirmed this age range and suggested that there might be a case for reconsidering the lower age limit if and when the school leaving age was raised. However, whilst 'Experience and Participation' (HMSO, 1982) identified four broad age bands (7-10; 11-14; 15-19; 20-25), the Report did not suggest an adjustment to the accepted age range but rather that priority should be given to the 11-14 and 15-19 age groups. Finally, the Second Ministerial Conference for the Youth Service agreed that the Youth Service age range should be 11-25. The conference also recommended that the Youth Service be open to all young people within the specified age range but focus primarily, although not exclusively, on the 13-19 age group.

Given the specified age range of the Youth Service, the concepts of 'adolescence' and 'youth'; and young people's 'transition' from 'childhood' to 'adulthood' or 'maturity' have, inevitably, represented major themes in youth work.

Macalister Brew (1957) associated the onset of puberty with social, emotional and physiological changes which 'increased emotional awareness and spiritual or idealistic development' and brought with it, in this society, a period of anxiety and uncertainty. Adolescence was described as 'the bridge connecting childhood with adulthood'. The youth worker's primary skill was identified as "the ability to help the development of personal relationships and to foster groups in which individuals can develop personally through being people with identities in comprehensible human settings" (1957:72).

Davies and Gibson (1967) focused less on the state of mind and body of the adolescent and their individual development, and highlighted instead the social situation of the adolescent and the attitudes of adults towards adolescence as a phenomenon. Their argument confronted adult society's often negative and limiting view of adolescence and maintained that adolescence should be seen not as a 'frustrating and intrinsically pointless preliminary to adulthood' but rather as 'a chance for young people to try out a multitude of different roles in preparation for mature adulthood' (1967:53). The role of the Youth Service was seen as creating opportunities for young people to develop their potential since "the adolescent retains the potentiality to become a whole range of different persons from the one he looks like becoming today" (1967:53).

For Davies and Gibson, 'adolescence' is conceived as a time of asking the essential questions of identity, 'what sort of person am I?' and 'what sort of person am I going to be?' (Davies and Gibson 1967:51).

This idea was expressed slightly differently by Leighton in terms of adolescence being a time for 'exploring the boundaries of freedom', examining 'how one sees oneself and is seen by others' and reflecting on 'personal identity' (Leighton, 1972:54). Also, that 'youth' is the moment when the young person is poised "to achieve a set of values drawn from ethical concepts and a growing moral conscience which makes him out as different to others in the way he views the social scene and relates to it" (Leighton 1972:54).

Eggleston's (1976) research into the organisation and purpose of the youth and community service in England and Wales suggested that most adult members of the Youth Service saw themselves as performing the task of 'adolescent socialisation':

"involving the assimilation of cultural patterns both of the society as a whole and of the local communities in which the young were likely to spend their adult lives. At both levels the Youth Service was seen to be assisting the young to internalise relevant behaviours, values, norms and patterns of interaction appropriate for life in adult society and in so doing enable them to 'become adult' in a way that will allow society to continue without economic difficulty or social upheaval." (1976:36)

In this context, Eggleston defined the Youth Service as both an instrument of social control and an agency that helps to bring about 'certain agreed forms of social change' (1976:37). Youth work was seen, therefore, largely in terms of supporting young people's personal development, primarily within the boundaries of the social setting, including the assimilation of cultural patterns, relevant behaviours, values, norms and patterns of interaction.

Reflecting on a broader sociological and psychological perspective, Leigh and Smart (1985) described the 'process of enfranchisement' as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood which helps to prepare young people for the different (and increasingly specified) roles they will play as adults.

Therefore, broadly speaking, 'adolescence' has tended to be understood in terms of young people's physiological and emotional development; whereas 'youth' or young adulthood has been understood more in terms of its sociological significance. In other words, 'adolescence' can be conceptualised as being concerned with psychology; and 'youth' as a 'socially constructed' phase of life.

However, since the mid 1980s, little has been written, from within a youth work perspective, which specifically illuminates the issue of young people's transition to adulthood. Nonetheless, the underlying principle remains essentially the same. That is, a commitment to the 'maturing' of young people as individuals and members of society, or as expressed by Leighton:

"There can be said to be an overall purpose for youth work in terms of offering opportunities to young people by challenging them to be creative and adventurous; to learn how to respond to different social situations; to reach forward to maturity and to see a part of them in the development of society." (Leighton 1972:100)

Summary

This critical review of historical development in thinking about the purpose of youth work demonstrates that from its earliest beginnings in the late Victorian period, youth work has been centrally concerned with the moral values of young people and their social attitudes and habits. Yet whilst it is arguable as to whether the social and political motivation for such work has changed over time (Davies 1999a; 1999b), it is nonetheless clear that, although expressed in different ways and with different emphases, the Youth Service's sense of purpose has, from the late 19th century to the present day, built towards a clear and consistent commitment to young people's:

- Personal development - expressed, in various forms, as their well-being of body, mind and spirit;
- Active participation (including autonomous, informed decision making); and
- Critical involvement in their community and society.

These features of the work have been expressed in terms of the service's commitments to social education, political education, informal education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity.

However, equality of opportunity is not conceived merely in terms of ensuring access. Within youth work, equality of opportunity extends beyond this to include a recognition of how the social, economic and political context in which young people live impacts on their lives and the communities of which they are a part (HMSO 1982). The Youth Service's commitment to equality of opportunity also involves challenging oppressions based on differences in culture, race, language, sexual identity, gender, disability, age, religion and class (NYB 1991).

Finally, youth work takes place at a particular moment in young people's lives variously described as during the 'transition from childhood to adulthood' or alternatively, during the 'transition from dependence to independence'. The notions of adolescence and 'youth' are therefore key concepts in youth work.

These key features of youth work's purpose have been examined from the perspective of central government commissioned reports on the Youth Service; and from the viewpoint of practitioners and key commentators on youth work and the Youth Service.

Research Proposition

The problem for youth work and the Youth Service, however, is that despite this rich history and collective wisdom the Service has often failed to express clearly, coherently and consistently the essential purpose of youth work in terms of the common qualities which enable various configurations or expressions of the work to be collectively known as 'youth work'.

Therefore, a clear understanding of 'youth work' has often been obscured, not by the absence of clearly defined concepts and guiding principles, but rather, by the Youth Service's inclination to accept that every initiative taken by organisations considered to be part of the Youth Service, or that involve work with young people, could (or should) be named 'youth work'. The result is that definitions of the work have sometimes been constructed not from the basis of a shared sense of purpose, but rather, from a desire to reflect and affirm existing provision and practice (e.g. NACYS 1989a).

Throughout, the Youth Service has increasingly excelled in its appetite to lay claim to its contribution to addressing urgent social issues (United Kingdom Youth Work Alliance 1996); and promoting possible roles for youth workers and the Youth Service in preparing young people for work, reducing youth crime and anti-social behaviour, promoting healthy living and other such initiatives (e.g. NYA 1998).

However, whilst crime prevention, health promotion, and so on, may be outcomes of youth work they are not its fundamental purpose. Indeed, the urgent social issues of the day are problems of 'political making and economic change' (Bloxham 1997:1). Working with young people cannot therefore be seen as a 'cure' for such problems because young people did not create them. They inherited them. Therefore:

"Trying to solve complex social problems such as juvenile crime, very young mothers or drug abuse through poorly funded youth work, as we have done in recent years, is [also] destined to flounder." (Bloxham 1997:13)

The proposition here is that, taken back to first principles, youth work offers an approach to young people's learning and development that focuses on them as human beings - not because young people are 'in trouble' or 'cause trouble' but because they are young people in the process of creating themselves and the meanings that underpin their 'being' and guide their actions in the world.

This means enabling and supporting young people, at a critical moment in their lives, to learn and develop the capacities to reflect, to reason and to act as social beings in the social world. Not in any way they choose, but in accordance with the state of 'good faith' to which all human beings aspire.

In undertaking this review of the literature, five issues have become particularly clear.

- Firstly, since the Ministerial Conferences, the principles of education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity have become fully embraced within the youth work vocabulary and have withstood the test of time insofar as they are still felt to be relevant to youth work in the 21st century (NYA 2000). However, there has been little work to examine the meaning of these terms, and importantly, how, taken together, these four principles both inform and underpin the development of youth work theory and practice.
- Secondly, there has been little recent attention to the 'social and political education' of young people in terms of their 'identity' and the effect of this on their relationships with themselves, other individuals, groups and institutions.
- Thirdly, the essentially moral concern of youth work - i.e. the concern about the values young people hold and the 'kind of people' they are to become - has been eclipsed by a more, perhaps pragmatic, approach which focuses on young people's values, primarily, in terms of the trouble they cause or the problems they have.
- Fourthly, there is an absence of work that examines the process through which young people gain the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to question 'cherished ideas, attitudes and standards and if necessary to reject them' (HMSO 1960); and engage in informed decision making leading to decisions that can be sustained through committed action.
- Fifthly, existing literature within youth work suffers from the lack of a clearly defined theory of the work. Therefore, what is needed is theory generating research.

The proposition here is that such a theory must necessarily be grounded in an understanding of the purpose of youth work. For regardless of their specific focus on, for example, youth work methods and processes; 'target groups'; varieties of settings, etc. - all descriptions of the work have been, inevitably, underpinned by implicit ideas, assumptions and beliefs about the purpose of youth work. The question of purpose is therefore fundamental to any theory of youth work and any understanding of what youth work is, and hence, what youth workers do.

The research therefore seeks to examine how youth work practitioners and young people (across England, Wales and Northern Ireland) understand the core purpose of youth work in relation to:

1. The meaning and practice implications of the underlying principles of education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity.
2. The central importance of 'adolescence'/the 'transition to adulthood'; and 'identity' as key concepts in youth work.
3. The features of the context within which youth work and youth workers enable and support young people to reflect on and examine their values.
4. The processes through which young people gain the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to question their experience and engage in informed decision making.
5. The knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by youth workers to undertake such work, and hence, the implications for the training and support of youth workers.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The literature review contained in the previous chapter traces the historical and contemporary development of purpose in youth work. As such it identifies the consistently emerging concepts and principles of the work from the mid nineteenth century to the present day.

This literature review served three essential functions for the research.

- Firstly, it demonstrated that the researcher is aware of the available *existing work* already undertaken in the area.
- Secondly, it identified what the researcher takes to be the key *issues*, the critical *questions* and the obvious *gaps* in the current state of knowledge.
- Thirdly, it provided *signposts* for the reader about which theories and principles have influenced and shaped the approach to be adopted in the proposed work. (Denscombe 1998:158)

Based on the perspectives contained in the literature review, the current research seeks to investigate how youth work practitioners and young people understand the core purpose of youth work specifically in relation to:

- The meaning and practice implications of the underlying principles of youth work - i.e. education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity.
- The central importance of 'adolescence'/the 'transition to adulthood' and 'identity' as key concepts in youth work.
- The features of the context within which youth workers enable and support young people to reflect on and examine their values.
- The processes through which young people gain the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to question their experience and engage in informed decision making.

This study also seeks to identify the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by youth workers to undertake such work, and hence, the implications for their training and development.

However, since research methods are not ends in themselves, but rather, ways of gathering evidence for furthering the questions posed then it is clear that:

"The choice of research design depends on the questions asked (which in turn) depend on the current state of knowledge as expressed in theory. Thus, if little is known about the phenomenon to be investigated, descriptive theory-generating research is needed." (Fawcett & Downs 1992:11)

Given the current state of knowledge regarding (i) the meaning and practice implications of the four underpinning youth work principles (education, participation, empowerment, equality of opportunity); and (ii) the context and process through which young people are supported to reflect on their values and engage in informed decision making; it is reasonable to pursue a theory-generating research approach. This approach is also supported by the fact that the literature review revealed a lack of a clearly expressed theory of youth work.

This study is, therefore, an attempt to create a theory of youth work by elucidating the "plausible relationships produced among concepts and sets of concepts" (Strauss and Corbin 1994 quoted in Silverman 2000:78) to explain the phenomenon known as 'youth work'. This is based on the understanding that theory provides both:

- A framework for critically understanding phenomena; and
- A basis for considering how what is unknown might be organised. (Silverman 2000:78)

In so doing, it is hoped that such a theory will make clear the unique contribution that youth work makes to the personal, social and moral development of young people; and create a framework which supports those engaged in youth work to make sound practical decisions about practice; and the training and development of youth workers. This is based on the idea that:

"A sound theory is the conceptual framework for reliable knowledge; theories help us to explain and predict phenomenon of interest to us, and therefore, to make well-founded, practical decisions." (Nachmias and Nachmias 1982:38)

Notwithstanding, in order to formulate such a conceptual framework or theory, one must first engage in research since 'research is the method used to gather the data needed for a theory. This is true whether the purpose of the research is to generate a theory or to test one.' (Fawcett and Downs 1992:4-5)

This chapter therefore describes the research methodology to be adopted and the work to be undertaken. Specifically, this includes details of the:

- research perspective
- methodology
- research strategy
- research methods
- sampling
- analysis
- research ethics.

Research perspective

Sarantakos (1998) suggests three perspectives in research - the 'Positivist perspective' (which defines reality as *objective*), the 'Interpretive perspective' (which defines reality as *subjective/socially constructed*) and the 'Critical perspective' (which defines reality as 'constructed by the powerful to serve their needs'). (Sarantakos 1998:37-41)

My own 'world view' contains elements of both the 'interpretive perspective', insofar as I believe that reality is socially constructed through interaction and carries the meaning that people attach to it; and elements of the 'critical perspective' in the sense that I believe that people are restricted and oppressed by social structures which keep them in a 'false consciousness', perpetuates inequality and injustice, and prevents them from achieving their full potential. (Sarantakos 1998)

In other words, whilst racism, sexism and other forms of oppression are sewn into the fabric of our society, in our institutions and our culture, we are also responsible, as individuals, for constructing our own meanings and reality. The existence of oppressive forces in society means that we all end up living distorted lives. Lives based on misinformation, myths and lies about ourselves, our history, nature and abilities; and the history, nature and abilities of others.

Therefore, in order to take charge of our lives we must both oppose the external structures and ideology of oppression and, importantly, examine the internal bridles and perceived powerlessness that underpin our sense of self. This means taking the responsibility to broaden and deepen our understanding of how external and internal forces act to constrain our lives and our imaginations. Or as Audre Lorde put it:

“The true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors' tactics, the oppressors' relationships. (Lorde 1984:123)

This position, therefore, reflects both:

- The ‘interpretive’ view that science provides a basis for explaining social events and understanding the meanings people use to make sense of their lives; and is based on knowledge derived not only from the senses but also from understandings, meanings and interpretations; and
- The ‘critical’ view that people are confronted by socio-economic conditions that shape their lives; and also that they are capable of giving meaning to their world and creating their own destiny through ‘fighting illusion and the structures that support and promote it.’ (Sarantakos 1998:38)

The ‘interpretive view’ leads to an understanding that knowledge is a ‘dynamic process not a static entity’ (Harvey 1990:3). The ‘critical view’ leads to an understanding that social structures are, in one way or another, oppressive structures. (Harvey 1990:2)

These principles identified by Harvey are also reflected in Sarantakos’ view that critical (social) research perceives reality as:

“complex, diverse and multifaceted. It entails appearances, it reflects ‘real facts’ that are hidden behind appearances, it contains personal perceptions and actions that are expressions of a correct or a false consciousness; it is seen as the result of historical processes and reflects the powerless position of people acting in well-orchestrated and institutionally reinforced systems of power that researchers are supposed to actively address.” (Sarantakos 1998:60)

As such, this position has echoes of the women’s liberation adage ‘the personal is the political’ and recognises that neither science nor research can ever be value-free.

In undertaking this research, my intention is to understand and interpret youth workers’ rationale for their work, the meanings they attach to it, the way they construct their practice and the social significance of their actions. This reflects what Tim May terms the ‘subjectivity perspective’ that focuses on the understandings and interpretations that people have of their social environment. In other words, the *meanings* that people give to their environment (May 2001:13).

The discussion above outlines the ‘paradigm’ or ‘world view’ underpinning this current research, since as Guba and Lincoln remark:

"Paradigm issues are crucial; no inquirer, we maintain, ought to go about the business of inquiry without being clear about just what paradigm informs and guides his or her approach." (1998:218)

Methodology

Different paradigms or theoretical perspectives lead to different methodological approaches.

Presenting the different methodologies in their 'pure form', Sarantakos comments that:

Quantitative methodology is based on the positivist (or neopositivist) philosophy that seeks to:

"establish a 'clear' and 'objective' orientation, a vigorous, disciplined and systematic procedure, and a reality-bound methodology, which allows scientists to arrive at a theory that will be free from vague and sloppy approaches, speculative thoughts about reality, and a theory that should be distinguished from a social philosophy, abstract speculation and everyday assumptions." (Sarantakos 1998:42)

By contrast, Lamnek (1988 cited in Sarantakos 1998) summarises the basic principles of qualitative methodology as involving:

1. Openness - not predetermined or prestructured by hypotheses and procedures that might limit its focus, scope or operation.
2. Research based on the process of communication between the researcher and respondent.
3. Commitment to identifying the *process* of reality construction, and the construction of patterns of meanings and actions.
4. Reflexivity - which allows 'meaning' to be understood through reference to its symbolic or social context.
5. Clear and accurate explanation to respondents about the research process and its operation.
6. Flexibility - for example, in regard to the choice of research instruments and procedures. (Sarantakos 1998:51)

Sarantakos also identifies a third approach - '*critical methodology*' but observes that whilst this "has been practised among social scientists for some time, [it] has not been fully accepted in the social sciences as a distinct, clear and independent methodology of the level of the other two." (Sarantakos 1998:41)

Guba and Lincoln (1998) suggest that precise quantitative approaches:

- 'Strip' from consideration contextual variables that might, if allowed to exert their effects, greatly affect findings.
- Exclude meaning and purpose since human behaviour cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purposes attached by human actors to their activities.
- Separate (outsider) theory from (insider) view of individuals, groups, societies or cultures.
- Produce generalisations that are not applicable to individual cases.

- Exclude the 'discovery dimension' in inquiry. (Guba and Lincoln 1998:197-198)

By contrast, qualitative approaches are seen as possibly being able to redress these imbalances particularly in relation to:

- The theory-ladenness of facts.
- The under-determination of theory.
- The value-ladenness of facts.
- The interactive nature of the inquirer-inquired relationship. (Guba and Lincoln 1998)

These differences in approach represent inherent tensions between the positivist paradigm, which underlies quantitative methods and the constructivist paradigm, which underlies qualitative methods. (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998:3) However, more recently, some theorists have become increasingly interested in understanding 'mixed methods'.

"Pragmatically orientated theorists and researchers now refer to 'mixed methods' (or mixed methodology or methodological mixes), which contain elements of both quantitative and qualitative approaches...most researchers now use whatever method is appropriate for their studies, instead of relying on one method exclusively." (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998:5)

Notwithstanding, as Tashakkori and Teddlie have argued, quantitative and qualitative methods are actually compatible. Indeed, a major tenet of the 'pragmatist paradigm' is that quantitative and qualitative methodologies are compatible because they share certain fundamental values that enable the formation of 'an enduring relationship'. (Reichardt and Rallis 1994 cited in Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998:12)

These similarities in fundamental values include belief in:

- The value-ladenness of inquiry (research is influenced by the values of investigators)
- The theory-ladenness of facts (research is influenced by the theory or hypotheses or framework that an investigator uses)
- The multiple and constructed nature of reality (reality does not exist independently of people's interpretations. It is socially and experientially constructed and specific to the meanings which people give to their experience)
- The fallibility of knowledge (knowledge is fallible - it is not possible to prove a theory or other causal propositions)
- The under-determination of theory by fact (any given set of data can be explained by many theories) (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998:13).

However, given that, in the end, the real issue of methodology rests on the suitability of different methods for answering different kinds of research questions (Bryman 1988), Denscombe's, approach is highly practical and extremely helpful. Denscombe maintains that the distinction between 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' research relates to the treatment of data rather than the research methods as such (1998:173). He therefore distinguishes the two approaches in relation to a number of features as follows.

Qualitative Research tends to be associated with	Quantitative Research tends to be associated with
words as the unit of analysis	numbers as the unit of analysis
description	analysis
small-scale studies	large-scale studies
holistic perspective	specific focus
researcher involvement	researcher detachment
emergent research design	predetermined research design

(Denscombe 1998:174-176)

As such, Denscombe identifies the advantages of qualitative analysis as including:

- Data and analysis that is 'grounded'.
- A richness and detail of the data.
- Tolerance of ambiguity and contradictions.
- The prospect of alternative explanations. (1998:220-221)

This approach is ideally suited to the kind of research questions posed, and the context of this investigation in the sense that this study is a small-scale study, using 'words' as the unit of analysis and focused on respondents' interpretations, meanings and experience. Given the demands of the investigation, the chosen methodology needs to be able to provide a 'richness and detail of data' as well as be tolerant of 'ambiguity and contradictions'.

Qualitative methodology is, therefore, the more suitable approach in this instance since it accords with the fundamental values identified by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) and supports the investigation's emphasis on:

"description rather than explanation; the representation of reality through the eyes of participants; the importance of viewing the meaning of experience and behaviour in context and in its full complexity." (Henwood and Pidgeon 1993:16)

Anti-oppressive practice

As well as considering methodological approach, it is also important to pay attention to how assumptions are built into research studies which 'contribute to the experiences of marginalised groups being distorted, misrepresented or ignored.' (Truman and Humphries 1994:2)

"Categories are useful in social research only when they help us to improve our understanding of the social relationships and experiences that we are trying to explore. Fixed and pre-determined classifications that are simply 'bolted-on' to the questionnaires, or added as the final set of issues in qualitative research may only redress the problem of 'invisibility' by replacing it with the problems of distortion or misrepresentation." (Truman and Humphries 1994:5)

It is important, therefore, that research is not conceptualised or conducted from a position of 'conceptual imperialism' that is male, white, eurocentric, heterosexual and able-bodied (Truman and Humphries 1998:3). Consequently, the proposed research will seek to reflect the perspectives and experiences of a wide range of social groups, not as a means of classifying personal characteristics (e.g. race, gender), but as a means for representing and reflecting the differential experience of *being*, for example, Black, or female or gay in a racist, sexist and homophobic society.

As such, the proposed research will be based on:

- An understanding that oppressive attitudes, beliefs and practices are embedded in the social structure at personal, cultural and structural levels (Thompson 1997).
- A commitment to empowerment in terms of the 'collective voicing of universal need' (Ward and Mullender 1991:21); and the elimination of the barriers that obstruct social justice, respectful treatment and equal rights (Friedmann 1992).
- A commitment to reflective practice which:
 - ◊ questions 'taken-for-granted' assumptions about the definition of problems and categorisation of need;
 - ◊ recognises the ways in which ideas, thoughts, understandings and opinions are shaped historically, economically, politically and socially through social structures and processes;
 - ◊ makes the implicit explicit;
 - ◊ raises the profile of value positions and works with the problematics they generate;
 - ◊ locates practice in its theoretical contexts;
 - ◊ builds involvement and reflection into every stage of the research process. (Adapted from Everitt et al, 1992 quoted in Dalrymple and Burke 1995:19)

For in the end, anti-oppressive practice is concerned with 'ethics', not in the sense of: "a neutral, detached, 'hands off' concern with 'doing no harm'. We mean rather an active involvement in challenging assumptions based on unequal social relations, through reflexive, explicitly committed participation in the process of social change." (Truman and Humphries 1994:14)

Research Strategy

Denscombe (1998) identifies five distinct research strategies:- surveys, case studies, experiments, action research and ethnography.

However, surveys have three main disadvantages in relation to the proposed investigation.

- Surveys have a tendency to empiricism in the sense that they can become obsessed with data to the exclusion of an adequate account of the implications of those data for relevant issues, problems or theories.
- The data produced can lack detail or depth of the topic being investigated.
- Wide and inclusive coverage limits the researcher's capacity to check on accuracy and honesty of responses. (Denscombe 1998:6-29)

Similarly, cases studies, whilst creating the possibility for in-depth study, are most helpful when the research is focused on the 'subtleties and intricacies of complex social situations' (Denscombe 1998:39) as opposed to the individual meanings and interpretations with which this investigation is centrally concerned. Experiments are inappropriate for this investigation since the proposed research does not intend to attempt to identify causal effects or measure outcomes and changes (Denscombe 1998: 46-47).

Ethnography requires the researcher to spend a considerable amount of time in the field, and has the tendency to produce detailed descriptive accounts at the expense of analytical or theoretical insight. Despite the advantages of producing data rich in depth and detail, ethnography is, nonetheless, more suited to studies which are more 'anthropological' and focused on the 'routine and normal aspects of everyday life' (Denscombe 1998:68).

The research strategy to be adopted in this investigation is, therefore, action research, described by Burns, as:

"the application of fact finding to practical problem-solving in a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it, involving the collaboration and co-operation of researchers, practitioners and laymen." (Burns 1990:252 quoted in Sarantakos 1998:111)

According to Denscombe, the four defining characteristics of action research are:

- practical - aimed at dealing with real-world problems and issues;
- change - in dealing with practical problems and discovering more about phenomena;
- cyclical process - involves a feedback loop in which initial findings generate possibility for changes to be implemented in further investigation; and
- participation - practitioners actively participate in the research process (Denscombe 1998:57-58).

This is a useful approach to the proposed investigation in the sense that the proposed research:

- is aimed at addressing the 'real-world' issue of youth work;
- is concerned with discovering more about the phenomena known as 'youth work' - its 'core' purpose, underpinning principles and practice;
- involves a 'feedback loop' in which these initial findings may influence changes in future thinking and practice; and generate possibilities for further investigation; and
- involves the active participation of practitioners in the research process.

Research Methods

The primary research method to be adopted in this investigation is interviews since 'interviews come into their own when we need to ask numerous open-ended questions or open-ended probes' (Oppenheim 1992:81).

"Qualitative interviewers try to be interactive and sensitive to the language and concepts used by the interviewee, and they try to keep the agenda flexible. They aim to go below the surface of the topic being discussed, explore what people say in as much detail as possible, and uncover new areas or ideas that were not anticipated at the outset of the research." (Britten 1995:252)

Interviews

However, in deciding the most appropriate approach, it is important to be aware of the different kinds of interviews used in social research. These are:

- Structured interviews:- which involve a pre-determined list of questions being asked of the interviewee - rather like administering a questionnaire face-to-face with a respondent.
- Semi-structured interviews:- which make use of a list of issues and questions to be covered but within which the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in letting 'the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher' (Denscombe 1998:113).

- Unstructured interviews:- in which the researcher's role is to be 'as unintrusive as possible - to start the ball rolling by introducing a theme or topic and then letting the interviewee develop his or her ideas and pursue his or her train of thought' (Denscombe 1998:113).

However, as Hoinville and Jowell (1978) have remarked 'the essence of qualitative research is an unstructured and flexible approach to interviewing that allows the widest possible exploration of views and behaviour patterns' (1978:9).

In addition, as Jaffe and Miller have observed:

"Attempts to capture the dynamics and outcomes of meaning and interpretation most often result in projects designed as in-depth interview studies...Meanings are then presented in a variety of ways: as concepts that capture some basic properties of how people think about something; or as situation-specific accounts of certain actions. A test of one's success is whether those being studied accept the researcher's account of whether it rings true to them both cognitively and emotionally." (Jaffe and Miller 1994:52)

The development of an 'in-depth' interview study therefore seems to be the most appropriate approach to the field research to be undertaking for this particular investigation.

This is because:

"In-depth interviewing is a data-gathering technique used in qualitative research when the goal is to collect detailed, richly textured, person-centred information from one or more individuals. It is used when the researcher wants to investigate what is meaningful to the individual." (Rubinstein 1988 cited in Kaufman 1994:123)

Kaufman also notes:

"In in-depth interviewing, social interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee is a part of the interview itself and generates both tone and content of data collected... Thus a formal and distant, or open and friendly, or wary and tentative relationship will be reflected in the type of subject matter covered, the degree of detail invoked, and the emotional tone of informants' responses to questions." (Kaufman 1994:126)

A similar approach has been developed by Holstein and Gubrium (1997) as a kind of antidote to the conventional view (as contained in the technical literature on interviewing) that interviews are 'primarily concerned with maximising the flow of valid, reliable information while minimising distortions of what the respondent knows' (Gorden 1987 cited in Holstein and Gubrium 1997:113). Conversely, Holstein and Gubrium's approach to *active interviewing* is based on the assertion that interviews should be treated as a social encounter in which 'knowledge is constructed' thereby suggesting that:

"The interview is not merely a neutral conduit or source of distortion, but is instead a site of, and occasion for, producing reportable knowledge itself... The point is that interviewers are deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating meanings that ostensibly reside within respondents ... Both parties to the interview are necessarily and ineluctably active. Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge - treasuries of information awaiting excavation, so to speak - as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers. Participation in an interview involves meaning-making work." (Holstein and Gubrium 1997:114)

Holstein and Gubrium's point is that instead of refining a long list of methodological constraints under which 'standardised' interviews are supposed to take place, interviewers should take a more 'active' perspective that is both conscious of, and conscientious about, interview processes that are sensitive to the social construction of knowledge. This entails understanding that *how* the meaning-making process unfolds in the interview is as important as knowing *what* is asked and conveyed (1997:114).

The interview is, therefore, conceived as a kind of 'conversation' in which the interviewer:

"converses with respondents in such a way that alternate considerations are brought into play. They may suggest orientations to and linkages between, diverse aspects of respondents' experience, adumbrating - even inviting - interpretations that make use of particular resources, connections and outlooks... The objective is not to dictate interpretation but to provide an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that address relevant issues, and not be confined to predetermined agendas." (Holstein and Gubrium 1997:123)

In other words, the approach to interviewing to be adopted in this study will be based not on a theory of the knowing subject, from whom data is elicited, but rather, on the basis that knowledge is created through the process of conversation, reason and argument. Or, following Foucault, based on "a theory of discursive practice" (Foucault 1970 quoted in Prior 1997:64).

As Fontana and Frey (2000), quoting Schwandt (1997), note:

"It has become increasingly common in qualitative studies to view the interview as a form of discourse between two or more speakers or as a linguistic event in which the meaning of questions and responses are contextually grounded and jointly constructed by interviewer and respondent." (2000:663)

Indeed, this is an approach much developed within feminist research not only in the sense that the interviewer is not seen as 'an impersonal data collector', and the interviewee 'a subservient data provider' (Oakley 2000:14); but also that in the process of the interview the interviewer

“invests his or her own personal identity into the relationship” (Oakley 1981:41) as opposed to being a dispassionate or ‘objective’ outsider involved in collecting information.

The proposed approach therefore meets many of the criteria, identified by Oakley, as constituting a feminist qualitative project in the sense that it is based on:

“loosely structured interviewing, sensitivity to interviewees’ concepts and forms of thought, [and] a concern with grounding [women’s] experience in the material circumstances of their lives.” (Oakley 2000:48)

However, this approach is neither new nor confined to feminist methodologies, for as Burgess has observed ‘there is a long tradition in social science research where interviews have been perceived as ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Burgess 1991:103). One early use of the unstructured or informal interview, cited by Burgess, is Mayhew’s report of ‘London Labour and the London Poor’, published in 1851, in which the researcher is seen as ‘a friend and a confidant who shows interest, understanding and sympathy in the life of the person with whom a conversation occurs’ (Burgess 1991:102). And, described as a Mayhew of his time, Tony Parker’s work spans over thirty years (from the 1960s – 1990s) of conversational interviews with criminals of all kinds, throughout which he was continually committed to ‘getting the voice right’.

“Parker strove always to be faithful to the language of the informant being well aware of the distortion which can occur when the spoken word is constrained in forms of written prose. He’d edit things out, and change the order but he was always concerned to keep the original integrity of the voice, never overshaping or inventing things that had not been said for the sake of flow.” (Smith 1999:249)

The task then, as Charmaz (1995) explains:

“[Is to] start with the experiencing person and try to share his or her subjective view. Our task is objective in the sense that we try to describe it with depth and detail. In doing so, we try to represent the person’s view fairly and to portray it as consistent with his or her meanings.” (Charmaz 1995 quoted in Miller and Glassner 1997:100)

In so doing, the interviewer, by virtue of initiating a series of questions embedded in a seemingly natural conversation with the interviewee, inevitably engages with the interviewee in reflecting on his or her experiences, opinions and views. Clearly, the effect of this interaction cannot be denied since (i) ‘the interviewee’s talk is produced by the interviewer’s questions’; and (ii) the interaction gives rise to ‘the intersubjective construction of social reality’ (Melia 1997:34).

However, as Melia points out:

“We can view the interview as a representation of self by the interviewee with the data as a representation that has no further credibility. Or we can see the interview as a means of

gaining insight into a world beyond the story that the interviewee tells, a means of getting a handle on a more complex set of ideas than the ones that the interviewee is ostensibly talking about. This is not to say that the interviewer moves into the territory of the paranormal and can somehow see through the data to things otherwise concealed. However, it does mean that a researcher with an interest in, and an open mind about, a particular topic can, with practised care, take an analysis beyond its face value." (Melia 1997:34)

Indeed, Burgess (in citing Palmer 1928) suggests that:

"The unstructured interview...[can]...provide the opportunity for the researcher to probe deeply, to uncover new clues, to open up new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate, inclusive accounts from informants that are based on personal experience...[the interview]...assumes the appearance of a natural interesting conversation. But to the proficient interviewer it is always a controlled conversation which he [sic] guides and bends to the service of his research interest."(Palmer 1928 quoted in Burgess 1982:107)

In the process, the interviewer needs to understand the interviewee's point of view and listen carefully to them, not only in order to make decisions concerning the direction of the interview, but importantly because "without allowing people to speak freely we will never know what their real intentions are, and what the true meaning of their words might be" (Cottle 1978 quoted in Burgess 1982:109).

The challenge for the researcher is to:

"convert these sense data into an explanation of the situation, an explanation which Becker (1958) points out, in his classic piece on 'inference and proof', has to convince others. Or, as Strong (1979:250) puts it, 'the best we can hope for in this world, even if we study practical reasoning, is a plausible story.'" (Melia 1997:35)

And indeed, it is just such a 'plausible story' about the purpose of youth work that this study will, hopefully, generate.

Interview Guide

The purpose of the interview guide is to provide a focus for the interview by:

"listing areas to be covered while leaving the exact wording and order of the questions to the interviewer. In some cases, the interview guide will be quite sketchy to allow for the possibility of non-directive interviewing in which the interviewee's replies determine the course of the interview." (Newell 1993:96)

The areas explored during the interviews with youth work practitioners were as follows.

- The meaning and practice implications of the underlying principles of youth work - i.e. education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity.

- The central importance of 'adolescence'/the 'transition to adulthood' and 'identity' as key concepts in youth work.
- The features of the context within which youth workers enable and support young people to reflect on and examine their values.
- The processes through which young people gain the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to question their experience and engage in informed decision making.
- The knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by youth workers; and the implications of this for youth worker training and support.

The areas explored in interviews with young people were:

- The purpose of youth work.
- The role of the youth worker.
- The knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by youth workers.
- The benefits, for them, of their involvement with youth work/youth workers.

Where necessary, 'probes' were used to motivate interviewees to clarify or explain the reasons and meanings behind their answer and/or to focus conversation on the desired topic (Nachmias and Nachmias 1982). Copies of the interview guides are attached as Appendix 1.

Response Error

Responding to interview questions requires a series of complex mental processes (Oppenheim 1992). When the topics being discussed relate to a person's personal interpretations, beliefs and values (particularly in the work context) the process of responding can become even more complex. Through no deliberate intention, respondents may experience memory failure, misunderstandings about the questions, or lack of knowledge. In addition, respondents may have a deliberate desire (for whatever reason) to advance a particular interpretation of events or present themselves in a particular 'light' (Sudman and Bradburn 1982). The result is that the interviewee's responses may be inaccurate or distorted.

Consequently, Moser and Kalton (1971) suggest that there are three necessary conditions for successful interviews. These are:

- Accessibility of required information to respondent;
- Understanding by respondent of what is required of her/him; and
- Respondent motivation to answer the question accurately.

Interviewees taking part in this investigation did so because they were youth work practitioners or young people who had volunteered to participate. The 'information' required by them was their own experience, interpretations and understandings.

However, in order to allow for adequate preparation all interviewees were provided with information, prior to the interview, about the purpose of the investigation; its anticipated outcomes; the main topics to be covered and a copy of the interview guide. Where necessary, supplementary information was provided to ensure that interviewees fully understood the questions posed. A copy of the letter sent to interviewees appears at Appendix 2.

The issue of 'motivation' is less straight-forward. Certainly, respondents need to be reassured that the information offered will not be 'used against them' - particularly within the organisation in which they may work. Also interviewees need to know that the interview process is not a judgement of them as workers or as people. However, given the nature of the inquiry, and the anticipated respondents, it seems logical to assume that interviewees will have, to some extent, an interest in the topics being investigated. They may also perceive some benefit from participating in the study and therefore feel motivated towards sharing information about their experience and/or practice.

In addition, the process will require interviewees to express their beliefs and values (as well as their thoughts) about youth work - a process made more difficult by the obscure nature of the topics and concepts being investigated. However, if Jones (1985) is correct, the quality of responses should increase with the level of relevance the topic has for respondents and their commitment to it.

Clearly, interviews cannot be expected to provide 'the truth'. Since, whilst interviewees may be able to satisfy two of the conditions specified by Wilson (1960) - i.e. knowing what their statements mean (to them); and having good evidence for believing it - there is no way to satisfy Wilson's third condition of being able to say correctly that a statement is true - i.e. knowing the right way to verify a person's values or beliefs.

Also, if human reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann 1967) then there are no 'truths' only different perceptions and interpretations, which can, and do, change over time. In other words, 'truth' becomes a matter of 'negotiated agreement' (Hughes 1980). The interview

process must therefore lend itself to negotiating the meanings of the concepts and practices explored.

Interviewer Effect / Bias

The literature on research methodology is full of concern about the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, particularly in terms of the effects that interviewers may have on respondents' statements. Hyman's study of interviewer effect (1954) identifies interviewer errors as arising from interviewer skill, the interview situation, respondents reaction to the interviewer and interviewer beliefs about the respondent which produce expectations about the answers to be elicited to questions - all of which act to bias the data collected.

Oppenheim (1992) identifies the main causes of bias as including: departures from the sampling instructions; adverse impression, poor rapport; rephrasing of attitude questions; careless prompting; biased probes; questions asked out of sequence; unreliable field coding; biased recording; poor management of 'problem' respondents; inadequate management of situational problems or 'special' procedures; and the structure and wording of the questions themselves.

Fielding (1993) identifies interviewer effects as arising from interviewer conduct, interviewer bias and the demographic characteristics of the interviewer (e.g. race, age, sex, social class and religion).

In essence, the literature on research methodology shares a common concern. That is, the need to avoid interviewer effect in the pursuit of 'objectivity'. However, whilst Hyman (1954) suggests that interviewer effect can be controlled by interviewer training, standardised situations and procedures, rapport building and an 'open' attitude on the part of the interviewer, Oppenheim acknowledges that the ideal of 'objectivity' is difficult when applied to human beings. The task is to ensure that 'the respondent's understanding of the question or task will be the same as that of every respondent interviewed'. In order to achieve this it is sometimes necessary to rephrase questions (Oppenheim 1992:87). Oppenheim's conclusion is, therefore, that a balance needs to be found between standardisation (to avoid bias) and flexibility (to create an interactive situation).

The issue that rests at the heart of these debates is fundamentally concerned with the need to avoid the detrimental effect of interview bias on the validity and reliability of the given research – insofar as validity refers to:

"The ability to produce accurate results and to measure what is supposed to be measured... A valid measure produces true results that reflect the true situation and conditions of the environment it is supposed to study." (Sarantakos 1998:78)

And reliability refers to:

"The ability of an instrument to produce consistent results; reliability is equivalent to consistency. Thus, a method is reliable if it produces the same results whenever it is repeated, even by other researchers." (Sarantakos 1998:83)

Validity

Hammersley suggests that there are three steps for checking the validity of findings.

1. The *plausibility* of the claim, given our existing knowledge.
2. The *credibility* of the claim, given the nature of the phenomena, circumstances of the research and characteristics of the researcher.
3. Where we have doubt about either 1 or 2, then we need to be convinced by the plausibility and credibility of the *evidence* (1990:61-62).

Such an approach provides a clear framework that renders redundant the need to 'standardise away' the potential for bias (Fielding 1993). Jones (1985) takes this one stage further by suggesting that the need is not to 'avoid bias at all costs' but to understand it.

"An interview is a complicated, shifting, social *process* occurring between two individual human beings, which can never be exactly replicated. We cannot get some 'objective truth' that would be there if only the effects of interpersonal interaction could be removed." (Jones 1985:48)

The critical challenge, as Jones perceives it, is to avoid imposing one's own definitions to the extent of excluding the respondent's. And, equally as important, is using our own 'bias' as human beings to develop relationships with particular people that enable them to tell us about their worlds. Or, as Merton and Kendall (1946) had put it earlier, the subject's definition of the situation should find full and specific expression; and the interview should bring out the value-laden implications of the response (cited in Fielding 1993:147-148).

Reliability

For Denscombe, the issue of reliability comes down to the question: 'If someone else did the research would he or she have got the same results and arrived at the same conclusions?'

However, in qualitative research, as Denscombe observes, there is no way of knowing this for certain - not in any absolute sense, although it is possible to address the issue of reliability by providing an explicit account of:

- The aims of the research and its basic premises.
- How the research was undertaken.
- The reasoning behind key decisions made (Denscombe 1998:213).

All of these conditions are met within this thesis.

In addition, adoption of the grounded theory 'constant comparative approach' enabled a constant checking of the analysis against the findings and a constant refinement of the emerging theories and concepts during the process of the research. As such, each phase of the investigation reflected what had been previously discovered and provided opportunities for new avenues to be explored with each interview generating new areas of interest and new paths to follow.

This process continued until the point of 'theoretical saturation' in the sense that data from interviews confirmed the analysis rather than added new data. Saturation was reached after approximately 50 hours of interviewing had been undertaken with 32 interviewees.

The Interviewer/Interviewee Relationship

In respect of the interviewer/interviewee relationship, Oakley (1981) argues that:

"The paradigm of the social research interview prompted in the methodology textbooks...emphasise (a) its status as a mechanical instrument of data collection; (b) its function as a specialised form of conversation in which one person asks the questions and another gives the answers; (c) its characterisation of interviewees as essentially passive individuals; and (d) its reduction of interviewers to a question asking and rapport-promoting role." (1981:37)

Oakley's point is that methodology literature portrays the interviewer/interviewee relationship as essentially hierarchical. 'Proper' interviewing is, hence, considered to be 'objective, detached, hierarchical and scientific' lest data should become 'contaminated' or 'biased'. Oakley believes that this polarity between 'proper' and 'improper' (subjective, involvement, equality, concern for people) interviewing is an almost classical representation of the widespread gender stereotyping that occurs in modern industrial civilisations. The result is that men, with their presumed objective rational capacity, are seen as 'better' interviewers. By contrast Oakley argues that:

"When a feminist interviews women (1) use of prescribed interviewing practice is indefensible; (2) general and irreconcilable contradictions at the heart of the textbook paradigm are exposed; and (3) it becomes clear that, in most cases, the goal of finding out

about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of the interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship." (1981:41)

Oakley's observation of the striving for 'objectivity and detachment' in research methodology literature is made with good foundation. However, her analysis of 'feminists interviewing women' is based on examples of shared experiences between the interviewer and interviewee (for example, as women, mothers, wives of clergymen). This gives rise to a number of questions. Principally these are:

- To what extent is the central issue the question of the gender of the interviewer and interviewee?
- What happens if the personal characteristics or 'identity' of the interviewer (e.g. as a Black person or as gay or lesbian) causes conflict for the interviewee resulting in disruption of the interview process?
- What happens if the interviewer does not want the same level of involvement as the interviewee would like him or her to have?
- Can the relationship really be as 'equal' as Oakley would like to suggest?

In relation to this, Jones (1985) suggests that:

"If we as researchers want to obtain good data it would be better that the persons we are interviewing trust us enough to believe that we will not use the data against them, or that we will not regard their opinions as foolish; that they are not trying very hard to please; or are not so untouched by us as individuals and the process of being interviewed that they produce a well-rehearsed script that tells very little about what actually concerns and moves them; or that they do not see an opportunity to manipulate us to suit certain personal ends of which we are unaware, and so on." (1985:51)

The relationship between interviewer and interviewee is not, therefore, necessarily based on 'equality', of personal characteristics or identity but rather on the need for an open and genuine interaction in pursuit of the achievement of the task.

The interviews to be conducted as a part of this investigation have a clear function. That is, the critical examination of interviewees' experience and understanding of the topics under consideration. The interviews are not 'tests' of participants' experience, understandings or practice. They are explorations of the possibilities for development - a kind of collaborative venture or collective learning experience throughout which all those involved are both 'teacher' and 'learner'.

This is a developmental process, which goes in search, not for the interviewee's first answer, but for the answer that most accurately and adequately reflects their response from their point of view. A prerequisite for such an approach is interviewer engagement, and a consequence is a shared learning experience since:

"...it is important to realise that *any* interview based research technique changes people in one way or another...The idea of an interview as a totally inert measuring device has no possible foundation in reality." (Hedges 1985:73)

Recording

Interviews were tape recorded in order to allow the interviewer to concentrate on listening and probing (Hoinville and Jowell 1978). This also helped to avoid distortions emerging from the interviewer summarising or paraphrasing the interviewee's responses - particularly those to open-ended questions (Oppenheim 1992).

However, the tapes were not transcribed in full as this was judged to be time consuming, resource hungry and not worth the effort (Bell 1987) – especially given that the main purpose of the exercise was to identify and extract quotations that directly addressed the research questions. Therefore, in order to minimise bias, the researcher immersed herself in the material by repeatedly listening to the tapes several times before focusing on the specific details of how each interviewee responded to the key questions posed. This involved the constant comparative method of immersion in the material, standing back, identification of common themes, comparison of meanings and significance.

Relevant quotations were then selected to accurately reflect each interviewee's responses and to give 'voice' to their particular perspectives. Quotations were reproduced and sent to each interviewee for his/her amendment and approval prior to being used in written materials.

This process ensured that findings:

- Were 'grounded' in interviewees' own experience, interpretations and meanings; and
- 'Fit' their view of their experience, interpretations and meanings.

Sampling

The purpose of the interviews undertaken in this investigation was to explore and develop theory. The interviews were, therefore, the primary method through which information was gathered and analysed in order to formulate a clear statement of the unique contribution that

youth work makes to the personal, social and moral development of young people. Specifically, interviews addressed the following questions.

- What is youth work? - in terms of its core purpose and the philosophical principles, concepts and values underpinning such purpose.
- What do youth workers 'do'? – in terms of the principles, processes and values that should inform and underpin effective practice.
- What knowledge, skills and dispositions do youth workers need in order to undertake such practice?

As such, it is not the intention that the interviews should 'represent' a broader population. But rather that they will be able to provide, because of the interviewees' experience, a range of perspectives and insights into the topics being studied. As Arber (1993) comments:

"Where the researcher's aim is to generate theory and a wider understanding of social processes or social actions, the representativeness of the sample may be of less importance and the best sampling strategy may be focused or judgemental sampling." (1993:71)

Purposive (or judgemental) sampling is a process in which the sample is 'hand picked' to deliberately select people or events that the researcher believes will produce the most valuable data. In effect, the sample is selected with a particular purpose in mind, with each person or event being chosen because of his or her particular qualities and relevance to the topic being investigated (Denscombe 1998:15).

Or, as expressed by Sarantakos:

"In this sampling technique (also known as judgemental sampling) the researchers purposely choose subjects who, in their opinion, are thought to be relevant to the research topic. In this case, the judgement of the investigator is more important than obtaining a probability sample. The process of sampling in this case will involve identification of the informants and arranging times for meeting them." (1998:152)

The current work is concerned with interpreting the meaning of concepts and their implications for youth work practice; and with generating theory in relation to this. It is concerned neither with 'representativeness', nor frequency (i.e. 'how much' or 'how often'), nor with 'predictive relationships' (e.g. the extent to which volunteerism may be linked to involvement in youth work). Its intention is interpretive and its focus is on 'searching for patterns that occur and reoccur in diverse sets of social relations' (Mead cited in Honigmann 1982:84). Specifically, in this instance, this relates to patterns in the 'meaning' which youth workers and young people give to certain concepts within youth work, and patterns in the principles and actions that

underpin youth work practice. As such, purposive or judgemental sampling is the most appropriate approach to adopt.

Indeed, following Sekaran's (1984) flow diagram (see Appendix 3) the choice of purposive sampling resulted from deciding that:

- 'Representativeness' was not critical for the study.
- The purpose of the study was to 'obtain information relevant to and available only with certain groups'.
- The study was 'looking for information that only a few *experts* can provide' (Sekaran 1984:239).

However, interviewees need to be selected not only on the basis of their special knowledge about and experience in youth work, but also in relation to a range of relevant 'distinctive qualifications' (Honigmann 1982:80) - for example, in relation to different roles and perspectives and different status levels in organisations (Burgess 1982:77).

Mason (1996) also identifies the importance of:

- Spatial or geographical dimensions;
- Organisational dimensions;
- Cultural dimensions; and
- Personal characteristics of the sample (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, class).

Mason's (1996) advice is that researchers should "select units which will enable you to make key comparisons and to test and develop theoretical positions" (1996:93). And also that researchers should "ensure that there is a very direct link between their sampling strategy, their data analysis and the type of social explanation they intend to construct" (1996:93). Thus, in this instance, the sampling strategy would need to be able to be linked to:

- (a) The 'constant comparative method' of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967).
- (b) The 'interpretive' and 'critical' perspectives (Sarantakos 1998) that underpin this research.

Of central importance, therefore, is the need to ensure that the sample selected will:

- Enable meaningful comparisons to be made in relation to the research questions;
- Contribute to the analytic validity by encompassing the 'right places and people' (Mason 1996:90) in the process of data generation; and
- Be 'large enough to make meaningful comparisons' (Mason 1996:98).

However, according to Mead (1953):

“The validity of the sample depends not so much upon the number of cases as upon the proper specification of the informant, so that he or she can be accurately placed, in terms of a very large number of variables...Within this extensive degree of specification, each informant is studied as a perfect example, an organic representation of his [sic] complete cultural experience.” (Mead 1953 quoted in Honigmann 1982:83)

Thus, in specifying the variables in relation to which interviewees will be selected, and in taking into account the need for meaningful comparisons and the underlying understanding of social structures contained here, the sample will be purposively selected on the basis of the following:

- Experience in youth work.
- Understanding of and interest in, the research questions.
- Organisational dimensions (e.g. roles, status levels, voluntary/maintained sector, youth work setting, different groups of young people worked with)
- Geographical dimensions
- Cultural dimensions (e.g. ethnicity, religion)
- Personal characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, sexuality).

Analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed in order to identify:

- Youth workers' and young people's understanding of the purpose of youth work - including the four principles established in the Statement of Purpose (NYA 1991).
- Youth workers' and young people's perspectives on the concepts of 'adolescence'/the 'transition to adulthood' and 'identity' as key concepts in youth work.
- Youth workers' and young people's views about the context and processes that enable and support young people to examine their values and engage in informed decision-making.
- Young people's experience of youth work interventions.
- Youth workers' and young people's views about the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by youth workers to undertake the kind of practice they describe.
- Youth workers' view of the training and staff development needs arising from such a practice.

This initial analysis was thematic since thematic analysis offers the possibility of:

“direct representation of an individual's own point of view and descriptions of experiences, beliefs, and perceptions. In contemporary terms, the qualitative study of themes gives more weight to the voices and experiences of the individual consumer or patient than to the expert

observer or medical researcher. It exemplifies the goal of qualitative research, which aims to discover lived experiences and meanings - that is, the *emic* (Fry and Keith, 1986) or insider's view of the lived world (Mishler 1986)." (Luborsky 1994:190)

As such, Luborsky defines themes as the 'manifest generalised statements by informants about beliefs, attitudes, values or sentiments' (1994:195). Therefore, themes:

- Seek to understand and reflect the informant's own view and words; and
- Use manifest and explicit statements rather than inference and background knowledge about the person or situation.

In addition:

"Themes can be readily described and coded. It is relatively easy to reduce a lengthy stretch of talk to a phrase or label that describes the main point or theme of the passage. The theme is then readily comparable with other stretches of talk by the same speaker or by other people." (Luborsky 1994: 190)

An analysis of the emerging themes according to their regularity, structure or inferences thereby enabled the development of *patterns* or *dimensions* in the sense of being able to determine the extent to which themes were shared across the collection of interviews (Luborsky 1994:195).

This thematic analysis appears as Chapter 4 of this thesis (Emerging Themes and Patterns).

Having established the emerging themes and patterns, the analysis proceeds to the 'constant comparative method' of grounded theory as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The process is therefore one of moving between inductive and deductive thinking - constantly engaging in the interplay between proposing statements of relationships between categories and checking these propositions against the data and existing literature.

Documentary analysis

The literature/documents referred to in this process will be used not only to support or illuminate empirical data but also as data in their own right - on the basis that documents 'enshrine a distinctively documentary version of social reality' (Atkinson and Coffey 1997:47). That is, in this instance, a distinctively documentary version of the purpose of youth work which, at the same time, both reflects and creates the social reality of the work in the sense that:

"The linguistic categories we use in order to 'describe' reality are not in fact reflections of intrinsic and defining features of entities. Instead, they bring into being the objects they describe. Furthermore, there is always more than one way of describing something and our choice of how to use words to package perceptions and experiences gives rise to particular versions of events and of reality. It is in this sense that language is said to construct reality." (Willig 1999:2)

In addition, since documents do not exist as individual separate entities but are related to other documents, the intertextuality of texts becomes important since it reveals the dimensions of similarities and differences between various texts which create a consistent, in this case, youth work discourse (Atkinson and Coffey 1997:55).

In this respect, documentary analysis is crucial to understanding the signs and 'system of signs' through which words carry meaning for members of the youth work 'community'. In other words, the signification of words in terms of the content they convey and the processes by which they come to have meaning (Feldman 1995:21-22).

This is essentially a semiotic approach in the sense that semiotics is concerned with how signs (words) acquire meaning. For as Sebeok (quoting Locke) states:

"[The business of semiotics] 'is to consider the Nature of Signs, the Mind makes use of for the understanding of Things, or conveying its Knowledge to others'... '[For] to communicate our Thoughts to one another, as well as to record them for our own use, Signs of our *Ideas* are [also] necessary.'" (Sebeok 1994:107)

Yet, it is not the intention here to apply semiotics as a method of analysis but rather as a 'point of view' in the sense that:

"The whole of our experience, from its most primitive origins in sensation to its most refined achievements of understanding, is a network or web of sign relations." (Deely 1990:13)

The analysis to be undertaken will therefore be conducted 'from the point of view' that all experience exists in a web of sign relations and that language "displaces the very thing it is supposed to represent, so that what is always given is a trace of other things, not the thing – lived experience – itself" (Denzin 1991 quoted in Miller and Glassner 1997:101).

The method of analysis adopted was that of grounded theory since 'in-depth qualitative interviewing fits grounded theory methods particularly well'.

"Qualitative interviewing provides an open-ended, in-depth exploration of an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial experience, often combined with considerable insight. The interview can elicit views of this person's subjective world. The interviewer sketches the outline of these views by delineating the topics and drafting the questions. Interviewing is a flexible, emergent technique; ideas and issues emerge during the interview, and the interviewer can then immediately pursue these leads.

Grounded theory methods depend upon a similar kind of flexibility... Thus the combination of flexibility and control inherent in in-depth interviewing techniques fits grounded theory strategies for increasing the analytic incisiveness of the resultant analysis." (Charmaz 2002:676)

Grounded theory

Strauss and Corbin (1998) define grounded theory as:

“A general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed. Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection. A central feature of this analytic approach is a *general method of constant comparative analysis*.” (Strauss and Corbin 1998:158)

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) the major difference between this methodology and other qualitative approaches is its emphasis on theory development, particularly substantive theory. Also, the procedures that make this methodology effective and influential include:

- The constant making of comparisons
- The systematic asking of generative and concept-relating questions
- Theoretical sampling
- Systematic coding procedures
- Suggested guidelines for conceptual (not merely descriptive) ‘density’ of data (i.e. the richness of concept development and their relationships)
- Variation of concepts
- Conceptual integration. (Strauss and Corbin 1998:161)

As such, grounded theory is seen as ‘closing the embarrassing gap between theory and empirical research’ (Strauss and Corbin 1998:162). In order to assure the practical application of the emerging theory, attention was given to the extent to which the emerging theory:

- Fits: i.e. is faithful to the everyday realities of the substantive area.
- Is understandable: by lay people concerned with the substantive area, close to realities and everyday experiences - they ‘recognise’ issues, events and concepts, they see how they can use it.
- Is general: applicable to a variety of different situations within the substantive area. And
- Allows for user Control: by guiding its use under most conditions, which the practitioner/user is likely to encounter (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

This ‘grounded’ analysis appears as Chapter 5 (Core Purpose and Principles) and Chapter 6 (Practice) as a mechanism for developing a theory of what youth work *is* and what youth workers *do*.

A similar analysis is conducted at Chapter 7, which examines the implications of the developing theory of youth work for youth worker training.

These analyses adopt a constructivist approach to grounded theory insofar as they are underpinned by the interpretive and critical perspectives discussed earlier, and are based on the assumptions that:

- Multiple realities exist.
- Data reflect the researcher's and the research participants' mutual constructions.
- The researcher, however incompletely, enters into and is affected by participants' worlds (Charmaz 2002:678).

In other words:

"A constructivist approach takes implicit meanings, experiential views, and grounded theory analyses as constructions of reality." (Charmaz 2002:678)...[And as such] "The power of grounded theory methods lies in the researcher's piecing together a theoretical narrative that has explanatory and predictive power." (Charmaz 2002:691)

Research Ethics

It would be incongruous to be writing about this investigation without consideration of research ethics, not merely because of the subject matter but because, as Denscombe observes (quoting the Social Research Association's Ethical Guidelines):

"The acceptability of social research depends increasingly on the willingness of social researchers to respect their subjects and the treat them with consideration." (Denscombe 2002:175)

Yet, whilst a number of 'codes of ethics' exist for social researchers (e.g. Social Research Association, British Sociological Association, British Psychological Association, British Educational Research Association) restrictive 'codes of ethics' or 'codes of conduct' are experienced as unrealistic in reality. As a result there has been a move away from 'codes' to 'guidelines', which recognise that:

"It is the individual researcher who must take responsibility for the methods he or she uses and that rigid codes are too restrictive and cannot be applied to every conceivable research situation." (Hornsby-Smith 1993:63)

Also:

"Nearly all writers on ethics in social research agree that it is not possible to provide a series of rules that should, or could, be applied to each and every instance of research because each new piece of research can give rise to its own special circumstances and these can call for

different solutions. The point is not that each principle should be *followed*, but that it should be taken into account and *considered*." (Denscombe 2002:176)

The critical principles include that:

- No harm should come to respondents as a result of their involvement in the investigation.
- It is the responsibility of the researcher to inform respondents about the purpose of the investigation, to explain the general content of the topics to be explored and to answer any questions that the respondent may ask about sponsorship or the use of the data gathered.
- Participation should be based on respondents' informed consent – i.e. arising from their right to freedom and self-determination; and including the freedom to refuse to participate. (Oppenheim 1992; Sudman and Bradburn 1982; Cohen and Manion 1994).

Guidance offered by the British Sociological Association and quoted by Hornsby-Smith (1993) echoes the importance of informed consent and re-affirms the concerns of Sudman and Bradburn by emphasising the need to explain what the research is about in 'terms meaningful to the participant'. Hornsby-Smith also observes that the British Sociological Association guidance recognises the obtaining of consent 'not as a once and for all prior event, but as a process, subject to re-negotiation over time' (Hornsby-Smith, 1993:63).

This leads Denscombe (2002) to identify the following key considerations for ethical research.

Specifically, this includes the need to:

- Obtain (ethics) approval from relevant research ethics committee(s)
- Take account of the moral and legal acceptability of the research
- Maintain researcher integrity
- Avoid misinterpretation or deception
- Protect the interest of participants
- Ensure security of the data
- Secure the informed consent of participants.

However, as May (2001) points out, the relationship between ethics and social research is a complicated one since it involves not only the values of the researcher(s) but also the negotiations that take place between researchers, sponsors, research participants and those who control access to the information which researchers seek. As a result, researchers may utilise one of two approaches to ethics and social research.

The first approach (deontological) is based on the work of Immanuel Kant and suggests that ethical judgements in social research would follow a set of (universal) principles that would guide the conduct of the research regardless of circumstances. Such principles might include gaining the 'informed consent' of participants, or protecting the identity of research participants. The second approach (consequentialism) is not so concerned with following a set of principles but rather with the context of the research - i.e. the situation in which researchers find themselves and the consequences of their actions.

Discussing the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches May notes that:

"Overall, rigid and inflexible sets of ethical rules for social research (deontology) could leave us with undesirable consequences... On the other hand, a loose and flexible system involving 'anything goes' so easily opens the research door to the unscrupulous... If research is to be viewed as a credible endeavour then perhaps the relations which are established with all those party to the research must utilise some ethical basis which provide guidelines for, but not simply constraints on, the researcher." (May 2001:61)

In addition, Punch (1998) identifies three particular developments that have materially affected the ethical dimension in research. Firstly, feminist research emphasises 'identification, trust, empathy, and non-exploitative relations'; it implies a 'standpoint epistemology' that not only:

"colors the ethical and moral component of research related to the power imbalances in a sexist and racist environment, but also inhibits deception of the research 'subjects'. Indeed, the gender and ethnic solidarity between researcher and research welds that relationship into one of co-operation and collaboration that represents a personal commitment and also a contribution to the interests of women in general (e.g. giving voice to 'hidden women' in generating the 'emancipatory praxis', and in seeing the field settings as 'sites of resistance'). In this sense the personal is related to the ethical, the moral and the political standpoint." (Punch 1998:169)

Secondly, 'action research' has now developed to a phase where 'subjects' are seen as partners in the research process. Indeed, action research is now seen, by some, as a process of 'empowering' people to make sense of their contexts and understand what their basic values are. As such, 'subjects' are seen as:

"respondents, participants, stakeholders in a constructivist paradigm that is based on avoidance of harm, fully informed consent and the need for privacy and confidentiality." (Punch 1998:169)

Thirdly, there is increasing insistence that financing of research be contingent upon an ethical statement in the research proposal and that organisations explicitly monitor and review the ethical component of research projects.

The effect of these developments has, according to Punch, heightened consciousness about research ethics particularly against deception; and for the need to take into account the 'interests of research subjects' (Punch 1998:170).

And indeed, this perspective has been further developed (particularly by those influenced by feminist-based research) to argue for 'dialogic retrospection' which, May notes, is defined as "an open and active exchange between the researcher and the participant in the partnership of co-research" (Humm 1995 quoted in May 2001:56). This perspective sits well alongside the approach to 'active interviewing' adopted in this research.

Also, and in addition to the guidance contained above, consideration of ethics in this current work is underpinned by:

- The 'Statement of Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research Practice' (Batchelor 2000); and
- The policy and procedures outlined in 'Human Research Ethics' (De Montfort University 2001).

The proposed research was approved by the De Montfort University Human Research Ethics Committee, which deals with the protection of individuals who are the subjects of research and reports annually to the Academic Board of the University.

The University Human Research Ethics Committee follows the guidelines of the:

"Helsinki Declaration of Human Rights to assess all studies that involve human volunteers. This approach is in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 together with the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950 and its subsequent Protocols." (De Montfort University 2001:2)

The 'Statement of Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research Practice' (Batchelor 2000) requires the research process to be approached in an atmosphere of mutual respect and the researcher to maintain a duty to ensure that:

- No harm comes to participants - physically, mentally or socially.
- Particular care is taken not to exploit the vulnerability of individuals, groups or communities in any way.
- Work is undertaken within a clear anti-oppressive, anti-discriminatory framework and is fully commensurate with equal opportunities principles.
- Foreseeable threats to individuals' well-being or dignity are eliminated.

- Participants are clear as to the nature of the research and give their informed consent.
- Intentional deception is avoided.
- Participants are aware of their right to withdraw from the research process at any point.
- Anonymity, confidentiality and privacy are guaranteed and honoured unless otherwise agreed with participants.
- Responsibility for ethical practice is shared by encouraging others to re-think their ideas if necessary.
- Nothing is done to bring the professional practice of the researcher, or De Montfort University into disrepute. (Batchelor 2000:3-4)

In this regard, the researcher:

- Negotiated access directly with the youth workers and young people to be involved in the research.
- Provided prospective interviewees with clear information about the purpose of the research and the topics to be discussed (in terms meaningful to them).
- Sent each interviewee a copy of the quotations extracted from her/his interview for approval prior to use in any material.
- Allowed adequate time for interviewees to consider quotations.
- Made amendments to quotations as requested by interviewees.
- Obtained written permission from interviewees for use of their quotations in the written work.
- Offered interviewees the opportunity to view, and comment on, the location and context of their quotations within the written work.
- Assured interviewees of their right to withdraw from the process at any point in the proceedings.

(See Appendix 1, 2, and 4.)

Summary

Based on the perspectives contained in the literature review, the current research sought to investigate how youth work practitioners and young people understand the core purpose of youth work specifically in relation to:

- The meaning and practice implications of the underlying principles of youth work - i.e. education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity.

- The central importance of 'identity' and 'adolescence'/the 'transition to adulthood' as key concepts in youth work.
- The features of the context within which youth workers enable and support young people to reflect on and examine their values.
- The processes through which young people gain the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to question their experience and engage in informed decision making.

This study also sought to identify what knowledge, skills and dispositions would be needed by youth workers to undertake such work, and hence, the implications for the training and support of youth workers.

The intention of the current research was to gather the data necessary to create a theory of youth work that makes clear the unique contribution that youth work makes to the personal, social and moral development of young people; and provides a framework which supports those engaged in youth work to make sound practical decisions about practice; and the training and development of youth workers.

The research methodology adopted for the research is outlined as follows.

Research perspective: This combines aspects of the 'interpretive perspective' - i.e. a belief that reality is socially constructed through interaction and carries the meaning that people attach to it; and elements of the 'critical perspective' - i.e. a belief that people are restricted and oppressed by social structures, which perpetuate inequality and injustice (Sarantakos 1998). The work also reflects the 'subjective perspective' as described by May (2001) in the sense that people are seen as giving *meanings* to their environment. Two understandings, central to critical social research (Harvey 1990) therefore underpin the proposed research:

- Firstly, that knowledge is 'a dynamic process not a static entity'.
- Secondly, that social structures are, in one way or another, oppressive structures.

Methodology: A qualitative methodology was adopted since this approach is ideally suited to the kind of research questions posed, the small-scale nature of the study, the use of 'words' as the unit of analysis, and its focus on respondents' own interpretations, meanings and experiences.

Research strategy: Action research was considered most appropriate for the current research because of its ability to:

- Address the 'real-world' issue of youth work;
- Reveal more about the phenomenon known as 'youth work';
- Provide a 'feedback loop' in which initial findings influence changes in future thinking and practice; and generate possibilities for further investigation; and
- Engage the active participation of practitioners in the research process.

Research method: 'Active interviewing' was utilised because of the capacity of this approach to capture the dynamics and outcomes of meaning and interpretation; and because of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, which creates an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that address the relevant issues.

Sampling: Purposive sampling was used since it was not the intention that the interviewees should 'represent' a broader population, but rather that they would be able to provide, because of their experience and 'distinctive qualifications', a range of perspectives and insights into the topics being studied. As such, interviewees were selected on the basis of:

- Experience in youth work.
- Understanding of, and interest in, the research questions.
- Organisational dimensions (e.g. roles, status levels, voluntary/maintained sector, youth work setting, different groups of young people worked with).
- Geographical dimensions.
- Cultural dimensions (e.g. ethnicity, religion).
- Personal characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, sexuality).

Analysis: Initial analysis is thematic since this offers the possibility of direct representation of the interviewee's own point of view, descriptions of experiences, beliefs, and perceptions. Having identified the emerging themes and patterns (the extent to which themes are shared across the collection of interviewees), analysis then proceeds by utilising the 'constant comparative method' of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This involved a process of proposing statements of relationships between categories and checking these propositions against the data and existing literature; and was underpinned by an appreciation of the ways in which language constructs reality. In this way, the process of analysis assured the practical application of the emerging theory.

Research ethics: Consideration of ethics in this current work is underpinned by a commitment to mutual respect and co-operation in which respondents are seen as partners in the research process; and where the research process is developmental in empowering participants to make sense of their experiences, practice and contexts. It is informed by:

- The 'Statement of Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research Practice' (Batchelor 2000);
and
- The policy and procedures outlined in 'Human Research Ethics' (De Montfort University 2001).

4. EMERGING THEMES AND PATTERNS

Introduction

The findings discussed in this chapter are based on tape recordings of interviews with 21 youth work practitioners and 11 young people. As such, it contains an analysis of the interviews undertaken in relation to:

1. Youth workers' and young people's understanding of the purpose of youth work - including the four principles established in the Statement of Purpose (NYA 1991).
2. Youth workers' and young people's perspectives on the concepts of 'adolescence'/the 'transition to adulthood'; and 'identity' as key concepts in youth work.
3. Youth workers' and young people's views about the context and processes that enable and support young people to examine their values and engage in informed decision-making.
4. Young people's experience of youth work interventions.
5. Youth workers' and young people's views about the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by youth workers to undertake the kind of practice they describe.
6. Youth workers' view of the training and staff development needs arising from such a practice.

This analysis is thematic insofar as themes:

- Seek to understand and reflect the informant's own view and words; and
- Use manifest and explicit statements rather than inference and background knowledge about the person or situation (Luborsky, 1994).

The emerging themes are also analysed according to their regularity, structure or inferences to enable the development of *patterns* in the sense of being able to determine the extent to which themes are shared across the collection of interviewees (Luborsky 1994).

Research Process

Interviewees' participation in the research was entirely voluntary. Individuals were contacted using four methods. These were:

- A workshop at the Youth & Policy Conference.
- A letter in 'Young People Now' magazine inviting those who may be interested in taking part to make contact.
- Networking amongst youth workers.

- Youth workers who, having already agreed to be interviewees, contacting young people in their centre/project and asking them if they would like to be involved. All the young people interviewed were aged between 16 -21 years.

The sampling approach identified in the previous chapter proposed that interviewees should be selected (using purposive sampling) on the basis of a range of specified variables. Namely, their:

- Experience in youth work.
- Understanding of and interest in, the research questions.
- Organisational dimensions (e.g. roles, status levels, voluntary/maintained sector, youth work setting, different groups of young people worked with).
- Geographical dimensions.
- Cultural dimensions (e.g. ethnicity, religion).
- Personal characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, sexuality).

As such, interviewees were selected to reflect a geographical spread across rural and urban settings in England; and also to include youth work in Wales (Cardiff) and Northern Ireland (Belfast).

Interviews in England took place with youth workers and young people in 13 different youth projects/organisations in Birmingham (Sparkhill, Ladywell, Kingstanding and Handsworth), Bristol, Coventry, London (Guide Association, Lambeth and Redbridge), Manchester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Nottinghamshire (Newark and Retford).

The youth work practitioners involved were:

- Workers in voluntary organisations and local authority youth services;
- Full-time, part-time workers, and officers;
- Women and men;
- Black and white workers;
- From different class backgrounds;
- From different cultural and religious backgrounds; and
- Heterosexual, gay and lesbian.

The young people interviewed included:

- Young women and men;
- Black and white young people;

- Young people from different class, cultural and religious backgrounds; and
- Heterosexual young people, young lesbians and young gay men.

The youth work settings included club-based, detached and project based work and involved work with the following groups of young people:

- Young women and young men;
- Young white and young Black people;
- Young lesbians and young gay men;
- Young people with disabilities;
- Working class young people;
- Young Jewish people;
- Young Muslims; and
- Young Christians.

Prior to the interview, interviewees were provided with a written explanation as to the purpose of the research, and the topics to be covered during the interview. At the interview, each interviewee was provided with a copy of the interview guide, which identified the topics for discussion (see Appendix 1). Each interviewee was also advised of his/her right to withdraw from the research at any stage in the process.

All interviews were tape-recorded. However, these tapes were not transcribed in full. Instead, they were listened to and quotations extracted by the researcher. These quotations were then returned to the relevant interviewees for their amendment and approval prior to use in any written work. Each interviewee gave his/her written consent for his/her quotations to be used. Each interviewee was also offered the opportunity to comment on the location and context of his/her quotations within the written text (See Appendix 4).

Quotations extracted from interview recordings and reproduced here are not attributed to specific individuals although some connections may be obvious by virtue of their content.²

² It is important to note that the perspectives offered and observations made here are strictly the personal opinion of the individuals interviewed. As such, they do not represent the policy or position of any youth and community service or voluntary organisation that employ the individuals concerned.

However, the contributors to this study should not, and did not wish to, remain anonymous. Each has made his or her distinctive contribution arising from her or his own experience and concerns about youth work. A list of interviewees is therefore attached as Appendix 5.

On reflection, the research process was very effective from a number of perspectives:

- The approach to sampling not only enabled the selection of interviewees in relation to a range of specified 'distinctive qualifications' (Honigmann 1982) - identified in the previous chapter and above - but also provided for the selection of interviewees capable of providing data for meaningful comparisons (Mason 1996).
- The sampling and selection of interviewees clearly reflected the study's commitment to anti-oppressive practice (Truman and Humphries 1994).
- The fact that interviewees volunteered to take part meant that they were both interested in and committed to an honest exploration of the research questions (Jones 1985).
- The process of 'active interviewing' represented a collaborative learning experience through which 'knowledge was constructed' (Holstein and Gubrium 1997) in the context of a non-hierarchical reciprocal relationship between the interviewee and interviewer (Oakley 1981).
- Interviewees actively engaged in the project's ethics policy and procedures (Batchelor 2000) and were conscientious about approving their abstracted quotations and giving permission for them to be reproduced.
- Data analysis has been able to be linked to both the sampling strategy (through selecting the 'right people' in the process of data collection) and the 'social explanation' underpinning the study (Mason 1996) - particularly in relation to the 'interpretive' and 'critical' research perspectives (Sarantakos 1998).

On the other hand, the personal characteristics of the interviewer combined with her 'credentials' or 'visibility' in the youth work field may have given rise to interviewer bias in the sense that, as Riessman notes, interviewees tell their 'story' to particular people and such stories 'might have taken a different form if someone else were the listener' (Riessman 1993:11).

Also:

"The issue of how interviewees respond to us based on who we are - in their lives, as well as the social categories to which we belong, such as age, gender, class and race - is a practical concern as well as an epistemological or theoretical one." (Miller and Glassner 1997:101)

Notwithstanding, whilst Kaufman observed that 'active interviewing' requires the development of rapport and trust; pacing and preparation; and active listening (1994:130-135), my own learning from the experience is that active interviewing also relies on the ability of the interviewer to:

- Create and sustain a reflective and 'enquiring atmosphere' throughout the interview;
- Establish her/his credibility, trustworthiness and integrity;
- Form a relationship with the interviewee which demonstrates trust, respect, openness, honesty and reciprocity; and
- Support the interviewee to make sense of her/his experience, while at the same time, not leading the interviewee to her/his (the interviewer's) own perceptions and conclusions.

Active interviewing also:

- Requires time, patience and enormous concentration (from both interviewer and interviewee); and
- Needs to be conducted by an interviewer who possesses both breadth and depth of knowledge of the interview topic.

In many ways, the experience of active interviewing had much in common with the 'conversations' that youth workers have with young people.

1. The purpose of youth work

The view unanimously expressed by all those interviewed was that youth work is centrally concerned with young people's learning and development 'as people'. This was expressed, variously, by workers in terms of "enabling young people to find themselves"; helping young people to "explore where they are at in their life, their relationships and how they see themselves within society", enabling young people to "think about themselves and their life. Who they are as human beings and what their contribution is and can be to society". Or alternatively "youth work is about seeing young people, their care and their development as human beings." One worker commented, "youth work is a kind of rites of passage process...it's about how they make choices, how they act and how they live their lives".

Young people's view was that "youth work changes your frame of mind. It makes you think positively to things not negatively", and also that "youth work is about valuing people." The role of the youth worker was seen, by one young person, as helping young people to "build their confidence and realise that they are needed and valued and that they can do loads of super things

- helping them to respect others and have a community feeling". Overwhelmingly, the inference was that youth workers helped young people to "find the right track because they see what you are capable of".

Within the context of their development as people, youth work was seen as offering choices in the sense of offering young people a variety of options and choices and enabling them to "make constructive decisions while taking into account the different options available and the possible consequences".

Central to this process, were three other key themes. These were:

- Increasing young people's personal confidence – which one young person expressed as "they help your development socially with your confidence. They encourage you to do activities, go out and meet people".
- Increasing young people's self-esteem and motivation through "creating opportunities for young people to succeed, experience a sense of achievement and grow in self-esteem".
- Helping young people to "put their beliefs and values to the test in a safe way." Or differently expressed as offering young people "opportunities to explore moral issues".

In relation to the four principles established through the Ministerial Conferences (NYA 1991), interviewees were absolutely clear about the essentially educative nature of youth work. This was expressed in terms of:

- Increasing young people's expectations of life and broadening their horizons;
- An educational process that helps young people to know themselves;
- Helping young people to develop transferable skills (including communication skills);
- Giving space to young people to check out who they are and what they are learning about themselves;
- Developing young people who are able to reflect on their experience; and
- Providing opportunities "in a safe environment for young people to challenge and be challenged in order to learn about themselves, their relationships to their immediate community, their relationship to the world and their relationship to their God".

Another worker observed: "informal and social education is an education that is grounded in young people's active search to discover what they think and how they feel and where their values match up with their sense of who they are".

The notion of participation was described as encompassing a wide range of interpretations including giving young people responsibility (e.g. running the coffee bar/café); and giving young people a voice in the organisation, for example, through providing opportunities for young people to represent others (e.g. youth council), and involving them in decisions that affect them (e.g. programme planning). However, participation was also seen in terms of understanding “where young people are coming from and what their next step or challenge is”. And also as an aspect of the ‘political role’ that young people can play “about challenge and change and looking at the system and how young people could be empowered to challenge it”.

Indeed, participation was seen as “essential for capacity building and empowerment”. Although it was also acknowledged that young people need to develop the skills of participation.

“You can’t just say OK let’s participate without young people knowing how to. In a sense they need to be trained in the skills of participation - how to ask for, request or demand things, how to attend and run meetings, how to make informed choices, how to make your voice heard, how to challenge people constructively, how to represent the needs and views of others, how to engage with others in a democratic process.”

Whilst one worker expressed the belief that the empowerment of young people ‘is a fallacy’ since both the youth worker and the organisation have particular ideas about what the worker should be doing, she also believed that: “What it comes down to is young people taking charge of their self-development and control of their lives. And that, I think, we absolutely do address”. Indeed, the general pattern of responses was to interpret empowerment very much in terms of “developing independence, the ability to choose, to make things happen, to influence their own life and be accountable”; “It’s about young people having ownership of ideas and the environment”; and in relation to working with disabled young people, empowerment was conceptualised as “the personal right of actually being able to say ‘no’ to somebody”.

Interviewees’ understanding was clearly that empowerment is about power. And as one worker put it: “Power is about defining reality and if you have not got the power to define your own reality you are going to be constantly under the control of external factors”. Another worker’s view was that:

“Empowerment of young people means that adults must relinquish the power they hold and enable young people to be autonomous. Also, empowerment cannot come about unless there is equality of opportunity. The relationships that youth workers establish with young people must demonstrate a commitment to equality of opportunity, otherwise they collude with the already existing power holders in excluding others.”

Equality of opportunity was therefore seen as central to youth work not only in terms of young people's equal access to provision and opportunities but also, and significantly, in terms of the:

- Development of young people's values which was seen as "at the core of the educational process"; and
- Practice addressing the issue of 'identity'.

Given this interpretation of the purpose of youth work, interviewees identified the outcomes of the work as fundamentally concerned with:

- The development of life skills (e.g. communication, group skills, negotiation, being sensitive to each other, listening skills); and
- The development of the person in the sense that young people should be able to be "good citizens", or as another worker put it "responsible members of society and share and care". In other words:

"Young people should be able to go into the world and conduct themselves in ways that they would be proud of. They should be able to make judgements and recognise the impact on other people."

2. 'Adolescence' and the 'transition to adulthood'

Many interviewees were unconvinced about the notion of young people being in 'transition to adulthood' since it seemed to suggest that young people were 'unfinished products', and when, in reality "transition happens throughout your life. I wouldn't really want to put down markers at certain ages". Some interviewees also reacted against the notion that young people were 'not quite adult' especially given the fact that many young people have already assumed adult roles in life as parents, carers or workers.

Despite a general reluctance to seeing adulthood as being quantifiable according to a person's age, interviewees nonetheless acknowledged that: "puberty is a real thing though. It's physical. It's a psychological and relevant thing in people's lives because the hormones that affect the physical, affect the psychological which affects the behaviour". Another worker commented that: "the very nature of being young means that young people are going through a lot of new situations and experiences". Indeed, according to one young person:

"Up to that point [leaving school] I'd been sheltered by school and a whole system. Then I got to 16 and thought 'Oh'... The truth is you don't really know what you are doing... I left school at 16 and I'd gone through the whole of those 16 years with someone telling me what to do. I felt lost when I left school."

According to interviewees, the significance of this moment in young people's lives, which may be called adolescence, is that young people are "starting to get a sense of themselves" and developing:

"a level of self-awareness that is not apparent when they are first in the junior section. They become more reflective and their exploration becomes more about wanting to know the answers to certain questions that they have thought about... They start to look at themselves and their lives and kind of think 'Is this what I want?'"

In other words, it is a moment in which young people "begin to crystallise their upbringing and the beliefs and values that make them who they are. They are asking questions and they are searching for answers". In this context, three interviewees described the role of the youth worker as supporting young people on 'a journey'. And since journeys require guides, the youth worker was described as a "guide who gives you information and sometimes advice... who may need to help or rescue you... and who engages in the process that's about figuring out which way to go".

"I believe that fundamental to youth work is a kind of 'rites of passage' which provides a structure for young people to go through the transition to young adulthood. And actually when you look at organisations like the Girl Guides and those types of uniformed groups you see that some of the concepts they use, like the badges and learning to cook, keep home, manage a budget - those things, although pooched by the left wing element of the youth service, are fundamental for learning to manage as a adult in this society."

Yet whilst the idea of 'transition' seemed controversial, interviewees were clear in identifying the features they considered characteristic of the state of 'adulthood'. These were:

- Being able to make decisions and accept the consequences of those decisions.
- Being clear about what you are not prepared to do - what is not acceptable to you as a person.
- People who are somehow at peace with themselves, having a sense of themselves and where their life is going.
- A feeling of responsibility to themselves and others - a kind of self-respect.
- The ability to "engage in a clear exchange of information and being non-manipulative in the sense that it's not about playing games or trying to outdo somebody else or make them feel bad".
- Being able to acknowledge where you are at and your feelings.
- The existence of a clear value system.
- Having one's own thoughts and desires.

"Adulthood means being in control of yourself... the capacity to make decisions and choices based on the knowledge of the consequences for yourself, community and ultimately, all that is. Not placing the responsibility for your actions elsewhere."

According to interviewees, adulthood means:

“Taking control of your own life and being responsible for your own actions.”

“Being able to say what you believe even if everyone else believes something different.”

“Having enough personal confidence to be able to give to others.”

“As you become an adult you begin to examine the views and values that you have been given by your parents. The role of the youth worker is to help young people to reflect on their life experiences and think about how their learning from one situation transfers to another.”

Identity

The issue of ‘identity’ was regarded, by all of the workers interviewed, as central to youth work’s purpose and practice. ‘Identity’ was seen as central to youth work in two key ways.

Firstly, in relation to young people’s development as effective human beings:

“The issue is about consistency... Trying to develop a consistent sense of self in terms of their core attitudes, values and beliefs... They are able to make tough decisions because they have a consistent set of values that enable them not only to make the decision but also to implement it. So their values provide a guide in terms of the things they would do as well as the things they couldn’t possibly see themselves doing.”

Secondly, in terms of their developing sense of self (e.g. as young women, young men, young Black people etc.)

The work is “about trying to get young women to explore with you where they are at and getting them to look at where they could be or how they could exist in a more positive sense of self.”

“My approach to young men is about creating opportunities in a relaxed atmosphere for young men to be more honest and open about themselves... that kind of experience leads me to say that young men’s work can only be done by men because it’s about reflecting on our shared or common experiences as men.”

“I think it’s important for young people to be aware of their identity and to preserve that identity as best they can. My role in that is to enhance their identity and provide information to them. This is what they’re asking for and I think as workers it’s important that we support it. Not dilute it. This third and fourth generation have now started to call themselves British Muslims. Not Pakistani Muslims or Indian Muslims but British Muslims. That’s a political statement that says they were born here. They didn’t come from somewhere else. They belong here. They are British and they are Muslim.”

“Young people of African heritage need to experience positive encounters with African culture as part of the journey which aids the positive development of their identity.”

“We’ve done a lot of stuff about self image and things like that. Basically, about having a positive self image and how heterosexual people see gay people and exploring those kind of issues and stereotypes and how it’s OK to just be yourself.”

“The importance of who you are, where you’ve come from and your roots is strongly grounded in our sense of community and continuity.”

3. Context and process

When asked about the context and processes that enable and support young people to examine their values and engage in informed decision-making, interviewees overwhelmingly and consistently referred to two aspects of the work - relationships and conversation. Indeed, these two features were seen as the two most important aspects of the work.

“The relationship is everything. Growth, development, learning in relation to values which is a human task that can only be done within a relationship. I also think the relationship is not only a base for sharing values but the environment within which young people construct their sense of self - a model of themselves if you like, that they re-form and re-shape as they further explore and develop.”

“The relationship enables us to look below the superficial and explore opportunities for reflection.”

Relationships

Interviewees identified the key features of the relationship between youth workers and young people as follows.

- Voluntary relationship in which young people are involved in making choices and decisions. This was seen as ‘crucial’.
- The relationship must create the environment for young people to explore their questions and answers in a genuine and meaningful way.
- The relationship must demonstrate acceptance of and valuing young people, and be based on the principles of honesty, trust, respect and reciprocity. These principles were stressed time and again by both the youth workers and young people interviewed.
- The relationship must be non-judgemental in the sense that workers need to have an ‘unconditional positive regard’ for young people as human beings.
- The relationship must be based on the young person’s agenda and not the worker’s.
- Youth workers must believe that young people have the ability to change and grow.
- The relationship must be based on ‘human contact’.

“The relationship is essentially empathetic. It’s about seeing young people and young people feeling they have been seen. They have been recognised in some way, which is a kind of spiritual thing that’s about self and a very fundamental recognition of one human by another in a very focused way.”

“Youth work is about making a human-to-human contact with young people and that adds a kind of spiritual dimension to the relationship.”

“For us to feel whole and operate effectively we need to go through a process of understanding not only our rights but also our responsibilities and our connection to humanity.”

Fundamental to all of this, was the idea that youth workers have to be authentic human beings in the sense of showing the “human side of us, including our weaknesses and vulnerabilities”. Youth workers also need to be “honest and open with young people about who you are and what you are capable of”. For as one worker commented:

“Young people will only hear you if they have a level of respect for you and obviously if you are open and genuine... and also if they see that you do actually care about them.”

From the point of view of the young people interviewed, youth workers were seen as a kind of ‘friend’:

“Youth workers are sort of almost friends...I can trust them...they can be supportive...they are not judgmental.”

“You can have a laugh and a joke with youth workers...it’s a much more relaxed relationship than with teachers.”

“The relationship is like a friendship...a mutual friendship where you respect them and they respect you.”

“What I saw [from the youth workers at the centre] was trust and leaders who had the patience and time and who were bothered to want to help.”

“A youth worker is a sort of friend because they see you grow up...It’s like having a big sister or auntie who you can tell things that you wouldn’t tell anyone else. But youth workers are not your friends because you are not part of their social life. You are a part of their work life.”

Yet, the youth workers interviewed were themselves very conscious of the “very fine line between friendship and that professional relationship...that you need to pay quite careful attention to.” As one worker put it:

“I am not their friend. I am there as a youth worker but I like to feel that the approach is friendly and that they can approach me and we can have a discussion and talk things through. In the process, I can and will challenge their comments, behaviour or attitudes, and hopefully we can talk about that because they know I’m not coming with some kind of authoritarian attitude. The relationship is more informal. More flexible. Sometimes I’ll get angry and sometimes they’ll be angry with me. But at the end of the session it will be like ‘see you next week’ because it’s over and finished. Or it may not be. It may continue. But the important thing is that I get across to that young person that I still value them. I still support them and I still care about them as people. I just don’t care about some of their beliefs or attitudes and I make that difference perfectly clear.”

In addition, there was the idea that youth workers are 'role models' for young people. This was mentioned by several interviewees on the basis that young people "choose people they can identify with and that's often based on some moral or spiritual quality they respect" or differently expressed, that part of the youth worker's role is to be "a role model that young people aspire to be whether it is because of wanting to be as thoughtful as the worker, as reflective, as sensitive or willing to listen". Whatever the reason, workers recognise that such a role brings the responsibility of "being clear and explicit about your own values".

Conversation

At the heart of the relationship lies 'conversation': - "Just talking with people and reflecting with them on their experiences, their behaviour, their attitudes. It's about helping them to think about what has happened and imagine other ways in which that could have occurred".

All of the youth workers interviewed reported that they actively encourage discussion and seek to create an environment in which 'conversation' can take place. That is:

"An atmosphere that has warmth, fun, spontaneity. An environment that enables young people to broaden their knowledge, understand the complexity of the issues they are involved in and express themselves in a clear, straight-forward and assertive way."

Conversations are therefore seen as pivotal to the role of informal educator. As one worker expressed it:

"What they need to be able to do is listen and understand and be able to empathise with young people. They need to be open to understanding... young people's experience, and able to help young people to understand it for themselves. So that's not about judging young people or saying their life is wrong. It's about asking 'how can you build on your life experiences and move forward?'"

In the words of another worker:

"You need a level of warmth and you need to share yourself in terms of the concern that you show. You need to remember the things they told you in the past and be able to refer to them when it's appropriate to do so - just to let them know that you've made the effort to remember. You also need to take the time to talk with them about where they are coming from, who they are, what they are interested in... It all works because all of these little things contribute to them feeling that they can trust you."

However,

"Getting young people in touch with their inner self might not solely be done through conversation. I use a whole range of tools to enable young people to experience their true self. Creative visualisation, relaxation and meditation, drumming, free dance, collage and arts and crafts, photography, story telling and silence or peace. It could be done in a range of ways because, for me, you cannot really talk to people about their inner selves as much of the

time their defence mechanism comes into the frame, but they can express their inner selves or we can explore it through creative expression.”

Other practice strategies mentioned by the youth workers and young people interviewed included:

- Residential work - which was frequently referred to and valued for the opportunities it provided for building and deepening relationships;
- The use of structured exercises - leading to discussion;
- Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme as a structured mechanism for getting young people involved;
- Expeditions - e.g. to Austria, Chicago, San Francisco, Ireland, Morocco, Mombassa, the Outer Hebrides;
- Travel to Egypt, India, Pakistan;
- InterRailing to Istanbul and back;
- ‘Problem page’ discussion sessions;
- Resource pack containing information and structured activities for facilitators working with individuals and groups to explore their values and attitudes;
- Role play;
- Structured programmes involving exercises and discussion;
- Celebrating specific religious festivals (e.g. Muslim, Jewish);
- Drama work.

4. Young people’s experience of youth work interventions

For the young people interviewed, youth work offered a range of opportunities for acquiring new skills and participating in new experiences:

“It was about social development, acquiring new skills for yourself...It gave us the abilities and skills to organise activities for ourselves.”

“I’ve been to so many places and done so many things and met so many people that I just wouldn’t have.”

“You get to know people that maybe you would never have talked to.”

For some of the young people interviewed, the key benefit was described as having someone to talk to.

“I’d never had any contact with anyone else who I could talk to about my problems or experiences and who could actually help me realise what I thought and make my own decisions.”

“It just makes a nice change to talk to someone who may understand what’s going on.”

For other young people, and these were in the majority, youth work was seen as helping them to learn about the sort of people they are; and think about the sort of lives they want.

“I learnt about the sort of person I am through meeting different people.”

“Basically it made us look inside ourselves and say ‘What am I doing here?’ ‘Where do I want to progress to in my life?’... [That] was more or less a stepping stone for us to begin helping the people in the community.”

“I would never have learnt what I’ve learnt about how to treat people in a better way and how people react to different situations.”

“It has helped me to change because when you get into arguments with people and then you think did I really do that and if I did then I think well I’m going to change it and gradually you get better. I’d like people to say I’m a nice person. - understanding, caring, a good listener.”

5. Knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by youth workers

“A youth worker needs good communication skills. The capacity to earn trust. The ability to talk to different age groups and different kinds of people. The ability to offer information in a usable, acceptable way. Because it’s the way they put it across that makes the difference. It’s their approach as well, the way that they break the ice.”

The key skills, knowledge and dispositions needed by youth workers, as identified by interviewees in this investigation, were:

- The ability to “initiate and develop relationships of trust and mutual respect with young people which motivate them to understand and develop their values”;
- The ability to support young people to complete their learning cycle - i.e. understanding and learning from their experience;
- An understanding of the social, political, economic context in which they are working;
- An ability to appreciate the complex and contradictory environment in which young people find themselves;
- Good communication skills;
- Leadership skills;
- The ability to act as advocates for young people; and also, the ability to enable young people to speak for themselves;
- The ability to develop a community development approach to youth work;
- Groupwork and facilitation skills;

- Listening skills;
- Skills in dealing with conflict.

Youth workers were also seen as needing to be reflective and effective practitioners in the sense that they are able to:

- Formulate clear plans, aims and objectives for their work;
- Critically appraise, monitor and evaluate their practice;
- Write reports;
- Understand how they use themselves in practice;
- Be open to their own learning, and have a commitment to looking at their own practice.

Values

All of these skills were seen as important. However, in terms of regularity, inference and emphasis, the primary concern expressed by interviewees addressed not the knowledge and skills of youth workers, but rather, the dispositions and values seen to be fundamental to youth work practice. These were:

- Honesty.
- Trust / trustworthiness (including maintaining confidentiality).
- Respect.
- Empathy.
- Commitment.
- An acceptance and valuing of, and liking for young people.
- A belief that young people have a positive contribution to make to society.
- Being non-judgemental.

Underpinning these dispositions and values, was a notion of reciprocity in the relationship in the sense that, in the words of one young person: "There's a two way system. You give. They give. You respect them. They respect you".

Self Reflection and 'Authenticity'

At the core of such expressions of youth work and youth work practice resides an expectation that, as one worker put it:

"The only way that youth workers are going to be there with young people is to be completely genuine and able to give young people a positive reflection of themselves. And the only way you can do that is from a position of being clear about who you are yourself."

The expectation here is therefore twofold. Firstly, that youth workers need themselves to engage in a process of self-reflection in order to become “confident and comfortable with their own identity and how that has shaped their own values and beliefs”. Secondly, that youth workers need to be authentic human beings who have the ability to “explore their own values”, are “aware of their own prejudices and bias” and for whom the “ego has to be mature or at least maturing”. In other words, youth workers “have to have integrity”; and “they’ve got to have a balance of emotions. They’ve just got to be a normal human being basically”.

6. Implications for youth worker training and development

Interviewees identified the implications for the training and development of youth workers as including three key aspects.

- A positive personal development experience for youth workers:

“Youth workers need to engage in a positive personal development experience...to explore their views, hopes, fears, aspirations, values, and what being you means to you and how your experiences have shaped your values and your life. It’s about the development of them as people.”

- Time to reflect on practice and themselves as practitioners.

- A model of practice that reflects the youth work process.

“Those who support or supervise part-time workers have a responsibility to value them, listen to them, support their efforts, their risk taking and innovations. Encourage them to reflect. Really model the youth work process that you would expect from them in relation to their work with young people.”

Summary

This chapter presents the findings from recorded interviews with 32 youth workers and young people. It identifies the emerging themes and analyses these according to their regularity, structure or inferences to enable the development of patterns. As such, the consistent themes and patterns emerging from these interviews reveal the following.

Youth workers’ and young people’s understanding of the purpose of youth

Interviewees see youth work as fundamentally concerned with young people’s learning and development ‘as people’. That is, their development as human beings. As such the work is described as offering young people opportunities to understand and make choices. In so doing, youth work increases young people’s confidence, self-esteem and motivation; and provides opportunities for them to examine their beliefs and values; and explore moral issues.

According to interviewees, the educative process of youth work enables young people to broaden their horizons and develop a range of transferable skills. However, central to the process is an education that is “grounded in young people’s active search to discover what they think and how they feel and where their values match up with their sense of who they are”. Participation in youth work is understood, in the main, as encompassing a wide range of interpretations including giving young people responsibility, and giving them a ‘voice’ - for example in programme planning, the running of the club/project and within the broader community (e.g. through youth councils). Empowerment was conceptualised very much in terms of “young people taking charge of their self-development and control of their lives”. Equality of opportunity was seen as both the need to provide equal access to provision and opportunities, and also in terms of the development of young people’s values which was seen as “at the core of the educational process”.

The ‘outcome’ of the work was described as fundamentally concerned with:

- The development of life skills; and
- The development of the person.

‘Adolescence’/the ‘transition to adulthood’

Interviewees were reluctant to accept the notion that young people are in the ‘transition to adulthood’. Nonetheless, they acknowledged the physical and psychological relevance of puberty/adolescence, and the fact that, in this society at least, the state of being young “means that young people are going through a lot of new situations and experiences”. Interviewees identified a number of key features of ‘adulthood’ including, most significantly, the ability to make decisions, taking responsibility for one’s own decisions and actions, and the existence of a clear value system. The implication for youth work was expressed in terms of youth workers helping young people to:

- Reflect on, and learn from, their life experiences; and
- Providing a structure that supports young people’s ‘journey’.

‘Identity’

The concept of ‘identity’ was regarded, by all of the workers interviewed, as central to youth work’s purpose and practice. ‘Identity’ was seen as central to youth work in two key ways. Firstly, in relation to young people’s development as effective human beings - that is, in terms of the development of their core values, attitudes and beliefs. Secondly, in terms of young people’s

developing sense of themselves as members of particular groups in society - e.g. as young women, young men, young Black people, young lesbians and gay men and so on.

Context and processes

When asked about the context and processes that enable and support young people to examine their values and engage in informed decision-making, interviewees overwhelmingly and consistently referred to two aspects of the work - the relationship between youth workers and young people; and the centrality of 'conversation'. Indeed, these two features were seen as the two most important aspects of youth work.

Both workers and young people stressed the importance of the voluntary nature of the relationship, and also the need for workers to make 'human contact' as authentic human beings.

Relationships were characterised as involving:

- Acceptance and valuing of young people (non-judgemental and a belief in their ability to learn, grow and contribute to society);
- Honesty, trust, mutual respect and reciprocity.

'Conversations' were seen, by interviewees, as pivotal to the youth work process since it is through conversation that young people are enabled and supported to reflect on their experiences, their behaviour, their attitudes; and to "imagine other ways in which [things] could have occurred".

Young people's experience of youth work interventions

The young people interviewed were clear that, for them, youth work not only offered opportunities for acquiring new skills and participating in new experiences, but also offered "someone to talk to" and the possibility that they will learn about the sort of people they are; and think about the sort of lives they want. In addition, some young people described youth workers as friends and role models. And indeed, the idea of role model was also mentioned by some of the youth workers interviewed.

The knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by youth workers

Whilst acknowledging the need for knowledge and a variety of skills, interviewees stressed the central importance of youth workers' values and dispositions, which they perceived as fundamental to the youth work process. Such values and dispositions included honesty;

trustworthiness; respect; empathy; commitment; an acceptance and valuing of, and liking for young people; a belief that young people have a positive contribution to make to society; and being non-judgemental. Interviewees also expressed the belief that, central to the youth work role was the expectation that youth workers would themselves engage in a process of self-reflection; and also workers needed to be authentic human beings.

Implications for youth worker training and development

Interviewees identified three particular implications:

- The need for youth workers to, themselves, engage in a positive personal development experience.
- The importance of workers having time to reflect on their practice and themselves as practitioners.
- The need for the training and support of workers to 'model' the youth work process.

5. CORE PURPOSE & PRINCIPLES

Introduction

Chapter 4 identified the themes and patterns emerging from the interviews conducted with youth workers and young people. The current analysis now seeks to develop a theory of youth work by exploring the “plausible relationships produced among concepts and sets of concepts” (Strauss and Corbin 1994 quoted in Silverman 2000:78), as revealed by the emerging themes and patterns, to explain the phenomenon known as ‘youth work’. To achieve this, the analysis utilises the ‘constant comparative method’ of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

This chapter therefore engages in a continuous interplay between proposing statements of relationships between themes and checking these propositions against the data and existing literature from both the youth work field and other relevant areas. In other words, it is a process of ‘sense-making’ created through a constant comparison between:

- Youth workers’ and young people’s descriptions of youth work; and
- Perspectives on various aspects of the work as provided in the literature.

The aim of this exercise is to enable the formulation of clear statements about:

- What youth work *is* - in terms of its core purpose; and the principles and concepts integral to such a sense of purpose (considered in this chapter);
- What youth workers *do* - in terms of the context, processes and values that inform and underpin effective practice (considered in chapter 6); and
- What knowledge, skills and dispositions youth workers need in order to undertake such practice (considered in chapter 7).

In addition, two other issues are of central importance. Firstly, the large collection of direct quotations from workers and young people reflects a commitment to preserving their authentic ‘voice’ and importantly, to reflecting their essential meanings since it is through narratives that human existence is rendered meaningful (Cortazzi 1993). Therefore, contributors’ own words provide a means for understanding the meanings they have given to their own experiences and reflections. Also, whilst quotations are not, in general, attributed to specific individuals, the text does contain a number of extended quotations as a way of illustrating continuity of thought.

Secondly, the quotations from youth workers and young people provide useful illustrations of the fact that the kind of youth work being envisioned in this study is already taking place. Not in a narrow or restricted way but in a wide variety of familiar settings and contexts; with many different kinds of young people. Indeed, the breadth of practice reflected here is only eclipsed by the amazing consistency of workers' sense of purpose and underpinning values.

Emerging purpose

Despite the changing emphasis over the past hundred years, much of the underpinning ideas about the nature and purpose of youth work can still be found in contemporary practice. For example, in terms of the commitment to young people's emotional, mental, physical and spiritual growth which Maud identified (1951):

"We have the stated aims about emotional, mental, physical and spiritual growth. So we're not specifically interested in someone's academic ability. In terms of the physical some people would say that we don't do that very well whereas others see camping as a physical activity. Certainly, we're not as sporty as we used to be and there are a lot of people who regret that. So right now there's a move to think some more about sport but not competitive sport necessarily - things like girls' football where they're developing the skills with a ball rather than having to get into a league. What we're trying to do is give a balance so you get your outdoors and your arts in Guiding. You don't have to choose between one or the other."

"In terms of the emotional, some of that's about being with other people and being in control of thinking about the effect on others of what you've said or done. Learning about relationships. There are a lot of Ranger Units now that are getting into things like sessions with Relate focused on taking control of a relationship, deciding what you're looking for in a relationship, not being put upon and issues like that. I think that's probably a response to the teenage pregnancy issue."

"The spiritual dimension is quite difficult in Guiding because for some people this is very much linked to the church. And in fact some units are clearly linked to a church or, for reasons of cost, use church premises. But spirituality is not just about religion. It's something to do with a connection with nature - going to the mountains and feeling a part of the world. Sleeping under the stars. Just being in the environment and remembering that you are only human. It can be really simple. For example, we had a young woman with a disability in our unit and then one day we were all sitting on the grass and we realised that she'd never sat on the grass. She wanted to join us so we helped her out of her wheelchair and she was completely stunned. She just couldn't believe it."

Interviewees also cited examples of practice that reflect the attention to 'responsible personal choice' and 'sense of achievement' to which the Albemarle Report (HMSO 1961) referred:

"I'm into creating opportunities for young people to succeed, experience a sense of achievement and grow in self-esteem. That's how I see youth work. Increasing young people's expectations of life and raising their horizons."

"We have a vested interest in developing young people who are able to reflect on their experience, consider different courses of action and the effect on other people, make choices, who have the confidence to bring about change or influence their lives and who hopefully will not do that at the expense of other people but with other people."

The notion of self-government, a sense of community and young people's understanding of their 'place in a changing society' as underlined in *Youth & Community Work in the 70s* (HMSO 1969) can also be seen in contemporary practice:

"Self government ranges from being able to choose what your Guide unit is going to do - probably from a prescribed list - say choose four activities from a list of eight or something like that; through to a Ranger unit that sets its own constitution and programmes and works it out for itself - writes its own letters, booking speakers and venues, organising the mini-bus, sorting out the catering arrangements. Just doing everything."

"Youth work is about enabling young people to find themselves. It's about them being able to look at where they're at in their lives, the way they interact with other people and feeling that they can make an impact on others around them. Maybe this is really simplistic but I feel if I can make an impact on, say, three young people during their lifetime which means that they take on some of the values about how people treat each other and offer that to the people they come into contact with then you'd have a kind of domino effect. And that could actually create a sense of community, a connection, a sense of being a human being that is far bigger than just you or me."

"What I've always tried to do in my work with young people is to help them explore where they are at in their life, their relationships and how they see themselves within society - their position, their schooling, what they do when they come along to the club, how they interact with each other, what their demands are, what their requests are, how they feel, how they want to be treated as young people. But in order to work effectively with young people with disabilities you also have to take into consideration a lot of the external influences. More so, I think, than in mainstream youth work. So I have to think about parental wishes and influences. Particularly when you are talking about personal relationships, sexual relationships and what that actually means, but this is not to say the young people's wishes are ignored."

Similarly, The Thompson Report (HMSO 1982) emphasised the need for young people to have the experience of being valued, and opportunities to understand their 'identity'. And again this is reflected in the practice of interviewees.

"Youth work is about enabling young people to think about themselves and their life. Who they are as human beings and what their contribution is and can be to society. It's about giving them positive strokes and letting them know that they exist and are valuable human beings. That's regardless of what they've experienced and where they've come from. It's just seeing them as they come through the door, respecting them and not judging them."

Finally, interviewees' practice also reflects the Second Ministerial Conference's (NYA 1991)

commitment to education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity:

"Youth work is about empowerment - supporting young people to increase their confidence in expressing themselves, their needs, their desires, their fulfilments. It's about them being able to communicate with other people and make constructive decisions while taking into account the different options available and the possible consequences."

"Education, capacity building, empowerment and equality of opportunity are all part of a community development approach that starts where young people are at, is dictated by their needs, goes at their pace, and is flexible to fit different situations. Even though this may look casual to the outsider, or even the young people, it represents very deliberate interventions by the youth worker."

Young people's views

Yet despite the concern of some about the apparently 'casual' look of the work, young people themselves are often very clear about the nature and purpose of youth work.

"Youth work isn't a job. You can't look at it like it's just a job unless you are in it for the wrong reasons. Like if you were just out to get a job and you go into youth work you won't really enjoy it. To be a youth worker you have to want to encourage young people's development - no matter who they are. They help your development socially and with your confidence. They encourage you to do activities, go out and meet people. You start doing things that you don't normally do. They make you talk and you can talk about anything really. They're there to have fun with you and look out for you and at the same time help you to discover all the aspects of life that you may not discover by yourself. Like before I got into youth work I just stayed in at weekends. I didn't do anything. But now we go out, sometimes we do fund raising events and all sorts of things. I would never have dreamed of doing some of the stuff we've done like face painting and handing out flyers because I was really self-conscious. But I did it and it was a big thing for me. We also did a parachute jump, which was quite good. The group I'm in now we just think of as many bizarre things as we can and just do them because we're never going to get a chance again."

"The role of the youth worker is to help young people build their confidence and realise that they are needed and valued and that they can do loads of super things - helping them to respect others and have a community feeling. It's about making them feel like they may be different but there's still a right track that you should be on as a person. So the youth worker helps you to find that right track because they see what you are capable of. But you choose that track as a young person because they can't force you to do anything. If I'd never met [the worker] I wouldn't be so headstrong about the right thing. I would have been headstrong about the wrong thing. But now I see the importance of things like the work ethic, respecting others, appreciating your culture and just not being nasty and realising that the world doesn't revolve around you."

"I've learnt about what sort of person I am through meeting different people everyday. I think you also learn about what sort of person you want to be when you are older. Like role models in a sense that help you to become more self aware about who you are and where you fit into all of this. And then you start thinking. Because when you're at school you're just confined to school. Come home, do your homework, have an argument with your parents. Next morning

you get up, have your breakfast and go to school again. But being with youth workers it's completely different. Since I've known them I've become less negative. I feel like I have something to offer now."

"I've developed an awful lot as a person in the four years that I've been coming here. I think if I hadn't have come here I would never have learnt what I've learnt about how to treat people in a better way and how people react to different situations. I've become more considerate and more caring and I understand a lot more about different people and their different backgrounds and experiences. I've also learnt that there is a lot more I could do because although I have some good qualities, like being reliable and trustworthy, there are also some bad qualities that I have. In time I need to develop those bad aspects and improve on the good ones. What I'd really like is to be able to say, 'What you see is what you get'. No false pretences about what I believe. No fake outside image. Just trying to be down to earth and natural. That's how I'd like people to see me."

What is remarkable about these quotations is not the differences in expression or language regarding the nature and purpose of youth work, but rather, the consistency in meaning and inference that emerges from both youth workers and young people. This is particularly striking in terms of their expressed commitment to enabling and supporting young people's capacity to:

- 'Grow' as human beings;
- Take charge of themselves and their lives; and
- Participate in decision-making processes and 'political' activity in their community and society at large.

"Over the last ten years most of my work has been a process of getting young people to explore alternative beliefs and value systems. When you are young you almost believe that this is how life will always be for you. So in claiming the values of your peers or school or capitalism you've not necessarily had the space to explore what you really believe. That opportunity has not been provided in schools because over the past ten years they have become very task and exam focused which means that the possibility of exploring what's not actually on the curriculum is no longer there in any real sense. There is personal and social education, which does provide young people with some information - for example about drugs or contraception or HIV or whatever. But what it tends not to do is get young people to engage on a deeper level about how they actually think, feel and act given all of this information.

My mission isn't to make young people *be* something. My mission is to explore with young people their potential and the wealth of life options available to them. When you are young you don't necessarily feel you have any options apart from keeping up with your peer group. For instance, you may feel that you have to do something against your own values in order to get those trainers or engage in sexual practices before you were ready because there were pressures upon you. But if you've given young people a chance to consider not only their options but, the possibility of choice, then it becomes clear that there is a range of value systems and you can choose any of them.

Youth work is about engaging with young people on an agenda that is about knowledge of the self and how young people perceive the world and their place within that world. So if we were organising a dance workshop we would ensure that the tutor we engage is aware of our agenda. Yes, they may be doing street dancing, hip hop or whatever but what we want conveyed to young people is an understanding of the link that that style of dance has with the long tradition of Black dance whether that's from West Africa or the Harlem Renaissance. The important thing is to understand the continuity. Not that nothing is new but understanding that what they come with is a transformation of what already is. And that they are connected to a long line of people who have enabled them to exist in the way that they exist here today."

The common quality reflected in all of these expressions of the work can, therefore, be seen as a concern not with the methods of youth work nor the activities in which young people participate, but rather, a central concern for young people's development as *people*. That is:

- Their sense of themselves as human beings and members of particular social groups (**identity**); and
- Their developing values and values system (**ethical standards**).

However, integral to this (given the specified Youth Service age range) are the concepts of 'adolescence' and 'youth'. Therefore, before addressing the issues of identity and ethical standards it is necessary to examine 'adolescence' and 'youth' as central concepts for youth work.

The concept of 'Adolescence'

The concept of 'adolescence' is central to the concept of 'youth work'. Not simply because youth work focuses its attention on a particular age range but also because 'adolescence' is typically portrayed as involving various transitions, for example in relation to clarity about rights, roles and responsibilities (Coleman, Catan and Dennison 1997). Specifically within youth work, 'adolescence' is often perceived as a period of transition 'to adulthood' or alternatively, the transition from 'dependence to independence or interdependence'.

"When I think about it, I think the 'transition' idea is like going on a journey. When you go on a journey you need a guide especially if it's a journey that you've never been on before and young people haven't been on this journey before. Now that guide may be a book or some sort of information or sometimes it's a person. As I unravel this it seems to me that young people are on this journey where the difference is that the guide doesn't tell you what

to do. The guide gives you information and sometimes advice. And you engage with the guide in a process that's about figuring out which way to go. Sometimes the road may take a turn you didn't expect and you may end up in a swamp. At which point the guide may have to rescue you and help you out - help you back onto your journey again. Actually, it's a journey that we all travel. But as we get older we gain more experience that hopefully we learn from. One of the things we learn is that life has a lot of swamps. The trick is to see them coming and learn how to avoid them.

If young people are in transition then we have to be able to say when that journey ends. For me, being an adult means being able to make decisions and accept the consequences of those decisions. It is when you are clear about what you are and are not prepared to do in terms of what is acceptable to you as a person. It's about having a solid set of principles that you use to measure your actions."

However, despite the emphasis on the 'personal journey', it is also accepted that 'adolescence' is a social phenomenon to be understood in relation to the social setting of the individual, the pressure of social expectations, and the relative influence of different agents of socialisation (Coleman 1992:11). This is a social setting within which young people are 'neither a homogeneous group nor a static one' (Jones quoted in Wyn and White 1997:8).

'Adulthood'

Notwithstanding, if adolescence is a period of 'transition to adulthood' then we must be able to identify when that transition ends. That is, we need to be able to define the concept of 'adulthood'. Kiernan (cited in Morrow and Richards 1996) defines adulthood as involving:

- Finishing full-time education;
- Entry into the labour market;
- Leaving home;
- The establishment of an independent household;
- Entry into marriage or cohabitation; and
- Parenthood.

Jones and Wallace (cited in Morrow and Richards 1996) also include the acquisition of full citizenship.

Yet, as one interviewee commented:

"It's very easy to say that young people with disabilities have the same rights as any other young person but in reality that is not the truth. There are all sorts of pressures from significant others and services available to young people and so on, and emotional pressures as well that act to create situations whereby young people are not supported or allowed to

exercise the independence that is usually associated with adulthood. That anxiety and fear and desire to both control and protect starts almost from the day that young person is born and so often has very little to do with the actual abilities, capabilities or capacity of the young person concerned.”

Morrow and Richards themselves classify ‘the normative *ideal* of contemporary adult status’ into four main categories - political or legal adulthood, financial or economic adulthood, social and sexual adulthood, parenthood (1996:10). They also assert that major changes in each of these aspects of transition results in an overall disconnection and complex (rather than linear) series of ‘transitions’.

Indeed, as Merton and Wylie point out:

“Youth work has long seen itself as encouraging the personal development of young people during their years of transition from childhood to adulthood. The very notion of such transitions is now being challenged: certainly the transitions have become longer, more complex and much more risky. Young people have to negotiate individual paths through education and training and into the labour market. They have to work out how best to move from the home of their childhood to independent living, and to choose how they want to deal with personal relationships, their health and family life. Moreover, these processes no longer naturally take a linear form – into work, then independent housing, followed by family formation. They are combined in different ways and they can be reversed if young people experience difficulties in sustaining employment, living independently or maintaining relationships.” (2002:1)

However, interviewees were not only aware of the complexities of young people’s ‘transition’ but also challenged the very notion of young people’s transitional status:

“I don’t think young people’s transitional status is at all clear. It’s not like leaving school at 16 and becoming an adult. Mass unemployment has completely changed that. Also, young people are developing their awareness of life at quite an early stage. They are very aware of sex and issues around sex. They are aware of a lot of things that I certainly wasn’t aware of at their age. So I think the experience is just about moving on and learning and gaining experience. And I think that applies to adults as much as it does to young people because I don’t see a clear demarcation between what young people know and their experience; and what older people know and their experience.”

“I think the idea that young people are in ‘transition’ is insulting. It gives the impression that young people are unfinished ‘products’ or ‘work in progress’ which can be shaped by whatever the adult population decides is ‘in their best interest’. It does not confer the status of citizen on them which in turn does not see them as having a right to be involved in decision making.”

As perceived by these workers, young people are not ‘work in progress’. Their understanding is rather of an on-going experience within which young people’s present (as opposed to future) lives should be seen as something of value, in itself. In addition, there is concern that young people’s ‘transitional status’ may lead to others deciding what is ‘in their best interest’. Intrinsic

to that concern, is the desire for young people to be acknowledged as citizens and included in decision making.

However, while it may be difficult to distinguish a clear 'demarcation between what young people know and their experience; and what older people know and their experience' it is not suggested that the experience of being a young person is the same as that of being an adult. The point is that young people's knowledge and experience are not necessarily exclusive to them in the sense that what they may know about (e.g. sex) some adults may also know about; and what they may experience (e.g. unemployment) some adults may also experience. Nonetheless, the particular experience of *being young* is not a biological reality. As Wyn and White point out:

"Age is a concept which is assumed to refer to a biological reality. However, the meaning and the experience of age, and of the process of ageing, is subject to historical and cultural processes... whereby age is socially constructed, institutionalised and controlled in historically and culturally specific ways." (1997: 9-11)

Therefore, it is not the objective reality of age that is contested but rather the subjective 'meaning' with which 'youth' has been imbued. In other words, whereas 'adolescence' has been conceptualised in terms of psychology, 'youth' has been constructed in sociological terms and thereby, embedded with particular 'meanings'.

'Youth'

Griffin (1993) identified a number of discourses that construct 'youth' broadly in two ways - either in term of 'youth as trouble' and therefore in need of control, or 'youth in trouble' and therefore in need of protection. She also comments that:

"In general, young men especially if they are working class and/or black, are especially likely to be the focus of policies that operate with a 'youth as trouble' discourse. Young women, however, are more likely to be dealt with under the aegis of a 'youth in trouble' discourse." (Griffin 1997:22)

Griffin also makes a number of other key observations:

- Dominant representations of youth are partly about setting young people apart from children and adults, as a transition point between two separate age stages.
- Such representations also make distinctions between different groups of young people (e.g. on the basis of gender, 'race', class, sexuality) in terms of discourses of deviance, disaffection and protection.

- Dominant representations of youth in social welfare policies (and mainstream academic literature) have targeted specific groups of young people as being in need of 'surveillance', 'protection' and/or 'care'. (1997:24)

'Youth' and youth work

Youth work focuses on young people at that particular moment in their lives when they are developing their awareness, seeking answers and, crucially, beginning to explore their beliefs, values and choices. This moment is not understood as the beginning of an end (i.e. the transition to adulthood, independence or interdependence) but rather, as the beginning of a life-long process of reflection, learning and growth.

"There is a moment in people's lives, call it adolescence, when they embark on a new and often painful journey. That moment is different from what they have experienced before and different from what they will experience in the future. In that moment they begin to crystallise their upbringing and the beliefs and values that make them who they are. They are asking questions and they are searching for answers."

This is a particular moment of change – a moment which may include the psychological transitions and sociological pressures typically associated with adolescence. However, youth workers do not understand this as a transition ending in some enduring existence where, as adults, young people will no longer experience 'status ambiguity'; where their rights, roles and responsibilities are clear (Coleman 1992); or where having a job, an independent household, marriage/cohabitation, parenthood and full citizenship will finally confirm their political, financial, social and sexual status as 'adults' (Morrow and Richards 1996). Youth workers understand this moment in young people's lives as the beginning of a reflective process within which:

"The role of the youth worker is to recognise and nurture that process. We need to support young people to ask their questions and find their answers by enabling their reasoning and opening up their choices."

It is a moment of questioning - a moment in which young people reflect critically on their sense of self, their beliefs and values. It is a moment that demands attention to enabling 'reasoning' and the opening up of options.

Yet, whilst youth workers reject the 'transition theory' of young people's lives, this does not mean that they have no interest in the concept of 'adulthood'.

From youth workers' perspectives:

“Adulthood is a very individual thing but I think some of the common features would be people who are somehow at peace with themselves, having a sense of themselves and where their life is going, and a feeling of responsibility to themselves and others. The kind of self-respect that you get from feeling responsible for yourself and what you want to do with your life.”

“Adulthood is when you are able to make your own decisions and take control of what you want to do. Being able to say what you believe even if everyone else believes something different. Having enough personal confidence to be able to give to others. Being able to be in a group of your peers but be an individual. Accepting your responsibilities.”

“To me, the adult state is about the ability to engage in a clear exchange of information and being non-manipulative in the sense that it’s not about playing games or trying to outdo somebody else or make them feel bad... [It’s about] the way a person conducts their life - the way that they acknowledge where they are at and their feelings. It’s the existence of a clear value system. Having one’s own thoughts and desires. For a young person with a disability, it may be that they will never be financially independent. Or will not necessarily have their own home. For some, they will always live in a system where there are carers or support workers. But that doesn’t mean that they will also have an absence of a clear sense of self, independent thought and a worked out set of values. And in that sense, they have the potential to be as independent as the next person.”

“Adulthood means being in control of yourself. And the thing about being young is about feeling like ‘I’m not in control of myself’. So you get this talk about pregnancy like it’s this accident that happened. And I keep saying how can it be an accident? You were there. He was there. You engaged in sexual intercourse. That’s not accidental. An accident is when you trip and fall down the stairs. The conception may be something that you didn’t think would happen to you but the whole thing isn’t accidental because you got to a point where you could have made a decision. So adulthood is the capacity to make decisions and choices based on the knowledge of the consequences for yourself, community and ultimately all that is, not placing the responsibility for your actions elsewhere. So saying your hormones are running away with you or you’re under stress or you can’t control your anger is renegeing on the choices you made and your responsibilities. Adulthood is about having emotional maturity, control over yourself including your emotions.”

The qualities and capacities, which these workers attribute to ‘adulthood’ therefore include:

- The ability to engage in a clear exchange of information without seeking to manipulate or ‘outdo’ others;
- Having self-respect and personal confidence;
- Taking responsibility for one’s own actions;
- Making choices from an informed position having considered the consequences for yourself, the community and others;
- Being in control of your life and having a sense of where your life is going;
- Being able to be in a group of peers and still be an individual;
- Being able to say what you believe even if everyone else believes something different;
- Being able to give to others;

- Acknowledging where you are at - your feelings, thoughts and desires;
- Having emotional maturity and control of yourself including your emotions; and
- Having a clear value system.

Interestingly, these qualities are neither age specific nor do they reflect the kinds of qualities and circumstances which Coleman (1992) and Morrow and Richards (1997), for example, identify as typifying the state of adulthood. There is no mention here of having achieved clarity regarding one's (social and political) rights, roles and responsibilities. No discussion of particular life events - e.g. leaving school, getting a job, leaving home, marriage, parenthood. No reference to the level of the political, legal, financial, social or sexual independence which adult status may be thought to confer.

'Maturity' and 'Discipline'

Youth workers' understanding of 'adulthood' is, in fact, much more akin to Davies and Gibson's much earlier view of 'maturity' in the sense that it is:

"A highly developed sensitivity to the requirements of others on oneself and a flexibility to express the appropriate aspects of one's individuality to meet the situation. Such maturity does not come rapidly and assumes the self-discipline and humility which comes from a careful discernment of one's own social situation and personal potentiality." (Davies and Gibson 1967:94)

Indeed, Macalister Brew had much earlier referred to discipline as the "system by which man achieves freedom and fits himself for carrying its responsibilities" (1943:274). In this instance, discipline was conceived in terms of physical discipline (bringing the body under control), discipline of the emotions (mastering one's feelings so that emotions are not the reflex response of unexpressed fears), discipline of the mind (the educative discipline), and discipline of the spirit - best expressed in service to one's fellows and community (Brew 1943:274-275).

But again we have to be careful not to suggest that this mystical moment of 'youth' does not bring with it its own pressures, questions and concerns. For despite the difficulties we may experience with defining the concepts of 'adolescence', 'adulthood' and 'youth', it cannot be denied that there is a specific experience, or range of experiences, resulting from being young in Britain today - the reality of which young people themselves are only too aware.

"Being a teenager is the worse part of your life - well so far anyway. There's so many things going round in your head that you're realising about people. Like when you're a child a smile is just a smile. But when you're older, when you're around your teenage years a smile is different. There's a malicious smile, a cheeky smile, a false smile, a genuine smile. All these things are entering into your head and that's just a smile and you've got four things already that you're not sure about. But it's just life. Everything. And for me being Asian in England

is really hard. That was hard at school. It just seems like the world is really big. You don't realise how big it is. And there are so many hormones and emotions and all sorts of things that you don't know about and there are no answers for. It's terrible."

"Adolescence seems to kind of defeat the purpose of childhood. I got to 16 and realised that I didn't really know what a childhood was because I thought, 'Was that my childhood?'. Up to that point I'd been sheltered by school and a whole system. Then I got to 16 and thought 'Oh'. I think it's good that schools treat you more like an adult in your last year. It kind of prepares you. But the truth is you don't really know what you're doing. You just think you'll go on the dole. You just look for another system that you can secure yourself with. I think parents have to play a big role in that. They have to give you some of the independence that you need to grasp and experience. The funny thing is even though leaving school is a really big moment it doesn't really hit you until you're not there and you're thinking I'd be in maths now or I'd be getting told off now, I'd be wagging now. It doesn't hit you until then how sheltered you've been. How lenient they were and how secure the whole environment was. You don't realise until you're out of it all. I left school at 16 and I'd gone through the whole of those 16 years with someone telling me what to do. I felt lost when I left school."

"I think youth workers have a really important role today because it's such a fast pace society. It's like the identity crisis. 'Who am I?' There are all these people around me. Different cultures. Different languages. Different religions. And there are more and more pressures on young people that are increasing the rate of distress like with eating disorders. But it isn't just about mental health. It's anything and everything to do with young people."

"Nobody can judge what the next person can or cannot cope with. People are individual people. So for some people you won't even notice adolescence. But for others you will do. And what you see is that it's a time of confusion. It's an awful time because I'm going through it now and I'm asking myself all these questions like who am I, what is my role in society, where am I, where do I go, what is my status? And it's not just about who and what and where I am. It's about how you feel within yourself and how you feel about this glamour around you about being size ten. How do you feel about these ideals that you have to live up to? How do you feel about the fact that one day you're going to have to leave home and then your support just stops. And that's what contributes to distress within this society. Because you're moving away from the extended family and with new technology you are moving away all of the time and becoming more and more isolated."

Of course, there are all sorts of young people since they are, after-all, unique individuals who:

- Live in different circumstances - e.g. in relation to housing, personal and familial relationships, or rural isolation
- Face different issues - e.g. in terms of health, crime, employment
- Have different interests - e.g. sport, music, the environment
- Aspire to different achievements - e.g. in terms of their academic achievement, career choices or life goals.

Young people are also different because some of them are women and others are men. Some are Black people, others white people. Some have a disability. Some identify as lesbian or gay. And they come from a range of class backgrounds and religious commitments. Faced with such

diversity it may appear that young people are not really 'a group' at all, since their identification as a social group, requires the existence of some shared experience or quality. One is therefore forced to ask, 'What is the common experience that young people share?' The answer to which is, of course, their age. Being young is the common experience that young people share.

'Ageism'

Yet, whilst different young people may experience the psychological changes of 'adolescence' in different ways and to varying degrees, one consistent experience shared by them is the imbalance of power between young people and adults, which means that despite wanting to be shown respect, young people often feel that their views are not taken seriously (Coleman, Catan and Dennison 1997). The issue of power, however, extends much further than the question of 'being taken seriously'.

Indeed, Franklin and Franklin (1990) have identified three dimensions of *ageism* (cultural, political and economic) affecting both young and old people. Central to their argument is the understanding that 'power is not an attribute of individuals but an expression of a relationship between them' (Franklin and Franklin 1990:5). In addition:

"Power is not always, although it can be, expressed in dramatic confrontations or battles between powerful individuals, classes, races or nations. It is more commonplace for power relations to become routinised within the life of a society so that overt opposition between dominant and subordinate groups is rare. The most effective exercise of power is a quiet affair in which individuals and groups may be ignorant of their subordination." (Franklin and Franklin 1990:5)

Power relations are also never one-dimensional. The ageism experienced by young people may be exacerbated by other forms of oppression deriving from their class, race, gender, sexuality or disability thereby 'creating a complex pattern of relationships of power and subordination' (Franklin and Franklin 1990:7).

The oppression of young people therefore shares a number of common features with other forms of oppression in the sense that it is:

- Systematic and structured
- Based on stereotypes, prejudices and misconceptions
- Operates at personal, cultural, and structural levels (Thompson 1997)
- Leads to adverse representation of and discrimination against young people
- Acts to exclude young people from aspects of social, political and economic life

- Is underpinned by an ideology based on the inherent 'inferiority' of young people because of their age.

As Franklin and Franklin observe:

"Ageism, like racism and sexism, expresses a power relationship between a dominant and subordinate group. The complex package of patronising and prejudicial views about young and old people which ageism embodies, justifies and sustains many of the injustices which these groups suffer." (1990:26)

Yet, despite the social changes (e.g. in labour market, social security and housing policy) which have affected young people's lives to a point where they are now perceived as 'disadvantaged, whether in the housing market, the labour market or in the overall quest for independence from their parents' (Morrow and Richards 1996:4), young people are still portrayed as a threat to society, not in the political sense of yesteryear, but in terms of the 'social damage they may do through their irresponsible behaviour (e.g. in relation to sex, drugs and delinquency) (Morrow and Richards 1996:4).

Indeed, Wyn and White observe that 'the popular image of young people presenting a 'threat' to law and order presents young people as more powerful than they really are' (Wyn and White 1997:12) - particularly since young people are both 'the symbol of society's future and its victims 'at risk' of succumbing to lives of violence, drug dependence and moral degeneracy' (Wyn and White 1997:20).

That the term 'youth' has come to signify 'thugs' (car thieves, vandals, hooligans), 'users' (drugs, alcohol, smoking), and 'victims' (unemployment, poor schooling, dysfunctional families) (Jeffs and Smith 1998) - none of which are categories, experiences or qualities specific to young people - creates compelling support for the argument that:

"It is increasingly difficult to approach 'youth' as a meaningful way of categorizing a set of experiences or qualities...[and that since]... 'youth' is almost exclusively employed to signify discussion of a social problem or behaviour being portrayed in a negative light...[youth work is] ...entwined with a view of young people as being in deficit...[and therefore] ... the notion of youth work has a decreasing usefulness." (Jeffs and Smith 1998:50-61)

Yet whilst Jeffs and Smith's observations are well founded, they fail to take account of young people's experience of *being young* in a society in which ageism is endemic. In a sense, they 'accept' contemporary stereotypes of young people as thugs, users and victims, by virtue of 'taking in' everything that surrounds young people while failing see *young people themselves*.

That is, young people's experience of *being young*, and specifically, their search for identity within the confines of the personal, cultural and structural ageism which they encounter.

Resistance and collective action

So whilst it is certainly true that not all 'thugs, users and victims' are young (Jeffs and Smith 1998), it is equally true that young people, nonetheless, share a distinctive experience of being young not least of which is the likelihood that being young increases the chances of being labelled a 'thug, user or victim'. That is the way ageism operates.

Yet if 'youth' is seen as a problem in need of 'surveillance, incarceration and control' (Jeffs and Smith 1998) the question is whether to dispense with it, as we have tried to with the term 'social education' (Smith 1988), or whether to reclaim it within a framework of resistance in much the same way as we have reclaimed 'woman' and 'Black' and more recently the term 'queer' by gay and lesbian activists (e.g. Woods 1995), and 'nigger' by contemporary black film-makers' (Pini 1997:162).

This is not to suggest that such terms could possibly hope to convey the richness and complexity of who we are as unique human beings. No single term could. But, in a political sense, such terms act as signifiers offering recognition to our experience and struggle in the face of the personal, cultural and structural oppressions we encounter.

Understanding the experience of 'being young' in contemporary society therefore lies at the heart of effective youth work. Naming 'youth' provides a focus for young people's experience as *young people* thereby enabling them to confront the contradictions and stereotypes of ageism; and create the possibility for collective action.

Having examined 'adolescence' and 'youth' as central concepts for youth work, we turn now to the question of young people's development as people. That is:

- Their sense of themselves as human beings and members of particular social groups (**identity**); and
- Their developing values and values system (**ethical standards**).

Identity

Identity represents a sense of self that includes a conscious sense of one's individual uniqueness and a sense of solidarity with a group's ideals (Erikson 1968). It embodies an understanding of

how one is like all other people, like some other people and not like any other person (Gallatin 1975 cited in Coleman and Hendry 1990).

However, whilst Erikson (1968) believed that 'identity crisis' was normative to adolescence and young adulthood in the sense that he saw the process of identity formation as emanating from the experience of some 'crisis' (Robinson 1997); the intention here is not to cast young people's identity development as somehow necessarily problematic, but rather, to acknowledge that entry into any new period of life involves challenges to an individual's self concept. In other words, a person starts to ask him/herself questions about the sort of person he or she is. This process involves self-reflection in terms of 'social comparison' (How am I like other people? What is my level of worth compared to others?), and exploration of personal values (Coleman and Hendry 1990).

However, while such self-reflection occurs at different significant moments in the course of life, it has been suggested that 'adolescence' represents the first phase of life during which the individual develops a clear personal and social identity that persists throughout life (Coleman and Hendry 1990:82). This being the case, the issue of identity becomes central to a service, which targets itself at that precise moment in people's lives.

Also, while accepting the existence of shared patterns of identity development in young people it needs to be noted that the development of self-concept varies in relation to factors related to social background whether this is in relation to personal circumstances (e.g. unemployment) or structural factors such as gender or race (Coleman and Hendry 1990:47). Indeed, it has been argued that not only does 'race' affect identity development but also that young people from Black and white communities actually follow different pathways in becoming aware of their ethnic identity (Lorenz 1996; Robinson 1997).

However this asymmetry exists for purely social and political reasons, and may be summarised:

"In the context of a racist society, feeling proud of being Black is not analogous to feeling proud of being White." (Tizard and Phoenix quoted in Lorenz 1996:160)

"I think it's important for young people to be aware of their identity and to preserve that identity as best they can. My role in that is to enhance their identity and provide information to them. This is what they're asking for and I think as workers it's important that we support it. Not dilute it. This third and fourth generation have now started to call themselves British Muslims. Not Pakistani Muslims or Indian Muslims but British Muslims. That's a political

statement that says they were born here. They didn't come from somewhere else. They belong here. They are British and they are Muslim.

But having a clear identity requires an understanding of what it means to be a Muslim. It's a question they have to ask themselves. What it means to them. I'm not there to judge whether they are good or bad Muslims. Nobody can do that. After all, you could have a humanist person who is caring and sharing and a non-Muslim and still a good person – a good human being. So the same thing goes with the Muslim. You could have someone who is praying five times a day and practising Islam but a good Muslim is what is inside oneself. It's about sharing and caring for other people. And that's really just like being a good human being. So first and foremost the issue is about being a good person.

At the same time, young people feel themselves to be different. They are concerned about who they are as part of a world wide Muslim community and what's happening around the world especially with the Muslims. They are concerned about it and some of them want to be known as Muslims. Others don't because they've seen that it has negative things connected with it. Like a few weeks ago in France there were teachers going on strike because the headmaster allowed a couple of young women to wear headscarves to attend school. The feeling among the young people was, 'Why are they doing this to us?' And the only reason they come up with is because we are Muslims and we have a different way of life. So the challenge for me as a youth worker is how to turn that into a positive. To look at how we can best contribute within this society that we live in - to contribute to this society as Muslims. Not as non-Muslims. Not as Pakistanis. Yes, young people are interested in visiting Pakistan or Bangladesh and even supporting the Pakistan cricket team. But what they are absolutely clear about is that they are staying here. They are a part of this country. And so they want to contribute to this society as Muslims and be accepted on their terms."

Within youth work, the development or preservation of identity is, therefore, not about judging young people but rather providing information and supporting them to understand what (for instance) being Muslim means to them. Indeed in discussing pedagogical principles in the development of anti-racist strategies, Lorenz comments that 'young people have to be facilitated in forming and expressing their ethnic identity, not in adopting given identities' (Lorenz 1996:161).

"All my work with young Black people is about enabling them to develop an identity that makes them balanced and operational within this society. When we think of identity we may say that this person is a Black person or dual heritage or whatever concept or notion the European world places upon us as people they see as different. Our choice is to either accept or reject it. For me, one of the most negative aspects of having to embrace the term Black in this society is that it doesn't come with any cultural meaning. It's just a political term. It doesn't tell you anything about what it means to be Black in this society. So when a young person embraces this concept of being Black it becomes a tool that is used to remove them from their true identity. Black is a useful political term. But most other ethnic minority groups move away from that when they are not directly involved in the politics. So if you are from India you are Indian, or from China, Chinese or wherever. You are an indigenous person from that part of the globe. But for people particularly from the Caribbean and Africa that concept of Blackness is something which defines us regardless."

Also, whilst Tajfel observes that ethnic identity is 'that part of an individual's self concept which derives from his/her knowledge of his/her membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel quoted in Lorenz 1996:160), it is easy to see the relevance of such a definition for other 'identities'. In other words that being, for example, gay, or working class, or Jewish could equally be described as 'that part of an individual's self concept which derives from his/her knowledge of his/her membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership'.

The body 'inscribed'

However, the 'fashioning of identity' is not merely a matter of being a man or woman; Black or white since, as Foucault (1988) observes, it is not the 'physical body' which has meaning but the particular cultural and historical contexts within which the meaningless body becomes 'raced' or 'gendered'. It is the cultural and historical context rather than the body itself which gives rise to meaning and therefore identity: a context within which 'bodies' have already been 'coded' as a result of being classified and regulated by ourselves and others. For example, in the way that the female body has been coded as 'hysterical', the Black body as 'deviant' the teenage body as 'rebellious', the disabled body as 'invalid' (Pini 1997:158). For this reason, as one worker observed:

"The process of young people's growing self-identity and definition involves knowing not only 'who they are' but also 'who they are not'. That means sifting the messages that permeate the social system to understand what they are 'told' about who they are and making sense of this in the context of their own experiences, thoughts and feelings."

Or, as expressed by Erich Fromm: 'Unless I am able to analyse the unconscious aspects of the society in which I live, I cannot know who I am, because I do not know which part of me is *not* me' (1993:78).

The process of their developing identity therefore forces young people to confront the ways in which *their body* (and the bodies of others) has been classified, 'inscribed' and regulated within the context of ageism, racism, sexism, and the other structural inequalities and institutionalised oppressions that exist. That is, the ways in which people are perceived and treated because they are, for example, women in a sexist society, Black people in a racist society or young people in an ageist society. This is because it is from within this context that young people engage in the process of 'making sense' of themselves, their lives and their world.

“Young people are influenced by their peers. But I think they are also searching for an identity or individuality that says I’m part of this group but I’m still that little bit different. We often talk about peer groups but we don’t often talk about young people as individuals within that. And actually in any group you’ll find a dynamic range of people who have a lot in common but also have a lot of things that are different about them.

To me, racism represents ten to fifteen years of painful transition - years of explaining to your elders and arguing with your colleagues. I’m not sure it represents that for most young Black people today. So I understand the impact of what racism does to people not only from my own experience but also from the way young people understand it. And actually, because they did not experience that painful historical transition, they are much more confident about their ability to cope and deal with it. They have a sense of being able to play the system, work it, beat it, side-step it. And while I may not necessarily agree with young people’s agenda on how to deal with these political issues, I have to accept that this is how they see it and how they experience it. Their attitude is very much ‘this is how it is now, deal with it’. That makes them very much more pragmatic than I ever was.

The importance of who you are, where you’ve come from and your roots is strongly grounded in our sense of community and continuity. Young people have that now. It’s not necessarily something they had to discover. It’s a way of life that goes without saying – a legacy that they’ve been given of right. So when you ask them to think about home and what goes on there and who their role models are they can tell you. That provides them with a platform from which to move on. When I listen to young adults or young people talk about it and the history of the people who they think made them, it really is awesome because they can stand proud without the tears and the pain. They can express their point without the emotion I had to keep bottled up. They can see a vision based on the black pearls of wisdom they were given as children and the history of our people which has informed them and given them self belief in what they can do.”

What becomes clear is that supporting young people to form and express their own identity, as opposed to adopting given identities, is a central part of the youth worker’s responsibility not only in relation to ethnic identity but also in relation to other identities. In practice, this means providing opportunities for young people to develop both their self-image and self-esteem given that identity or self-concept involves a person’s:

- Self-image:- That is, their description of self; or knowledge of membership of a social group(s); and
- Self-esteem:- That is, their evaluation of self; or the value and emotional significance attached to membership of particular social group(s) (Coleman and Hendry 1990:46).

Self-image (Description of self)

“We often use residential week-ends and festivals to look at contemporary issues. The starting point is usually that week’s reading from the Torah - which has been read out at

synagogue. What we're asking is what contemporary issues can we draw from this? This becomes quite an astounding experience for the young people because they are confronted with the sense of their religious history and suddenly realise that it may hold some contemporary relevance or dilemmas for them."

"My approach to young men's work is about creating opportunities in a relaxed atmosphere for young men to be more honest and open about themselves and all that comes from that. We have never dangled any carrots in order to get young men involved. We've always made it clear that if they come to the group they'll be expected to talk about themselves and explore what being young men means to them. The interesting thing is that when you create that opportunity to talk the hardest part is getting them to stop talking and listen to each other. It's just like the flood gates have opened because the opportunity is there, perhaps for the first time, to talk about themselves in a reflective rather than superficial way."

Self-esteem (Evaluation of self)

"I see everyday in young Black people, in their negative behaviour, towards each other, how they have internalised the negative aspects of what this society deems as Black. So I very much see my role as helping young people to deconstruct that and look at what their Blackness means to them. What is it that's unique about being in their state of Blackness? What is unique about claiming their Africanity? And when you have tuned into that you can stand up as a more powerful person because you are defining who you actually are based on your knowledge of your history. If young Black people today haven't got that understanding of their history then they are very much confined to a notion of being Black or African as an insignificant thing - that we have never had any power ever as a race of people; that we have done nothing; that we have contributed nothing on the world platform; that we have no history; that our history began when the European came and enslaved us. It's all negative. Even the images they get of Africa today is very much about disadvantage, famine - all the negatives in society. So why would you want to associate yourself with that? The term Black becomes a problem because it is an easy option. You can exist in an aspect of Blackness even though it doesn't necessarily support who you actually are."

"Once you can deal with that part of your personality which is you being gay it makes it easier to deal with other stuff - like stuff you may have about your parents of whatever. It's like once I realised I was gay, and even though I was completely chilled out about gay people and everything, I suddenly thought, 'Oh my God. I'm gay and I hate myself and I think I'm really ugly and I'm going to have a horrible life and I'm never going to meet anybody'. But once I started coming to the project and being with other gay people and all my friends knew then everything else didn't seem so bad. It seemed to fall into place."

Identity and moral orientation

In addition, as Crossley has observed, there is a fundamental link between identity and moral orientation. Referring to Taylor's (1989) exposition on the historical (back to Plato) evolution of the modern concept of self, Crossley comments that:

"Taylor's contention is that concepts of self and morality, what he sometimes calls 'the good', are inextricably intertwined. He argues that we are selves only in that certain issues matter for us. What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me. To ask what I am in abstraction from self-interpretation makes no sense (Taylor 1989:34). Moreover, my self-interpretation can be defined only in relation to other

people, an 'interchange of speakers'. I cannot be a self on my own but only in relation to certain 'interlocutors' who are crucial to my language of self-understanding. In this sense, the self is constituted through 'webs of interlocution' in a 'defining community' (Taylor 1989:39). This connection between our sense of morality and sense of self, according to Taylor, means that one of our basic aspirations is the need to feel connected with what we see as 'good' or of crucial importance to us and our community. We have certain fundamental values which lead us to questions such as 'what kind of life is worth living?' and 'what constitutes a rich, meaningful life, as against an empty, meaningless one?' " (Crossley 2000:15)

Other 'self theorists' have also cast 'virtue' (adherence to moral and ethical standards) at the top of the hierarchy of dimensions, which they refer to as *global self-esteem*. This includes:

1. Competence, or success in meeting achievement demands.
2. Social acceptance, or attention, worthiness, and positive reinforcement received from significant others.
3. Control, or feelings of internal responsibility for outcomes.
4. Virtue, or adherence to moral and ethical standards. (Coleman and Hendry 1990:54)

Interestingly, all of these aspects are needs, which have long been emphasised and addressed by youth workers.

Competence, or success in meeting achievement demands

"We have an accreditation system in our senior section. Most of this is about moving on. Young women get a certificate in relation to the eight personal development areas identified in the 'Look Wider' programme. Those areas are Out of Doors, International, Independent Living, Sport and Fit for Life, Leadership, Creativity, Service in the Community and Personal Values. When you are in the Guide section, 10-14, you do a selection of these. The words are different but they're the same eight things. When you get to be 14+ you can specialise or have a particular focus that the unit is trying to work through."

"I think it's pretty much accepted that class can adversely affect your success at school. So part of our role is to compensate by creating opportunities for young people to succeed. That's not saying that working class young people have more, or more important needs than middle class young people. I think it's just that the needs of the two groups are different. I have to admit though that middle class young people are more likely than working class young people to be able to sort out their own issues or problems. Or certainly that they tend to have more people and resources around them to help them sort out those things."

Social acceptance, or attention, worthiness, and positive reinforcement received from significant others

"When we're talking about the development of social skills what we're often talking about is the kind of social skills that working class young people need to help them deal with people of a middle class background. Frequently, it's about gaining the confidence to engage with or deal with people in authority or people they think are more important than they are. So you

are often in situations with them where you have to be saying: 'You're just as important as everybody else in this queue or everybody else trying to see this person. Don't put yourself down'. As a youth worker you have to find different ways of saying this but basically it's about getting young people to value themselves and have the confidence to believe they are as important as anybody else. When we are not directly addressing it we are doing so indirectly by encouraging young people to do things that increase their confidence and make them look important to others."

"Taking a group of young people to Egypt helped that group of young people to shift their sense of self and their understanding of their people's contribution to the world stage. There was a level of pride and dignity that was nurtured within the group as they began to explore their connection with Egypt and their understanding of Egypt as an ancient and prominent civilisation. Young Black people need to be given experiences and encounters with Africa which can enhance their self-concept and develop a positive sense of self."

Control, or feelings of internal responsibility for outcomes

"I started off as a trouble-maker when I was a junior. Now I'm a volunteer leader at the junior club and I can see what I used to do. I can see the thing from both sides now. I'm lucky being on the leadership training programme because it makes me explore how I was although it's kind of scary because it has come around so quickly. But I've definitely changed as a person. I can criticise myself now as a leader and it helps me with communication and gives me a good experience because I love being with the little kids."

"We are there to offer clarity and help young people understand the consequences of their actions. We provide a safe environment for them to deal with the conflicts of self that they may have."

Virtue, or adherence to moral and ethical standards

"The operating world view as it relates to practice is paramount within my approach to youth work. Young people of African heritage need to experience positive encounters with African culture as part of the journey, which aids the positive development of their identity. There need to be opportunities for young Black people to critically analyse their belief systems, enabling them to explore how their current beliefs are affecting their perception, cognition and knowledge. Contrasting the consequences of differing belief systems introduces alternatives for young people that lead to development and growth, leaving young people in the position of making conscious choices and accepting responsibility for them."

"That volunteering has survived for young people is nothing short of a miracle given Thatcher's Britain in which the question that was always asked is, 'What's in it for me?' But I think the reason they've pulled through is partly because of their Jewish values and sense of community and continuity."

'Morally textured landscape'

In addition, since humans are, by nature, social beings, our identities are inevitably a function of our social relations. Therefore, in order to sustain our identities we must 'morally respect' both the identities of those around us, and the social relations which sustain those identities (Shotter 1993:164). Indeed, according to Shotter, in order to qualify as citizens we must perceive

ourselves as being in a 'morally textured landscape'. We must understand how we are currently 'placed or positioned' in that landscape and operate from an awareness that 'opportunities for action' are made differentially available because of our location (1993:162).

Identity is therefore a question of morals. Not simply because virtue (adherence to moral and ethical standards) is a crucial dimension of self-esteem but because we are social beings living in a 'morally textured landscape': a 'landscape' that requires us to understand our moral responsibility to ourselves and others; a landscape that requires us to develop, through our changing sense of self, a consistent set of values and the virtue that makes us authentic human beings.

Values and Virtue

However, morality cannot be understood as a set of universally valid rules since moral action requires choices to be made - not simply in choosing whether to steal or not to steal; to lie or not to lie - but in the more complex weighing of one 'good' (e.g. loyalty) against another 'good' (e.g. justice). In the process of such deliberations, we come to recognise the necessity for rational judgement within a 'coherent system of precepts' (Williamson 1997:97).

Youth work is not, therefore, concerned with the inculcation of a prescribed set of values, but rather, with the development of young people's:

- Critical skills and rational judgement; and
- Their disposition towards a 'coherent system of precepts', which underpin the exercise of such judgements.

In other words, youth work's intention is to enable and support young people to develop the critical skills and moral dispositions needed to make rational judgements and choices that they can sustain through committed action.

This is not, however, a solitary activity since:

"The moral self is nurtured in social contexts and develops through learning and through being a member of and living within a society and making the moral decisions which are inescapably part of being a sentient human being." (Williamson 1997:103)

Indeed, it is primarily through such social contexts that people are enabled to develop an understanding of their moral nature as human beings. Youth work can therefore be understood as

the engagement of young people in the social contexts and deliberations, integral to their development as moral human beings - where morality is seen as being concerned with:

- Conduct in relation to people's well-being;
- Some degree of freedom of choice; and
- Impartiality - which should apply equally to all persons in similar circumstances (Barrow 1981).

Clearly, this is not an easy task particularly given the constant tension between the needs of the individual and the needs of the 'state' - conceptualised by Aristotle in terms of whether education should:

- Develop the potential for excellence in each individual or their ability to serve the good of the *polis*;
- Promote the noblest life or the most comprehensive civic life; or
- Promote the education of the free citizen who is capable of deliberating while giving directions to those unsuited for self-rule (Rorty 1993:35).

Notwithstanding, social education within youth work has always attempted to balance 'individual self-expression with a degree of conformity' (Davies and Gibson 1967:17) in the interest of the common good - a tension that exists to the present day.

"What I want is for young people to grow up to be responsible members of society and that they share and care. The reason that they should share and care is because it works. It's basically the Christian message. Love your neighbour as yourself. Society will work but you need to give a bit. It's actually the very opposite of the Enterprise Culture with which we are now all imbued and which says, 'What are you volunteering for? Aren't you good enough to get paid?' "

"A residential is the best place to think about how you treat other people - which is basically where all values start because it's no good having wonderful global values about equal opportunities if you can't get on with the people around you. It is also an important place for young people to learn to be in control. It's a chance for them to come out of their norms into a different set of norms. Very often it's a chance for them to feed themselves. And that's quite a big thing for young women today because most of them don't actually do a lot of cooking at home. Then there's the activities and all the social time which is when the conversations really happen - around preparing the meal, eating it and all the other things that have to be done."

However, while some would argue that not all values are moral values they are all, nonetheless, based fundamentally on some conception of what is 'right' or what is 'good'. Or as Milton Rokeach put it 'an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end state of

existence' (1973:5). In other words, that telling the truth, for example, is preferable to lying or deliberately misleading others as a 'mode of conduct'. And that justice, for example, is preferable to injustice as 'an end state of existence'.

The challenge for youth work is how to develop a practice which:

- Addresses values without 'imposing' them;
- Maintains a meaningful and appropriate concern for individual as well as societal needs;
- Enables young people to engage in 'moral inquiry'; and
- Supports young people's disposition towards virtue:
 - ◊ as a central dimension of their self-esteem; and
 - ◊ as social beings in a morally textured landscape.

Values without 'imposition'

"Engaging with young people in their social education is a privilege and a luxury. So you have to be very careful that you don't impose your own standards and values on them. That's where it becomes really skilful because you can't deny your own beliefs and values. But if you acknowledge them and are aware of where you are coming from then you stand a better chance of working effectively from your value base without imposing your view on young people."

"For a long time now the youth service has been conscious of not wanting to just pass on a prescribed set of values. Yet at the same time we talk about youth workers being role models. The thing is young people don't choose as role models people who have no values or principles. They choose people they can identify with and that's often based on some moral or spiritual quality they respect. In fact, one of the most common things that African Caribbean, African, Asian young people have is some sort of faith or spiritual involvement that comes from their home and culture. It doesn't matter what religion the young people are. It's about faith and a belief in something that underpins the way they live their life and makes them as a person."

The individual and society

"Most of the time people think that the universe is miles out there. But the truth is that you can go in and in and in as much as you can go out and out and out. Everything in the universe is connected. All the things we think of as being out there and all the things we think of as being in here. They are all connected. Some scientist said that in your lifetime every individual on earth is likely to breathe a cell of Jesus. And if you think about it when you sneeze millions of cells of your body are propelled into the universe and some cells are immutable, they just go up into the air and are carried on the stratosphere and drop down somewhere else. And they become part of everything else. So if you drop a piece of litter you make that area unpleasant. But if you didn't drop it and your friend sees you put the litter in your pocket instead you will have set an example and your friend might do the same. And in that moment

you will have changed the universe. So I think what we are really about is changing the universe.

I was originally trained in religious life as a Franciscan friar and my basic philosophy when I came into youth work was the principle of the Franciscans - that basically all you need to do to get to Heaven is to keep the Commandments and love your neighbour: don't pinch his things and take responsibility. If you want to do something else Jesus said, 'Go and give all you have to the poor and come and follow me'. The Franciscans take that to mean 'do what I do'. So as a youth worker my message to young people is that we don't need to know anything else to be happy. Love your neighbour, take responsibility and basically give. And the more you give the more you'll get.

Christian values are not the values just of Christians. They are the values that Christ put over to us. People sometimes mix that up because what has happened is that different individuals and groups have taken what Jesus said and changed and adapted it to suit their own interests - particularly in terms of power. What Jesus said was, 'This is the way we should behave as individuals to make a better society'. That is not the same as the values of the Church that has tortured people, had wars and done a whole load of other things."

Moral inquiry

"One of the most basic Jewish values is to question your surroundings. A good illustration of this is a part of Jewish religious Law called the 'Mishna'. This is where you have a piece of text from the Torah in the middle of the page surrounded by eight to ten commentaries from different sources. Some of them agreeing with each other; some completely disagreeing. There is page after page of this and the premise is that all these commentaries are right. In fact, in orthodox Jewish seminaries they sit from eight in the morning to eight at night, day after day, arguing over the same piece of text. Debate is seen as a very good thing."

"Most young people do not know what they believe, morality and ethics is not a curriculum subject in GCSEs. They behave in a way that is part of a group but when you ask them what do you actually believe they find it hard to express. For example, a young woman may not know that she values life and therefore disagrees with abortion until she is actually pregnant and faced with the dilemma of 'do I have an abortion or carry on with the pregnancy?' If this is the point at which she discovers that she does not agree with abortion then it could be said that she has no choice in the matter. Whereas, if she knew beforehand that she values life she may have taken greater responsibility of her reproductive creative powers and viewed that aspect of her creativity as sacred and therefore taken precautions so as not to get pregnant. So what youth work can do is help young people put their beliefs and values to the test in a safe way."

Disposition towards virtue

Whilst it has always been the case that some commitments to virtue arise from specifically religious values, Barrow maintains that we should engage in moral behaviour for its own sake, not out of fear or self-interest, or because we have been told to do so. 'Good exists independently of God and therefore morality does not depend on religion for its existence' (1981:144).

Virtues and Virtue

Virtues refer to particular moral qualities for example, wisdom, courage, benevolence, compassion or trustworthiness. By contrast, virtue is 'an ethically admirable disposition of character...[which] helps to determine, in the right contexts, what one will want to do' (Williams 1993:9). Virtue therefore requires that a person will choose to act in certain ways based on a disposition towards certain ideals. Virtue asks not 'What should I do?' but 'What would the just or compassionate or trustworthy or courageous or 'virtuous' person do?'

The practice of virtue therefore requires the ability to make judgements and take action whilst being guided by some underlying set of values or ethical principles - whether these have their origins in specifically religious beliefs, are considered to be part of an innate moral reality (Confucius trans. 1979) or the result of 'pure reason' (Kant 1785).

Religious traditions

"Something that's specific to young Jewish people, and perhaps other religious groups, is the sense of a life cycle. There is an annual Jewish cycle, a monthly, a weekly cycle, a daily cycle for some and it's very specific. A lot of young Jewish people have this as a value but they are not conscious of it because they have never known anything else. So for example they will know that every September is the New Year, whether they observe it or not. They know Friday and Saturday is Shabbat. Whether they choose to go out on a Friday night or choose to observe Shabbat they know it exists and they know it is significant because they are Jewish. There is Bar Mitzvah which is a very significant event whether they choose to observe it or not - and most of them do. All of this provides 'markers' that affect their values because life is not just one long thing. In that sense, they are used to being 'boundaried'. And whether they choose to observe it or not they know that boundary is there and fundamentally affects their lives.

Some people would say that there are no specifically Jewish values - just human values. But I think the Jewish take includes continuity. So the average, intelligent, questioning aware human being who wants to question themselves and their actions and the actions of other people - if that person is Jewish - also has another layer of religious understanding of themselves as part of a continuum which recognises those who went before and those who will come after. This is absolutely lodged in the Jewish unconscious. At 16 or 17 young people are becoming aware of this and their role in the Jewish community as part of the Jewish chain. So we get a lot of young people, and adults, who want to be volunteer workers because, in their words, they want to put something back into the community. And even though they may not identify it in a conscious way, it is still a recognition of the Jewish life cycle and the significance of continuity."

Within Judaism the pursuit of virtue rests on the imitation of God since God is good and therefore to be good is to be like Him.

“Since human beings are created in the image of God, it is obvious that one achieves the highest possible level of perfection or self-realisation by becoming as similar to God as humanly possible. This is the basis of what may be the single most important ethical doctrine of the Hebrew Bible, that of *imitatio Dei*, the imitation of God...One achieves holiness [that is] by obeying God's commandments or...by walking in his ways.” (Kellner 1993:84)

For Christians it is a case of obeying God's commandments whilst 'walking in the ways' of Jesus Christ - of showing forgiveness, loving kindness, mercy, compassion, charity, justice, faith, and most important, humility. However, the Golden Rule - 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you' - is not simply a command to follow some specific rule, but rather a requirement to think and deliberate about what each situation demands (Preston 1993).

So whilst religions have established rules or principles of ethical behaviour - for example the Judeo-Christian Ten Commandments, the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path, the Five Pillars of Islam - it is also clear that the development of virtue is considered to rest not only on devotion to some greater wisdom, but also on the exercise of human reason.

“While revealing his will to humankind in the Quran, God also urges them to exercise reason in understanding revelation...Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam's beginnings are [thus] rooted in the idea of the divine command as a basis for establishing moral order through human endeavour.” (Nanji 1993:107)

Indeed, whilst the Noble Eightfold Path contains within it a wide range of sanctions and prohibitions covering all aspects of human life and conduct (Saddhatissa 1987; Khema 1987), it is in essence a threefold scheme of moral training, which consists of:

- The development of wisdom - right understanding, right thought;
- The practice of virtues - right speech, right conduct, right livelihood; and
- The practice of meditation - right effort, right mindfulness, right contemplation

Thus, in Buddhist ethics there is a close integration of the ethical as a rational engagement of analysis and argument, as a normative recommendation of conduct and a way of life, as a social expression and as an intense personal quest and mode of character development (De Silva 1993:59).

Natural moral order

“There are two kinds of morality. We have laws in society, which set a kind of morality and we have conscience. I believe that conscience is innate. That is, you come into the world knowing all and you lose it through the processes we go through. But that inner morality is

not a set of rules to follow. It is a recognition of the sacredness of life and our relationship to everything as complementary.”

Confucius, believing in a natural moral order, subscribed to the ancient Chinese conception of Tao - The Way - the sum total of truths about the universe and humanity in the form of the individual and society. For Confucius virtue (te) was scripted in Heaven to be cultivated by human beings. Confucian virtues include benevolence, wisdom, courage (when guided by morality), trustworthiness and righteousness although Confucius believed that ‘the only worthwhile thing a man can do is to become as good a man as possible’ for its own sake (trans. 1979:12).

Similarly, Mencius postulated that all people are born with four incipient tendencies in 'germ' or seed form - compassion which is the germ of benevolence; a sense of shame the germ of dutifulness; courtesy and modesty the germ of observance of the rites, and right and wrong the germ of wisdom (Mencius trans. 1970:82). For Mencius, these four 'germs' constitute the 'original heart', which must be cared for, nurtured and cultivated in order to grow to full maturity. The purpose of the heart is to think and it is this, according to Mencius, which distinguishes human beings from animals. Therefore through our own effort human beings can perfect our own moral characters.

Also, like his teacher Plato, who believed in an unchanging unwritten 'law' to which all human behaviour is subject, Aristotle was also committed to natural justice ‘which has the same authority everywhere, and is independent of opinion’ (Aristotle trans. 1987:167). He also believed that virtue lies in the degree to which 'reason' is or is not the ruling faculty in a person's being:

“It is perfectly clear that it is the rational part of man which is the man himself, and that it is the virtuous man who feels the most affection for this part.” (Aristotle trans. 1987:309)

However, while producing an extensive catalogue of virtues (including courage, temperance, wisdom and justice), Aristotle considered justice to be the supreme virtue.

“Justice...is not a part of virtue but the whole of virtue; its opposite, injustice not a part of vice but the whole of vice.” (Aristotle trans. 1987:146)

Therefore the virtue of justice was considered to underpin all other virtues as well as provide the basis for deliberation and 'right reason'. And while Gilligan's (1982) theory of an ethic of care maintained that men (more so than women) conceive of morality as being based on justice

whereas women (more so than men) conceive of morality as being based on caring for others, the plain fact is that every moral decision contains not only principle but also a context which, by its very nature, includes specific circumstances and relationships. Therefore taken together an ethic of justice and an ethic of care create a conception of morality within which:

“The moral person is seen as one whose moral choices reflect reasoned and deliberate judgements that ensure justice be accorded each person while maintaining a passionate concern for the well-being and care of each individual.” (Brabeck 1993:48)

So whilst some conceptualise virtue from a specifically religious base and others subscribe to an innate or natural moral order in the universe, both perspectives affirm the need for human beings to think and deliberate about what each situation demands and to exercise human reason. In other words, that the development of virtue requires the exercise of:

- Practical reason and rational judgement; by
- Autonomous human beings - that is people capable of acting in accordance with reason and from their own free will, voluntarily as opposed to acting 'under compulsion or from ignorance' (Aristotle trans. 1987:66).

Practical reason

“As a child you often accept your parents’ view of the world. And that view is really the conclusion that they have come to about life. Then as you get older you start to test out, with other people, the views you’ve acquired from home to see whether they are right or real.... So if they [young people] are saying to me that they want to be a positive person who contributes to society then what they have to understand is how their actual behaviour in different situations fits in with this helpful, kind, sharing person that they say they want to be. The issue becomes one of consistency. Trying to develop a consistent sense of self in terms of their core attitudes, values and beliefs. Then when they make decisions about what is right or wrong, and these may be tough decisions, they are able to make them because they have a consistent set of values that enable them not only to make the decision but also to implement it. So their values provide a guide in terms of the things they would do as well as the things they couldn’t possibly see themselves doing.”

The primary advocate of ‘pure reason’, Immanuel Kant postulated that a good will is the only unconditioned good, and the purpose of reason is to produce a will that is good in itself as opposed to a will that is good as a means to something else.

Kant's categorical imperative was that people should ‘act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law’ (i.e. *will* that everyone should behave in the same way). In other words, if I believe that it is OK for me to steal then (as a universal law) I must also be prepared to accept (or will) that it is OK for you to steal... and OK

for you to steal from me. Kant's categorical imperative is therefore not a prescription for behaviour but a principle to be used in making rational moral judgements.

Also, since a rational person is one who acts in accordance with principles then, according to Kant, one reasons one's way to morality through the exercise of practical reason, or in other words through one's will (Kant 1948).

Benn and Peters (1959) suggest that Kant's categorical imperative is actually underpinned by three principles:

- Impartiality - that is, impartial consideration of people as sources of needs, claims and interests.
- Respect for people as rational human beings - as illustrated in Kant's subordinate maxim 'treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end' (Kant 1948).
- Autonomy - 'act as if you were through your maxims a law-making member of a kingdom of ends' (Kant 1948) which, according to Benn and Peters (1959), demonstrates Kant's commitment to individual autonomy that also takes account of others' like moral status.

Notwithstanding, utilitarian philosophers dispute the idea that morality could be based on pure reason. For them, a thing can only be good if it is good for someone. Actions are therefore perceived as right or wrong according to the extent to which they promote the greatest good for the greatest number - usually construed as the greatest pleasure or happiness (Bentham 1948). In other words, according to their consequences as opposed to their motive. However, in deciding between our own happiness and that of others it is necessary to be impartial and so utilitarianism requires the basic principle of benevolence (Benn and Peters 1959).

Even by the utilitarian code then, one is still required to make some judgement about what would constitute the greatest good however construed. Therefore utilitarianism requires not only benevolence but also some level of practical reason and rational judgement by autonomous human beings regardless of whether the motive is to exercise virtue for its own sake, or to bring about some particular consequence - i.e. the greatest good for the greatest number.

However, the question is:

"...not simply how am I to conduct myself in my life, but how am I to become the kind of person readily disposed so to conduct myself, the kind of person for whom proper conduct emanates characteristically from a fixed disposition." (Kosman 1980:103)

This, therefore, brings us to the question of how people learn to be virtuous.

Learning to be virtuous

According to social psychologists Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1981; 1983) the process of moral development comes in a sequence of overlapping stages both cognitive and emotional during which young people learn to structure the way they think about rules and moral issues.

According to Piaget, the process is represented by a transformation away from a situation where rules are given by an external authority to a situation where rules are consciously deliberated and negotiated by the individual. Kohlberg describes the process as a transformation from obeying rules through fear of punishment to seeking to establish universal principles through one's own experience and critical thought (Pring 1984).

The process is therefore understood as moving beyond simple habituation to a concern not only with the existence of certain rules, but more centrally, with the general principles on which these rules are based.

"In every family there are those pearls of wisdom. The maxims you were constantly being told by your parents. As adults we often think that young people ignore them. But I don't think that's true. I think young people hold on to the same pearls of wisdom that their parents gave them - even if they're just lodged in their minds. And those principles form the key elements that make up their life. What they are searching for is a way to move on from there. Perhaps discarding some of those pearls and establishing new ones or new interpretations that match their lives and the person they want to be as a part of this society. What they want is to please their parents, carers, and the people to whom they are accountable while also feeling valued and valuable. But what makes them valued to a parent isn't necessarily what makes them valued to a peer. So they struggle. A youth worker has to take all of this on board."

"Young people are aware of the confusions and contradictions of life. What they are trying to do is put together a jigsaw puzzle without the picture on the box. They may even have a lot of the pieces but they still feel that they are not doing it properly. They are searching for some answers. For instance, their family may go to church and they themselves may be holding on to some of those beliefs. Yet, at the same time, they may be doing all sorts of things that are against what their family thinks. When you talk to them they might say that they believe in the Bible. They'll tell you: 'OK I never read it and I don't go to church but it doesn't mean I disregard it. Just because I don't use it in the way you want me to use it youth worker, or mother or church leader doesn't mean that I don't regard it.' The issue is not about judging young people or their actions. It's about listening to them and understanding how they are using the knowledge, ethical principles, beliefs and values they have acquired to inform their own lives."

However, in order to utilise 'knowledge, ethical principles, beliefs and values' to inform one's life one must necessarily be capable of making reasoned judgements. This is the basis of autonomy, not only in the sense of freedom of will, or regard for the like moral status of others, but also in terms of:

- An attitude to authority and 'taken for granted' rules that, though respectful of them, becomes increasingly questioning of the principles behind the rules;
- An increasing integration of the values and purposes that permeate one's actions and relationships; and
- A sense of one's own value and identity through different circumstances and pressures (Pring 1984:75).

The argument, following Dewey, is that while people may inherit certain moral principles from their family and community they can nonetheless 'through rational inquiry, devise new solutions to social problems, working consciously together to reform their community and their own moral outlooks' (Schneewind 1993:154).

"Being second or third generation African-Caribbean or African in this country means that the connection, traditions and values that perhaps their parents or grandparents had are now being recreated and coming up in a new format for the young people today. That can be both a good and a bad thing because obviously culture is always evolving therefore it's a moving thing and not a stagnant thing. So when I see young people re-asserting a Black culture and identity in a way that's different from how young people asserted it when I was young I think that's a good thing. But what can be lost in that are the core values from which your culture is derived. And I think sometimes it's the core values that help maintain you as a person when there's chaos and mayhem going on around you. If your values are sure then that supports any kind of choices in life that you seek to make."

"I know the damage that has been done to Black people in thinking that we have to change or assimilate our values because European values and white middle-class values are somewhat better than ours. So concepts of parenting and all the other values that we came with have somehow been dissipated into a place where there are no boundaries for young people. Some people see that as liberating but I truly feel that for you to feel secure in this society you have to be held - not in a cage - but something that is holding you and supporting you. I don't see being ultra liberal as support. I see it as being negligent in fact. Because in order for us to feel whole and operate effectively we need to go through a process of understanding not only our rights but also our responsibilities and our connection to humanity."

Right action and right motive

There are therefore two basic issues of virtue:

- How to find right action in particular circumstances; and
- How to act from right motive (Preston 1993:93).

Finding right action

Central to 'finding right action' is the ability to make reasoned choices and yet, as Barrow observes:

"No doubt for many of us, much of the time, the reasons that lie behind our actions are muddled, insufficiently worked out or only vaguely formulated in our minds. Nonetheless we choose to act in some ways rather than others and our choices are based on reason - for to make a choice is precisely to opt for one thing rather than another for some kind of reason."
(Barrow 1975:21)

Finding right action therefore requires the individual, firstly, to accept that she or he has choices, however limited or constrained they may be; and secondly, be able to *make* choices based on reasoned and rational judgement. This is a continuous lifelong process since virtue is not:

"an eternal quality of an unchanging good human being, but a disposition of character that is able to select and practice the good within the recognition that authenticity of action is related to multiple dimensions of selfhood and self-transcending behaviour." (Streng 1993:98)

Finding right action is also a process nurtured in social contexts (Williamson 1997) and therefore, in order to discover and develop authentic virtuous expression two conditions are needed:

1. A process of dialogue between sincere people who represent different ideologies - with each participant in the dialogue attempting 'to evoke the best, the deepest, the most enlightening aspects of the dialogue partner's orientation...instead of looking for ways to discredit it'; and
2. The learning and cultivation of virtuous expression by practice as well as by testing and exploring in dialogue (Streng 1993:99-100).

Indeed, it was Aristotle who commented that 'it is not enough to know the nature of virtue; we must endeavour to possess it, and to exercise it, and to use whatever other means are necessary for becoming good' (Aristotle 1987:351).

In this sense, 'dialogue' is envisaged not so much as a Socratic question and answer interrogation designed to uncover 'universal truths' but more as a 'conversation' in which young people are supported to know what *they* think, by being able to 'see' what they say (Weick 1995). In other words, it is a conversation that involves mutual respect and freedom of rationality.

However, as Midgley observes:

“Discussing - serious, open-minded discussing rather than just disputing - is not easy. It is something that people need to learn to do while they are still young and flexible... that discussion is inevitably philosophical. Philosophy, in fact, is not a luxury. At least in confusing times like ours, philosophy is an unavoidable necessity.” (1997:38)

Acting from right motive

However, acting from right motive is not merely a question of dialogue and reflection. Acting from right motive requires attention to feelings as well as thought, for as David Hume argued morality ‘must be rooted in our feelings since morality moves us to action, and reason alone can never do so’ (cited in Schneewind 1993:150). Indeed, as one worker remarked:

“Maliciousness, downright cruelty, racism - and OK this sounds all pat - racism, sexism and so on, but I am quite serious. If someone makes a racist remark when we are in the minibus then there’s no real discussion. That’s out of line. It’s unacceptable. You will not do that. You will not shout racist remarks out of the minibus. And then, after you’ve done that bit, then it’s time for talking. There are times when values are very straight-forward.”

Core Purpose

This comparative analysis of the interview data and existing literature now makes it possible to postulate a theory of youth work in terms of its ‘core’ purpose as follows.

The core purpose of youth work is to engage with young people in the process of moral philosophising, through which they make sense of themselves and the world. As such, youth work is a process of reflection and self-examination through which young people increasingly integrate their values, actions and identity; and take charge of themselves as empowered human beings. Youth work therefore enables and supports young people to:

- Explore their values;
- Deliberate on the principles of their own moral judgements; and
- Make reasoned choices and informed decisions that can be sustained through committed action.

Through this process of moral philosophy young people learn and develop:

- The skills of critical thinking and rational judgement;
- The ability to engage in ‘moral inquiry’ - about what is ‘good’ and conducive to the ‘good life’ generally - the ability which Aristotle (trans. 1987) called the development of practical wisdom; and
- A disposition towards virtue (adherence to moral and ethical standards) - as a central feature of their identity and their responsibility as social beings in a social world.

This philosophical inquiry occurs through 'conversation' and the cultivation of virtuous expression through practise. As a part of this:

"It is important to destroy the wide-spread prejudice that philosophy is a strange and difficult thing just because it is the specific intellectual activity of a particular category of specialist or of professional and systematic philosophers. It must be first shown that all men (sic) are philosophers." (Gramsci 1971:9)

Principles

The four underpinning principles of education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity have been re-affirmed by those interviewed during this investigation (see Chapter 4).

These principles have also been confirmed by the National Youth Agency (2000) in terms of:

- Education:- broadening horizons, developing new skills, learning from experience.
- Participation:- enabling young people to have a 'voice'.
- Empowerment:- young people taking charge of their self-development and control of their lives.
- Equality of opportunity:- providing equal access to provision/opportunities; development of young people's values and ethical standards.

They also appear as a part of the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work in the UK (Paulo, January 2002).

Summary

Building on the analysis from the previous chapter, this chapter commenced with an understanding that youth work is essentially concerned with supporting young people's growth and development 'as people'. That is, their development as human beings. However, given that youth work addresses itself to people at a particular period in their lives, then understanding the concept of 'youth' becomes essential to understanding the purpose of youth work. In other words, youth work is about *young* (age range of target group) *people* (focus of development).

'Adolescence' and 'Youth'

The concepts of 'youth' and 'adolescence' are discussed noting that whilst young people have different experiences of 'being young' because of their different social backgrounds, personal circumstances and structural factors in society; it is nonetheless the case that 'being young' gives rise to a shared experience of imbalance of power between young people and adults. This ageism

(Franklin and Franklin 1990) is the oppression of young people *because they are young*. As such, it shares a number of common features with other forms of oppression in the sense that ageism is:

- Systematic and structured
- Based on stereotypes, prejudices and misconceptions
- Operates at personal, cultural, and structural levels (Thompson 1997)
- Leads to adverse representation of and discrimination against young people
- Acts to exclude young people from aspects of social, political and economic life
- Is underpinned by an ideology based on the inherent 'inferiority' of young people because of their age.

The contention here is that the term 'youth' acts as a political signifier offering recognition to young people's experience and struggle in the face of the personal, cultural and structural ageism they encounter. Understanding the experience of 'youth' therefore lies at the heart of effective youth work. Naming 'youth' provides a focus for young people's experience *as young people* thereby enabling them to confront the contradictions and stereotypes of ageism; and create the possibility for collective action.

Development 'as a person'

In the process of their growth and development 'as people', young people must necessarily develop:

- Their sense of 'identity' (as members of particular social groups, and given the fundamental link between identity and moral orientation); and
- A set of ethical standards, which guide and inform their choices and actions in the world.

Indeed, some 'self theorists' have cast 'virtue' (adherence to moral and ethical standards) at the top of the hierarchy of dimensions, which they refer to as *global self-esteem* (Coleman and Hendry 1990).

However, morality cannot be understood as a set of universally valid rules since moral action requires choices to be made. For whether 'greater wisdom' is thought to come from one's God, or some natural moral order in the universe, virtue is nonetheless achieved through human endeavour. That is to say, virtue is not a set of rules to be followed unthinkingly. Virtue requires the exercise of practical reason. Human beings must deliberate about what they think they *ought* to do; and make judgements about what they will actually do. The development of virtue

therefore involves a process of reflection through which individuals perfect their own moral character (Williamson 1997).

Youth work is not, therefore, concerned with the inculcation of a prescribed set of values, but rather, with the development of young people's:

- Critical skills of deliberation and rational judgement; and
- Disposition towards a 'coherent system of precepts', which underpin the exercise of such judgements.

This process of moral deliberation or inquiry is not, however, a solitary activity but one that takes place through social contexts (Williamson 1997). That is, contexts that involve both 'conversation' (deliberation), and the cultivation of virtuous expression through practise. There are, therefore, two basic issues of virtue: (i) how to find right action in particular circumstances; and (ii) how to act from right motive (Preston 1993). These rely on:

- The ability to make reasoned choices;
- A process of dialogue between sincere people who represent different ideologies; and
- The learning and cultivation of virtuous expression by practice as well as by testing and exploring in dialogue (Streng 1993).

The core purpose of youth work is, therefore, postulated as the process of engaging with young people in moral philosophy through which they make sense of themselves and the world, increasingly integrate their values, actions and identity, and take charge of themselves as empowered human beings. Youth work therefore enables and supports young people to:

- Explore their values;
- Deliberate on the principles of their own moral judgements; and
- Make reasoned choices and informed decisions that can be sustained through committed action.

In the process, young people learn and develop the skills of critical thinking and rational judgement; the ability to engage in 'moral inquiry'; and a disposition towards virtue as a central feature of their identity and responsibility as social beings in a social world.

The principles underpinning youth work have been re-affirmed as education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity.

6. PRACTICE

Introduction

Youth work, as postulated in the previous chapter, engages young people in the process of moral philosophising as a function of their identity development and responsibility as social beings in a social world.

This does not mean having a fixed set of values or code of behaviour into which young people are to be initiated or inculcated. Philosophical pursuit necessarily involves reflection and questioning. Neither does it suggest that such an endeavour can be achieved primarily through engagement in structured exercises about imagined situations since the development of identity, the construction of the person, takes place not only through one's own agency but also through interaction with others. Indeed, as Shotter remarks 'reality is constituted for us by the ways in which we render our activities accountable to one another in our daily social lives' (Shotter quoted in Coleman and Hendry 1990:68).

"As what people say and do is always open to criticism and judgement by others, an essential part of being free individuals in a modern society, is them being able to justify their actions to others when required to do so - they require a capacity to be able to articulate 'good reasons' for their conduct. For, in executing their own actions, in acting as free agents (and in qualifying for their status as such), people cannot just act as they please, when they please. They must also act with a certain kind of socially shared awareness." (Shotter 1993:162)

The development of identity is, therefore, not an insular activity. As such, and in order to engage with young people, youth workers must make **relationships** with young people which enable them to develop the critical skills and moral dispositions needed to engage in the youth work **process**. That is, a process which helps young people to make sense of themselves and their experiences and, in so doing, give meaning to their lives.

Chapter 4 of this study identified the relationship between youth workers and young people as being characterised by:

- Acceptance and valuing of young people (non-judgemental and a belief in their ability to learn, grow and contribute to society); and
- Honesty, trust, mutual respect and reciprocity.

Chapter 5 illuminated the youth work process as involving 'conversations' through which young people are encouraged and supported to reflect on and learn from their experience.

This chapter seeks to develop a theory of youth work practice by undertaking a comparative analysis of the interview data and literature from the youth work field and elsewhere. The aim of this exercise is to enable the formulation of a clear statement about what youth workers *do* - in terms of the context, processes and values that inform and underpin effective practice.

Relationships

"Moral education is a matter of becoming a certain kind of person - of coming to care in certain kinds of ways and this is not directly achievable by means of syllabi and classroom techniques of the familiar kind. As much as anything, the development of virtue is a function of the relationships within which people move, and which provide a context for whatever moral reflection they engage in." (Kleinig 1982:253)

"The relationship is everything because personal growth, development, learning about values are human tasks that can only be done within a relationship. Actually, the relationship is not only a base for sharing values but also the environment within which young people construct their sense of self - a model of themselves if you like, that they re-form and re-shape as they further explore and develop. Specifically in the Christian context the whole idea of an incarnate God is a central theme, which speaks of *being with* and *sharing with* as a means by which people test the validity and accuracy of their values.

So youth work provides opportunities in safe environments for young people to challenge and be challenged in order to learn about themselves, their relationship to their immediate community, their relationship to the world and their relationship to their God.

Youth workers must therefore be able to initiate and develop relationships of trust and mutual respect with young people, which motivate them to understand and develop their values. At the same time, young people need to feel safe enough to be open to sharing what they think and feel in order to enter into that sort of relationship. Of course, this all takes time. Values are deeply personal so the worker needs to keep focused on the young person and not be side-tracked by the benefits that they may see for some other party be it the church or society in general."

Relationships are, and always have been, at the heart of youth work. As such it represents one of the most consistent themes in workers' accounts and other descriptions of the work. Relationships are important because it is within the context of 'being with' and 'sharing with' others that people are supported to create and re-create themselves, take charge of their

relationships (with self and others), actively engage in their community and contribute to the world. This requires trust, mutual respect, safety and time.

“The relationship between the youth worker and young person is like the foundation of a house. If it’s not firmly established then the walls and ceiling will collapse. There is a responsibility on the youth worker to demonstrate to young people that positive relationships with adults are possible. They also need to use opportunities to be positive role models for young people and put a human face on the values that youth work is based on.”

“We talk about all sorts of methods for empowering young people and even how to consult with them. But actually, it’s the relationship that youth workers make with young people that forms the basis for young people’s development and empowerment. It’s the relationship that drives the process forward. That one-to-one relationship outweighs everything else. It’s the foundation on which everything else is built.”

“If you ask young people what they value about the youth service they say the relationships with the staff. They always say that. They will give examples of being able to talk to workers about their family, school, relationships with other people and they may say: ‘If I want to, they’ll take me camping.’ I don’t think that really happens in their contact with other agencies. Not in any consistent way.”

However, whilst the relationship between the youth worker and young person has been a constant theme throughout the development of youth work, it is also the most elusive of all aspects:

“The worker cannot quantify this relationship to those ‘outside’ and yet, because of this, the worker is left to attempt to assess youth work in terms of the demands of those ‘outside’. The failure of youth work has been its own reluctance to argue for a validity of a view from the ‘inside’. Indeed, most accounts of practice focus upon the activity, assessing the work with young people in terms of ‘doing’ rather than ‘being’.” (Richardson 1997:91)

From activities to relationships

The reality, of course, is that most young people get involved in youth work because they are attracted by the activities or opportunities being offered. They do not necessarily, in the initial instance, come for the relationship about which they possibly have no inkling. They come for the activities and the facilities and the chance to do something. It does not even have to be that exciting or different. Sometimes they simply need a warm and welcoming place to be with friends.

“A number of years ago there was a questionnaire of young people in the rural villages. What the report said was that young people had nothing to do - which is absolutely true. There is a real problem with access to facilities. So when you ask young people around here what they want to do they say, ‘Go to the Dome in Doncaster’, which is a place where they can take part in almost any activity you can think of. They don’t say they want ‘social education’ or a ‘good listening ear from a youth worker’. After they’ve started to get involved in youth work

they begin to recognise that there is something to be gained from engaging in a relationship with the youth worker which actually offers them more than they thought, because they thought they were just going to get to go canoeing or climbing or whatever. Here is something else that they didn't know about and were therefore unable to anticipate. So two things happen. Firstly, they recognise the relationship, and secondly, they come to value it."

"It was a summer's day and these two old gentlemen started walking towards us. At first, we thought it was someone's father but when he (the worker) came up he had these bright yellow A5 leaflets and he introduced himself and started telling us about some new project that was starting up and invited us to the youth project to have a chat. We were a bit apprehensive because you only really trust your own age group. Anybody older is basically outside it. So we started cracking a few jokes to break the ice and he started telling us what they were planning to do. And it seemed like it was basically giving us some power to do things for ourselves like residential and activities and so on. So we went along. But in all honesty it was basically for what we could get out of it for ourselves. That's what it came down to. But from there on it developed into a relationship - with trust."

"When it first started off we just thought well if they want to do this for us that's fair enough. We weren't doing anything apart from playing football in the park and going down the arcade. So we thought great. Free residential, activities, things we'd never had the opportunity to do before. But then most of us became aware that there was more to it than met the eye. It was about social development, acquiring new skills for yourself rather than just gallivanting off to whatever residential and doing activities. It gave us the abilities and skills to organise activities for ourselves. Which meant that we would later be able to say we did this or organised that. You had a certain idea about how to do things. Basically it made us look inside ourselves and say, 'What am I doing here?' 'Where do I want to progress to in my life?' We also started looking at the neighbourhood and crime and thinking about what could be done about it. It was more or less a stepping stone for us to begin helping the community and in that way it encouraged more young people to join in the youth project."

Initially, young people may be attracted by the opportunity to take part in activities. They may decide to go along with things to see what they can get out of it for themselves - grasping the chance for a free week-end away or involvement in activities like 'canoeing or camping or whatever'. It is only after this initial phase that they come to realise that there is more to youth work than they first thought. They acquire and develop new skills and abilities. They look inside themselves and ask, 'What am I doing here?' and 'Where do I want to progress to in my life?' They look at their neighbourhood and discover ways of helping the community.

Central to this experience is the relationship of trust that young people come to recognise and value. Trust is crucial. Interviewees also identified a number of other features. First of all, the relationship is voluntary and focused on young people.

"The voluntary relationship is crucial. Young people don't choose their parents, or choose to go to school. They choose to be here."

"The relationship needs to be based on young people's agenda and not on the worker's agenda. So when they have an issue they go and talk to the youth worker and it's their issue. The youth worker is not trying to get them through the national curriculum."

Indeed, Jeffs and Smith (1998) argue that one of the distinguishing characteristics of youth work is a voluntary relationship between the 'client or participant' and the worker "with the former invariably retaining the right to both initiate any association with the worker and more importantly to terminate it" (1998:48).

The relationship between youth worker and young person is also underpinned by a collection of essential principles identified by the workers and young people interviewed as:

- Accepting and valuing young people.
- Honesty.
- Trust.
- Respect.
- Reciprocity.

Obviously, these are overlapping qualities. Acceptance, honesty, trust, respect and reciprocity are not separate entities. They combine together to create the broad foundation of the relationship within which the youth worker and young person explore and negotiate their own parameters. However, in taking a 'view from the inside' it is possible to identify and illustrate how youth work practice gives meaning to such concepts.

Accepting and valuing young people

"If you are working with people you have to understand that a person is about emotions, feelings, values, things that happened to them years before you got there and the experiences they've had. Youth work is about protecting that, honouring it, valuing that person for who they are and recognising that we have inequalities in society that affect people's lives. Youth work is about acknowledging those differences and not pretending that we are all equal or just making sure that particular individuals can do certain things."

"You need to be honest about where they are at and where you're coming from. It's about not being judgmental. That probably sounds like a cliché but particularly as an Asian woman worker I'm really conscious that if I'm working with young Asian women it's crucial that they very quickly realise that I'm not the sort of person who's going to judge them. Many of the things that happen in their lives are to do with the communities from which they come and to which I also belong, so it's very important that they actually see that I'd be non-judgmental and also maintain confidentiality about whatever it is they share with me. The important thing is for them to know that I will not judge them despite being a Hindu woman with the values and cultural norms that I come with."

"I think youth work is about valuing people. The workers have really valued me, and what I believe in and who I am even though they don't always understand what I'm trying to do. They realise how important it is to me and so they're prepared to give me time and support."

Acceptance means accepting young people with all the emotions, feelings, values and history they come with. It means not judging young people whatever our cultural norms and values; and it means recognising how inequalities affect people's lives and seeking to challenge those inequalities as opposed to simply securing opportunities for particular individuals. Acceptance means valuing young people - giving them time and support. Acceptance involves honesty.

Honesty

"I think youth workers should be completely honest and open with young people about who you are and what you are capable of. What you can or cannot do with them. There are times when young people think that you can do a lot more than you can. At those moments there's often a temptation to go along with it because you think if we can get them in we can get the numbers up and so on. But actually that's not what it's about."

"The principles of trust and honesty are central to youth work. I need to trust young people as much as they need to trust me. But it's always me that has to be the first one to take that risk of putting trust in them. They have to feel that I trust them. I also have to be honest and not have hidden agendas with them. If I'm about to do something about which they should be consulted then I should consult them in an open and honest way. That's just showing respect, which is another important principle. Respecting them, their opinions, their talents and treating them as valued human beings."

The relationship between the youth worker and young person requires the worker to be honest and open about who they are, what they are capable of and what they have to offer. There is no hidden agenda in the youth work relationship. Workers consult with young people and 'put trust in them' - often being the first one to take that risk. Youth workers respect young people and their opinions, and treat them as valued human beings.

Respect

"A youth worker does not have an automatic right to engage with a young person. I cannot assume that just because I am an adult that the young person wants to communicate with me. Therefore, the establishment of a relationship that is based on respect and trust is absolutely crucial. Besides, young people can always see through charades, through people who are patronising, people who are tokenistic, people who hide behind their authority."

"It's about recognising that the situation a young person may be in is their situation. So we don't take a situation that the young person is in away from them, muck about with it and give it back to them and say, 'What do you think?' We keep them involved the whole time."

"People need to feel connected to each other. Young people will only hear you if they have a level of respect for you and obviously if you are open and genuine but also if they can see

that you do actually care about them. And if you don't actually care about them, young people pick that up very quickly. In fact some youth workers may even talk about a level of love for the young people that they work with - which means having positive regard for them. Viewing them as positive beings and being able to offer them support on their terms."

Respect in the relationship means recognising that youth workers do not have an automatic right to intervene in young people's lives or even to engage with them. Relationships are negotiated with trust and respect, and within an understanding that young people's lives, situations and issues belong to them. Respect means having a positive regard for young people, genuinely caring about them and being prepared to support them on *their* terms.

Trust

"To me, young people are no different from adults in the sense that they only share their hopes and fears with people they trust. Like adults, they are more likely to listen to and consider the views of somebody who they feel has their best interest at heart even if they are saying difficult things. That's very different from feeling that people are either trying to manipulate you or that they just don't care. So if workers are going to challenge young people about their behaviour or question the choices they make then that's only going to be accepted by young people if they feel there is some trust and respect in that relationship."

"I'm quite honest with young people in terms of what I'm thinking about what they are saying and what they are doing. But if they listen to me it's because of the respect and trust that's built up between them and me not because I'm an adult in authority and therefore I'm right."

"I am a volunteer leader now but I used to be a member at the centre and what I can remember I saw was trust and leaders who had patience and time who were bothered to want to help. With that kind of person you made a bond - someone that understands you and shows patience and time and trust and someone that just cares really. I think that's one of the most important things in youth work. You've got to really care about what you are doing because if you don't then there's no real point in doing what you're doing."

Young people, like all other people, share their hopes and fears with people they trust. They are also prepared to consider the opinion of people they trust even if those opinions are difficult to take on board. But what makes a person trustworthy? The main message from those interviewed appears to be: 'You can trust people who care', people who take the time and show the patience and who are bothered enough to want to help.

The bottom line in the relationship between youth workers and young people is trust, respect and honesty, and the belief that young people have the ability to change and grow and become whoever they want to be.

"Youth workers are trustworthy in the sense that you can tell them stuff and also if I needed someone they'd be there for me... [the worker] is completely on my level - which is funny because before I got involved in youth work I didn't really think much of youth workers. I

just thought they were prats. And then after a while I thought, 'God they earn so much respect and you really don't appreciate them'."

Reciprocity

Those interviewed also had a strong sense of the relationship as being two-way. That is, that youth workers support young people knowing that young people also have skills, valid perspectives and expertise of their own. Young people also have something to offer, not only in practical ways:

"If I go ice skating with young people they need to help me because I can't skate to save my life. But that's good because as youth workers we don't claim to be experts at everything. In fact, sometimes we need the young people's expertise which is good for them as much as for us."

But also in terms of 'being there', their sensitivity and concern:

"I try to be sensitive to young people's needs. I don't build their hopes and then disappear. The young people I'm working with know I'll be there when I'm needed so there's a much deeper kind of relationship between us. They have my home telephone number. I don't give it to all the young people. I choose who I give it to and it's those who I know won't abuse it. They'll use it when they need it and that's fine. Some also have my address at home and a few have visited me at home. Not necessarily because of any particular reason but just because they wanted to. They just felt like it. So they'll ring up and then come over. When they come to my house I make them welcome because I don't live in the area where I work and I acknowledge the effort they've made in travelling to see me - just because they wanted to see how I was. That's a reward that I find fascinating because it motivates me. You know we all work for money. If we didn't get money OK we might do a few hours of voluntary work but not full-time like this. You've got the mortgage to pay or whatever. But the financial side doesn't cheer me up. I think generally it doesn't cheer people up. It's the people you're working with. They are the ones who motivate you. So one of the things that I've always thought important in youth work is that you're not doing it for the money. You're doing it because you feel for young people. You have to feel their experience and what they're going through to actually do youth work. And you have to acknowledge it. Whether it's a positive or negative experience you have to feel for them and their needs in that situation. That's how they motivate you and you motivate them. It's done in partnership. Youth work is not a one-way process. It's not like I'm the youth worker and I'm expert at these issues and this is how it is. No. Young people have something to offer as well."

"Youth workers are like family. You know, someone who'll always be there. That's how I take them. You can let your guard down with them because they let theirs down with you. It's a two-way system. You give. They give. You respect them. They respect you."

The youth worker as mentor

In their study of young people and mentoring, Philip and Hendry (1996) highlighted the qualities of 'helping relationships' as including honesty, respect, acceptance, (adult) interest in young people, trust (particularly in relation to confidentiality), empathy and elements of reciprocity,

adults who are open to negotiation, and adults who are less authoritarian. These are actually the same qualities identified here in relation to youth workers relationships with young people.

However, Philip and Hendry's study did not work from the more traditional definition of mentoring - that is, a one-to-one relationship with someone more experienced and usually older within which the young person is supported and challenged thereby enhancing the 'transition from adolescence to adulthood' (Philip and Hendry 1996:189). Instead, they worked from the position of asking young people to identify instances in which they had *felt* supported and challenged by individuals and/or groups (1996:190). The result was the identification of five 'forms of mentoring' - one-to-one; individual to group (e.g. as in the youth work setting); friend to friend; peer group; and long term one-to-one.

Whilst understanding about the nature of mentoring is changing (Russell and Adams 1997; Eby 1997), there is still a question to be asked about what, if anything, distinguishes mentoring from other forms of 'helping relationships' and in particular, the relationship between youth worker and young person.

Three features appear particularly significant here. Firstly, the importance of 'long-term relationships where trust was assured and negotiation was possible' as stressed by the young people involved in the Philip and Hendry study (1996:199). Mentoring cannot, therefore, be conceived as a kind of 'one off' occasion. Mentoring takes place within the context of a relationship, which is very often informal in nature (Philip and Hendry 1996). Indeed, Noe (1988) notes that the majority of mentoring relationships (in organisations) are informal:

"That is, the relationship develops because of shared interest, admiration, or job demands that require the skills of two or more persons. In informal mentoring relationships discussions between the mentor and protégé usually go beyond career-related issues to more in-depth personal sharing of interests, needs and values." (Noe 1988:458)

This issue of formality/informality therefore represents the second significant feature of 'mentoring' relationships. In formal organisational 'mentoring' relationships a mentor (usually a senior more experienced employee) is assigned to support a younger employee through acting as a role model, providing support, direction and feedback' (Noe 1988). Similarly, recent 'mentoring' schemes in work with young people have been based on the assignment of mentors - be they independent volunteers specifically recruited and trained (Burke and Loewenstein 1998), or within careers service work, adults in employment or careers service advisers (ECOTEC

1997). 'Mentoring' is then the expressed purpose of the relationship as opposed to 'mentoring' taking place within the context of an on-going relationship.

This leads to the third significant feature - the question of purpose. In the business world, the purpose of mentoring schemes is to support the interpersonal development and career opportunities of the younger employee. In relation to work with young people, the 'mentoring' approach is being developed largely in the area of work with young people 'at risk', where the work is seen very much in terms of influencing the behaviour of young people - for example in relation to offending, drug use or truancy (NYA 1997b). Similar objectives exist in careers service work with 'disaffected' young people which focuses on job support and career search initiatives, re-entry to education and training, jobs and qualification (ECOTEC 1997).

Such an approach sits in direct contradiction to the experiences of the young people reported in the Philip and Hendry study (1996) for whom 'helping relationships' created space, time and support for *their* interests, needs and issues and finding solutions to *their* questions. That is, of course, very different from an imposed agenda arising, not out of young people's concerns, but out of the concerns of others. So while:

"Mentoring provides protégés with the opportunity to develop skills, gain access to developmental opportunities, build the confidence necessary to tackle challenging tasks, and obtain guidance and counselling" (Kram and Isabella, 1985 cited in Eby 1997:126)

Mentoring works best when:

"the need is the *acquisition of wisdom*. By wisdom we mean here the ability to relate what has been learned to a wide spectrum of situations, and to achieve *insight and understanding* into the issues discussed." (Clutterbuck and Sweeney 1997:3)

Clearly, a formal and focused approach to mentoring has the distinct advantage of ensuring equality of access to opportunities for support, guidance and career advancement for particular groups of people, e.g. women, Black people. However, it has also been acknowledged that:

"Assigned mentoring relationships may not be as beneficial as mentoring relationships that develop informally, due to personality conflicts between parties.....and the lack of true personal commitment of either the mentor or the protégé to the relationship because it was not formed on their initiative." (Noe 1988:458)

The conclusion to be reached is that mentoring is most effective when:

- It takes place within the context of an on-going relationship;
- It is informally initiated by the parties involved;
- It pursues the acquisition of wisdom; and
- All parties make a personal commitment to the process.

Youth workers can therefore be seen as invariably involved in the *activity* of mentoring, in the sense that they engage in informally initiated relationships with young people within which young people are supported and challenged to gain greater insight and understanding of themselves, their relationships and their world; and to which there is a deliberate commitment. This may take the form of the kind of one-to-one relationships, individual to group relationships or long term one-to-one relationships which Philip and Hendry identify. (1996)

However, youth workers are not formal 'mentors' in the sense that:

- They are not assigned. The relationship with the young person is voluntary and informal and therefore the nature and extent of 'guidance and challenge' is (informally) negotiated with young people.
- Youth workers' work with young people focuses not on the priorities and concerns of others, but on the interests, needs and concerns of young people themselves.

"He ... [the youth worker] has had more experience than us. He's been there. He's seen it. And he's advising us. He's not telling us like our parents do. At first we didn't really take any notice. We just thought yeah, yeah, yeah. But over the years he's said things to us and even if we didn't take any notice at the time they've come back to haunt us. So then you think about it and you go, 'Oh yeah he was right'. And from that you say, 'All right let's see what he's got to say.'"

"I met [the worker] two years ago when I was 15 and trying to set up a self help mental health project for young people who suffer from distress. At that time I think I was sort of having a breakdown but when I met [the worker] I was sort of coming through it. She was very open to new ideas and was very accepting. With her support I've now set up the group and won a Millennium Award so I've got funding for a year and I'm based at the Council House. But at the time I didn't really understand what her role was as a youth and community worker because I'd never even heard of youth and community workers before. So we had to work out what the relationship was and how she could best guide and advise me. That's not been easy because the workers have been very unsure and even frightened at times. But they thought here is a young person who is passionate about what she wants to do let's support her even if at times they didn't understand the issues involved."

"The most important thing about the relationship is that it creates the environment for young people to explore their questions and answers, in a genuine and meaningful way. Conversations with young people begin with, 'How are you?' not 'what's your issue?'"

Yet even these explanations do not adequately describe the relationship between a youth worker and young person. For in addition to the 'helping' qualities outlined above (acceptance, honesty, trust, respect, reciprocity), there is an added, more intangible quality that can, it seems, only be understood by way of comparison. In other words, by comparing the youth work relationship with some other relationship with which young people are familiar. For the young people

interviewed as a part of this investigation, that comparison is made in the form of a 'friend'. A youth worker is seen as being *like* a friend.

What is interesting is that while youth workers themselves tend to see this as problematic and are disinclined to describe the relationship as a kind of 'friendship', young people are often only too clear about the lines of demarcation. For them, youth workers are *like* 'friends' whilst at the same time not *being* 'friends'.

The youth worker as 'friend'

"It's important that you get on with the youth workers because if you don't then there's not much point coming here. The relationship is like a friendship but it won't be such a strong friendship, just a mutual friendship where you respect them and they respect you. You can talk to them about anything really. Sometimes you may want to talk to a youth worker about things you are thinking about. Sometimes I may go to my friends. What makes youth workers different is that they are not controlling you. You come here because you want to, whereas with school you go there because you have to. So because you come here because you want to, it's a lot more friendly and you have a laugh."

"Youth workers are sort of almost my friends. In fact more than that. I can trust them with stuff I wouldn't tell my friends because I would be afraid that my friends might freak out and have a panic reaction. Like for example, when you first tell a friend that you are gay. If they've never met a gay person they might freak. But with youth workers you can tell them anything. They have some idea about how to deal with it. They can be supportive. Even if they don't agree with it, they're not judgmental. Unless it's about drugs and things like that, then they can be quite judgmental. They'll never march up to you and say, 'What you're doing is wrong. Stop it now.' But they have their own ways of telling you that maybe it isn't such a good idea."

"A youth worker is like a friend because they see you grow up and they are always there. They know your family. They're there when you are in trouble. They know all about your life so they're sort of always in the background or in the foreground. It's like having a big sister or big auntie who you can tell things that you wouldn't tell anyone else. I know some people have sisters and aunties like that, but if you don't it's good to have a youth worker around. But youth workers are not your friends because you are not part of their social life. You are part of their work life."

"Because youth work is mainly in the evening you can sometimes think it's social time and that you're friends with the youth workers. But you're not, so it can be frustrating. What you have to realise is that the youth worker's relationship with you is work. When I became a volunteer youth worker myself I understood it much more clearly. Like there are some of the girls in my group who I really like and would be friends with, but because their parents know me as the worker I can't go out with them on a personal level because I would always be responsible. Like if I went to a club or something then the parents would think, 'Why are you taking my daughter to a club? Is that part of your job description?' So you have to keep a clear boundary."

Youth workers are like 'friends' in the sense that there is mutual respect. Young people talk with youth workers about anything. Youth workers are not judgmental. They understand young people's issues and pressures. Young people choose to engage in the relationship. Youth workers are not controlling and young people can 'have a laugh' with them.

Youth workers are not 'friends' because young people are not a part of their social life. Young people sometimes tell workers things they would not tell their friends. Youth workers are more like family, an aunt or sister, who is always there. Youth workers have more experience and knowledge than peers. Youth workers maintain clear boundaries.

From the worker's point of view:

"I am not their friend. I am there as a youth worker but I like to feel that the approach is friendly and that they can approach me and we can have a discussion and talk things through. In the process, I can and will challenge their comments, behaviour or attitudes and hopefully we can talk about that because they know I'm not coming with some kind of authoritarian attitude. The relationship is more informal. More flexible. Sometimes I'll get angry and sometimes they'll be angry with me. But at the end of the session it will be like, 'See you next week', because it's over and finished. Or it may not be. It may continue. But the important thing is that I get across to that young person that I still value them. I still support them and I still care about them as a person. I just don't care about some of their beliefs or attitudes and I make that difference perfectly clear."

Subscribing to the idea of the youth worker as 'friend' is problematic since the word carries connotations of socialising, which detract from the essential professional or work focus intended. As a result, many workers balk at the suggestion while young people seem much more able to draw a distinction between 'a friend' (i.e. peer) and someone who is 'like a friend' (a youth worker).

However, following Aristotle, it becomes possible to understand the concept of a friend as 'someone who likes and is liked by another person', given that liking is defined as:

"Wanting for someone what one thinks good for his [sic] sake and not for one's own, and being inclined, so far as one can, to do such things for him... out of concern for him and not, or not merely, out of concern for oneself." (Cooper 1980:302)

The central question raised by this is the question of how youth workers show such concern for young people. The young people and youth workers interviewed in this investigation identified four ways in which this concern is demonstrated. These were:

- Empathy.
- Listening to young people.

- Taking account of young people's views and ideas.
- Helping young people to 'see' themselves.

Empathy

"One of our best part-time workers came here originally as a Prince's Trust Volunteer. Six years later, he is a qualified youth worker who may well get the other full-time post here. One of the key things about his relationships with the young people is that he comes from the immediate area. He started where lots of the young people are. He didn't fly in from middle class suburbia with all the qualifications and so on. He struggled to become qualified. And because he comes from this neighbourhood then it's easy for the young people to identify with him. He can empathise with their situation. He's been where they are. He can understand what they are going through as white working class kids living in this neighbourhood. They trust him and they want to talk with him about things that matter to them."

"The relationship is essentially empathetic. It is about seeing young people and young people feeling they have been seen. They have been recognised in some way, which is a kind of spiritual thing that's about self and a very fundamental recognition of one human by another in a very focused way. That's not an easy thing to do. And it's more difficult when you are busy. But I think it happens more often than not since the young people here are not simply seen as a mass to be serviced."

Listening to young people

"When I came here there was a leader who loved football and I got on really well with him and even though I wasn't the best behaved kid I felt I could trust him. He was understanding, and just listened and gave me attention. Teachers are doing their job. They don't care about your feelings. They don't listen. They just say, 'Oh you've got homework' or whatever. But here it's more like a community. It's nice."

"The way youth workers connect with young people is crucial. That means giving a clear message that I am listening to you and you alone right now. Showing respect for young people's space - none of this head patting - metaphorically or physically - or come to me I'm a youth worker and you're my job."

Taking account of young people's views and ideas

"The club is for young people with learning disabilities. When I first started there we didn't have members meetings. The workers decided what the young people wanted within the club programme and we decided how it was going to be run. I then started the members meetings and got a lot of hostility from some of the volunteers who said things like, 'Well, they'll never sit still for a start, never mind getting them to talk about what they want or how to build a programme'. So I had to get over that to start with and sometimes it was a case of even saying to some of the volunteers, 'I'd rather, if you're not going to take an active part in this and disrupt it by shuffling, moving, getting up, then I'd rather you just stayed out of the room'. So it took a long slow process to get the young people to actually say what they wanted and engage in a process of negotiation about what was possible. From that experience they started to realise that we were going to listen to them. So we were building up a relationship where they came to trust us more and more. They then started to tell us about what had gone on at school or what some of their personal fears were, how they were feeling, peer pressure, what some of their girlfriend or boyfriend issues were. It was a gradual process

of building that relationship and responding to them with compassion, which made them more willing to discuss things about themselves and their lives.”

“The key thing is the relationship that youth workers have with young people. That relationship is about young people being able to open up and talk to us. They come in because they want to come in. They want to participate. They want to take part. If you look at schooling, social work - it’s young people being told that they have to do it. But in youth work, it’s about what young people want to do. It’s about getting their ideas. Getting their views. And using their ideas and views to take them forward.”

Helping young people to ‘see’ themselves

“Before I met [the worker] I’d never had any contact with anyone else who I could talk to about my problems or experiences and who could actually help me to realise what I thought and make my own decisions. He doesn’t tell us. He asks us and he gives his own viewpoint. Just his viewpoint. Rather than saying this is what you should do, he says this is what you could do. And that’s a completely different way of saying something. Different from other adults. Also, he was on the same wavelength. He understood our language. Teachers were more formal. They used to speak more formally to us. So I felt more comfortable talking to [the worker] because I see him more as a friend whereas if I was talking to a teacher I wouldn’t feel comfortable and there are things I wouldn’t tell the teacher.”

“The relationship between youth worker and young person enables us to look below the superficial and explore opportunities for reflection. That’s not to say that when you look at me, you see yourself, but that there is some kind of openness and willingness to be available on young people’s terms. What you see is me reflecting you back to yourself. What you don’t see is me, my ego, my problems, my issues, my worries, my experience of what you’re going through. You will see yourself. That’s the ideal. So this is more than just a mirror that reflects back and has no personality. It’s about being there for the other person, as a role model that young people aspire to be whether it is because of wanting to be as thoughtful as the worker, as reflective, or sensitive or willing to listen.”

The youth worker as role model

People model themselves on others through a process of observing others’ actions and the consequences of others’ actions, and adjusting their own behaviour. It is something we learn at an early age. Indeed, Bandura (1974) observed that this is the very process, which children use to learn language. Children observe the effects of different sequences of sound and words and imitate them. Some reproductions are verbatim. However, on many other occasions children re-construct their observations to create sentences they have never actually heard. In so doing, they move beyond mere imitation to grasp the ability to produce appropriate responses to new situations.

It is not just language that is learnt in this way. The process of imitation and re-construction accounts for many of the life skills that constitute our daily experience. For the most part such

learning happens on a subconscious level. However, whilst this natural learning process has been developed into a highly structured learning technique (behaviour role modelling - Bandura 1974) the informal nature of youth work means that 'role modelling' is likely to remain somewhat ethereal. Nonetheless, youth workers are often described as role models for young people.

"Our project is about working with young people involved in or on the margins of the drug culture. But actually, the most important thing is not about giving them information or going in heavy about drugs. It's about making meaningful and constructive relationships with young people. That's the key. And in order to do that, you need consistency and continuity. You can't parachute into this kind of work.

Offering a positive role model is crucial. That means being clear and explicit about your own values. Saying what you stand for. Drawing firm lines. And setting high standards for yourself and young people. Young people are not stupid. They know what is right and wrong and they believe in fairness. What they want to know is what you are about.

Trust and credibility are not there for the asking. It's about being real and consistent. We have to do the right thing in the way we behave and interact and lead our lives. People see us everyday walking down the street or out shopping or whatever. We can't afford to be hypocritical because the success of this project rests on our integrity as people as much as our integrity as workers.

We work from a Black perspective, which means five things to us. Firstly, recognising that we live in an inherently racist society and understanding race, racism and oppression as being socially constructed. We also think it is crucial to have an understanding of Black culture and history. Valuing education is important because knowledge is power, but actually, knowing how to use knowledge is more powerful. The Black perspective is also about doing something. Taking action and being positive about what you are going to do. Finally, it's about building on tradition and continuity and recognising the rich and lengthy tradition of youth work in this community which will continue long after the end of this particular project."

The idea of the youth worker as role model is therefore grounded in the necessity for workers to practise what they preach. That is, the need to establish the 'moral authority' (Jeffs and Smith 1996) that underpins their integrity as people and gives credibility to their work as practitioners. It is not, therefore, so much a case of imitation, but rather, establishing the value base or ethical framework within which the relationship and youth work itself operates. In other words, letting young people know 'what you are about' and living true to it.

"An inevitable consequence of the voluntary nature of the relationship between young people and youth workers is that the latter, perhaps more than other educators, rely on their moral authority to secure a constituency. Securing and retaining such authority, often in trying

circumstances, creates an ever present tension within the work, for without resorting to subterfuge they must seek to become the kind of people that young people 'can trust, both intellectually and with regard to their character ... steady, completely reliable and consistent.' (Jeffs and Smith 1999b:71)

However, the importance of the youth worker's 'moral authority' is actually about much more than merely 'securing a constituency' since the very intention of youth work is to engage young people in a process of examining and exploring values and morals. As one worker remarked:

"We say that youth work is about informal and social education but I think it is actually about more than that. It's an education that is grounded in young people's active search to discover what they think and how they feel and where their values match up with their sense of who they are."

Engagement in such self-exploration cannot, therefore, be undertaken simply as a matter of developing the 'cognitive equipment needed for autonomous moral judgement'. For youth work, like moral education, is not 'just or mostly a matter of moral reasoning, but a growth in our concern for what we are in our relationships with each other' (Kleinig 1982:252).

Therefore, the role model offered by youth workers not only establishes their 'moral authority', but also, and importantly:

- Creates the ethical framework for their relationships with young people; and
- Secures the basis for engagement in the process of moral philosophising which youth work necessarily involves.

"Adults can seem like very scary figures sometimes but youth workers are usually down-to-earth characters. You can just sit down and chat with them about anything and everything for hours. It's really a lot of fun. Actually I'm baffled by the relationship. It's not like a social worker and a client relationship. It's more flexible. It's different. It's not like a parent and child. It's not like a teacher. Not like going to the doctors. It's not like anything. It's not like having a friend. It's like youth workers are none of these things but all of them rolled into one. So they need a kind of personality that's open to everything and the ability to talk to anybody and everybody. You need to be able to have a laugh with them. And if you think about [the worker] you can see that she genuinely cares about people."

The contention here is that youth work, as defined at the end of the previous chapter, takes place within the context of a voluntary relationship with young people within which the youth worker engages in the *activity* of mentoring whilst acting as a role model and 'friend' to young people in the sense of wanting for the young person what 'one thinks good for his or her sake and not for one's own'. The characteristic features of this context are empathy, listening to young people, taking account of young people's views and ideas and helping young people to 'see' themselves.

However, youth work is a process. A process that was described by those interviewed as based on 'conversation' and aimed at enabling young people to learn from their experience. Central to youth work then, is a commitment to supporting young people to 'make sense' of their lives through 'conversation' since talk 'interprets what actions mean and thereby performs an evaluative function' (Marshak 1998:21).

Process

Youth work is an educational activity and therefore, following Dewey, it is not an activity for inculcating rigid patterns of socially accepted behaviour. It is not a static yardstick but a set of processes that must be re-assessed to meet the needs of different individuals, situations and circumstances. Also, education is its own end - a liberating experience that encourages reflective behaviour and promotes growth and health, developing the individual and supporting his or her participation in society (Dewey, 1961).

As such, youth work's intention is to liberate as opposed to domesticate young people (Freire 1972). Indeed, education, as the practice of freedom enables people to:

"reflect on themselves, their responsibilities, and their role in the new cultural climate - indeed to reflect on the very *power* of reflection. The resulting development of this power [being] an increased capacity for choice." (Freire 1976:16)

"Once you've established some trust, a good way to begin is to give young people some responsibility. Running the café is a good example. It offers the chance for involvement and ownership. It's true that sometimes we've made a wrong judgement in giving out such responsibilities. Maybe the young person wasn't ready for it. Maybe they were so much in poverty that it was like putting it on a plate for them. But we're not talking about phenomenal amounts of money so there's always been the opportunity to discuss the whole issue of morals. And that has led on to conversations about what it means to have taken from your own community and then looking at where that young person is, why are they doing that and what their needs are.

Within the social education context a lot of the work is about enabling young people to explore and make choices whether it's about leaving home or all the other issues that come up. So what we try to do is to create a curriculum that gives them opportunities to explore moral issues. That is political sometimes. So in an agency like this, 'outing' is a regular discussion amongst young people. That enables us to tap into debates about the consequences of 'outing' - for example, loss of family, friends, job - and whether or not it is essential for people to be 'out and proud'.

We do a sort of 'problem page' session, which we normally recycle about once a term. During this, people are able to write down problems for the agony aunt to resolve. Generally what happens is the agony aunt, who will be one of the young people in the group, tries to promote

debate. Through that process the young people will have an opportunity to explore rights and wrongs. Sometimes the staff put things in to provoke discussion because they know of an issue or something that's going on. For example, a while ago we realised that quite a few of the young people were working on the 'rent scene'. And although we'd talked about some of the issues and run some sessions on self-assertion it didn't work very effectively. But when we started using structured sessions with case studies and scenarios young people started to get more involved in the discussion and were more able to open up."

The youth work process is therefore a reflective exercise, which enables young people to:

- Learn from their experience;
- Develop their capacity to think critically; and
- Engage in 'sense-making' as a process of continuous self-discovery and re-creation.

Learning from experience

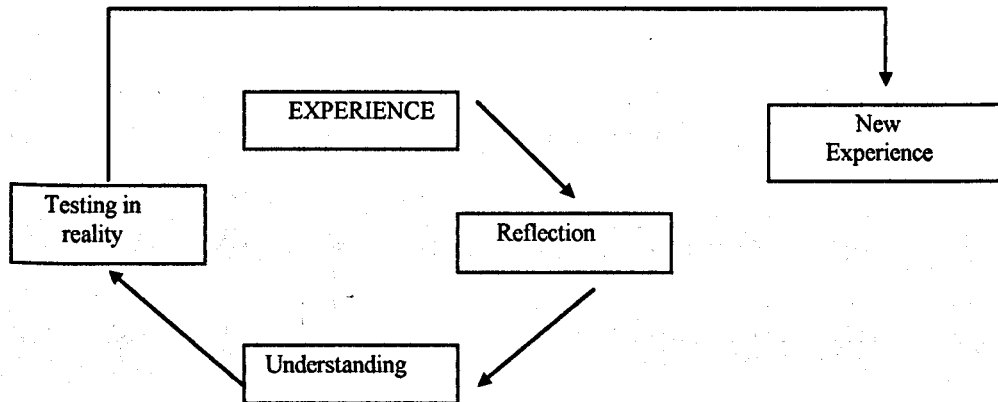
The learning process in youth work involves reflection and deliberation. So learning is not envisaged simply a process of 'inert ideas...[being] received into the mind without being utilised, or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations' (Alfred North Whitehead quoted in Freire 1976:36). Learning is seen as a dynamic process, which leads to action. In other words, to be meaningful, learning needs to be tested in reality.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle is a particularly helpful diagrammatic representation of this integrated reflection/action model of learning. As such, the learning process is described in four stages:

1. Experience:- The young person's experience, whether arising from everyday life or some particular youth work opportunity.
2. Reflection:- The opportunity for the young person to reflect on the experience, analysing not only what he or she thinks but also how she or he feels.
3. Development of understanding:- Through which the young person:
 - Examines his/her thoughts and feelings about this experience in relation to other situations and experiences;
 - Gathers information from other sources (e.g. other young people, the youth worker, other adults, books, newspapers, videos, etc.); and
 - Integrates these reflections and information into a logical and rational framework for decision-making and future action.
4. Testing in reality:- The 'testing' of the young person's new 'theory' in a real life situation.

Of course, the learning does not end here. For 'testing in reality' gives rise to new experiences, which, in turn, trigger a new learning cycle of reflection, understanding and testing in reality.

This can be diagrammatically represented as shown below.



(Based on Kolb's experiential learning cycle, 1984)

Also, the young person's 'experience' may not necessarily be something that 'happened'. It may be information they have received or ideas they have encountered. In any case, what the young person is faced with is a new 'situation' which, in order to derive learning, they must reflect on and come to some understanding which can inform their future thinking and action.

Critical thinking

Central to this process is the capacity to reason - the capacity to think critically. In other words, the capacity to:

- Identify and challenge assumptions.
- Recognise the importance of the social, political and historical contexts of events, assumptions, interpretations and behaviour.
- Imagine and explore alternatives.
- Exercise reflective scepticism towards claims to universal truths or ultimate explanations (Brookfield 1987).

Critical thinking therefore entails the ability to:

- Grasp the *meaning* of a statement.
- Avoid *ambiguity*.

- Spot *contradictions*.
- Judge what *follows*, what is *assumed*, and when a conclusion is *unwarranted*.
- Decide when a definition is *adequate*.
- Decide when an *observation statement* or *authority* are reliable.
- Decide when a problem has been properly *identified* and adequately resolved (Ennis, 1962 cited in Fisher 1991:50).

This, of course, is no easy task. It requires discipline and practise. In fact, reasoning, according to Dewey (1900, The School and Society cited in Whalley 1991) is sharpened and perfected through disciplined discussion. This therefore re-affirms the central importance of 'discussion' or 'conversation' to the youth work process. Indeed, according to Paulo Freire:

"The mark of a successful educator is not skill in persuasion - which is but an insidious form of propaganda - but the ability to dialogue with educatees in a mode of reciprocity." (Freire 1976:xiii)

Dialogue or 'conversation'

'Dialogue' utilises young people's own experiences in order to help them to develop their reflective behaviour. As such, dialogue enables and supports them to 'reflect on themselves, their responsibilities, and their contribution to society' (Freire 1976).

"The relationship that young people have with youth workers here is informal. Most of the interaction takes place through conversation so the worker needs to be able to think very clearly about the conversations that go on with young people - what their role is or what kind of intervention they can make. To do that, you need to have enough knowledge and foresight about what is likely to happen next and a readiness to use conversations as opportunities to be in the role of an educator, albeit informal. That's what makes conversations meaningful."

"Meaningful conversations don't just happen. You have to create an environment for them to take place. An atmosphere that has warmth, fun, spontaneity. An environment that enables young people to broaden their knowledge, understand the complexity of the issues they are involved in and express themselves in a clear, straight-forward and assertive way."

Jeffs and Smith (1996) describe 'conversation' as involving:

- Concern - in being *with* our partners in conversation; engaging with them.
- Trust - taking what others say on faith.
- Respect - mutual regard.
- Appreciation - valuing the other's qualities.
- Affection - a feeling with and for our partners.

- Hope - faith in the inherent value of education (Jeffs and Smith 1996: 30).

By contrast, Green and Christian (1998) refer to 'accompanying' - a process which they liken to a pianist 'accompanying' a soloist. What is required, according to Green and Christian, is concentration and attention, and a striving to 'pick up the mood' of the soloist with sensitivity and awareness. 'Accompanying' means 'being alongside' young people, 'Being there' (1998:20). It is:

"an empathetic conversation where one person supports another and enables them to explore the full range of emotions, thoughts and consequences of part of their life. Both the accompanied and accompanist have to listen to each other and are learning and growing from the conversation. However, the accompanist is giving the gift of a platform to the accompanied, who is then able to analyse, accept and make plans concerning their current situation." (Green and Christian 1998:23)

The qualities of 'accompanying' are identified as empathy, sympathy, tolerance, respect for the viewpoint of the accompanied, being grounded (or centred), personal space, life experience, understanding, wisdom, active listening, concentration and grace - awareness of the spirit moving in the lives of both the accompanied and accompanying person (Green and Christian 1998:28).

Conversations in context

Conversations are therefore the bedrock on which youth work is built. But conversations do not happen in a vacuum. Conversations have contexts. For example, conversations sometimes occur in the process of offering personal support to young people.

"Before I met [the worker] I wasn't really into education. If I failed an exam I would just give up. But he's given me the sense to just carry on and work even harder at it. He's shown me a different kind of view if you like. And I've realised that if I get an education I've got a better chance of getting a job that I like instead of just working in a factory or something like that for the rest of my life. So if I hadn't met him I wouldn't be going to university. I would have probably found myself a job and started working on from there."

Youth workers also engage in conversations with young people in the process of helping them to explore their options and choices.

"I view my role as ensuring that young people have an awareness that there are other options. For instance, if I'm talking to a young person who is doing his or her GCSEs and thinking about A levels, I might ask them, 'What has your careers advisor advised? What are you interested in? What do you dream about doing?' Their answer is very much located around going to work in this society, that's it. So I may explore with them other options such as developmental work in the Caribbean or another area of the developing world, volunteering for a Black organisation, VSO or simply not feeling pressured to make a fixed decision at this point, looking further than what the agenda of capitalism has to offer."

Sometimes youth workers utilise structured activities and situations to 'kick start' conversations that help young people to think about their lives, their experiences and their values.

"We have a programme, developed jointly with the local adventure playground, that involves work with 10-14 year olds in four local primary schools. It's a structured series of weekly sessions based on ten key principles called 'Do The Right Thing'.

1. Treat others as you would like to be treated.
2. Listen and you will be heard.
3. Do not shout at just speak to others.
4. Positive attracts positive.
5. Achieving is believing and believing is achieving.
6. Each one, teach one.
7. Set your own standards, live by example.
8. Share and care for your own space.
9. Speak with your mouth, not with your fists.
10. Wake up to your faults and do something about it.

Young people are supported to think about these principles using structured exercises and discussion. Through this process they get to examine who influences them, who holds power, how to take responsibility for their own actions, how they would like to see their community and what positive change they can effect."

"The drama group has been working on a play about alcohol. But something that kept coming up again and again was a load of stuff around domestic violence and relationships that the young people in the group have with their fathers in particular, but parents in general... So as workers we thought it important to recognise what was happening. When we went on the residential we said, 'OK we're not doing drama this weekend. This is about domestic violence and our relationships with our families'.... So for example, the part-timer worker ran a session on domestic violence. I ran a sort of debate about gender relationships between women and men - what that means for us in terms of our values, our cultural values, our personal values. So there are times when you have to create space to make those kinds of conversations overt. But before that can happen you have to be open to recognising that there is a need."

Sensemaking

However, despite the diversity of issues and contexts, youth workers' conversations with young people are essentially about one thing - the development of young people's ability to 'make sense' of themselves, their experiences and the world. Youth workers' conversations with young people therefore provide those much needed opportunities for young people to deliberately and consciously examine their experiences and the meanings they compose for their lives.

"The personal narrative is a special kind of story that every one of us constructs to bring together the different parts of ourselves into a purposeful and convincing whole. Like all narratives, the personal narrative has a beginning, middle and end, and is defined according to the development of plot and character. A personal narrative represents one of the ways in which we narratively structure and configure life insofar as it is an 'act of imagination that is a patterned integration of our remembered past, perceived present and anticipated future... we

do not 'discover' ourselves in narrative, rather, we make or create ourselves through narrative...we create a narrative so that 'our lives, and the lives of others will make sense' (McAdams 1993:92). Through narrative we define who we are, who we were and who we may become in the future. Hence to make meaning in life is to create 'dynamic narratives that render sensible and coherent the seeming chaos of human existence' (McAdams 1993:166)." (Crossley 2000:67)

But such an undertaking is no simple matter since:

"When people talk about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused and get things wrong. Yet they *are* revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was', aspiring to some standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences...Unlike the Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them." (Personal Narratives Group quoted in Riessman 1993:22)

People's narratives are therefore not 'true' accounts of their experiences but accounts of the 'sense' they have made of their experience. In other words, the interpretations they have woven based on their emotional responses, existing understandings and the social, political and historical contexts within which those understandings and assumptions are located.

However, sensemaking is not merely a case of constructing reality – i.e. re-interpreting the past to conform to the present, or alternatively, interpreting the present so as to create a continuous relationship with the past (Berger and Luckman 1967). Sensemaking is a discrete process, which has, according to Weick (1995) seven distinct characteristics that distinguish it from other explanatory processes such as understanding and interpretation. According to Weick, people make sense - that is they come to know what they think, by being able to 'see' what they say. The process of 'sensemaking' is therefore:

1. Grounded in identity construction - since the question of 'who I am' is answered through discovery of 'how and what I think'.
2. Retrospective - in order to learn what I think I look back over what I have said and done in the past.
3. Enactment - by saying and doing things I create new situations that can be inspected for clues about what and how I think; and who I am.
4. Social - what I say, single out (events, actions, thoughts) and conclude are the result of who socialised me, how I was socialised and the 'audience' I anticipate will scrutinise my conclusions.

5. On-going - my talking is spread across time, competes for attention with other on-going projects and is reflected on after it is finished.
6. Focused on and by extracted cues - I single out and embellish a small portion of events, actions and thoughts because I identify them as salient within the context and my personal dispositions.
7. Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy - sensemaking is not about creating accurate accounts but rather accounts which are coherent and credible.

“Something that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable, something that embodies past experience and expectations, something that resonates with other people, something that can be constructed retrospectively but also can be used prospectively, something that captures both feelings and thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current oddities, something that is fun to construct. In short, what is necessary in sensemaking is a good story.” (Weick 1995:60)

However, ‘personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one’s life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned’ (Rosenwald and Ochberg quoted in Riessman 1993:2). Therefore, a person’s identity is to be found in their capacity to ‘keep a particular narrative going’ (Giddens 1991:54), since:

“Self-identity... is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual’s action-system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual.” (Giddens 1991:52)

Sense-making is therefore a process of self-actualisation the moral thread of which is authenticity, that is being true to oneself - a process that requires being able to find oneself as well as being able to disentangle the true self from the false self (Giddens 1991:79).

Given that the role of the youth worker, as articulated earlier, is to engage with young people in the process of moral philosophising which enables them to develop a consistent set of values that:

- Inform their identity; and
- Support their development of virtue as authentic human beings.

Then the process of ‘sense making’ must become an integrated activity since people do not usually stop to make sense, they do it as they are going along - reflecting critically on their experience and creating new meanings for their lives (Wallemacq and Sims 1998).

Summary

This chapter analysed the interview data alongside relevant literature in order to enable the formulation of a clear statement about what youth workers *do* - in terms of the context, processes and values that inform and underpin effective practice.

The context of youth work practice was identified as the relationship that youth workers have with young people. These are relationships based on the values of honesty, trust, respect and reciprocity; and within which young people are accepted and valued.

Through such relationships, young people are supported, motivated and inspired to engage in the process of learning from experience that supports their capacity to think critically and make sense of themselves and their world.

Integral to youth work practice is the activity of 'conversation', since it is through narrative that 'people organise their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world' (Bruner quoted in Cortazzi 1993:1).

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The comparative analyses contained in chapters 5 and 6 enabled the formulation of statements about the purpose and practice of youth work insofar as youth workers make relationships with young people that enable them to make sense of themselves, their lives and their world through:

- Exploring their values;
- Deliberating on the principles of their own moral judgements; and
- Making reasoned choices and informed decisions.

In the process, young people are encouraged and supported to engage in reflective 'dialogue' or 'conversation' as a way of developing the critical skills integral to learning from their experience.

The analysis contained in this chapter interrogates the interview data alongside relevant literature in order to identify the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by youth workers to undertake such practice, and the implications of this for their training and development.

Skills and Values

"Youth workers need highly developed and effective interpersonal skills in order to establish and build positive relationships with young people. They also need groupwork facilitation skills and an understanding of group dynamics. An ability to critically appraise and evaluate practice. An understanding of how she or he uses him or herself in practice. Knowledge of the context within which one is working - social, political, economic. An ability to act as an advocate when necessary but also knowing when to enable young people to speak for themselves. Youth workers need to be confident and comfortable about their own identity and how that has shaped their own values and beliefs. He or she needs to be able to be articulate and express what these are.

Youth workers need to be able to engage with other professionals from different fields and with parents. We need to see young people as a part of their community and work so that the community sees them as stakeholders in it.

We also need not to be 'experts'. It can be very reassuring to a young person to hear an adult say 'I don't know' or 'I never thought of that' or 'I don't understand' as often young people are afraid to say these things. They see it as a sign of weakness. We also need to know our own limitations and be able to say 'I'm sorry' or 'I was wrong' or 'I shouldn't have done that'. We need to be accountable to young people for our actions as well as to those who manage and fund us.

This might seem obvious but youth workers need to like young people. Need to get a kick out of working with them. Need to enjoy their energy, laughter, spontaneity and tendency to be politically incorrect. It can be very refreshing.”

Effective youth workers must also earn the trust and respect of the communities in which they work.

“There is partly an assumption of trust in the community - trusting the worker to be non-judgmental, unconditional positive regard for them as human beings.”

“Last year I wanted to go to Pakistan with the youth project and I told my parents about it and they just smiled at me and said, ‘OK son you’re going to Pakistan.’ But the more into it I got then my parents said, ‘Oh you can’t go because who is going to take care of you’ and things like that. I spoke to [the worker] and he spoke to my parents and because he spoke to them about the project and they knew he was older and wiser and he’d been there before they gave me the chance to go with him because they gave him that responsibility to take care of me.”

Skills

The youth workers and young people interviewed during this research identified the need for youth workers to have good communication skills and the ability to listen and empathise. Youth workers were also seen as needing to be honest, friendly, humorous, observant, patient and be able to set boundaries. Youth workers also need to have commitment and faith in themselves and those around them; and be able to support young people through their learning cycle (See Chapter 4).

However, such skills are not practised in a vacuum since youth work is underpinned by youth workers’ understanding of young people’s lives.

“Young people are the experts of their own world. Our responsibility is not to know it, but to try to understand a little of it - just as much as they want to offer. That certainly helps me to be mindful about how I work with them so that I’m not going to offend them unknowingly or make them feel uncomfortable or open a door and quickly close it again. Then it’s about creating the situations for them to want to take the plunge if you like - to make some choices. And then being there to support and help them think about what they learned or how they could have dealt with the situation in a different way or how could they have made it more beneficial or successful - without causing them to feel like they’re rubbish or they’ve made a big mistake.”

“Young people often say that adults don’t understand. That we’ve forgotten. I think that’s often true. Sure we can talk about the characteristics of adolescence but we don’t always remember what it actually felt like and the impact those changes have on you as a young person. So I think the job is about listening and hearing. It’s about seeing things with a 16 year-old pair of eyes not using the hindsight that I have at 30-something and saying, ‘Well you know this will happen’. It’s actually about trying to understand how they see it, how big

it is to them and what's important about it to them. Not what's important to us. OK, it might not be big in two weeks' time but in that moment it is big and needs to be afforded the same significance we attach to the things we identify as important. The main thing is to affirm young people and their experience - what they are saying and what they are feeling. Who feels it, knows it."

The relationship and work is also, in some instances, enhanced by some particular characteristic of the worker:

"For some people it helps that [the worker] is a Muslim. They would feel more comfortable talking to him knowing that he is a Muslim as well. I feel more comfortable talking to him because we are both Pakistani. It's just one of those things really. It just helps you to build up trust knowing that he's from the same religion."

"I'm not an overtly religious person. I fast and attend Friday prayer but I wouldn't call myself a religious person because you're meant to pray five times a day and that's what I class as religious. The fact that [the worker] is a Muslim is completely irrelevant to me. The only time it has helped me is when we've had a talk on religion and he has been there and been able to answer my questions. But that's because he just happened to be there and he's more educated than I am. The thing is though that [the worker] can speak Punjabi and the first time he came up to me and spoke to me in Punjabi I was really taken aback. Then he asked me what village I was from. And I thought, 'How do you know these things?' It broke down some barriers and kind of made the whole relationship relaxed and more personal. The Punjabi language is my identity. Most of my friends can't speak Punjabi they speak a different dialect. So [the worker] speaking Punjabi makes me feel closer to him because he knows where I was from."

"If [the worker] was a white worker I think there'd be a lot more mistrust. I don't know why. But I do think it would probably take more time to actually trust him because you'd have to work much harder on the relationship and you'd be thinking in your head all the time, 'Is he thinking I'm a bad person because I talk like this?' In your head you'd probably be picking out the little things and feeling uneasy and wondering, 'does he understand the culture? Does he understand what goes on at home?' And thinking he can't really. Unless you've lived it, you can't really know what's going on."

However, according to interviewees, being an effective youth worker is not simply about accumulating a comprehensive set of skills (although skills are important). Neither is it about the youth worker's personal characteristics (although this too is important). In the end, good youth work practice rests on the youth worker's values.

Values

"It's about attitude. Accepting where young people are coming from. Not putting them down but gaining their trust and being able to explore with them. There's a difference between a young person saying something and you just telling them they shouldn't have said it; and letting them say it and working out what's the belief underneath it. It's about adults who accept and value young people and who don't see themselves as somehow above them. That's where you have to be to start as a youth worker..... Being non-judgmental is very important. So if my values are different from a young woman's parents' values then I need to

explain to her what I believe without judging her parents as wrong because in the end she has to choose. You can't be in the position of turning her against her family. She has to grow into someone different if she chooses. The role of the worker is to open up the possibility that there is another point of view."

Youth workers' values are important because they impact directly on the work.

"As a youth worker you can't impinge your own values on young people. I come from a background that is very middle-class and I work with young people that are at the lower socio-economic class in terms of their parents being unemployed and things like that. It would be very easy for me to say, 'Well you should be doing this or you should be doing that'. So I think youth workers need to make sure that they look at their own values. And particularly in terms of how their values affect the way they are working with young people and dealing with the particular issues they are working with."

"The youth worker needs to be constantly aware of her or his own prejudices and bias when it comes to combating structural inequalities. In terms of Northern Ireland, you have to be aware that very few venues are perceived as 'neutral' and often young people do not feel safe travelling outside of their own areas. Even a simple thing like wearing a particular football shirt can be divisive, provocative and dangerous. Words and phrases can also be insulting and derogatory without the young person knowing this to the full extent. There is also a lot of distrust and a lack of knowledge about the facts of history. In Northern Ireland there are always two versions of every story and very few workers who know both - including me."

Youth workers' values are also important because they underpin practice and create the basis for young people's moral reflections and exploration.

"My values are central to the way I work with young people. I feel quite privileged coming from a spiritual base that is a Hindu base because I don't feel any need to evangelise. But there are things about my values which come from my spirituality that I think are also common to people in general - like not wanting to hurt other people, taking on board that your actions may have an impact on other people so you have to think about what it is you are doing. You could even go back to the Ten Commandments I suppose if you wanted to say, 'Don't kill, don't steal', and the basic differentiation between good and evil that is there in everybody's faith. Issues around honesty for example - doing unto others as you wish to be treated yourself which is one of those core themes that I think is universal but we don't talk about anymore. I think another important value is about taking the time to reflect on your life. Wanting to give other people a chance is another. All of these are part and parcel of the values I hold and consider crucial in my relationships with young people."

"My search for understanding is a part of my faith. It gives me something to fall back on. It means I don't have to have all the answers. What I do have is a way of working through my questions and an ethical framework that helps me to make sense of the issues around me. As a youth worker, my faith helps me to support young people to find a path that's clear for them. I help them to make sense of the spiritual teachings they have received and consider how to relate these to their everyday life - particularly when they need to come through a difficult time."

“My values affect my relationships with young people through them realising that: (1) I don't mean them any harm; (2) I do have their interest at heart; (3) That my contact with them is borne out of honesty, respect, caring - all of which come from a deeper commitment to people in general but to them in particular because that's the area I'm working in. I think if they know that, and most of them do, then the relationship can operate at a greater depth. So that would mean that they would be able to openly ask questions about doubts they might have about their lives. There may be experiences in their lives that are pivotal and may be harmful or hurtful to them that perhaps they can share with me in confidence. Actually, many of the young people I work with do come with some very damaging things that have happened to them. They feel able to talk about these because they sense that the relationship with me operates at a different level from the relationships they may have with other adults.”

Ethical practice

In the process of such practice, youth workers encounter a range of ethical issues, problems and dilemmas. Some of these may arise because they are *working* (which involves specific duties and responsibilities) with *young* people (who may have fewer rights and may be regarded as vulnerable in some way) (Banks 1997). Others may concern issues of confidentiality or dilemmas about the need to safeguard the welfare of different individuals and groups - e.g. the young person, the community, or the agency (Morgan and Banks 1999).

“As a youth worker working with young people with disabilities it's very difficult to know where the balance is between what is practical and what, in an ideal world, should actually be happening. I sometimes face terrible dilemmas of wondering how much I should be talking with young people about contraceptives or relationships for example. Not just about the physical aspects but in terms of the feelings and what relationships actually mean to them. I ask myself, 'When do they have the space to do that?' And the truth is they often don't. There is so much anxiety and pressure from parents, guardians who have an influential role and others that there's never any time or space or privacy for them to discover what relationships mean to them. So whilst I might want to support young people to think about those things, I know some parents would not find that acceptable.”

“It is very difficult to work with young people in Northern Ireland around the issue of identity. And while political education and cross community work has been on the youth service curriculum since 1987, I think it's very difficult to be effective if nothing happens with adults in the community while young people are engaged in their programme. But it's not only that young people are seen to be divorced from their community, it's also that so many parents are actually openly opposed to cross community work.”

Within youth work, there have tended to be two kinds of response to such issues.

- Firstly, consideration of codes of ethics - which are concerned with standard setting and regulation in the sense that they offer a 'code' or guide to 'professional' conduct and stipulate the nature and exercise of sanctions (e.g. as originally drafted by the Community and Youth

Workers' Union in 1998; initiatives to establish a 'code of ethics' for youth and community work in Wales - see Ymlaen 1997: 8).

- Secondly, there has been some attention to the ethical issues and dilemmas which workers encounter - for example, in relation to confidentiality, autonomy and control, agency policy, individual and public welfare, accountability to funders, and so on (e.g. Morgan and Banks 1999).

However, while both of these approaches make their own particular contribution to the development of practice, they are based on the premise that workers have an understanding (or enough of an understanding) of the concepts and values involved to enable them to interpret an ethical code and satisfactorily resolve ethical dilemmas. This, of course, is not necessarily so.

Therefore, it may be helpful to offer illustrations of the meaning of certain concepts and values. For example, Crimmens and Whalen (1999) comment that 'respect for human rights' includes listening to young people, taking their views seriously, giving them information and involving them in decision-making about their lives.

And indeed, 'Ethical Conduct in Youth Work' (NYA 2001a) takes a similar approach in outlining the values and principles of ethical conduct in terms of:

- 'Ethical principles' which include the way that youth workers should treat the young people they work with (for example, with respect for their rights and choices, without discrimination); and the kinds of values that youth workers should work towards (e.g. social justice);
- 'Professional principles' which relate to how the youth worker should act in the role of a practitioner with certain types of responsibility and accountability; and
- 'Practice principles' which suggest how youth workers would apply the broader ethical and professional principles. (NYA 2001a)

As such, the 'ethical principles' are identified as:

1. Treat young people with respect.
2. Respect and promote young people's rights to make their own decisions and choices.
3. Promote and ensure the welfare and safety of young people.
4. Contribute towards the promotion of social justice. (NYA 2001a:4)

The 'professional principles' are listed as:

5. Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life.

6. Recognise the need to be accountable.
7. Develop and maintain the required skills and competence to do the job.
8. Work for conditions in employing agencies where these principles are discussed, evaluated and upheld. (NYA 2001a:4)

By way of example, the 'practice principles' associated with the 'ethical principle' of 'Respect and promote young people's rights to make their own decisions and choices' include:

- "raising young people's awareness of the decisions and choices open to them and offering opportunities for discussion and debate on the implications of particular choices;
- offering learning opportunities for young people to develop their capacities and confidence in making decisions and choices through participation in decision-making bodies and working in partnership with youth workers in planning activities; and
- respecting young people's own choices and views, unless the welfare or legitimate interests of themselves or other people are seriously threatened." (NYA 2001a:5)

This is helpful. However, setting aside the difficulties of unexplained concepts such as 'justice' and 'legitimate', there are, nonetheless, two issues here. Firstly, to address oneself to the question of ethical conduct in youth work is to separate ethics from youth work in such a way as to suggest that youth work is a (separate) activity, which needs to be conducted in an ethical way. For example, as medicine or nursing are separate activities that need to be conducted in an ethical way. This separation acts to negate the fundamental centrality of ethics in youth work. That is that, for example, promoting young people's right to make their own decisions and choices or promoting social justice actually form the very fabric of the work. That is, the very essence of youth work and not an ethical principle governing it.

Secondly, the distinction being made between 'ethical' and 'professional' principles simply result in further highlighting the difference between youth work itself (i.e. principles 2 and 4) and the way in which such work should be done (i.e. principles 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8).

In addition, as Barrow points out:

"There is a distinction between stating clearly 'what I mean by democracy is one man one vote' in order to advance a discussion in a history lesson about whether Periclean Athens was or was not democratic, and attempting to analyse the concept of democracy which would involve one in a more painstaking task which would have nothing specifically to do with Athens." (1981:135)

For it is one thing to state that the values underlying youth and community work are:

- Respect for basic human rights - e.g. justice, freedom;
- Respect for the individual and rights to self-determination;

- Respect for the different cultures and religions in society. (NYA 1997c)

It is quite a different matter to interpret or implement such principles in the absence of a clear understanding of the concept of 'respect' - never mind that of justice or freedom. Youth work therefore requires that youth workers engage in the (never ending) process of clarifying their values; and commit themselves to reflecting on their practice.

"A commitment to reflecting on your own practice is crucial. You need to be able to acknowledge your mistakes and accept criticism. So if a young person says 'You were wrong to do that to me', then you have to take it on board and come clean."

"Youth workers have to be open to their own learning. They need a commitment to training and a commitment to looking at their own practice and really reflecting on the way they work with young people. That's really important to me. It matters because it's people's lives you're working with and so getting it right or being on the right track to working positively with them is very important. I learn so much from them as well and I love that."

Reflective practice

Consequently, as a central part of the youth work process, youth workers need to be:

"conscious of their own values and priorities in the work...aware of how these differ from and conflict with those of others and ...prepared either to justify and defend their views or to change or modify them." (Banks 1997:25)

However, more than this is needed. For youth workers also need, as a matter of routine, to constantly revisit, reflect on and renew their values. Such a commitment to reflective practice requires practitioners to:

- Question 'taken-for-granted' assumptions about the definition of problems and categorisation of need.
- Recognise the ways in which ideas, thoughts, understandings and opinions are shaped historically, economically, politically and socially through social structures and processes.
- Make the implicit explicit.
- Raise the profile of value positions and working with the problematics they generate.
- Locate practice in its agency contexts so that service delivery issues are not addressed as routine constraints.
- Build reflection, involvement and evaluation into every stage of the practice process. (Everitt, Hardiker, Littlewood and Mullender 1992:134)

In the end, however, the need for youth workers' clarity and commitment in relation to their values is not simply because of the necessity to develop critical reflective practice or resolve ethical dilemmas. The need arises from the necessity for youth workers to be, themselves, well versed in the reflective and deliberative processes through which they seek to support young people.

Indeed, the idea that those involved in social education should engage in philosophical reflection is not new. Pring (1984) suggested that a part of the 'professional job of those who introduce personal and social education into the curriculum' should include:

"a careful, philosophical reflection upon what it means to be a person, how development as a person is inextricably linked with a form of social life, and where moral values and ideas are presupposed in both." (1984:167)

Earlier, Davies and Gibson had emphasised the need for the worker to 'understand what sort of person he himself is, what his needs are and what his beliefs and values are' (1967:186).

And even earlier, in 1944, the McNair Committee had commented that:

"A well-informed philosophy of life, which may or may not be professedly religious, is most necessary to the youth leader; indeed, it is not easy to conceive of a successful youth leader without it." (HMSO 1944:101)

But these are not merely old concerns. In 1999, the report on the 1996-1999 Youth Work Development Grants Programme identified 'peak performing' youth workers as having personal qualities rooted in:

- A clear set of values;
- Professional integrity; and
- A constant openness to self-appraisal and learning. (Hunter, Payne, Pittham and Young 1999:7)

Therefore, 'philosophy' is not enough since a 'well informed philosophy of life' can only have (professional) integrity if it informs action. That is to say, it is not enough to know what is 'right' one must also seek to act 'rightly'.

The challenge for youth work training, is how to support workers to develop their 'philosophy' in terms of a clear set of values; and their 'integrity' in terms of a disposition towards acting ethically - that is a disposition towards finding right action in particular circumstances and acting from right motive.

Training and Development

“The problem is that most people only have the vaguest idea of what it might be to lead an ethical life. They understand ethics as a system of rules forbidding us to do things. They do not grasp it as a basis for thinking about how we are to live. They live largely self interested lives, not because they are born selfish, but because the alternatives seem awkward, embarrassing, or just plain pointless. They cannot see any way of making an impact on the world, and if they could, why should they bother? Short of undergoing a religious conversion, they see nothing to live for except the pursuit of their own material self-interest. But the possibility of living an ethical life provides us with a way out of this impasse.” (Singer 1997: vi)

In this context, the issue is less a question of youth workers leading ethical lives and more a concern with youth workers developing ethical practice - assuming, indeed, that such things can be so separated.

The point here is that, in an occupation like youth work, reflection and discussions about principles and values are not merely intellectual exercises since there is an intention that ‘discussion’ should lead to both individual and collective action through ‘the *activity* of talking and the chain of conversations in which the individual takes part...as well as its *content* (Hardy, Lawrence and Phillips 1998).

Therefore, understanding participation, for example, involves not only an intellectual understanding but also acting in ways that enable young people to participate, which in turn, requires an understanding of the concept of participation. The process is somewhat circular but represents what Plato called ‘philosophy’ (understanding of virtue) and ‘habit’ (disposition towards acting virtuously) which he considered to be the two essential components of an ethical education (Kupperman 1983).

The training and development of youth workers therefore needs to include, at its very core, an ethical education which seeks to extend workers’ personal and professional philosophy; and encourage their intelligent disposition towards acting virtuously - a disposition which requires the exercise of practical reason and judgement within a coherent system of precepts.

This is not a matter of adhering to a ‘code of ethics’ or guidelines for ‘ethical conduct’. For central to these activities is the ability to give meaning to the concepts and values involved. In youth work, this includes concepts such as education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity; and values such as social justice.

“In terms of their training, youth workers need a clear understanding of their role and the fact that youth work is a job. They need to reflect on practice and they need to learn how to set boundaries and hold them. There are also some skills like groupwork, facilitation skills and dealing with conflict, which are important. But something that is in some ways more important is the opportunity to engage in a positive personal development experience. The sort of experience that encourages you to explore your views, hopes, fears, aspirations, values, what being you means to you and how your experiences have shaped your values and your life. Really it’s about the development of them as people. It’s almost like going through the same sort of experience they will be engaging in with young people. In ‘Starting From Strengths’ there was a recognition that in the first six months, part-time staff were often having a personal development experience themselves rather than working with the young people. That was right in the sense that they needed the time and attention to reflect and develop as practitioners. But sometimes when people leave college courses they haven’t themselves had that sort of experience. If they are going to help young people to understand themselves and their lives then I really do think that they need to have experienced it themselves.”

But how can youth workers be encouraged and supported to explore their ‘views, hopes, fears, aspirations, values, experiences’ in relation, not only to themselves as people, but in terms of their role as youth workers?

“For surely it was Dewey who, in modern times, foresaw that education had to be redefined as the fostering of thinking rather than the transmission of knowledge; that there could be no difference in the method by which teachers were taught and the methods by which they would be expected to teach; that the logic of a discipline must not be confused with the sequence of discoveries that would constitute its understanding; that student reflection is best stimulated by living experience, rather than by formally organised, desiccated text; that reasoning is sharpened and perfected by disciplined discussion as by nothing else and that reasoning skills are essential for successful reading and writing; and that the alternative to indoctrinating students with values is to help them to reflect effectively on the values that are constantly being urged on them.” (Lipman 1988 quoted in Whalley 1991:69)

Lipman’s reference to teachers is no less relevant to youth workers in the sense that there should be no difference in the method by which youth workers are trained and the methods by which they are expected to work with young people. Therefore, youth workers need to be able to think. Their reflection is best stimulated by living experience. Their reasoning should be sharpened and perfected by disciplined discussion. And they should be helped to reflect effectively on the values that are constantly being urged on them and those which the practice of youth work demands.

Such ‘disciplined discussion’ could be envisaged as containing three essential components.

1. Serious discussion about values including getting people to see what it is like to live according to various value judgements (including the destructive effect of immorality on psychological harmony and integrity).

2. Promotion of sensitivity to others and the consequences of one's actions.
3. Discussion of moral rules and principles - e.g. respect for persons. (Kupperman 1983)

Such discussion should, following Dewey, focus on workers' own personal and work experiences and help them to reflect effectively on the values that inform and underpin their lives and their work as youth workers.

Clearly, the process is not value-free insofar as the idea is not to produce 'rational egoists' but to support a 'rational form of morality, which enables a person to adopt a stance that is critical of tradition but not subjective' (Peters 1981:143). This cannot be achieved, purely, through one's ability to reason 'in the sense of making inferences'. Rational morality must be characterised by the ability to reason:

- Supported by a group of 'rational passions connected with the demands of consistency, order, clarity and relevance; and
- [what Piaget calls] 'Reversibility in thought'. In other words, the person must be able to appreciate the experiences of others and show concern for their interests as well as one's own. They must be able to demonstrate what David Hume called a 'sentiment for humanity' or in other words, empathy. (Peters 1981:144)

'Philosophy' or Understanding Virtue

For Socrates, a person cannot be truly virtuous unless he or she knows what virtue is. The only way to obtain such knowledge, he believed, was to examine accounts of the particular virtues and seek to expose their 'nature' (Gottlieb 1997).

We therefore find in Plato's 'Laches' an exchange in which Socrates dismisses all the examples of courage being offered by Laches by insisting, 'What is the common quality that is called courage, and which includes all of the various uses of the term when applied both to pleasure and pain, and in all the cases to which I was just now referring?' (Plato trans. 1970:117).

In 'Lysis' Socrates cajoles Lysis and Menexenus into a debate about 'the nature of friendship' (Plato trans. 170:91). Temperance gets the same treatment in 'Charmides' when Socrates tells Charmides to:

"fix your attention more closely and look within you; consider the effect which temperance has upon yourself, and the nature of that which should have this effect. Think over all this, and tell me truly and courageously - What is temperance?" (Plato trans. 1970:47)

In 'The Republic', while debating justice and injustice, Glaucon says, 'I want to be told what exactly each of them is and what effects it has as such on the mind of its possessor, leaving aside any question of rewards or consequences' (Plato trans. 1974:103).

Form and Content

However, while many of Socrates' investigations end with no final conclusions, the dialogues themselves act as the vehicle for expounding the many and various thoughts about, and perceptions and interpretations of, the topics being discussed. Following Kupperman's (1983) form of 'serious discussion about values' and 'discussion of moral rules and principles', it becomes possible to envisage a content that supports youth workers to explore the 'nature' of justice or equality or empowerment. That is, a 'dialogue' which draws on their own experiences to give meaning to their conception of such principles and values.

In addition, while it may seem erroneous that Plato's dialogues often involve Socrates' intellectual adversaries eventually agreeing with him about the nature of justice or courage or friendship, it is equally unrealistic to operate on the basis that people can believe anything they like - i.e. that there are no guiding principles for life and that one opinion is as valid as the next. For example, it would be misguided to suggest that a racist or sexist perspective is as valid as any other because it is someone's opinion. There is no suggestion here that we should be so liberal. After all Socrates did not question the 'worthiness' of courage. He sought to reveal the *nature* of courage (justice, friendship etc.) because he believed that knowledge of virtue was the same as being virtuous. In other words, that to know the nature of courage was the same as being courageous because, so Socrates believed, no-one having such knowledge would choose to behave otherwise. His search for definition was therefore a means to an end - namely the exercise of virtue (Gottlieb 1997). This was a conviction shared by Aristotle.

"The object of our enquiry is not to know the nature of virtue but become ourselves virtuous...it is necessary therefore to consider the right way of performing actions, for it is actions as we have said that determine the character of the resulting moral states." (Aristotle trans. 1987:44)

According to Aristotle, a person acquires virtue by doing virtuous acts. 'It is by doing just acts that we become just, by doing temperate acts that we become temperate, by doing courageous acts that we become courageous' (Aristotle trans. 1987:43).

Of course, it may be the case that 'disciplined discussion' within youth work may seek to question the 'worthiness' of justice or empowerment or equality of opportunity. But what must

also be central to such deliberations is the illumination or revelation of their *nature*; and particularly an understanding of their nature in terms of what action one would take in becoming just or empowering or promoting equality.

'Habit' or Practising Virtue

The contention here is that 'philosophical reflection' does not lead to 'a well-informed philosophy of life' unless it contains both an understanding of the nature of virtue and the practise of virtue. And that therefore, any 'personal development experience' for youth workers must necessarily include not only discussion about the meaning or nature of various principles, values and virtues but also an exploration of the ways in which they, as workers, are themselves virtuous. That is, the ways in which they demonstrate virtue through their own actions and practice.

Notwithstanding, actions performed in accordance with virtue are not performed because the actions are *themselves* virtuous - e.g. just or trustworthy or respectful. Actions performed in accordance with virtue require that the person performing them satisfy three conditions.

1. The person should know what he or she is doing.
2. She or he should deliberately choose to do it for its own sake.
3. He or she should do it as an instance of a settled moral state. (Aristotle trans. 1987:50)

This is because, for Aristotle, virtue is not simply a habit but:

"an internalised disposition of action, desire and feeling. It is an intelligent disposition. It involves the agent's exercise of judgement, that same quality of practical reason." (Williams 1993:35)

Virtue therefore requires not only habit but also 'an intelligent disposition' involving practical reason and judgement. However, although one makes judgements and exercises the capacity for critical thinking, choice is not simply a matter of reason. For:

"As Plato and Aristotle remind us, behind the choice of actions, lies the choice of dispositions, of characters, of overall patterns of life...dispositions cannot be switched on and off in deference to the calculation of likely consequences on particular occasions... the practical choice will be between one fairly persistent disposition and others, equally persistent, that contrast with it. And if we then ask what sort of person it is in one's own interest to be, what dispositions is it advantageous to have, there is little doubt that it will be ones that can be seen as virtues... as dispositions that harmonise with knowledge, but also more specifically in the light of some conception of the good and with some respect for the way of life of the society in which one lives." (Mackie 1990:192)

Implications of culture and structure

“The concern is about dominant cultures and where people come from into youth work as part time workers. So the dominant culture for a police officer would be the culture that he or she is employed in. If that person then wanted to go into youth work they bring with them those dominant cultural values. It’s the same for people who work in hierarchical situations in factories or shops where there is a clearly defined hierarchy, function and purpose, it’s about profit and all of those things are actually dominant cultural influences. They then step into the youth service and we expect them to be something else. And we expect them to be something else almost by inclination. That they are going to be able to forget those dominant cultural values and accept the culture that is dominant within the youth service or the culture that we perhaps wish would be dominant because very often it isn’t.

So the challenge for training is about getting the part-time worker, the deliverer of the service, to understand and internalise the value base of youth work. Actually, that’s the crucial bit but we miss it because we are scared about money and whether or not we have it. So training ends up being related to functions. You know - how do you organise this trip to ice-skating, or manage the centre, or look after the bureaucracy of what’s going on. And so we do not get the part time worker to explore the issues of values and dominant cultures because it’s considered to be too nebulous and esoteric. There is also a false belief by many training managers that if they get people into the training arena they’re only going to get them once and so they need to teach them the things that are important. How to fill in their time sheets, health and safety, what to do in terms of child abuse. All very important issues but still not preparing people to do youth work with young people - in this almost nonsensical view that we have about what the culture of youth work is.

The other thing is you do not train part-time teachers. You do not train part-time nurses. What you train are nurses or teachers who work part-time. And that is exactly the philosophy that underpins youth work training in Wales. That actually means that the structure of youth work training in Wales, from the time that people take their first step onto it, they are actually training to become full-time youth workers. What they actually do is make decisions within that training about when they are going to get off or whether they are going to continue. So there is a vision in Wales that part-time workers, particularly key part-time workers, will be trained to at least Certificate (in Higher Education) level. And that’s actually where part-time workers are now starting to get off this continuous and coherent training route we have here in Wales. This involves 21 of the 22 authorities and some voluntary organisations. But because the voluntary sector, through the Council for Wales Voluntary Youth Services, also has it’s own initial training course it becomes crucial to build a bridge between voluntary and maintained sector training. And what we are doing is running an introductory course that focuses on what the youth service is, what it does, what it is built on and what it is driven by. Thereby, integrating both voluntary and maintained sectors at a strategic level.”

The approach to youth work training outlined above would necessarily require a change in both the culture and structure of current training. And this is particularly so given the prominence accorded here to a ‘personal development programme’ involving the investigation of particular principles, values and virtues; and attention to the development of virtue in workers.

This, as envisaged, would form the centrepiece of youth work training with the theoretical underpinnings (e.g. psychology, sociology, social policy) and practical skills (e.g. groupwork) acting to both inform and enrich this essentially philosophical exercise.

In terms of culture, this would involve:

- Students/workers taking responsibility for their learning;
- An integrated approach to the training of full-time and part-time workers;
- An organisational commitment to the continuous development of both full-time and part-time workers through a structured supervision process based on learning from experience and providing opportunities for workers to:
 - ◊ Develop their skills in critical thinking
 - ◊ Engage in disciplined discussion about values and moral principles
 - ◊ Develop the practise of virtue through action, reflection and learning.

In terms of structure, this may involve:

- Teaching or tutoring - for the acquisition of knowledge;
- Coaching - for the acquisition of skills; and
- Mentoring - for the acquisition of insight, understanding and wisdom. (Clutterbuck and Sweeney 1997:3)

Indeed, the idea that youth workers could benefit from coaching and mentoring during their training was advocated in 'Starting From Strengths' (Bolger and Scott 1984); and further developed in the 'Handbook for Personal Training Advisers' (Jackson, Bolger and Young 1989) which described the personal training adviser as offering advice and guidance; and facilitating learning from experience through an open, trusting and personal developmental relationship with the trainee. This was an approach developed specifically in relation to the training of part-time youth and community workers. An approach, which may, nonetheless, be equally as beneficial in the continuous support and development of both full-time and part-time workers.

However, as interviewees commented:

"One of the problems for a lot of youth workers is that they work on their own. Although they work with other people it's actually quite isolating. There is a distance between them and the young people. There is a distance between them and the part-time staff that they have managerial responsibility for. They may be on a venue like a school where their professionalism isn't recognised or is seen as different. So they can be isolated and as a consequence it's actually easy to get diverted or lose focus. So I think one of the roles of management is to help them regain that focus and to put their experiences in perspective. It's

also about helping them to see some of the positives of their work and their achievements when they can often feel like they are not getting anywhere. Sometimes it's also about helping them where they are blocked in their learning cycle. But consistently it's about keeping them focused on the fundamental question that we also ask young people: 'Do you think it's the right thing to do?' Because whatever decision they make they are the ones who have to live with it."

"Youth workers need a range of practice opportunities in working with individuals and groups. They also need, and I think this is very important, time to reflect on their practice and themselves as practitioners. Actually that's one area where I think part-time workers should be given much more support and encouragement - time for reflection."

"Those who support or supervise part-time workers have a responsibility to value them, listen to them, support their efforts, their risk taking and innovations. Encourage them to reflect. Really model the youth work process that you would expect from them in relation to their work with young people. The service's commitment to valuing people, honesty, trust, respect should be at all levels of the service. It's not just something we save for young people. It should be there for everyone."

The need for change

The implications of this thesis for the training and development of youth workers is far reaching. However, the need for change lies within the very practice of youth work itself, insofar as youth workers need to establish the 'moral authority' of those who 'practise what they preach' (Jeffs and Smith 1996:52).

"I suppose in the end what we are trying to do is to get young people to control themselves through making the right choices. Not just in terms of what we think are the right choices but the choices that are genuinely in their interest in terms of furthering their well-being. The best way to do that is that we also control ourselves, but you cannot do that unless you have analysed yourself. I think that's one of the most important things you should get from a training situation."

Also youth workers need some basis for resolving the various ethical issues, problems and dilemmas encountered in their work (Banks 1999).

"One of the problems is knowing what right you've really got to be talking about morals with young people. So for instance how can you talk with them about not taking drugs and then go off for a drink at the end of the evening with the other workers. I know that alcohol can be as harmful as any of these other drugs. Therefore, who am I to say, 'I'd rather you didn't do that' when I know that if that young man said to me, 'I'd rather you didn't go to the pub', I wouldn't take any notice of him."

Change is necessary because youth work demands it.

"We have created a monster in Wales and the monster in Wales is the curriculum statement. Because if you now go around and talk to workers about what they are doing they say,

'We're doing the curriculum statement for Wales'. And if you try to un-pick that a little more what they actually say is, 'What we do is educative, participative, creative and empowering'. And by repeating that mantra they actually frighten away the devils who really want to investigate what they are doing. And generally, that's the end of the conversation. There's no more after that.... Youth work is about working from that particular value base which is in itself a problem because firstly, we have difficulties in the articulation of those values and secondly, for many people ... they don't know that those values exist.... And actually having an opportunity to explore, challenge, question, debate, to analyse the value base of youth work is something that they have never had the opportunity to do."

Change is needed in youth worker training and development because, as Aristotle noted, the 'fundamental moral and intellectual activities that go to make up a flourishing life cannot be continuously engaged in with pleasure and interest unless they are engaged in as part of shared activities with others who are themselves morally good persons' (cited in Cooper 1980: 331).

"We live here and draw our strength from being a part of this community. We are known in the community and in holding true to our values we have earned the respect accorded to those who genuinely care about the neighbourhood and its people."

Change is needed because wisdom brings virtue and virtue brings happiness (Socrates).

"It's about honesty. If I can't be honest in the work relationship, if I have to suppress myself then I don't want to be involved in it. For me, it's as much about me as it is about the work because I like to feel that my work is an expression of me. It's my creativity and I have integrity within that. So I don't want to be involved in something that's going to diminish my integrity. Just doing something for the sake of doing it isn't part of my value system."

Change is needed because it is our human responsibility - 'The only worthwhile thing a person can do is to become as good a person as possible' (Confucius).

"Youth work is about making a human to human connection with young people and that adds a kind of spiritual dimension to the relationship. By this I mean a deep appreciation of humanness - of human beings contacting each other in a way that isn't based on who the other person is - just based on the fact that they are human and no other criteria. That the person has intrinsic value because they are another human being on the planet. That's not easy, but I think it can be taught given reasonable raw material - that is a worker who has some spiritual sense or value base of their own."

In the process youth workers will need to:

- Overcome their selfishness.
- Gain an awareness of the roots of their fears (of life or uncertainty), their sense of powerlessness, distrust of people 'and the many other subtle roots that have grown together so thickly that it often is impossible to uproot them'.
- Change their practice.
- 'Go out of themselves' into the world outside of their own egos. (Fromm 1993:119)

For in the end, true knowledge of oneself and others is liberating and conducive to well-being
(Fromm 1993:86)

Summary

This chapter analyses the interview data alongside relevant literature in order to identify the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by youth workers to undertake youth work practice as postulated in this thesis, and the implications of this for their training and development. In so doing, it reiterates the importance of communication skills and the ability to support young people through the cycle of experiential learning. The chapter also notes that youth work is underpinned by workers' understanding of young people's lives.

However, developing effective youth work practice is not simply about accumulating a comprehensive set of skills, nor about the personal characteristics of the worker, but rests on the youth worker's values. This is because youth workers' values impact directly on the work and create the basis for young people's moral reflections and exploration.

As such, youth workers need to develop ethical and reflective practice, not in the sense of adhering to a 'code of ethics' or guidelines for 'ethical conduct', but rather, as the essential foundation of interpreting the meaning of the concepts and values involved in youth work. This includes concepts such as education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity; and values such as social justice.

However, since reflection and discussions about principles and values are not merely intellectual exercises but should lead to action, the challenge for youth work training is how to support workers to develop their 'philosophy' in terms of a clear set of values (understanding of virtue) and 'habit' (disposition towards acting virtuously).

The proposition here is that in addition to the content of theoretical underpinnings (e.g. psychology, sociology, social policy) and practical skills (e.g. groupwork), youth work training should also engage workers in a personal development programme that involves 'disciplined discussion'. That is, a process, the content of which should include:

1. Serious discussion about values including getting people to see what it is like to live according to various value judgements (including the destructive effect of immorality on psychological harmony and integrity).
2. Promotion of sensitivity to others and the consequences of one's actions.
3. Discussion of moral rules and principles - e.g. respect for persons.

Such an approach would require a change in both the culture and structure of current youth worker training. However, in the end, youth work practice demands it since the need for youth workers' clarity and commitment in relation to their values is not simply because of the necessity to develop critical reflective practice or resolve ethical dilemmas. The need arises from the necessity for youth workers to be, themselves, well versed in the reflective and deliberative processes through which they seek to support young people.

8. THE FUTURE FOR YOUTH WORK

Introduction

The fundamental argument of this thesis is that youth work is a distinct activity in its own right. An activity that is different from other forms of work with young people - not because of its methods, 'curriculum' or 'target groups', but because of its core purpose, and arising from this, the particular kind of relationship that youth workers have with young people.

The three previous chapters have described and discussed youth work in ways that have enabled the production of clear statements about:

- What youth work *is*;
- What youth workers *do*; and
- The implications of this for the training and development of youth workers.

However, youth work does not take place in a vacuum. This chapter reviews the changing political climate within which contemporary youth work takes place, and considers the contribution envisaged for youth work and the Youth Service within the Transforming Youth Work (TYW) agenda and the Connexions Service.

Youth work and the emerging political agenda for young people

Over recent years, a range of allied organisations have become increasingly interested in youth work. This interest has tended to take two forms:

- Utilising the methods and approaches, which have been, over the years, consistently developed within youth work (e.g. groupwork, detached work).
- Enlisting youth workers to pursue, through their relationships with young people, the objectives and goals of these other organisations - focusing especially on work related to crime prevention, health promotion, and particularly, work with young people termed 'disaffected' and 'socially excluded' - terms which are, themselves, contested concepts. (Piper and Piper 1998)

The effect on youth work and the Youth Service has been twofold. Firstly, there is an increasing range of professional groups who now lay claim to some form of informal education that supports young people's personal development (Jeffs and Smith 1992). This includes, for

example, careers officers, teachers, probation officers, social workers, Youth Offending Teams, Drug Action Teams, Youth Inclusion Programme workers, Connexions personal advisers. This has both positive and negative implications in the sense that, on the one hand, it is flattering that other professions find something worthwhile in youth work methods and approaches; on the other hand, youth work has been gradually colonised by others who have different agendas and different criteria for success (Young 1998; Jeffs and Smith 2002).

Secondly, youth workers' have become increasingly involved in targeted work with young people as a direct result of the need to supplement dwindling local authority budgets with targeted 'external' funding - e.g. from the National Lottery Charities Board/Community Fund, European Social Fund, special government funding schemes etc. (Marken, Perrett and Wylie 1998). Obviously, there are benefits to be gained from this, not least of which is the chance to sustain existing work and develop new opportunities for young people.

However, the targeted nature of funding has effectively required youth workers and youth service organisations to accept the stereotyping and categorisation of young people proffered by different funding bodies. The result is that services and organisations, anxious to meet funding criteria, collude with the individualisation of the issues and problems faced by young people and contribute to their continued marginalisation - for example, whether young people are considered to be 'at risk', 'disadvantaged', 'disaffected' or 'socially excluded'.

As a consequence of both of these developments, youth workers and Youth Services/youth organisations have found themselves increasingly working to different agendas and expectations in terms of both the anticipated outcomes of their work and the criteria by which the success of their work is to be judged. This is problematic since, as Jeffs comments:

"The provision of quantifiable output measures for youth work is impossible; for who can measure the worth of a conversation, the value of an experience or the depth of an insight, on a scale of one to ten?" (1997:164)

Yet in a climate of anxiety about the 'job culture' and our 'troubled and troublesome' young people:

"Paradoxically, the mounting obsession with controlling underclass youth has created a minor upsurge in the demand for youth workers. New, albeit short-term, projects have blossomed. However, a price has been extracted, in that particular workers have had to abandon many of the gains achieved in recent years relating to their professional autonomy. Traditions of practice which sought to foster participation and an engagement with democracy have increasingly been jettisoned. Instead much youth work has either embraced, for self-serving reasons or an unquestioning belief in the inherent rightness of authority, authoritarian and

oppressive modes of practice. The educational *raison d'être* which underpinned alternative methodologies has been sidelined as intervention has increasingly been justified on the basis of crime prevention or the management of the socially 'excluded'." (Jeffs 1998:61)

Jeffs' view is that such approaches have two inherent dangers. Firstly, they narrow the client group and the focus of the relationship with young people. Secondly, they pit youth work against other means of crime management such as CCTV, private security firms and police officers - 'all of whom may be cheaper, have a higher and more acceptable public profile and be more capable of *proving* their effectiveness' (Jeffs 1998:61).

Indeed, as the evaluation of the Youth Action Scheme suggested (France and Wiles 1997) youth workers, whilst being able to attract such targeted funds, had little success in demonstrating how their methods did, or would, reduce young people's involvement in crime - a difficulty created, in part, by their reluctance to act, in their own perception, as agents of social control (France and Wiles 1997).

Notwithstanding, an increasingly explicit political agenda has continued to be established for youth work in terms of the Youth Service's contribution to crime prevention, drugs awareness, health education, helping to deliver the New Deal for unemployed young people and facilitating projects with young people as a part of the Millennium Volunteers scheme (Kim Howells, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Lifelong Learning, August and November 1997).

The Audit Commission (1996) also proffered a role for the Youth Service in crime prevention through young people's constructive use of leisure and other diversionary activities. And the national evaluation of the GEST funded Youth Action Scheme (France and Wiles 1997) suggested that the Youth Service should target its work on young people at risk and help prevent them from being damaged by crime. In addition, given that the Youth Service is considered to have a 'good track record of working with disaffected young people' (DfEE 1996), the New Start strategy included a key role for the Youth Service in the design and delivery of local initiatives for getting 'disaffected' 14-17 year olds back into learning (NYA 1997d). The Youth Service has also been charged with the role of:

- Being an active partner in facilitating links between schools and their communities; and
- Providing peripatetic specialist or additional staff, on contracts that recognise more flexible working arrangements within Education Action Zones. (NYA 1997-1998)

For the Youth Service, the message from government has become crystal clear and it is this. In order to grasp the promise to bolster its statutory base and resourcing, local authority youth services need to meet two conditions.

- Focus their efforts much more (perhaps primarily) on those young people who are pre-defined as excluded, disaffected or disadvantaged; and (in order to do this effectively)
- Increasingly work in partnership with other youth-serving agencies. (Davies 1999b:169)

Partnership

The drive for 'partnership' has, in fact, been a central plank in emerging youth (and other social) policy, not only in terms of the Youth Service being encouraged to contribute to 'joined-up' responses, but also as one of the main features of effective work - insofar as a feature of 'high performing authorities' is that they contribute to cross-agency youth strategy and strategic partnerships which support joint planning, development and provision (Marken, Perrett and Wylie 1998).

Clearly, there are benefits to be gained from partnership initiatives, not least of which are:

- Enhancement of the Youth Service's ability to provide meaningful experiences and opportunities for young people.
- Increased capacity of the Youth Service to support responsiveness of other agencies to the needs of young people.
- Improvement in the integration of services to young people.
- Increased capacity to attract funding.

However, whilst there are benefits to be gained from partnership work, there are also dangers. Significantly, these involve the question of shared goals, whether or not the youth service organisation is perceived as 'the agent' of the other partner(s), the extent to which youth work organisations compromise their values to meet the partnership's goals, and the question of which (organisational) culture will prevail. Interviewees involved in this investigation were well aware of such issues.

"Actually as a voluntary organisation we get more funding if we go for partnership money. But the problem with that is that you have to compromise your values. I've seen some organisations change their whole methodology and style in order to get money. I'm not saying that this agency hasn't been tempted but it's a bit like selling yourself to the devil."

“You have to be careful about the assumptions made by other agencies about what they think you are about. For example, we do some joint work with the local school with whom we share a client group and I think that there was some expectation on their part that we are sort of their agents so we have had to be quite quick to say, ‘No. This is what we are doing and this is what you are doing’, and pointing out that these were different and separate things even though we were working together.”

“The key thing about having a youth service is that it is called a youth service and is therefore there to service young people. Probation service is a law and order service. Social service is about the social welfare aspects of young people’s lives. That’s not to say that these other services don’t work effectively with young people, in their own way, but in terms of partnership the question is: whose values and culture will prevail? For example the youth service is currently talking about seconding a youth worker to youth justice. Why not have a youth justice worker seconded to the youth service? In that way, they will be working within a youth work culture with youth work values as opposed to the other way around. The important thing is that in any partnership the youth service needs to be clear about its aims and what its values are and not just see itself as pursuing the other agencies’ agendas.”

Yet despite youth workers’ and Youth Services’ own recent experience, some sections of the Youth Service have appeared determined on ‘*spinning* youth work into the new government’s agenda’ (Holmes 1997) by emphasising the service’s expertise in addressing the ‘urgent social issues’ of the day (UK Youth Work Alliance 1996); and urging the youth service to take an active part in the various government schemes for tackling youth unemployment, reducing youth crime and anti-social behaviour, promoting healthy living, supporting educational achievement and developing partnership between different parts of the public service (NYA 1998).

This is not to suggest that such issues are unimportant. After all everyone, including young people, is concerned about crime, adequate employment, meaningful education and social involvement. Indeed, the case for addressing the needs and aspirations of young people who are disadvantaged and/or estranged from education, training or employment is well made (Bentley 1998; SEU 1999). However, the crucial question is: ‘Does the Youth Service have its own objectives and contribution to make to such initiatives or is it simply to become the agent of other organisations’ goals and aspirations?’

Possibly, the answer to this question came in December 1999, not in the form of another Government review which Holmes (1997) hoped would, like Albemarle and others, combine knowledge and critical analysis from those both inside and outside of youth work to fashion a way forward; not in new legislation to secure the statutory base of the service as the Minister had promised (Howells, October 1997); but in the New Labour Government’s announcement of its

Connexions strategy for young people aged 13-19 years old who are out of education, training and employment.

Connexions

The Connexions strategy was described by the DfEE as a universal and targeted support service for young people aged 13-19, focusing in particular on those who are hardest to help including:

- Young people from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Young carers
- Teenage parents
- Those living away from home
- Those in care
- Those with learning difficulties or disabilities
- Those with emotional and behavioural problems
- Those misusing drugs and alcohol
- Young offenders.

The key aim of the Connexions Service is “to enable all young people to participate effectively in appropriate learning - whether in school, FE college, training provider or other community setting - by raising their aspirations so that they reach their full potential” (DfEE 2000:32). The eight key principles on which the Service is based are:

- Raising aspirations - setting high expectations of every individual;
- Meeting individual need -and overcoming barriers to learning;
- Taking account of the views of young people - individually and collectively, as the new service is developed and as it is operated locally;
- Inclusion - keeping young people in mainstream education and training and preventing them moving to the margins of their community;
- Partnership - agencies collaborating to achieve more for young people, parents and communities than agencies working in isolation;
- Community involvement and neighbourhood renewal - through involvement of community mentors and through personal advisers brokering access to local welfare, health, arts, sport and guidance networks;
- Extending opportunity and equality of opportunity - raising participation and achievement levels for all young people, influencing the availability, suitability and quality of provision and raising awareness of opportunities;
- Evidence based practice - ensuring that new interventions are based on rigorous research and evaluation into ‘what works’ (DfEE 2000:33).

Central to this strategy are the Connexions Service's Personal Advisers (PAs). Initially recruited from within existing organisations such as the Careers Service, Youth Service and Youth Offending Teams, PAs work directly with young people and are responsible for:

- Working with, or as part of, the school or college or training provider;
- One-to-one support and providing information, advice and guidance;
- Assessment planning and review;
- Working with parents and carers;
- Community support;
- Working with other agencies;
- Keeping in contact and monitoring individual progress (Wylie 2000 and Lawton and Wylie 2000).

However, what alarmed many Youth Service personnel was the early suggestion that local youth services would be somehow incorporated into the Connexions Service.

“The youth services both statutory and voluntary, already perform a range of valuable support functions for young people, and often undertake excellent outreach and personal adviser work. They will make an important contribution to the wider work of the Connexions Service. As part of their contribution to the Service, local authorities will be expected to incorporate their outreach and detached youth workers within the multi-disciplinary teams of Personal Advisers at local level. But, when devoting resources to the Connexions Service, it will also be important that local authorities preserve the wider work of youth services in their areas, and that these activities are integrated with the Connexions service. Such work includes centre based and residential activities with groups of young people, and that provided by voluntary organisations with local authority funding - for instance motivation/outward bound work. The Connexions Service will have an important role in ensuring that all youth service activity is effectively co-ordinated, coherent, and that gaps in provision are filled.” (DfEE 2000:52)

However, despite some back-peddling by Government officials, and reassurances that the Youth Service would remain a service ‘in its own right’ (DfEE 2001:8), the underlying intention remained the same in the sense that the Government’s plan to ‘radically transform and re-shape’ the Youth Service was based on the perceived need to transform the ‘low-quality, mediocre and downright dire’ provision being offered by the service (Crequer, 2001); and a desire to create the type of Youth Service it needed to “help us drive forward the range of policies impacting on young people, particularly the Connexions Service” (DfEE 2001:21).

Accordingly, the task, according to lifelong learning Minister Malcolm Wicks, was to ‘integrate’ the Youth Service into the new Connexions Service (DfEE 2001:16) through youth workers and the Youth Service playing a key role in:

- The development of preventative strategies for enabling young people to make informed choices about avoiding crime, protection from drug or alcohol related dangers, preventing

teenage pregnancy, healthy eating and living, achieving qualifications, securing employment, being valued and respected, contributing to the local community, taking full advantage of entitlements in a fair society, having access to a range of leisure time pursuits.

- Offering young people the chance to benefit from community and voluntary service (e.g. through Millennium Volunteers).
- Encouraging understanding and supporting the participation of groups experiencing discrimination.
- Developing relationships with young people 'at risk' so that they can intervene and prevent problems for young people in relation to drugs awareness, health issues, education, employment, accommodation.
- Providing a 'lifeline' for young people to joined-up support across local support agencies including social services, housing and the police.
- Contributing to strategies to prevent teenage pregnancy.
- Assisting in the development of participative and democratic models for young people to 'have a voice' in all aspects of the Connexions Service including design, delivery and governance; and wider (e.g. local youth councils, the new UK Youth Parliament, representation on local authority and community decision-making bodies).
- Becoming Personal Advisers.
- Contributing to the multi-disciplinary Connexions teams. (DfEE 2001:14-17)

Of course, state funded youth work has always been a target, and often victim, of changing social priorities and policy. As such, it continues to reside in that twilight zone between social education and social control. What gave 'Transforming Youth Work' its fresh twist was the insidious undercurrent in contemporary social discourse and policy that young people are a new 'underclass of rabble' (Jeffs 1998), a bunch of 'loafers and criminals' (Booth cited in Williamson 1997:76), and, as such, represent the 'new enemy within' (Jeffs 1998). Indeed, the gradual marginalisation of young people in social policy in the United Kingdom (Williamson 1993) has now led to a situation whereby young people have been firmly cast in the role of 'yob'. As popular mythology would have it, 'youth' represent the 'yob' culture that is on the verge of over-running civilised society because they have no 'stake' in it. As Jeffs notes:

"It is argued that the 'underclass' now poses a serious threat to the stability of society. Dealing with it has therefore become a central focus for this government as much as for its predecessor." (Jeffs 1998:58)

New Labour has been both swift and decisive in implementing its youth policy agenda across all areas of youth provision including schooling, employment and employment training, the judicial

system, social security and health. It has placed 'youth' at the centre of the Social Exclusion Unit's agenda and insisted on the development of 'joined-up' responses to young people at local level (Davies 1999b).

Whilst not challenging the virtue of 'joined-up' responses, it has become increasingly clear that the Government's attention to youth work and the Youth Service arises not from a commitment to addressing the needs of young people but rather from the desire to:

- Equip them with the 'skills essential to successful business and modern public service'
- Raise educational standards and 'tackle the modern scourges of street crime, anti-social behaviour and community conflict'
- Improve young people's self-esteem and relationship skills so that they will 'do so much better at school and in further education'. (Ivan Lewis's speech to the Association of Principle Youth and Community Officers, Tuesday 23 April 2002)

And indeed, this focus for the Youth Service (on educational attainment, the labour market, crime and community conflict) continues to be justified through the fashioning of young people as 'disengaged' from society; and the positioning of the Youth Service as the service best placed to give young people the skills to tackle:

- Disengagement from their communities and the democratic process
- Anti-social behaviour
- Inter-generational tensions
- Inter-community tensions (arising from cultural differences or religious beliefs)
- Teenage pregnancy
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- The demands of a modern labour market.

For as Ivan Lewis (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Young People and Adult Skills) told delegates at the 'Transforming Youth Work' conference on 18 December 2002:

"What is the service that has historically given young people those skills more than any other from its personal development work and its groupwork? It is youth service both statutory and voluntary. So that is the scale of the agenda, the challenges and I believe that youth services, working alongside others – the police, educationalists, social workers, have the answers to many of those challenges and many of those questions.

And then of course there is the Connexions Service and I want to make it very clear today again that we expect to work both within, and alongside Connexions. How it's done is a matter for you to resolve at local level, but it's non-negotiable." (www.nya.org.uk/ministers-speech.htm)

Yet whilst the Government sees youth work and the Youth Service as being 'at the heart' of the Connexions strategy, it also believes that youth work needs to be 'transformed' and the Youth Service 're-shaped' in order to play its role in the delivery of Connexions (DfEE 2001:8). Such transformation is considered necessary because:

"The nature and quality of youth services are too varied; the level of resources too uneven; too many services are rated as poor by OFSTED; there's a lack of consistency and focus on age ranges; and there isn't enough resource reaching the hardest to help." (Ivan Lewis, 18 December 2002)

Accordingly, the Transforming Youth Work agenda has moved forward swiftly and confidently in its mission to 'raise the quality of youth work' and consolidate the Youth Service's relationship with Connexions. This has involved:

- The publication of 'Transforming Youth Work Resourcing Excellent Youth Services' (DfES 2002a) - which provides the long hoped for 'statutory base' for the Youth Service in the form of a specification of local authorities' duty to ensure the provision of a sufficient youth service; and direction regarding a local pledge for young people, national standards of provision, the youth work curriculum, quality assurance processes and other matters.
- Development of a common planning framework (DfES 2002b) for local authority youth services.
- 'Working Together' guidance on the relationship and role of the Youth Service in Connexions (2002c).
- A reference pack of Quality Standards for Youth Work (NYA 2002).
- Introduction of a national programme of management training for Youth Service managers (developed by the Association of Principal Youth and Community Officers, the National Youth Agency, the University of Leicester and Ford Partnership Management working with the DfES Youth Service Unit and Connexions Service National Unit).
- Establishment of the Transforming Youth Work Development Fund (TYWDF) that provided £22m in its first year (2002-2003) and will provide £10m for the following three years up to 2006.

As always, times are hard and local youth services have been eager to submit their applications for the cash despite the fact that as a condition of the grant, local authority youth services are required to lead on the production of a comprehensive Youth Service Plan that encompasses all youth work undertaken by the local authority youth service (voluntary and statutory) and have it agreed with Connexions Partnerships.

A comprehensive Youth Service Plan at local level is not a 'bad thing'. It is potentially a 'good thing'. The rub is that in the process, local youth services must meet the main aim and objectives of the TYWDF which are focused on 'raising the quality of youth work' within the context of Connexions and the Government's broader policy agenda for young people.

As such, proposed youth work projects and innovations are required to (amongst other things):

- Enhance the engagement of young people in local democratic processes
- Celebrate diversity and promote community cohesion
- Combat youth crime and youth causing annoyance
- Build the capacity of the local youth service to engage effectively with Connexions. (NYA March 2002:23)

This brings youth work squarely within the parameters of the Connexions agenda - a position further compounded by the decision to bring the £2m Standards Fund Grant for local authority youth work under the umbrella of the TYWDF "for ease of allocation, management and monitoring" (NYA March 2002:24).

Admittedly, the Transforming Youth Work agenda contains recognisable aspirations for youth work, for example that:

"Youth work offers particular ways of learning, characterised by processes which encourage personal and social development and reflect wider social issues." (DfES 2002a:11)

However, this is couched in a broader framework within which youth work is seen, primarily, as offering young people ways of developing:

"the skills and knowledge needed for their long-term employability, including basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and an increased awareness of health and social issues such as drugs and alcohol education." (DfES 2002a:11)

Consequently, the notion of developing 'quality' is cast within these parameters – highlighting the needs of young people who 'experience a wide range of problems and acute crises in adolescence' including leaving school without qualifications; non-involvement in education, employment and training; homelessness; or being victims of a violent offence (NYA 2001:1). Raising the quality of youth work is therefore seen to demand a continuing need to:

- Develop the capacities and potential of all young people, through promoting their skills, self-worth, creativity and enterprise;

- Promote social inclusion through supporting more disadvantaged young people, re-engaging them in learning and enhancing their employability; and
- Encourage active citizenship and establish in young people an awareness of their rights and responsibilities to the wider community. (NYA 2001:1)

But this is not 'raising the quality' of youth work. It is a complete mutation of youth work from an activity concerned with the education and welfare of young people *as people*; and one in which young people (rather than, say, parents or even the 'community') are seen as 'the clientele' (Davies 1991:5) – to an activity concerned with the education and welfare of young people *as workers and citizens*; and one in which society and central government are seen as the 'clientele'.

Realistically, of course, they who pay the piper call the tune. But it is not surprising to discover that one worker responded on the informal education website bulletin board with the observation that:

“The Government has given us what we wanted, but also completely taken away what we are and do.” (Quoted in Smith 2003:15)

So, as welcomed as the injection of additional resources might be, along with the specification of statutory functions for local authorities to provide a sufficient youth service and the recognition of youth work values (DfES 2002a) – there is also a cautionary note insofar as the transformation of youth work requires that:

- All work with the 13-19 age range in each English youth service is to be 'integral to the Connexions Service' – as a key partner meeting Connexions objectives
- 60% of young people worked with in the 13-19 age range must 'undergo personal and social development that results in an accredited outcome'
- Work must be 'curriculum based' with clearly identified outcomes and targets
- Local authority youth services must meet annual targets for monitoring improvements in performance.

Thereby fuelling concerns about:

“the level of surveillance and bureaucracy involved. More detailed records will have to be kept on an increasing number of young people, so that participation can be accredited and the monitoring requirements of Connexions met.” (Smith 2003:15)

Thus, the long and the short of it is, that despite the fine rhetoric of personal and social development, youth work values and a 'pledge' to young people (DfES 2002a) the message from the Minister is clear:

"We want a high quality, well managed and properly resourced service that can make an even greater contribution to improving community cohesion, tackling anti-social behaviour and crime and overcoming alienation amongst young people." (NYA January 2003:25)

However, the motivation underpinning this vision of youth work's contribution arises not out of "a shift from voluntary participation to more coercive forms; from association to individualized activity; from education to case management (and not even casework); and from informal to bureaucratic relationships" (Jeffs and Smith 2002:57) – for these are mere symptoms. The vision arises from a 'breaching' of the 'definitional boundaries of youth work'.

"This movement is not simply a change within youth work – it is a leap away from it. It serves to remind us that we have allowed the definitional boundaries of youth work to be breached." (Jeffs and Smith 2002:58)

In other words, we have allowed the distinct activity of youth work to be eroded by the absence of a consistent, clearly articulated theory of youth work – a statement of the purpose of youth work – a statement of what youth work *is* and what youth workers *do*.

Actually, the writing has been on the wall for some time. I for one was firing warning shots in 1998, and in 1999 I wrote:

"Crime prevention may be an outcome of youth work. Young people may even decide to return to school or change their lifestyle as a result of their involvement in youth work. But this is a kind of side effect. It is not the main purpose of the work and those who maintain that youth workers can deliberately stop young people from stealing cars, taking drugs, getting pregnant, truanting from school, and all the rest of it are, quite frankly, unrealistically optimistic. Youth workers cannot be relied on to control young people nor to coerce or even win their acquiescence to the social and political status quo. And neither should they, since youth work is first and foremost concerned with young people's education not their subordination, indoctrination or indeed, recreation." (Young 1999b:1)

"And when we are clear enough to be coherent and articulate about the 'core' purpose of youth work. And when we are brave enough to no longer rely on subterfuge. And when we are bold enough to assert the value of youth work for its own sake. Then, and only then, will the youth service be equipped to confront the shifting sand and rising tide of the changing social and political agenda." (Young 1999b:7)

Summary

Over recent years, a range of allied organisations have become increasingly interested in youth work in terms of utilising the methods and approaches which have been consistently developed within youth work; and enlisting youth workers to pursue the goals and objectives of their organisations - e.g. crime prevention, health promotion etc.

This has resulted in a gradual colonisation of youth work and an increasingly visible shift within the Youth Service towards targeted work with young people. Therefore, in order to supplement dwindling local authority budgets with targeted 'external' funding, local youth services have both focused their efforts much more on those young people who were pre-defined as excluded, disaffected or disadvantaged; and increasingly worked within partnerships which enable them to contribute to cross-agency youth strategy, and joint planning, development and provision.

However, despite the Youth Service's mixed experience of partnership work, there has still been a determination by some sections of the Service to '*spin*' youth work into the new government's agenda (Holmes 1997) by emphasising the Service's expertise in addressing the 'urgent social issues' of the day (UK Youth Work Alliance, 1996); and urging the Youth Service to take an active part in the various government schemes for tackling youth unemployment, reducing youth crime and anti-social behaviour, promoting healthy living, supporting educational achievement and developing partnership between different parts of the public service. (NYA 1998)

The hope was that by acquiescing with the Government's youth policy agenda the Youth Service would earn some special attention, and eventually, a fulfilment of the promise of legislation to secure its statutory base. However, in 1999, New Labour's response was not to secure the Youth Service as an institution in its own right, but rather, to envision a future for the Service as integrated into its new Connexions Service; and a future for youth work as helping to "drive forward the range of policies impacting on young people, particularly the Connexions Service" (DfEE 2001:21).

Indeed, it is absolutely clear from the Transforming Youth Work agenda that, as far as the Government is concerned, the future of the Youth Service lies in its capacity to *transform* itself into a service capable of making:

"...an even greater contribution to improving community cohesion, tackling anti-social behaviour and crime and overcoming alienation amongst young people." (NYA January 2003:25)

Yet whilst Jeffs and Smith (2002) recognise that this shift is not simply a change within youth work but a 'breaching' of its 'definitional boundaries', I maintain that such a 'breach' has been able to occur because of the absence of a clearly articulated theory of youth work – a statement of the purpose of youth work – a statement of what youth work *is* and what youth workers *do*.

Youth work and the Youth Service may be too small, too insignificant and too powerless to stem the tide of social change in contemporary Britain. But we should at the very least take responsibility for attempting to preserve and give new life to all that was, and continues to be, worthy about youth work. But this will only happen when we are:

“...clear enough to be coherent and articulate about the 'core' purpose of youth work. And when we are brave enough to no longer rely on subterfuge. And when we are bold enough to assert the value of youth work for its own sake. Then, and only then, will the youth service be equipped to confront the shifting sand and rising tide of the changing social and political agenda.” (Young 1999b:7)

That time has come.

9. CONCLUSION

This current undertaking is time specific in the sense that it emerged from a particular historical moment following the Ministerial Conferences for the Youth Service, and the Service's failure to provide a clear and unequivocal answer to the challenge posed by the Minister in 1989.

“What I am looking for is not just a statement of general aims, or an expression of basic beliefs and values, nor a justification of the process the youth service adopts, but a clear consensus as to the practical outcomes – in terms of skills and experience – which the youth service, and only the youth service, can and should offer.” (NYB 1990:67)

At that time there were many who expressed opposition to the process to agree a ‘core curriculum’ for youth work which they saw as ‘a Thatcherite conspiracy’ (Jeffs and Smith 1990; Davies 1991); a mechanism for the ‘National Youth Bureau to secure its own future and increase its centrality in the scheme of things’ (Sawbridge 1991:27); and an insult to youth workers who experienced the debate as constantly being told ‘you do not know what you are doing’ (Cockerill 1992).

Although to be fair, Sawbridge did acknowledge the ‘courage’ of those who formulated, ‘in such an unsympathetic climate’, the ‘Statement of Purpose’ emanating from Second Ministerial Conference (1991:27); and Davies did concede that, in the end, the Statement was “an ambitious (perhaps over-ambitious) and, in historical terms, radical ‘official’ declaration of intent.” (1999b:134)

For my sins, mine was the pen from which the infamous ‘Statement of Purpose’ and principles had emerged, albeit re-drafted and re-shaped during the course of the second conference. And whilst I shared with others in the Youth Service some of the scepticism and sense of unease about the process, my naive belief was that the courageous formulation of a bold and ‘radical declaration of intent’ would, if we could agree it at national level, provide the Service with a solid mandate, a secure base and a clear focus for youth work in the years to come.

However, this was not to be. Soon after the second conference the Minister involved, Alan Howarth, was heavily lobbied by powerful interests in the service, especially those in the traditional voluntary sector, and within months he had both publicly distanced himself from the

process and moved from the (then) Department of Education and Science. By the time the third conference took place (some 18 months after the second) the then Minister, Nigel Foreman, was left with nothing to point to apart from "a greater sense of common educational purpose within the service - and an acceptance that it was determined to settle its fate locally" (Davies 1999b:135).

The 'core curriculum' initiative had died a death, or as Davies put it, had ended, not with a bang but with a 'ministerial whimper' (1999b:136). There were many at the time, of course, who felt relieved that the Youth Service had escaped what they feared would be a Thatcherite 'top-down' enforcement of a national curriculum. However, the reality was that our failure to agree, at the very least, a statement of the core purpose of youth work left the Youth Service exposed to further financial cuts and vulnerable to the managerialism that lay at the heart of the Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte review of the management of the Service that was to follow.

Admittedly, the process of the Ministerial Conferences did leave behind some remnants that took the form of debates within the Service, both locally and nationally, about the Service's values; and the formulation of new or amended statements of purpose, which embraced, if not the exact wording of the Ministerial Conference statement, then certainly its sentiment. Central to this were the four principles of education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity (NYA 1992) that have withstood the test of time insofar as, in 2000, the National Youth Agency reiterated them as the youth work values that should inform work with young people - albeit having added 'social inclusion' to the list (NYA 2000). These four principles also underpin the (January 2002) National Occupational Standards for Youth Work in the UK (www.paulo.org.uk).

However, the Youth Service's resistance to agreeing a statement of purpose in 1991 did not eradicate the need for such a statement. Indeed in 1998, Tom Wylie (Chief Executive of the National Youth Agency) suggested that:

"What would most help the youth service nationwide is a clearly expressed focus in respect of its core purposes, its primary target groups and the distinctive programmes and services which it should be offering." (Wylie 1998:25)

Yet despite the failure of the Ministerial Conferences to produce a nationally agreed statement of purpose and a 'core curriculum' for the Youth Service, there is now much talk of 'curriculum' - given its status as one of the specified elements of 'a sufficient local authority youth service'

(DfES 2002a). Interestingly, the list of practice principles originally developed by Davies in his challenge to the notion of a 'core curriculum' and his 'critical review of the policy imperatives behind the whole thrust for such a curriculum' (1991:1) is now presented (albeit slightly amended) as the 'distinctive set of values' that 'inform the shaping of a curriculum for youth work' (Merton and Wylie 2002:5). And it is these same values that are now seen to underpin youth work within the Transforming Youth Work agenda (DfES 2002a).

In the meantime, the Youth Service has found itself increasingly scrutinised by those both within the Service and those outside of it. For example, Smith (1988) having declared that social education no longer provided a valid explanation of youth work, proceeded, with Jeffs, to suggest that many of the special features of youth work were, in fact, shared with practice found in other areas of welfare and, as such, the interests of both young people and youth workers might be best served by "persuading other welfare professionals that the interlopers will make valued colleagues" as informal educators within "multi-professional and multi-disciplinary teams" (Jeffs and Smith 1992:16). Later, Jeffs and Smith proposed that:

"[since] 'youth' is almost exclusively employed to signify discussion of a social problem or behaviour being portrayed in a negative light.... [youth work is] ...entwined with a view of young people as being in deficit... [and therefore] ... the notion of youth work has a decreasing usefulness." (Jeffs and Smith 1998:50-61)

From the outside (so to speak) Kim Howells (then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Lifelong Learning) was busy observing that the Youth Service was:

"the patchiest, most unsatisfactory of all services that I've come across so far. I've never met such down-at-heart, can't do representatives as I've met of youth services throughout Britain...I think that the provision of youth service in this country is incredibly unfocused....I think that the training that's provided for the youth service is totally inadequate, they provide very few skills, I think in whole areas they've lost the skill to organise simple things like youth clubs..." (Howells 1998)

Yet, whatever the Minister might have thought about how simple it is to organise youth clubs or the skills needed by youth workers, the fact remained that the absence of a clear statement of purpose nationally agreed within the Youth Service, was to increasingly become the Service's Achilles heel - particularly in the rapidly changing political climate. For in the end, Howells' view that in order to put the Youth Service "on a proper statutory footing...we have to decide exactly what it is we want the youth service to do" (Howells 1998), was to be superseded, barely two years later, by the Government's announcement of the establishment of the Connexions Service - and later, a statement from Government about the role to be played by youth workers and the Youth Service in building and delivering Connexions (DfEE 2001).

The need for a clear sense of the core purpose of youth work as a distinct form of informal social educational work with young people has not gone away. Indeed, it may be even more pressing at this point in time as youth work is 'transformed' and the Youth Service becomes 'integrated' into Connexions.

The aspiration of this current work was to create a theory of youth work, that would explain the phenomenon known as 'youth work'; and provide a framework for making sound decisions about practice and the training and development of youth workers. Through interviews with 32 youth workers and young people and a comparative analysis of interview data and the relevant literature, the proposition here is that:

- 1. The core purpose of youth work is to engage with young people in the process of moral philosophising, through which they make sense of themselves and the world. As such, youth work is a process of reflection and self-examination through which young people increasingly integrate their values, actions and identity, and take charge of themselves as empowered human beings. Youth work therefore enables and supports young people to:**
 - Explore their values;
 - Deliberate on the principles of their own moral judgements; and
 - Make reasoned choices and informed decisions that can be sustained through committed action.

- 2. Through this process of moral philosophy young people learn and develop:**
 - Skills of critical thinking and rational judgement;
 - The ability to engage in 'moral inquiry' - about what is 'good' and conducive to the 'good life' generally - the ability which Aristotle (trans. 1987) called the development of practical wisdom; and
 - A disposition towards virtue (adherence to moral and ethical standards) - as a central feature of their identity and their responsibility as social beings in a social world.

- 3. What youth workers *do* is to make relationships with young people that support, enable and inspire them to:**
 - Engage in philosophical inquiry through 'conversation'
 - Learn from their experience
 - Cultivate virtuous expression through practise.

4. **Youth workers' relationships with young people** are voluntarily entered into by young people and are based on accepting and valuing young people, honesty, trust, respect and reciprocity.
5. **The implication for youth worker training and development** is that workers need to be provided with the opportunity for their own self-exploration, the examination of their own values, the development of their own critical skills and the enlargement of their own capacity for moral philosophy. This is crucial, not only for their own development but also, and importantly, in order to prepare them to undertake similar processes in their work with young people.

For in the end, adapting Louden's observation about teachers (quoted in Cortazzi 1993:5), youth workers do not merely deliver youth work. They define it, interpret it and develop it. It is what youth workers think, what youth workers believe and what youth workers do in practice that ultimately shapes the kind of experience and learning that young people get.

Against this backdrop, the four youth work principles can be re-stated to identify the learning and development gains for young people as follows.

- **Education:-** learning the skills of reflection, critical thinking, rational judgement and 'sensemaking'.
- **Participation:-** young people's voluntary engagement since moral philosophy is not an absent-minded exercise; and neither can it be hidden or coerced. For central to the educative process is the capacity for rational judgement by autonomous human beings - that is people capable of acting in accordance with reason and from their own free will, voluntarily as opposed to acting 'under compulsion or from ignorance' (Aristotle trans. 1987: 66).
- **Empowerment:-** young people making sense of their lives, integrating their values, actions and identity, and cultivating themselves as authentic human beings.
- **Equality of opportunity:-** young people examining their values; and learning how to find right action in particular circumstances and how to act from right motive.

For as Leigh and Smart commented:

"The objective is not to achieve liberty and justice, but to enable young people to deliberately and explicitly explore and understand such issues in ways which impact on their lives and how they live." (Leigh and Smart 1985:126)

Of course, all of this takes place within a context – a context that includes:

- Unique individuals whose experiences are mediated by their age, class, race, gender, sexuality, religion, (dis)ability.....
- Particular circumstances of different young people's lives - e.g. in relation to housing, personal and familial relationships, educational experience or rural isolation
- Particular issues faced by different young people - e.g. in terms of health or employment or poverty
- Particular interests of different young people - e.g. sport, music, the environment
- Particular aspirations of different young people - e.g. in terms of educational achievements, career choices or life goals
- Particular experiences derived from intersecting structures - for example of culture, economics, politics, religion.

Finally, the youth work process is not value-free. Since the intention is not to produce 'rational egoists' comfortable in their own cultural and historical contexts, but rather, to support the development of a 'rational form of morality' (Peters 1981) that combines the ability to reason with:

- The demands of consistency, order, clarity and relevance; and
- An appreciation of the experiences of others. In other words, a concern for their interests as well as one's own.

For in the end, the object of philosophical enquiry is not merely to know the nature of virtue but ourselves to become virtuous (Aristotle trans. 1987).

"Morality which is no particular society's morality is to be found nowhere... Aristotle is the spokesman for one class of fourth century Athenians, Kant... provides a rational voice for the emerging social forces of liberal individualism... Nonetheless, if some particular moral scheme has successfully transcended the limitations of its predecessors to date *and* has then confronted successive challenges from a number of rival points of view, but in each case has been able to modify itself in the ways required to incorporate the strengths of those points of view while avoiding their weaknesses, limitations *and* has provided the best explanation so far of those weaknesses and limitations, then we have the best possible reason to have confidence that future challenges will also be met successfully, that the principles that define the core of a moral scheme are enduring principles. And just this is the achievement that I ascribe to Aristotle's fundamental moral scheme." (MacIntyre 1985:265-270)

All of which may bring new meaning to the McNair Committee's comment that youth workers should act as 'guides, philosophers and friends' to young people (HMSO 1944:103) - a statement I have previously elaborated as:

“Providing a steer for young people through the philosophical enquiry into the nature, significance and inter-relationship of their values and beliefs, based on a relationship of true friendship - [following Aristotle’s definition of] - wanting for someone what one thinks good for his/her sake and not for one’s own.” (Young 1999a:82).

Original Contribution

The Youth Service has, for many years, laid claim to a form of informal education work with young people that supports their personal development and social education, and is underpinned by the principles of education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity. However, what has so far been absent is a coherent theory of youth work that examines the key concepts in the work, and demonstrates the relationship between them in order to create a framework for critically understanding what youth work is, its nature and significance for young people.

This current work represents such a theory. In so doing, it postulates a universal core purpose for youth work as engaging young people in the process of moral philosophising through which they make sense of themselves and the world. As such, ‘personal development’ is understood not merely in terms of the development of the individual but in terms of the development of the person – their sense of self, identity and the values that underpin their actions in the world. ‘Social education’ is understood not in terms of ‘life skills’ or learning about the world, but rather as the development of young people as social beings in a social world.

Crucially, the current work enables understanding of the interconnectedness of these concepts and the implications for practice. For example, in illuminating the intention of the youth work relationship, the function of ‘experiential learning’, the purpose of ‘conversation’ and the role of association.

The argument proffered in this thesis, therefore, represents an ideal of youth work, an ‘ought’ which has been derived from empirical work and documentary analysis based on:

- A semiotic perspective (an understanding that words form ‘signs’ and ‘systems of signs’ that carry meaning for members of the youth work community); and
- A grounded theory method of analysis based on the constant comparative approach.

The resulting theory represents a universal truth claim in much the same way as other universal truth claims have been made about the values underpinning youth work (Davies 1996), and the ‘key dimensions’ that characterise youth work (Smith 2002). But whereas so-called ‘values’

such as 'starting where young people are – with their view of the world and their interests' (Davies 1996) provide essential principles for good practice, they do not make clear the distinctiveness of youth work compared to other forms of work with young people. Similarly, few would dispute that youth work involves:

- Focusing on young people.
- Emphasizing voluntary participation and relationship.
- Committing to association.
- Being friendly and informal and acting with integrity.
- Being concerned with the education, and more broadly, the welfare of young people. (Smith 2002)

However, whilst such 'key dimensions' offer a comprehensive set of 'defining features' of youth work, again, they do not explain the distinctive contribution that youth work makes to young people's lives, and consequently, as the Minister put it, the contribution that: 'the youth service, and only the youth service, can and should offer' (NYB 1990:67).

Yet, whilst the advent of the Connexions Service and the march of the Transforming Youth Work agenda lead some to question whether the current circumstances could 'spell the end of youth work as we know it' (Smith 2003), I maintain, as I have for many years, that youth work cannot be preserved through attention to its 'curriculum', methods, target groups, practice principles or defining features, but rather through a careful discernment of its core purpose and underlying philosophy. It is this challenge that the current work has met.

The challenge ahead

There is an old slave tradition that I learned from my mother. And she from her's. And she from her's. And she from her's. And it is this. Remember where we have come from. And remember to tell those who come after you. It is that constant knowledge, awareness and appreciation of one's roots and history. It is finding one's place in that sense of community and continuity to which some interviewees referred. Indeed, it was Martin Luther King who asked, 'How can we know where we are going, if we do not know where we have come from?'

As the Youth Service lurches ahead into the arms of the Connexions Service, we need to remember that where we come from is a long tradition of work with young people that is fundamentally concerned with them not because they are 'troubled' or 'troublesome', not because

they are disaffected or socially excluded - but because they are young *people* in the process of creating themselves and the meanings that shape their identity, their lives and their actions in the world.

In making their contribution to the delivery of the Connexions Service, youth workers also need to remain conscious of the shifting emphasis of their work from a concern for the education and welfare of young people as *people* to a concern for the education and welfare of young people as *workers* and *citizens*. Indeed, Levitas' analysis of discourses of social exclusion reveals the extent to which the current 'social exclusion' agenda is constructed, in the case of young people, in terms of a 'young people-as moral underclass-in need of social integration' discourse which is underpinned by a characterisation of young men as idle criminals, young women as socially irresponsible single mothers and young people, in general, as:

- Moral and behavioural delinquents;
- Culturally distinct from the 'mainstream'; and
- Having no 'stake' in civilised society.

In addition, the 'social integration' of young people is conceived, predominantly, in terms of their inclusion in paid work, since work is "perceived as having social as well as moral and economic functions" (Levitas 1998:22).

"The solution implied by a discourse of social exclusion is a minimalist one: a transition across the boundary to become an insider rather than an outsider in a society whose structural inequalities remain largely uninterrogated." (Levitas 1998:7)

In the circumstances, the aspiration for this work is that it will help to:

- Re-vitalise and support the continuing development of youth work as a distinctive practice in informal social educational work with young people in contemporary Britain
- Clarify the differences between youth work and other forms of work with young people so as to inform the appropriate contribution of the Youth Service and youth workers to the emerging Connexions service
- Illuminate the ways in which current youth work training could be built on in order to enable practitioners to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to successfully engage in the process of moral philosophy that, as manifest in this thesis, is youth work.

For, in the process of transforming youth work, the best defence against incorporation is to have one's own clear sense of purpose, confidence in one's skills and integrity in one's values and actions.

Finally, given the question as to whether "we can claim with any confidence that profound and self-reflective youth work is what really takes place on the ground" (Williamson 2000:32), and it is a perfectly valid question, it seems clear that the ideal must be judged on its own merit. For whatever shortcomings may exist in current practice, the challenge must surely be to remedy them rather than to see the ideal as somehow less than worthy.

Yet, as ever.

"Never believe any spiritual teaching because it is repeatedly recited; or because it is written down in the scriptures; or because it has been handed down from teacher to disciple; nor because everybody around you believes it; nor because it has metaphysical qualities; nor because it agrees with what you believe anyway; nor because you can rationalise it. Don't believe it if it is a viewpoint which you need to defend and don't believe it because the teacher is a reputable person or because the teacher said so... Don't believe something because it's a tradition, or because everybody around you does it, or because it's written in a book, but only, the Buddha said, if you have inquired into it and found it to be useful and true." (Khema 1987:160)

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDES

For youth workers:

1. In what ways do you help young people to reflect on their values?
2. Why, in your opinion, is the relationship between the youth worker and young person important?
3. What are the features of the youth work relationship, which you consider to be fundamental to supporting young people's ability and motivation to understand and mediate their values?
4. What kind of situations and circumstances best support such relationships?
5. How does such an approach relate to the principles of education, participation, empowerment and equality of opportunity?
6. How is such a relationship and approach affected by structural factors? (e.g. inequalities related to race, gender, class, sexuality, disability)
7. What are implications for such an approach for the development of inter-agency initiatives and partnerships?
8. What personal and professional qualities, dispositions and skills would a youth worker engaged in such relationships with young people need to possess?
9. What are the implications of this for the training and support of youth workers?
10. Young people are often referred to as being in 'transition to adulthood'. What does this mean to you?

For young people:

1. What do you think the purpose of youth work is?
2. What do you get out of it? How does it make your life different?
3. How do youth workers help you to think about your values?
4. What's important about the relationship between the youth worker and the young person?
5. What makes the relationship 'good'?
6. What skills and qualities do youth workers need to be good youth workers?
7. Young people are often referred to as being in 'transition to adulthood'. What does this mean to you?

APPENDIX 2

LETTER TO YOUTH WORKER INTERVIEWEES

Dear

I'm really delighted that you have agreed to be involved in this project. Thank you.

As I explained on the telephone, this exercise is fundamentally about *what youth workers do* and how they conceptualise and understand their role and specifically in terms of the way they support and enable young people to explore their values – in the sense of helping them to reflect on their own moral judgements and make reasoned choices.

Central to this, I believe, is the relationship between youth worker and young person and specifically the nature and context of the relationship, which supports young people to:

- Become aware of and understand their values and beliefs
- Gain the critical abilities needed to mediate their values and beliefs
- Understand how their decisions affect their lives – in psychological as well as material ways
- Take charge of themselves as positive, rational (and moral) agents.

I am very much concerned with practice. So during my conversation with you I will be focusing on how, through your own practice (and that of your organisation) you enable and support young people to understand (and formulate) their values in the process of creating themselves and the meanings that shape their identity, their lives and their actions in the world.

From an editorial point of view – your interview will be tape recorded and I will extract quotations which I may then use. This collection of quotations will be checked back with you for any amendments and your approval. I will only therefore use quotations approved by you.

Obviously, you will not be able to see the context in which your quotations have been used until the first draft of the work is completed. However, I would be happy, at that point, to send you a copy to enable you to comment on the location of your quotes.

I hope all of this makes sense and is OK. A list of my main questions are attached. And, of course, it goes without saying that you are completely free to withdraw from the process if you wish to do so at any point.

Thanks again and I look forward to catching up with you on

Regards

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APPENDIX 4

APPROVAL/CONSENT FORMS FOR INTERVIEWEES

Please tick the boxes as appropriate

1. I have read the attached quotations extracted from my taped interview with Kerry Young and give my permission for them to be included in The Art of Youth Work

as they currently exist

as amended on the attached text

as amended on a separate attached sheet.

2. I consent to my name being included in the book and provide the following biographical details (50 words)

3. Please tick the box if you would like to receive a photocopy of the first draft

Signature:

Date:

Please return to Kerry Young no later than.....



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