The Nature of Youth Work in Northern Ireland:

Purpose, Contribution and Challenges

Dr Ken Harland
*Community Youth Work,
University of Ulster*

Dr. Tony Morgan
*Community Youth Work,
University of Ulster*

Dr. Orla Muldoon
*School of Psychology,
Queens University Belfast*

2005

Commissioned by the Department of Education

Department of
Education
www.deni.gov.uk

UNIVERSITY *of* ULSTER

Queen's University
Belfast

The Nature of Youth Work in Northern Ireland:

Purpose, Contribution and Challenges

Dr Ken Harland
Community Youth Work, University of Ulster
Dr. Tony Morgan
Community Youth Work, University of Ulster
Dr. Orla Muldoon
School of Psychology, Queens University Belfast

2005

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This study investigated the role of youth work in Northern Ireland in addressing social exclusion. Four focus groups and two in-depth interviews were carried out with 44 practicing youth workers. Findings revealed that youth workers are dedicated and committed to working with young people they primarily perceive as marginalised, socially excluded or experiencing difficulties that mainstream youth provision struggles to deal with effectively. Findings also revealed that youth workers place huge significance on the nature of relationship building between a youth worker and a young person. While this is fundamentally important, youth workers appear to experience difficulty measuring social progression or identifying concrete outcomes from their work with young people.

The study raises important questions about 'levels' of youth work expertise, practice and training that impact upon the status of youth work as a profession. Finally, the research findings challenge the Youth Service in Northern Ireland to comprehend and clarify the implications of delivering youth work outside its perceived traditional context, for example youth work in formal settings and in areas of community tension.

SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING YOUTH WORK

1.1   Introduction.

This study into the role of youth work in combating social disadvantage and low achievement was undertaken by the University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast. The research was commissioned by the Department of Education and carried out from October 2002 to March 2004.

An extensive review of the literature relating to research and practice in the area of youth work formed the first part of the study. The review discusses the purpose of youth work, the nature and process of youth work in practice and challenges currently faced by the profession. One key issue addressed was the role youth work in tackling social exclusion. Youth work's historical commitment to voluntary work as well as an interest in the welfare of young people has resulted in the evolution of a profession that primarily addresses many of the issues associated with young people in marginalised and excluded situations. The research involved interviews with a sample of youth work practitioners in the field of youth and community work, to ascertain in what way those working with young people addressed these social issues. This study proceeds by first examining current literature on the nature of youth work, its contribution to Northern Ireland society in tackling social exclusion, and future challenges to practice.

1.2   The nature of youth work

The transition from primary to secondary school, from education and training to the labour market and from the family home to independent living requires certain key skills. For some this process may be hampered by factors such as unemployment, a lack of social or educational skills, or lack of adequate housing. In such cases, young people may find it difficult to follow a narrow curriculum, not least due to factors such as, minimal parental support, poor earlier schooling or absenteeism. This group of young people, as Aristotle believed, need an education that can start where they are, identify their specific needs and proceed accordingly (Morgan et al, 2000).

Failure to provide opportunities to 'increase capacities' for these young people can lead to social exclusion (McCartney, 1999).

Structures such as school, established to educate and support young people, are often perceived as part of a system that has labelled these same young people as failures (Harland, 2001). For this reason, schools may not necessarily be best placed to meet the needs of this group. The Department of Education (1997) purports that effective youth work enables young people to develop a range of personal and social skills and understanding. The Youth Service in Northern Ireland aims to ensure opportunities for children and young people to acquire knowledge, skills and experience to enable them to achieve their full potential as valued individuals (Department of Education, 2000).

Of crucial importance is the quality of the youth worker's relationship with young people and the consequent influence on their learning and development. Learning can take place in planned and focused programmes, or it may be spontaneous through informal encounters with individuals or with groups offering programmes that attempt to meet the multitude of developmental needs of young people. Youth programmes aim to be flexible and relevant and ensure progression through what is being learnt. In many cases, the opportunities and experiences brought about by youth work are complementary to what young people encounter in school (Department Of Education, 1997). Whilst the nature of youth work appears identifiable, it remains a contested field of activity in the sense that there are different and competing views as to its fundamental purpose (Murphy, 1999). Williamson (1995) believes that there is a sequential process in all youth work practice beginning with a focus on the individual, leading to group formation followed by consolidation, growth and possibly concluding in the group effecting change for itself. According to Smith (2002) whilst there are many forms of youth work, it is possible to identify some key dimensions that have been present to differing degrees when discussing youth work practice since the early 1900s. These key dimensions include:

1.   *Age- related Youth Work.*
Youth work caters for specific age groups. In Northern Ireland the age range is 4 – 25 (Department of Education, 2003).

2.   An Emphasis on Voluntary Participation based in Positive Relationships.

Youth work ethos and process strongly emphasises that the relationship between the worker and the young person remains voluntary. As Jeffs (2001) has commented, the voluntary principle has distinguished youth work from most other services provided for this age group. The participant retains the right to freely enter into relationships with youth workers and to end those relationships when they want. Without a doubt, this voluntary principle has implications for the way in which practitioners work as it encourages them to think and work in more dialogical ways through developing innovative programmes that attract young people whilst appreciating they have the choice to leave a programme at any given time (Smith, 2002). As noted by Bamber (2002) if engagement and participation of young people cannot be assured, neither can the ultimate outcomes of the work.

The government has for the first time has officially recognised the role and value of youth work (DfES, 2002). Importantly however, as Ord (2004:57) argues, 'whilst on the one hand the government acknowledges the benefits of youth work, sadly, at the same time it is denying the main tool utilised for that benefit – the youth work process.' The importance of relationship has been an essential element of the youth work process. The ability to form appropriate and satisfying interpersonal relationships and education through relationships represents a central theme embedded within youth work practice (Smith, 2001). Smith (2003:79) warns however, 'organising youth work around concepts like outcome, targets, curriculum and issue' means there is a danger of losing relationship as a defining feature of youth work practice through a reduction in the amount of time youth workers spend with young people.

3.   A Commitment to Association:

Association has been an essential feature of youth work since its inception (Smith, 2002). According to Doyle & Smith (1999) association refers to joining together in friendship or for a given purpose. The Albemarle Report (HMSO 1960) highlighted the importance of association, maintaining that the primary aims of the Youth Service should be association, training and challenge. However, as Smith (2002) argues, the idea of association has become less prominent as individualised and specialised understandings of youth work have become more prominent.

4.   Friendliness, Informality and Integrity:

Smith (2002), in agreeing with Henriques (1933), believes that the success of youth work depends upon the personality, ingenuity, approachability and friendliness of the youth worker and their ability to engage informally with young people in a wide range of settings. Therefore effective youth work is a combination of an informal approach and the character of the youth worker.

5.   A Concern with the Welfare and Education of Young People.

Historically youth work did not develop simply, to 'keep people off the streets', or to 'provide amusement.' Training courses and programmes, discussions, and opportunities to expand and deepen experience have been an essential element of youth work since its beginnings (Jeffs & Smith, 1998/99). Furthermore, as Smith (2002) maintains, there are many examples of youth work providing a range of more specialised services for young people.

Given that youth work has historically been engaged with both education and welfare provision, it is perhaps not surprising that the principles underpinning youth work are now at the forefront of efforts aimed at tackling social exclusion in young people. Building capacity, as a central tenet of youth work, is defined by Kearney et al (1994) as the enhancing of both human and physical resources, 'a form of investment' achieved through the development of skills, experimentation with alternative procedures, and/or increasing adaptability to changing environments. Given that a large percentage young people do not achieve their full academic potential within the formal education sector, it is questionable whether the existing school curriculum delivers these capabilities to all pupils. According to Morgan et al (2000) Britain has one of the worst records in ensuring the transition from school to employment. In Northern Ireland, whilst A Level achievement is very good, pupils who leave school after GCSE's often have insufficient qualifications to gain employment. Further to this, the Department of Education (2000) stated that on average only 33% of those leaving secondary school in 1999 gained five GCSE's at A-C grades, i.e. the minimum requirement for employment.

A major challenge facing youth work and educationalists is the development of a new system to tackle the requirements of current times (Gallagher, 1995). Morgan et al (2000) suggest the development of a more inclusive education system requires the combination of formal and informal approaches. This will help guarantee

that all young people, in particular marginalised young people, have equal access to the best possible educational resources and opportunities.

A further differentiation of youth issues is presented by Jeffs & Smith (1999) who highlight the tendency among politicians and policy makers to talk about young people in three linked ways, i.e. as thugs, users and victims. They suggest that as thugs young people steal cars, vandalize other people's property, attack older people and disrupt classrooms; as users they take drugs, alcohol and smoke excessively, get pregnant to obtain housing quicker and only care about themselves; as victims they are unemployed, receive poor schooling and are brought up in dysfunctional homes. However, as Jeffs & Smith (1999) point out many of these undesirable behaviours, so often associated only with young people, can be displayed among people of all ages. For instance, whilst truancy may be viewed as a 'youth problem', absenteeism from work is a phenomenon that crosses ages, classes and backgrounds. Additionally, the typical association of soccer hooliganism with youth becomes meaningless when we take into account those appearing in court for soccer related offences. Young People Now (2004) talks about "modern folk devils" and how moral panics about young people have been a mainstay of society from Victorian times right up to modern day (Pearson, 1983).

The perception of youth as a 'threat' has led to a number of policy initiatives during the last ten years related to control and management (Jeffs & Smith, 1999). Some have involved increased surveillance. For example, there has been an increased use of close circuit television in shopping areas and entertainment areas specifically aimed at identifying problematic groups of young people. Not only has the perception of young people as a threat created a new way of dealing with youth issues, it could additionally be argued that youth work has been shaped and influenced by these policy changes and practices. Youth workers often find that not only are they influenced by the ideology that underpins these practices but have found themselves undertaking work in areas where young people congregate and appear to engage in behaviours that are perceived as deviant. For example, in response to concerns expressed by shop owners and police, youth workers have been appointed to Belfast city centre as detached workers to engage with young people on the streets. There is increasing recognition within society of the potential of youth work in addressing the perceived negative behaviour of young people. Crucially however, those who look to youth workers may have little understanding of the traditions or concepts which have

historically informed and shaped youth work practice. What they require is a solution to a problem. For example, hooliganism, petty crime, teenage pregnancy, anti-social behaviour – and they are willing to try youth work as an alternative to CCTV or to employing a private security firm. If youth work practices are to be used in this way, it is important that the educational principles do not become secondary to the "controlling" potential that seems to underpin them.

The placing of youth work in predetermined contexts such as school or other contested spaces may also change the fundamental impact and purpose of youth work practice. While demands placed on youth workers are likely to increase in future years as more professions see the potential that youth work approaches offer, the voluntary principle may be perceived by those seeking to monitor young people's behaviour as problematic (Jeffs & Smith, 1998/99). The introduction of coercion into the operation of youth work causes problems for youth workers who question whether or not they can do their job effectively where attendance is compulsory. As Hand (1995) points out, school-based work has sometimes developed 'negotiated programmes' or put forward an agreed 'contract at the start of the project' which blurs the voluntary issue. Indeed, much of the current school-based youth work is funded to target specific 'problem youth' such as 'truants', young people 'at risk' the 'disaffected' and those referred by teachers, parents or social workers (Jeffs & Smith, 1999). In such cases any type of coercion does not constitute voluntary participation. Banks (1997) highlights the dilemmas that youth workers face in deciding which is the more beneficial, to protect and control young people or respect their rights to self-determination. Young (1999) believes it is important for youth workers to keep focused on the fact that they do not work with young people solely because they are 'in trouble' or 'cause trouble.' Indeed, youth work programmes that focus on particular issues such as harm minimisation or alternatives to school, may be criticised for addressing the symptoms of the problem rather than the root causes of the problem (Morgan et al, 2000). In this context it is both unrealistic and unfair to construct youth work as a panacea to social exclusion or other contemporary social problems.

Jeffs & Smith (1998/99) argue that schools and colleges have become increasingly like fortresses surrounded with fences. Whilst this is often justified in terms of keeping danger out, more often they are erected to keep young people in. Furthermore, there has been a significant increase in secure provision for young offenders and a lowering of the age of imprisonment. Additionally, there has been a

movement towards the use of generalised curfews, what Jeffs & Smith (1998/99) identify as 'potentially a massive attack on the civil rights of children and young people.' Individual curfews, i.e. confinement in the home, are already commonplace. The practice of using general orders such as those which take place in many US cities and towns is being keenly considered. In Hamilton in 1997 a policing initiative was developed which gave the police the right to send home any children or young people who were found on the streets and did not have a satisfactory reason for being there. Not only are there increased forms of surveillance and confinement in schools and colleges, but more subtle forms are also present in education and training (Jeffs & Smith, 1998/99). Schemes where young people are encouraged to develop less anti-social behaviours have been developed focusing on activities such as drug abuse, smoking and sexual activity. The rationale being that it would be less costly if children and young people are taught to control themselves rather than having to spend money on external constraints (Jeffs & Smith, 1999).

Certainly, communities need to keep anti-social behaviour in check for the welfare and contentment of all residents. The introduction of anti-social behaviour orders (ASBO's) however, are a further example of government attempts to control young people. Admittedly, young people do sometimes commit crimes or display undesirable behaviour. However, it is not only young people who need to be restrained. There can be no justifiable reason for controlling people on the grounds of their age any more than on the basis of their gender (Jeffs & Smith, 1999). It is clear that people's difficulties are rarely due to their age but result from factors like poverty, family circumstances and housing. Youth workers experience ethical tensions in labelling young people as problematic as this compromises youth work's fundamental principles of non-labelling and non-judgemental approach.

Policy makers and funders need to be aware of the potential to change the way in which youth work has historically been practiced. A simple but stark example of this is youth work in schools or youth work within disadvantaged communities and flashpoint interface areas. Youth work approaches in these contexts clearly illustrate, implicitly if not explicitly, tensions between education as a means of social control, and youth work's emphasis on relationships.

1.3   Youth Work and Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is multi-dimensional involving the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of a person's life (e.g. Kilmurray, 1995). The Social Exclusion Unit defines social exclusion as a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. It is generally accepted however, that social exclusion is not just about material poverty; it also involves political powerlessness (Morgan, et al, 2000). Atkinson (1998) points to four elements that persist in any discussion of social exclusion, namely multiple deprivation, relativity, agency and dynamics.

Phillip & Shucksmith (1999) point out that viewing social exclusion as a process helps to contextualise the issue and leads on to looking at the underlying causes rather than blaming the victim. McBride (2000:7) argues that the 'stigmatism, particularly of young people, often leads to their disenfranchisement since society, labelling them as dangerous or lazy, tends to treat them accordingly.'

Despite the increasingly prevalent belief that UK society allows equal access and opportunities for all and that society is nearing classlessness (e.g. Jones, 1997), many employed people, especially the young, are poorly paid and have little job security. In contrast to the concept of classlessness, some commentators have used the term "underclass" to describe those who are socially excluded (Katz, 1993, Murray, 1994, 2000). Morgan et al (2000) maintain that the increase in social exclusion reflects a rapidly changing world wherein new issues and different manifestations of old problems pose challenges for national governments and alliances like the European Union. Saraceno (1997) claims that social exclusion is a post-modern phenomenon, not because the social inequalities are greater but simply because 'in contemporary societies, it is more difficult to find the reasons for social integration' (Saraceno, 1997:179). In this context the value of social interaction with socially excluded young people afforded by youth work should not be under-estimated not least because of its emphasis on relationship building.

Young people are the most vulnerable to social and economic forces which have caused disruption, unemployment, poverty and homelessness. Children and young people at risk from social exclusion include those from disadvantaged backgrounds, children with special educational needs, children in care, travelling children, teenage parents, persistent truants and those caught in an escalating problem of poor educational achievement and poorly paid employment (Youth Council for

Northern Ireland, 2001). The causes and consequences thought to be associated with social exclusion are often those processes and problems that youth work aims to address. The combination of youth work's traditional concern with the welfare of young people, together with the increased failure by the formal education sector to fully serve the needs of young people, has resulted in youth work being viewed as a vehicle for tackling social exclusion (Morgan, et al, 2000).

1.4   Core Youth Work Principles in Northern Ireland

In order to understand the philosophical and ideological concepts underpinning youth work in Northern Ireland, it is important to take cognisance of the core principles permeating youth work. The core principles laid down by the Department of Education (2003) are; a commitment to preparing young people for *participation;* the promotion of *acceptance and understanding of others;* and testing *values and beliefs.* These core principles underpin the personal and social development of young people and should be reflected in all youth work.

i.   Participation.

Many young people are excluded from life in Northern Ireland feeling they have no voice. In addition, they are often perceived as a threat or a problem to those in their community (Department of Education, 1997). Youth work challenges such perceptions by giving young people the opportunity to shape and develop their own experiences and to make decisions on issues relevant to them. Little occurs in youth work processes, group activities, programme design or meetings without the involvement and co-operation of young people. Young people are given opportunity to veto or approve processes or activities, to speak, to lead and generally to be involved in their own learning in a thinking and creative way. This proactive and inter-active approach, much more a feature of non-formal youth work than formal education and vocational training, enables youth workers to ensure equality of opportunity and offer encouragement, support, stimulation and facilitation for the development of young peoples potential. According to the Department of Education (2003) this concept of participation is a way of thinking and working which facilitates collective decision making by young people and promotes personal and social development. Crucially however, participation has different meaning in a school

setting as opposed to a youth work setting. This ambiguity can cause difficulty for both teacher and youth worker when both approaches attempt to work together.

ii.   Acceptance and Understanding of Others.

It is increasingly recognised that youth workers possess a unique blend of skills, knowledge and experience that is particularly effective in building meaningful relationships with young people (Harland, 2001). One of the most powerful influences in encouraging young people to engage in potentially contentious work is the trust they have with the youth worker. It is important that youth workers are aware of their potential to communicate to young people the values of compassion, understanding and acceptance of others. Youth workers have huge potential to serve as alternative role models and by their example can encourage these values both in the young people they are immediately involved with and other young people in the community. By doing so, youth workers can help young people achieve a broader understanding and tolerance of issues such as sexuality, disability and tradition (Department of Education, 1997).

It must be realised that within Northern Ireland youth work takes place within 'the context of a legacy of violence and communal strife, along side other issues that affect modern society' (Department of Education, 2003:16). The promotion of acceptance and understanding of others, whilst important in the shaping of a youth work curriculum, must be seen within a broader framework. Equity, Diversity and Interdependence (EDI) are widely recognised as the underpinning values of a pluralist society and permeate the values set out in the Youth Service Policy Review (Department of Education, 1999). Acceptance and understanding of others is a principle underpinned by EDI and involves enabling young people to respect themselves and others. It seeks the appreciation of the difference between, and interdependence of people within, society and builds upon community relations practice developed in response to conflict in Northern Ireland since 1969.

iii.   Values and Beliefs

Youth work provides an opportunity for young people to explore and question the origins of their values and beliefs through group discussions into the opinions and beliefs of others. Youth workers can help young people gain understanding through discussing moral and spiritual issues, values such as "right and wrong", honesty, truth,

integrity, rights and responsibilities, respect for other people and their property (Department of Education, 1997). Youth work offers young people a chance to ask questions, explore various issues and arrive at their own conclusions albeit in conjunction with accepting responsibility and awareness about what this means to both themselves and the wider community.

1.4   Conclusion

It is clear from literature that youth work is a complex, diverse and value-driven profession that has young people at the centre of its practice. It is perhaps best viewed as a range of activities based on a number of underlying principles that have a core aim of enhancing the personal and social development of young people. This aim is achieved by focussing on three inter-related objectives, viz., preparing young people for participation and citizenship, promoting their acceptance of others and developing personal values and beliefs. The provision of these "curricula" is guided by a number of key youth work practices. These include voluntary participation, commitment to association with others involved in the programme, informality and integrity, and a concern for the education and welfare of young people.

The literature concludes by identifying some of the key challenges facing youth work in Northern Ireland. These include challenges to the principle of voluntary participation, the challenges presented through working more closely with the formal education sector and other contexts outside traditional youth work, and the challenges of finding more appropriate and realistic responses to the increasing demands on youth workers to resolve social problems amongst young people. Perhaps the biggest challenge however, will be in measuring up to societal expectations of youth workers without compromising the fundamental and historical principles upon which youth work has been built.

SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY

Introduction.

The aims of the research.

The central aim of the research process was to investigate, using a qualitative strategy and appropriate research methods, the role of youth work in combating social disadvantage and low achievement. As the practice of youth work, by its very nature, allows a degree of vagueness about its aims and objectives or any prescription about its outcomes the research strategy was based on the need to interview key respondents who had years of experience in the field of youth work. This in-depth analysis would lead to a categorisation of relevant information related to the topic of investigation and, after careful scrutiny of the data, produce a set of themes that could be illustrated by data extracts. The two methods of data collection were focus groups and interviews.

The sample.

The sample was chosen from youth and community workers who were experienced and currently practicing in the field of youth and community work (see appendix 1) from a diverse range the agencies representing both a rural/urban mix, a gender balance and statutory/voluntary sectors. All these workers had youth work experience and were interested in the meaning, perspectives and understandings of youth work. They could allude to the process of youth work practice and would express their own epistemology, as practitioners, about the world of youth work.

Qualitative research.

The researchers adopted a qualitative approach using four focus groups followed by two in-depth interviews (see appendix 2) with both working in disparate youth work worlds, i.e. youth work within a community that involved violence between conflicting young people (at a sectarian interface) and youth work in schools. One respondent was a male and the other a female. The two projects were chosen to

see if a model of youth work practice could be deduced from youth work outside the norm and outside of traditional practice. This research approach was chosen because the researchers knew they would be dealing with complex issues that were beginning to evolve from their review of relevant literature and through informal discussions with experts in the field of youth work.

The use of focus groups.

The research team used Wilson (1997) model for focus groups which outlines the following common elements:
- a small group of 4-12 people;
- a trained researcher/facilitator/moderator;
- meeting of between 1-2 hours;
- selected topic(s) identified;
- a non-threatening environment;
- an exploration of participants' perceptions, attitudes, feelings, ideas and encouragement and utilisation of group interactions (Wilson. 1997:211).

This research project contained 4 focus groups made up of male and females, statutory and voluntary youth and community workers from around Northern Ireland, all with a vast amount of experience and understanding about issues associated with the aims of this research.

Focus group process.

The groups focussed on a number of key areas (see appendix 3), namely how these workers defined youth work, how the effectiveness of youth work could be monitored, how thy understood the essential skills needed for effective youth work, how learning is achieved in youth work contexts and how youth work can tackle social exclusion and encourage economic development. The groups were conducted by an experienced facilitator and a second researcher was also present to take notes in line with current best practice. All focus groups were taped and subsequently transcribed.

The aim of this qualitative approach was to probe the understanding of youth work as conceptualised and practiced by experienced workers. However, while the strength of this approach is the development of a group conversation that may use naturally occurring language, the situation is, to a degree, contrived and the researcher, as catalyst, may unwittingly influence responses, changing meanings, redirecting the course of thinking, or even creating a stilted and artificial atmosphere which can inhibit full and frank responses. To this end the researchers were mindful of the need to feedback to the group what it is they thought they were saying. Additionally, they followed up the focus groups by sending all the participants transcripts of the outcomes for them to comment upon.

In-depth interviews.

The two in-depth interviews were central as part of the triangulation process in that the researchers followed up aspects of understanding and themes emanating from the focus groups. The two interviewees had been in the field of youth and community work for many years and were currently involved in practical fieldwork situations involving youth work outside what would be termed traditional. The interviews were semi-structured, thus allowing a clear set of questions (see appendix 4) to be asked while allowing for probing if necessary. The interviews were taped and analysed by all three researchers for triangulation of understanding and to increase validity and understanding of answers. The central aim of the interviews was to look for experience and feelings about the role of youth work and to explore sensitive issues. The end product resulted in the researchers being presented with very privileged information from two passionate practitioners who were working in difficult situations and who articulated the complex nature of both youth work and its role in a changing society.

Analysis of findings.

Full transcripts of the interviews, together with the notes made during the focus group discussions, were then read and reviewed by a third researcher. Recurrent themes were identified in this way. Other themes evident in some, but not all of the

transcripts, were also identified. The two researchers present at the focus groups and interviews then reviewed these themes. This provided a form of triangulation that aimed to ensure that the analysis provided an adequate reflection of the issues discussed.

2.3   The Verification process

A number of useful approaches have been employed in previous investigations by qualitative researchers which can be used both to guide the progress of research, to assist in its evaluation and to verify findings. To this end respondent validation and reflexivity (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997) were incorporated into the study. Certainly issues of credibility and trust are crucial to the acceptance of qualitative methods. Griffin and Phoenix (1994) assert that researchers conducting research face a dominant set of assumptions that can be difficult to overcome. Quantitative methods and the use of statistical analyses are the norm, and the use of qualitative methods for data collection and/or analysis can be viewed as an easy option, and of less value and credibility. Thus much effort has been made to enhance the credibility of this method and to ensure that the analysis presented is an accurate and honest representation of views and opinions in the focus groups.

In order to establish the extent to which participants agreed with the findings, participants were sent a written summary of results. This allowed participants to comment upon the findings and validate the interpretation and analysis of the researcher. In the first instance, a brief synopsis of the analysis was circulated among the relevant groups. In particular, participants were asked to comment on whether they felt their views were represented in the report, whether they had similar concerns regarding the challenges facing youth work, and whether they believed that important issues had been omitted. Participants were also encouraged to comment on any other pertinent issues. A covering letter was included to explain the purpose of the process and participants were made aware that their responses could be anonymous. Stamped addressed envelopes were enclosed and participants were thanked again for their help.

SECTION 3: FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

3.1 Defining youth work.

Participants from the four focus groups had difficulty defining youth work and in general there was no specific agreement or definition of youth work. Typically youth work was perceived as:

"Helping young people develop"… "personal development" … "helping socially disadvantaged young people" … "providing opportunities for young people" … "empowering young people" … it's about citizenship education" …"encompassing everything from education to personal and social development to employment" … "it's about self-esteem"

Whilst there was no all embracing definition of youth work, there was however consensus in all groups about what youth work was not. In many ways, it was easier for participants to define youth work by stating what it is <u>not</u> rather than what it is. For instance:

"Youth work has a different approach to formal education. It is applied differently" …"youth work is not about doing things for a young person, but doing things with a young person." Other participants stated: *"it's not like formal education or carried out for a set period of time" … "you can't work with young people alone, you've got to work with communities"… "youth work is not about controlling young people"… "I don't think it's clear what youth work is."*

Many participants believed that the formal education system had failed a considerable proportion of young people and youth work often played a valuable role in supporting those young people who were struggling at school. For example, several participants stated that youth work targeted: *"young people who have had bad experiences in the educational system"… "those whom the school system has failed"…"young people who leave school with no qualifications and live in areas of high social deprivation with little chance of getting a job."*

Emerging from the interviews was an implicit assumption that the school system was failing many of the young people that these practitioners engaged with. Participants discussed how youth work educated young people in skills that are not necessarily covered in the formal system. For instance one participant stated, "*Youth*

work is about trying to prepare someone for life and helping them see and understand their role in society."

A key theme evident in each of the interviews was the value of youth work in empowering young people. Every participant believed that youth work was particularly well placed to support young people to take control of their lives. Principles of empowerment and young people taking control were perceived as key aspects of all youth work practice. One participant stated: *"It is about empowering young people to make their own decisions and you are there to facilitate thi*s." While several participants linked principles of empowerment to citizenship education, they struggled to articulate exactly what this meant: *"Citizenship is presented as a key aspect of youth work but it's hard to define."… "I don't think youth workers really understand what citizenship education means."* Despite being unclear about specific definitions participants strongly believed that youth work played an important role in developing young peoples' confidence, self-esteem and self-belief.

Respondents frequently referred to the lack of vision, focus or direction in the lives of the young people they worked with, and their desire to help these young people develop real autonomy was almost tangible. Although the youth workers worked with young people from a variety of backgrounds, they perceived themselves as primarily working with marginalised young people from socially disadvantaged communities: *"youth work is primarily concerned with helping socially disadvantaged young people develop life coping skills and confidence."* Disadvantaged young people were typically perceived as those most often failed by the formal education system. For young people like this, the voluntary and non-obligatory aspect of youth work was perceived as crucial to the youth work process. Imposing attendance requirements were deemed counterproductive as it removed the locus of control from the young people. One participant stated: *"An important aspect of youth work is that it is not obligatory and young people have a choice. You can never say this is what we are going to do for the first six weeks because after three weeks a young person may choose not to be there. So your goals must suit the needs of young people and be appropriate to what they want."* Strikingly, the voluntary and participatory nature of youth work with its person-centred focus was seen as fundamentally opposed to approaches within formal education.

3.2   The nature of youth work

There was strong agreement that youth work should be 'process' rather than 'product' orientated and be rooted firmly in the nature of relationship between the youth worker and a young person. This focus to the work was evidenced by the fact that participants had difficulty articulating how youth workers set their goals when undertaking youth work. Repeatedly youth workers stated that they primarily focused on building relationships with young people rather than specific or measurable outcomes. One participant stated *"youth work is definitely a process; there is no specific beginning or end. How can you say at the start what the end result will be? If a young person is empowered then he or she will decide the outcomes."*

The process within youth work was seen to be contingent on the quality of relationship between a young person and a youth worker. Although most youth work was primarily carried out within groups, the work also had an important individual focus. Participants believed that time spent with young people and building trust were crucial factors in this relationship. One participant illustrated this belief as follows:

"In our literacy programmes, the first thing you have to do is develop a relationship with that young person. It is very embarrassing for a young person to say, "I don't know my alphabet," or," I can't read a dictionary." So a rapport is crucial so that you can work together. The needs of every young person are different so you need a different relationship with every young person you work with."

When asked were there specific stages in youth work, respondents highlighted a number of elements in the process that were deemed important rather than identify specific stages. For almost every respondent the importance of establishing a meaningful relationship between the youth worker and a young person was the first and most fundamental stage. The notion of relationship was the essence of youth work:

"Building relationships is the most important aspect of youth work. It starts with this and everything else depends on how comfortable a young person is with you. The next stage is to consolidate the relationship. When the relationship is stronger you can begin to challenge the young person in a constructive way and identify what for them are the key issues."

Whilst the majority of participants perceived that meaningful relationships were crucial to the youth work process, many struggled to articulate the purpose of youth work beyond the relationship phase. Workers found it difficult to offer an overall model

of youth work that incorporated patterns of progression, specific content that would facilitate progression and an evaluation process that would help identify, even quantify, hard evidence that empowerment and autonomy have taken root in the young person. Indeed, the majority of workers did not appear to think it was important to try and determine what the next phase would be: *"young people define for themselves what they want from the relationship."* Statements such as these revealed the extent to which youth workers were struggling to define their interventions with young people in terms of products and 'hard outcomes.' For these youth workers products and outcomes were always secondary to the youth work process and its unique emphasis on relationships. One respondent expressed concern that youth work was *"moving dangerously away from informal to formal education."*

A second important learning or guiding principle in youth work was seen to be positive role modelling. Many youth workers believed that young people often did not have access to available, interested and alternative role models. Rather, in communities that experienced high levels of social deprivation, anti-social behaviour and paramilitary influence, the young people they worked with were more likely to be exposed to negative role models. In contrast, respondents believed they had unique opportunities to be positive role models for the young people they worked with. One youth worker stated: *"In the communities where I work young people rarely look to adults or parents for support. They have little access to positive role models and feel left to their own devices. Through our relationship with young people we can become positive role models to them."*

A third element seen as a central guiding principle in youth work was related to flexibility and creativity. Respondents believed that a hallmark of youth work was a willingness to find and use alternative solutions to problems that young people might encounter. Once again the process was deemed more important than the identification of specific measurable aims and objectives: *"All the young people I work with are different and at different stages of development so you have to work with each person differently. Our programmes try to reflect this difference. This is important, particularly when someone is fragile."* Another participant stated, *"you need to be flexible and use creativity. There is no one way of doing youth work"*

The flexible nature of the youth work approach was evident in each of the focus groups. Whilst participants were convinced that learning for the young person occurred from early in the relationship, the approach was typically flexible to suit the needs of

the young people they worked with. One outcome of this was that youth work appeared to take place within a very loose framework. Despite this, participants were not necessarily concerned that they could not articulate what occurs beyond the relationship phase of youth work. Indeed, they believed it was this 'looseness and flexibility' that made informal youth work approaches unique and distinct from formal education.

Respondents were suspicious that the notion of curriculum was linked to products associated with formal education rather than processes associated with youth work. Whilst many of those interviewed agreed that youth work might benefit from a form of curriculum, even if it was simply to *"stop workers going off on a tangent,"* there was general agreement that youth work practice should always be guided by fundamental principles rather than a curriculum. Some of these principles were related to issues of control and empowerment. Others included matters specifically related to the process orientation in youth work and the importance of a person-centred ethos. Reference was made to the effects that being labelled as failures at school had on children and young people. Youth workers felt that this type of labelling was particularly damaging and should be avoided by youth workers at all costs. One participant stated: *"This is where non-formal education differs from formal education. We are not trying to get a specific number of people through an exam. We don't call them failures if they don't achieve a specific grade. This is a pessimistic orientation whereas youth workers have an optimistic outlook even when young people don't reach certain standards. We don't label people as they do in school. Some may think this is simply naïve but for me this is the core of youth work."*

Participants perceived the majority of young people they worked with as disadvantaged and having limited opportunities within the family, school and the wider community. Several participants stressed that sometimes they worked with young people from middle class backgrounds and it was important to acknowledge that, *"every young person has specific needs."* For the majority however, their work was with young people they perceived as on the *"margins of society"* and *"young people who have experienced the worst of sectarian and community violence"* and *"young people who were failed by the school system."*

Participants believed that while many young people possess *"huge amounts of untapped energy, creativity and potential,"* in many inner city and rural areas there are few opportunities for them to express this. Participants spoke of *"innovative and creative approaches"* to engaging young people through art and drama and suggested

that it was this flexibility and originality that made youth work so effective. In the words on one respondent: *"We create environments that are an alternative to school. Young people feel they are in control and get involved because they want to rather than being forced."*

3.4 Youth work and social exclusion.

One important aspect of the focus groups was the fact that participants perceived themselves as working in some capacity with young people who were socially disadvantaged. For many this was fundamental to why youth work was so successful in Northern Ireland. One participant suggested that, *"youth work has been going on all through 'the troubles.' The are many excellent examples of youth work going on behind the scenes and picking up the pieces of young peoples lives and supporting them to understand issues that no one talks about such as violence, sexual and mental health."* The majority of participants worked in inner city and rural areas with young people typically aged 12 – 25. Many of the youth workers' programmes were specifically set up to address issues of social exclusion and anti-social behaviour. For example, participants worked with the unemployed, homeless, ethnic minorities, young people underachieving at school, young people involved in crime, joy / death riders, teenage mothers and young fathers, young people abusing drugs and alcohol, young people with behavioural problems, young people with mental and sexual health problems, young people identified as marginalised within communities characterised by paramilitary influence, sectarianism, violence and marital breakdown. Typically the work took place in contested spaces such as interface areas, city centres, on the streets, schools, parks and in communities with little or no youth provision. Notably, it was in discussing these issues that respondents appeared most passionate and energised.

Some workers felt that this focus to youth work has been determined by the changing social and political context in Northern Ireland as the result of over thirty-five years of sectarian violence and political unrest. Initially, and to some extent more recently, Youth Service provision was primarily centre-based and located in the heart of communities. This trend has radically changed recently with many professionally trained youth workers perceiving themselves as doing more 'specialist' project and outreach work using a variety of bases, leaving youth centres to be run by indigenous part-time youth workers. Whilst the impact of this shifting trend has not been fully

measured, there are many who believe that youth work in Northern Ireland has naturally progressed from being a *"centre-based provision to a community based provision."* While some perceived this as a necessary shift, others believed that youth centres were a valuable resource to local communities and their demise was detrimental to local communities. There was general consensus however that the nature of funding has played a key role in the direction that youth work has taken over the past decade. For some participants this was not necessarily in the best interest of young people: *"In order to get funding now you have to demonstrate ways in which you are working with 'disadvantaged young people.' This has meant that the focus of youth work has switched from a focus on all young people to a focus on disadvantaged young people. The danger therefore is that youth work becomes issue focused rather than young person focused."*

There were participants who still perceived themselves as providing 'traditional' youth work in youth centres. Typically however, these participants were local people who are not professionally qualified and are either working voluntarily as a youth worker or working part-time several afternoons or evenings per week. In contrast, the majority of professionally trained youth workers did not work in 'traditional' youth centres. One participant spoke of how youth work has changed over the past number of years: *"In the past youth workers typically worked alone in a youth centre with part-time staff. Today there is much more emphasis on partnerships and working in the community with marginalised young people. It is good that the skills of youth workers are more appreciated by agencies such as Probation, Health Boards and even in schools. The danger is however, that youth workers are expected to be experts in these areas. It's good that things are changing but I'm not sure that youth workers can be all things to all people."*

Others felt that the value of youth work has never really been fully appreciated. For example: *"Youth workers have always worked with young people on the margins of society. The work that has been achieved in community relations and providing young people with essential life and social skills has never been recognised or fully appreciated. Youth work has always been the poor cousin of formal education." … "I think that youth work helps young people develop coping skills. There are many young people who are struggling and feel depressed and have no one to talk to."…. "Youth workers can reach young people who slip through the net. The problem is no one appears to appreciate this apart from the young person you are working with."… "In*

the community where I work lots of young people fail the 11+. As youth workers we can help young people see that they have other skills and abilities."

3.5   Assessing the impact of youth work

Each focus group was asked how youth work could be measured. This issue elicited a wide range of opinions and strong views. The majority of participants believed that the effectiveness of youth work *"could not and should not be measured.'* Others believed that its effectiveness was often self-evident. For instance: *"I think working with young people in groups you can see development and growth even if it is just they are getting on better with each or showing more confidence….. You can measure it, but it is very, very hard to put it down on paper."… "Youth work has been criticised because we can't measure outcomes. But how can you measure personal development or the impact that the work has had upon a young person. Sometimes it's only years later that a young person realises the benefit they have had from being involved in youth work programmes."*

This difficulty in measuring the impact of youth work was reflected in what many participants believed should be assessed as potential outcomes. Some believed it was difficult to be *"absolute"'* about achievements whilst others believed there were long-term benefits for young people. Conversely, others thought it was best to think about youth work in terms of short term goals stating *"you meet the needs of a young person at a given point in time and maybe that's all they want."*

Two key markers of achievement in terms of youth work frequently mentioned were levels of participation both in terms of frequency and duration and the extent of relationship with young people. For example, one participant stated, *"We measure the number coming through the door. We know how many young people attend and their involvement in the club"* Another stated *"as a detached youth worker we can measure how many young people we come into contact with."* These indicators should not be under-estimated as they may be particularly valuable given the non-obligatory nature of youth work and the relationship-basis of its purpose in socially disadvantaged areas. Considering that many of the groups targeted by youth workers are the most disadvantaged and excluded from mainstream society these indicators are perhaps of more value than might appear on the surface.

Each participant stressed how difficult it was to evaluate youth work – often to the extent that they appeared awkward in their attempts to measure their intervention:

"Youth work is much harder to measure than formal education." Others were clearly confused about measurement: *"There is some stuff you can measure. Like say in a group process you can measure how open and honest young people are and how much they participate in the group"...* Some respondents were clearly struggling to identify specific measurement. For example: *"most times you don't see the growth until years later. I see young people who have become adults and say to me 'do you remember all we did in the youth club'."... "you can set yourself objectives at the beginning of the year but you cannot say how effective they will be or if they will be met."...* Some workers were more practical: *"If the young people I work with turn up for a session that is a measurement – the fact that they want to take part in our programme when no one else can get them involved in anything is a key outcome."... "If there are positive outcomes this is a bonus, but it crucial that we do not focus purely on outcomes otherwise we will lose our identity as youth workers."*

Participants acknowledged that they worked within a *"very loose framework"* but felt comfortable with this, perceiving this as a crucial and necessary difference between formal and informal approaches to education: *"Youth work is different than school. We do offer personal development training courses that young people do not get at school. Of course, we want young people to do well. But the process is what is important. Young people working together and helping each other. It shouldn't be competitive and we celebrate everyone's achievement. I think this is why young people voluntarily join our courses."*

A large proportion of participants cited *"increased community involvement"* as a key indicator of success. Workers spoke of young people getting involved in issues within their community that were important to them. Several participants mentioned 'citizenship education' as a relatively new way of measuring success. The fact that young people want to get involved in their communities was perceived as an important tool for measuring youth work success. For some the fact that a young person now had the *"confidence to lift the phone" ... "or speak in front of a group"* was an indicator of success. Others spoke of young people from different communities and traditions engaging in youth exchanges, participating in cross community and international programmes and embracing active citizenship as positive outcomes.

3.6   Key challenges facing youth work

A number of issues of concern to participants emerged from the focus group discussions. Youth workers often felt that they were responding to crises within their communities rather than being involved in supporting young people. In addition, participants felt under pressure to *"address anti-social behaviour amongst young people"* in response to community concerns. They feared that youth work would over focus on *"sorting young people out"* rather than offering them supportive, creative and exciting learning opportunities.

There were serious concerns voiced regarding the nature of resource allocation and in particular funding arrangements for youth work. One respondent explicitly stated that youth work funding, *"makes youth work problem-oriented."* The need for youth workers to be involved in securing funding for the continuance of projects was also a major concern. For many, the demands on time and energy to complete cumbersome funding applications took them away from what they perceived as *"the real business of working with young people."* Participants were also concerned that the *"competitive nature of funding"* has had a negative effect on youth work. As one participant stated: *"youth work has become competitive and undermines traditional youth work values. The nature of funding now determines what we do with young people rather than the issues that young people feel are important."* A number of participants believed that this problem was particularly exacerbated by the top-down orientation of government policy: *"We keep waiting on the next government policy or priority to tell us what needs to be done with young people. Often it is youth workers who are at the coalface and know what the needs of young people are. But we are told what to do with young people by policy makers and funders."*

A number of participants expressed concern that the voices and worries of young people remain unheard. They believed that the opportunity for young people to voice their own concerns is seriously limited. As one participant stated *"what's the good of having a voice if the authorities do not listen."* Both the status of youth work and the role of the youth worker were also of concern to respondents, particularly those who had received professional training in youth work. Some felt uncomfortable with the fact that *"anyone working with young people can call themselves a youth worker."* While acknowledging the fact that volunteers and non-qualified youth workers provide an important service to young people, several qualified workers believed that only those

with professional training should be formally recognised as youth workers. They believed that initial professional training is essential in order for youth workers to understand the *"skills, knowledge and experience needed to work with young people."* These participants expressed concern that youth workers were often perceived as *"less professional than school teachers, social workers and other professionals."* In contrast, non qualified participants perceived that it was more important for youth workers to *"be passionate about the work and prepared to be available to young people at all times."* These indigenous youth workers felt they had more knowledge of the young people they work with and were more accessible. When probed for deeper interpretation of the purpose of youth work, the non-qualified workers struggled to articulate any real understanding. They appeared to function on an emotional or feelings level rather than consider issues from a theoretical perspective. They were much more articulate in presenting issues facing young people in their communities than they were in identifying what they are trying to achieve or the reason they adopt certain approaches.

In contrast, professionally trained workers appeared to have a deeper understanding of both the issues facing young people they work with and the nature and purpose of youth work. They criticised certain approaches to youth work by non-qualified youth workers. For example: *"It takes certain skills to work with young people. Professional training is essential. I have worked with non-qualified workers who were working with joy-riders. They said it was youth work but it was not. They did not really know what they were doing or what skills they were using. There is an important process in youth work. It is not just something you stumble into. Youth work not something that anyone can do."* Another participant added: *"You can let a handyman in to wire your house and it may work but you're better getting an electrician – it's like that in youth work."*

Those professionally qualified participants who had been in youth work for many years believed that the nature of youth work in Northern Ireland had changed. They identified 'the troubles' and difficult socio-economic circumstances as having an adverse affect on communities and young people. As two respondents stated: *"being a youth worker is different now than it was twenty years ago. The essence of youth work is no longer simply to get young people off the streets and into youth clubs. Youth workers are expected to engage young people who have particular difficulties and provide a service that attempts to meet all their needs."… " It's only in recent years*

that youth workers have recognised the need to address issues such as suicide and mental health and the importance of diet and the environment. Young peoples' lives are becoming more and more complicated and the transition into adulthood is more prolonged."

SECTION 4: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

4.1   Introduction.

After conducting the initial focus groups involving individuals who were working in the field of youth and community work, the researchers decided to elaborate on their findings by interviewing youth workers in two diverse projects. The rationale was based on the notion that in order to deepen the understanding of youth work, it was necessary to increase our knowledge about how youth work transfers to other situations and contexts. It was decided to investigate youth work in the domains of formal education and sectarianism in Northern Ireland. This would enable the researchers to compare these models of youth work practice with the models of practice that emerged from the focus groups.

4.2   Background.

The interviews involved practitioners working in inner city areas of Northern Ireland. The first interview was with the co-ordinator of a programme entitled 'youth work in schools' which by its name implies that it would be possible to understand how youth work functioned and contributed to the formal education system. The second interview was with a youth and community worker who had been drawn into dealing with issues that emanated from nightly rioting around a local Catholic primary school which had been in dispute with Protestant/Loyalist residents from an adjoining area. This unique sectarian interface was thought to offer the research a context in which youth work could be assessed and investigated through the professional perspective of the youth worker involved in this dispute. The researchers believed that by assessing practice through these two distinct interviews they would be able to identify key aspects of effective practice which involved youth workers working outside their 'normal' context.

4.3   Interview 1: Youth Worker in a Schools Setting.

The interviewee in the schools-based project was a professionally trained youth worker who organised 'area teams' of youth workers who functioned in school settings. The project was based in a mixed gender primary school as well as a secondary school for boys only. The work is accessed through, and based on, a 'needs analysis form' which each young person fills in and through which issues are identified. This enables the youth worker to build a timeframe for the work and determine if other agencies, for example, counselling services or Educational Welfare Officers, are required.

One of the primary issues for the interviewee was the need to… *"develop a working relationship between youth workers and schools."* This aspiration led the worker to outline the need for the work to develop in stages. These stages related to both the nature of youth work in the schools and the issues that needed to be addressed by two different professions (and approaches) coming together. The stages were outlined as follows:

Stage 1:

As the school was unclear about exactly what youth workers did with young people, they, in collaboration with teachers, decided to develop a pro-forma as a first step in understanding what was expected of youth workers in the school. After analysis of the young peoples needs, based on evidence from the pro-forma the youth worker could develop a series of programmes thus moving the project to stage 2.

Stage 2:

This involved further meetings between youth workers and teachers to discuss certain aspects of the programme, for example, HIV/Aids education for 4th year and building a programme around information sessions for other students. At the early stage in the relationship the youth worker identified issues around the formal imposition of school rules on youth work, including carrying the work out during school hours. The youth worker believed that schools were happy with the delivery and, *"…often saw the youth worker, particularly in the primary school, as an extra teacher."*

The secondary school youth worker appeared to have a bit more autonomy because she worked through the Education and Library Board Youth Service project

team rather than the school management and thus she was managed by the Youth Service. The interviewee said that this was a better arrangement in terms of understanding the role of the youth worker: *"The schools gave us a list that reflected their perception of youth work."* This highlighted potential conflicting tensions around the delivery methods within youth work as opposed to a preset school curriculum.

The school clearly saw the role of the youth worker differently to that of a teacher: *"They wanted intensive counselling.....this (in the interviewee's opinion) was dumping or coaching, not youth work."* These perceptions led the youth worker to ask some questions about her role as a youth worker in a school. For example: *"what is youth work"... "what about the principle of voluntary commitment from young people'...what about the voluntary nature of relationships"... "and the notion of compulsory schooling?"*

Stage 3:

The worker began the process of interacting with young people in school based on youth work approaches and the needs identified in stage one. Young people reported that this more informal approach within school was less authoritarian and more 'laid back.'

There were other issues that taxed the youth worker. For example, *"Practical issues around timetables"* and the fact that the youth work input was not always well structured in school *"caused problems."* Tension between competing approaches was always evident and caused frustrations for the youth worker: *"If the school is not going to use youth work as we define it then perhaps youth work should move out of the school."*

4.4   The Value of Youth Work in Schools.

Although the interviewee acknowledged there were early signs of a developing partnership through the various stages, contradictions in styles and approaches were always apparent. Despite differences in approaches and emphases, there were suggestions during the interview that teachers were beginning to understand the benefits of the different approach used by the youth workers. The interviewee believed attitudes were changing towards youth workers and there was

greater appreciation of youth worker skills and the impact they can have on young people and the school itself.

One school ran assertiveness and health courses through group work and additional courses for play ground supervisors who have been trained to deal with conflict in the playground. The interviewee referred to this as being the *"Assertiveness of youth work in schools.* They also ran an XL programme (a course specifically designed to meet the needs of students who would normally leave school early) in most schools which was a joint agreement to take disengaged young people out of the curriculum.

The youth worker gave the following example to illustrate difficulties she perceived in imposing rules on young people while at the same time engaging in meaningful discussion: *"by using the Iraq war to discuss right and wrong some young people went on an anti-war protest after the discussion. However, they were disqualified from school even though a letter was sent to the head about the march."* This example clearly indicates that youth workers practice in a more flexible context than that of the school and that without a prescriptive curriculum, to constrain decisions about personal development, they can develop programmes that would not work in a formal setting. The worker outlined other issues associated with conflicting values: *"work in school raises issues of power. Teachers for example have to be smartly dressed and use second name, i.e. Mr. 'Something.' Youth workers however, are more prone to dress casually."*

The interviewee was able to articulate some issues that were manifested in the school but not often found in a youth club. For example, she stated that they had to produce… *"written material"* and that there were: *"Differences in how you talk to the young people"* and that,… *"Some young people do not want to be in school and there are also discipline issues'* which were leading to the *"Youth worker becoming like a teacher."* These points exemplify problems when two professions with different approaches and purpose come together to deal with the same young person, particularly where one profession, i.e. the school, is dominant.

The interviewee stated that programmes in schools were*, "Initially set up to deal with anti-sectarianism by bringing the young people together in school during the day and through youth work in the evenings. However, the anti-sectarian framework seems to have been dropped and we are now delivering products. The process is now solely about individual measurement within the schools."* These

comments are important for two reasons. Firstly, they demonstrate that if the school system wants to use a professional worker in a certain way, the initial impetus can change, i.e. from cross-community work to dealing with difficult young people in a school setting. Secondly, they illuminate our understanding about the influence that youth work can have on a school system and the difficulty that youth workers may have dealing with issues outside the context of Youth Service. This may indicate that youth work has broader parameters in which youth workers have more flexibility with regards to interpretation of curriculum as pre-designed by the Youth Service than is available to teachers in a school which has to deliver the quite inflexible common curriculum. This was manifested when the respondent noted that a youth worker had to… *"Set positive performance indicators for young people which are part of the change in attitudes….not only improving the positive but lessening the negative…and looking for indicators…..based on individual 'key result areas' that are reflected in core themes around a timescale based on key results through teams and workers."*

Although the nature of curriculum in youth work is much more flexible, indicators from the staff team showed this more prescriptive approach used in schools appeared to be working…*"the programme has tiers ….three single identity programmes are running…contact programmes….residentials…a trainee leader course based on youth work approaches…..multi-disciplinary teams working with youth workers."* The assumptions from these statements suggest that youth work approaches, even if prescriptive in delivery and presentation, can be effective in school settings – but only if youth workers are able to implement youth work principles.

When asked about the usefulness of youth work in schools the interviewee stated that,… *"We are able to reach some of those young people who are not reached by the Youth Service. We can cultivate relationships and help them through the transition from school to work or training. It's important to realise you can do quality youth work anywhere."* This sentiment echoes some of the comments made in the focus groups that youth work can take place in a variety of settings and does not necessarily have to occur in traditional settings such as youth clubs.

In response to questions about what would make the work more effective the interviewee stated*:… "They (the school) have to give up some control. Running the XL programme is about good relationships and this needs a more flexible approach. At times school is very strict which clashes with a youth work approach."* The

interviewee acknowledged that one of the key issues in schools was the need for better relationships between teachers and young people. The presence of the teacher in sessions where the youth worker took responsibility often changed the dynamic between youth worker and young person.

The interviewee offered some caution about youth work in schools: "*Youth workers seem to have to adapt to the school and what it is that is expected of them. One example of this is when a youth worker has to give detention for behaviour that teachers do not like.*" This was clearly at odds with the core principles of youth work practice as it would be a barrier to relationship building.

The use of a formal curriculum was also of concern to the interviewee: "*school has to develop a clearly defined curriculum, which is much more formal and less flexible than curriculum in the Youth Service.*" There was clear evidence from the interviewee that informal youth work approaches are evolving within schools and the skills and approach of the youth worker are increasingly recognised and appreciated. Crucially however, whilst youth work undoubtedly has potential to be effective in schools, it must be questioned how much progress a youth worker can make in formal settings where the type of relationship they have with a young person may have to be compromised.

4.5   Interview 2. Youth Worker in the Community

The researchers also interviewed a professionally trained youth and community worker who became involved in intercommunity tension in north Belfast. When asked if he thought a conflict situation makes youth work different or more difficult, he responded by stating that, "*I am not in a youth work field as such, but work in a community relations post of which youth work is a huge aspect. For example, in this area there are 3000 young people under the age of 21 with 2 youth clubs that are capable of dealing with only 400 at the very most. So there are 2600 young people not being reached by traditional youth provision.*"

The interviewee believed there were not enough youth workers to deal with local issues: "*in the most conflictual areas we have asked for more youth workers to deal with young people but we can only get a youth worker one night a week. In this whole area we have two area youth workers so it is very difficult to get the resources we need.*"

When asked specifically about issues associated with conflict and how youth work can address these issues he stated: *"It is hard to do youth work in these types of contested spaces. Aside from the developmental work with young people we are trying to deal with the effects of the conflict and why conflict happens. It's particularly hard to do these type of programmes in youth clubs."* When asked to elaborate on the point of who goes to youth clubs the interviewee stated: *"even if all young people wanted to go to youth clubs, the capacity is not there. There are huge numbers who don't even want to attend clubs. Most say the place is boring and shudder in horror at the thought of going to the youth club."*

Although the interviewee had a sceptical attitude to the provision of youth work in the area, he was conscious of the fact that the needs of many young people were not being met within current Youth Service provision. When asked what he thought that means for youth work, he suggested: *"I feel that if young people had more contact with youth workers they would probably get less involved in conflict and develop much more as individuals. We have done quite a bit of work with young people around conflict, identity and relationship development with young people from different communities. It is good that young people engage with these issues - although to be honest sometimes the only reason young people get involved is because there is a 'trip' at the end of it. I can understand why they are not really interested in sustaining relationships with young people from other traditions, particularly when the community they live in is in conflict with another community"*

While young people go through the motions of cross community contact and enjoy the experience of residential weekends, there was an underlying assumption that they are not as engaged as they should be. Given the fact that the interviewee lived in the area, he was in a good position to see the outcomes of youth work interventions as they unfolded. These views also challenge the perception that youth work is always a positive experience and that the outcomes are always beneficial to young people. It would appear that many young people engage in youth programmes because of their relationship with the youth worker rather than their own desire to participate on specific youth programmes.

The worker was asked what he thought was the value of youth work in an interface area with high community tension: *"The last project we delivered was for young people who had been lifted for rioting and had been given community service or put on remand. Whilst many of the young lads saw themselves as protecting the*

area, which gave them sort of a status, I was able to address and raise other issues through structured groupwork.”

The interview highlighted the intensity of work with young people in an area experiencing community tension and sectarianism. It also demonstrated the need for the youth worker to understand the ecology of the environment in which he carried out his work. Being indigenous also gave him a more holistic perspective of the value of youth and community work and set realistic outcomes that can be assessed over a longer period of time. While some of the views of indigenous youth workers are undoubtedly anecdotal with little concrete evidence, this interview corroborated many of the issues that arose in the focus groups.

These responses in some way highlighted the importance of understanding the context and neighbourhood in which young people are growing up. For example, the way in which young people in certain areas use of rioting, whether recreational or not, can become a manifestation of community solidarity through ‘defending’ their community. This example also demonstrates the many difficulties youth workers face working in an area of conflict that in itself offers more excitement for young people than the youth club or other youth work experiences.

The respondent was asked about the challenges to youth work in dealing with antisocial behaviour and what he thought happens after rioting and sectarian violence subsides: *“one of the huge issues is that a lot of young people have no escape. It is a grinding machine for them. In the last programme we ran with a group of twenty young people, 10 young lads and 10 young girls, all the young girls aspired to go to University to better themselves. Not one of the young men considered University as a possibility. Now I know that they wouldn’t be deemed to be academic, but they are reflective of the young people in this area and not one of them thought any academic route would serve a purpose. They all intend to leave school at 16 or sooner if they can believing they are all going to get good jobs. One wants to be a joiner and thinks this will be easy. Believe me in this community it’s very difficult for anyone to get work. The young people have goals and dreams but the infrastructure just isn’t there – It’s sad.”* Continuing he says, *“…maybe giving these young people a wee bit of confidence in themselves is the best you can actually do. Try and draw them out of themselves and in some way help them to cope better with whatever comes around. Perhaps this is all I can hope to achieve.”*

This sentiment again illustrates the frustrations felt by many youth workers who frequently witness first hand the apathy and desperation that exists amongst many of the young people with whom they come into contact. While youth workers attempt to support marginalised young people, often they are working against strong societal forces such as unemployment, poverty and violence that render them powerless. This is undoubtedly demotivating for youth workers. Even when effective youth work was carried out, the young people still remained in a deprived and fiercely contested area: *"even in the daily grind some young people remain optimistic. But others people feel absolutely demoralised and turn to heavy drinking or repeatedly offending or getting into drugs. That's the real bad end...the grind is just getting by. So life becomes about learning to cope and hope you don't end up an alcoholic or dependant on drugs."*

This depressing response indicates that even the most effective youth work may sometimes have limited impact on certain young people, particularly those living in areas where there is huge socio-economic deprivation and acute community and political conflict. In these circumstances the role and value of youth work is perhaps exposed in that it cannot claim to alleviate broader social ills within society. Conversely, perhaps the fact that youth work can only offer coping skills makes it all the more valuable to these young people. This dichotomy is all the more acute in a climate where youth workers are under increasing pressure to identify tangible and more concrete outcomes.

The interviewee spoke of the need to understand the nature of youth work as it impacted on young people. He says of himself, *"I need to know what type of job I am doing. People who are doing youth work for a long time must work out some way to measure what they are doing but that's not always easy. It can be depressing working in this area but sometimes it can be uplifting when you see young people doing positive and exciting things that were not expected of them."*

This statement is reflective of this interviewee's clear need to understand what exactly youth work was about. He questioned whether or not youth workers should be more involved in issues that address social inequality or continue to be agents of social control. Lastly he asserts, *"...there is no big picture. For example at our last residential some of the lads came back saying I have never tasted water from the mountain spring. Instead of telling them it is 'boggin', you stop the van and get them*

to get two big bottles of water and drink it. Maybe it's because they haven't done that before …a wee special moment. Whether you see simple things like this community relations doesn't really matter. It mightn't be the big picture, but when you have to give indicators and measure things surely this is still important. How do you measure a change in someone's attitude? How do you measure someone who has been through an extremely bad experience and has moved a little bit compared to someone who has not been through much? How do you measure these things with a different measurement and who decides how important they are?…I suppose that is one of the things...if you take an area like Ardoyne....then it may be 10 times harder to get some young person on a cross community project than it would be somewhere else. Yet how do you measure that?"

The interviewee held strong views on the role of youth work and how it was increasingly used as an agent of social control. His perceptions included reference to both youth work and community development and indicated that issues that involved young people are not owned exclusively by youth workers. He highlighted the complex nature of growing up in an area that espouses, for example, the use of rioting by many young people as part of their community involvement. This case study also revealed difficulties that youth workers may have working in areas where engaging in riots and community conflict can offer more alternative excitement than a youth club or traditional youth work programmes.

4.6   Feedback from Follow-up Questionnaires

In order to establish the extent to which participants agreed with the research findings, participants were sent a written summary of results. This allowed participants to comment upon the findings and validate the interpretation and analysis of the researcher.

The authors felt it was important to acknowledge that whilst the majority of respondents felt there was no need for additional comment on the focus group findings, five did submit further opinions. Two of the respondents reiterated that availability of funding with the voluntary sector had made things particularly problematic for youth work and workers. One respondent suggested that all youth work should be core funded and another commented on the fact that the need to "*chase funds*" meant that many youth workers were meeting *'funders targets rather*

than valuing the contribution of young people." Other concerns highlighted were the increased demand on youth workers in communities where young people were increasingly involved in anti-social behaviour and where issues such as drug use and mental illness were increasingly prevalent. The diverse and ever complex nature of youth work was highlighted as putting additional pressures on both youth work and youth workers.

Three respondents expressed concerns regarding the relationship between the formal educational system and the informal youth work system and expressed concerns about the notion of a youth work curriculum. Whilst these respondents believed it was important that the two systems operated in tandem, they believed that too often youth work was viewed as the 'poor relation' of formal education. They believed the issue of curriculum, or lack of a tangible curriculum with specific outcomes, was crucial to the lack of status within the profession. Conversely, one respondent believed that youth work did have a 'loose' curriculum to which all workers were trying to work. It was suggested that working within broad parameters rather than specific outcomes would allow youth workers to engineer some positive change within young people no matter how difficult it might be to measure and specify the extent of change. One respondent suggested that the formal education sector cannot definitively assess the impact of teaching on young people or confirm the quality of the teaching that has taken place and saw the issue of a curriculum as a 'red herring.' Another respondent was clear that, as a result of the voluntary nature of young people's participation in projects, the growing culture of youth workers leading young people into particular training or programmes was unacceptable. Essentially the curriculum must be informed by the young people's interests. This point resonated in a comment by another respondent who suggested that youth work had to recognise the existing level of skill/experience held by young people.

Two respondents highlighted the need for youth work in Northern Ireland to specifically and more transparently address issues related to the troubles. Both respondents pointed out that youth work faced particular challenges because of the backdrop of continual political unrest. However, both also stated that youth work had a particular role to play and that community relations work has successfully been proven to be a means of encouraging young people to understand different cultures and traditions. Another respondent took this issue one step further and believed that youth work should play a greater role in terms of embracing diversity and

multiculturalism and finding creative ways of encouraging young people to be more outward looking.

SECTION 5: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.

5.1   Relationship and Values.

Literature and evidence from the focus groups and the in-depth interviews revealed that informal educational approaches used in youth work played an important and complementary role in the education of young people in Northern Ireland. While there were obvious problems associated with agreeing a precise definition of youth work and while practice issues can appear ambiguous, there were a number of key areas on which there appeared to be agreement. These areas largely centred around two fundamental tenets underlying the nature of youth work, i.e. the establishment of a relationship between the worker and the young person, and the values that youth work attempts to inculcate.

The relationship between the youth worker and a young person was considered by all participants as the central plank of youth work. Unlike the relationships between young people and workers in the formal education setting, the quality of this relationship and its person-centred focus were seen as of paramount importance. The centrality of the relationship was underlined by youth workers who talked about meaningful relationships as well as the tendency for youth workers to measure their achievements with young people in terms of this relationship. Meaningfulness, or quality, was most often measured by increased candidness, congruence and engagement between the youth worker and a young person.

Another significant aspect of the relationship between a youth worker and a young person was its voluntary nature. Voluntary participation was crucial to this relationship for two reasons. First, it meant that a young person can control the nature of his or her involvement in any activity, and second, it puts the onus on the youth worker to work creatively with young people.

Youth workers conversations about the nature of the relationship between youth workers and young people also emphasised the importance of positively valuing young people. This positive regard, together with an emphasis on meaningful relationships, mirrors the emphasis in mainstream psychological theory on the centrality of attachment to functional development. This means that the quality of the physical, emotional and interpersonal relationship between adults and young people is as important during adolescence as it is during the more formative early years. Indeed,

many youth workers believed that young people in socially excluded groups often lacked a significant attachment figure. Therefore, the importance of young people controlling their engagement in these relationships was crucial. Abrupt termination of projects or of a particular youth worker's involvement in a given project could have serious consequences for young people. The project, without the influence of a trusted mentor or animateur, would become meaningless to the young person. Not only could their development cease but they might also regress, feeling betrayed and confirmed in their belief that society does not care for them.

The voluntary nature of the relationship between youth worker and young person means that either person can withdraw at anytime. The fact that a young person can leave a youth programme whenever they choose makes youth work distinct from most other professions working with young people. Importantly however, the effect for the young person in this context is likely to be far greater than its effect on the worker. This issue was particularly concerning in light of the fact that there was some evidence from the research undertaken, that the most difficult young people are least likely to successfully engage in youth work projects. In one of the in-depth interviews, the worker commented that youth work was often seen as boring. This research suggests that excluded groups in marginalised communities can be so difficult to work with that they are failed by both the formal and informal systems. The need for youth work to face this challenge is self-evident if it is to continue to profess that it serves those at the margins of society. This is a challenge that needs to take cognisance of those young people at the margins of the margins of society and deal with them in a specific way which may require a refocusing of professional training and resources.

If youth work is viewed as a form of education, undoubtedly youth work aims to teach young people a set of values. Top of the list of values that youth workers seek to teach young people are principles of citizenship, participation and encouraging empowerment. The theme of citizenship and civic participation was evident throughout the interviews undertaken and was also a theme reflected in the literature. Yet there appeared to be lack of clarity or agreement amongst youth workers about their role in this type of work or how it should be implemented. Further to this, youth workers often painted a picture of serving communities that were seriously disadvantaged. This social disadvantage is not likely to have escaped the notice of young people. In such contexts, it is ambitious to expect youth workers to be able to

persuade these marginalised young people of their future role in civic society. Civic participation in the face of such disadvantage requires broader social initiatives than informal education, not just from youth workers, but from all those who work with disaffected young people.

A second key value that youth workers sought to promote was that of empowerment. Many of the workers interviewed made explicit reference to the importance of encouraging young people to take control of their own lives, not least because of the perceived effects of social disadvantage. However, the research points to problems with raising young people's efficacy and expectations. The youth worker working within a school points to a conundrum whereby young people are explicitly encouraged to be autonomous, yet the system requires them in most instances to be compliant. It is difficult to see how such values can be successfully taught if there is nowhere for young people to practice these skills or they are reproved for using them. This is not to say that the underlying principles advocated in schools are in any way detrimental to the development of many young people. But for some the context is incongruent with other social disadvantages they have to deal with. In the second in-depth interview an even more serious concern was raised. Acknowledging the problems within the community in which he works, this youth worker suggested that raising young people's expectations could not be his central concern. He suggested that the best he could do for young people was help them to increase their skills for coping with a life of chronic social disadvantage.

Indeed, the recurring theme in many youth workers' conversations about their work was the fact that youth work tends to be particularly targeted at young people who are marginalised or excluded. Combating the effects of social exclusion was considered a distinctive and increasingly recognised aspect of youth work. It was also clear from the research undertaken that youth work is under-resourced. Youth workers acknowledged that whilst they had only limited resources, tackling social exclusion amongst young people was something that youth work was well positioned to address because of the nature of youth work and the unique relationship between youth workers and young people.

.

5.2   Youth Work in Schools

The research findings suggested that while the formal education system in Northern Ireland is increasingly interested in the process that youth workers use to engage with 'troublesome' young people, its ultimate aim is for young people to fit into the school system. While it is apparent that youth workers can build effective relationships with young people regardless of their status, this relationship is much more 'strained' within a school setting. The drive towards achievement (and inevitable failure for particular young people) within formal education conflicts with youth work values and its unique emphasis on relationship. The school setting and its formal nature of curriculum also conflict with the more flexible use of curriculum implemented by youth workers. The flexibility within youth work curriculum appears to be particularly useful when youth workers come into contact with disaffected young people.

The movement from informal educational towards formal education is proving difficult for youth workers. The fact that youth work principles are seriously compromised when outcomes are predefined has important implications for the future delivery of youth work in formal educational settings. Youth work must address the growing tension that youth workers experience when attempting to make the transition into mainstream educational environments. The youth worker in schools felt she was not able to develop appropriate relationships with young people in a school setting and believed she was not delivering 'youth work.' In essence, the formal nature of education in schools was fundamentally opposed to the informal nature of what she understood as 'good youth work.'

There also appears to be a lack of understanding about differences between teaching within formal education and the learning process within youth work. Ironically, the very reason youth workers are requested to work in schools, i.e. the skills of the youth worker and the principles and processes of youth work, are nullified by the very nature of the classroom setting. Formalities in school procedures such as uniform, timekeeping, attendance, titles such as sir / madam, punishment, etc, are in stark contrast to the informal nature of youth work and the value placed on person centred relationships based on equity and trust.

On one hand the growing trend for youth workers to be employed in schools is to be welcomed as it recognises the potential of youth work in underpinning formal approaches to education. On the other hand it is crucial that schools and youth workers must both be prepared to make compromises in order to fully utilise the potential of combining formal and informal approaches to educating young people. Further research

is needed to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of employing both approaches within a formal setting, particularly as the very nature of youth work is so dramatically altered in schools. Equally important is the need to more effectively measure the benefits to young people, in particular socially excluded and marginalised young people, of employing youth workers in schools.

5.3 Youth Work in Contested Spaces

Youth work in Northern Ireland occurs within the context of a society emerging from over 35 years of conflict and political unrest. Throughout this period youth workers have consistently responded to the needs of young people in a deeply divided and contested society. Youth workers have been at the coalface of informal education with young people, many of whom have been both the victims and perpetrators of political, community and sectarian violence. It is important to acknowledge that conflict in young peoples' lives is not always directly related to 'the troubles' that have been prevalent since 1969. Schools, families, city centres and local communities are also contested spaces where young people can feel unsafe and vulnerable. The interviewee working with young people during a particularly difficult conflict situation raised many issues that are important to understanding the nature of youth work in Northern Ireland. While the worker felt youth work was limited in its capacity to change socio-economic and political conditions, he clearly believed youth work had an important role in helping young people explore values and behaviour. By providing alternative activities and experiences the youth worker was able to remove young people from the rituals of conflict to a safer environment where they could explore new possibilities. The story that the interviewee told of the group stopping by a stream to drink spring water was both powerful and symbolic. This 'snapshot' demonstrated the potential of youth work to be an effective educational process. By 'seizing a moment in time,' the youth worker was able to create a safe learning environment and connect this to the world of young people. The ritual of drinking the spring water brought a sense of calmness and normality to the lives of these young people in contrast to the turmoil and ritual of nightly violence. It was difficult for the youth worker to measure the impact of this moment, but he knew something powerful and valuable had occurred. Undoubtedly many youth workers have similar stories of seemingly small events or special moments that had a profound impact upon

themselves and the young people they work with. Youth work is perhaps limited when it becomes a series of single events that are not connected to the lives of young people. Crucially however, when these events occur within the dynamic of an ongoing relationship between a youth worker and a young person, these moments have great significance.

It was poignant that the interviewee perceived youth work as struggling to provide a viable service to young people that was a realistic alternative to a dangerous activity such as rioting. The interviewee believed traditional youth provision was perceived by many young people as boring and therefore they were not interested in youth work. In contrast, rituals such as rioting and violence did create a buzz for these young people. The buzz that many young people get from engaging in anti-social behaviour is an important feature of youth culture in Northern Ireland. One reason may be that violence has been used over such a prolonged period as a means to cement identity and community solidarity. In this context, it becomes possible to understand why activities such as rioting can have such an appeal to certain young people. For many young people, in particular young men, engaging in various forms of anti-social behaviour provides them status amongst their peers and their community.

Youth work can, and does, play an important role in supporting and encouraging young peoples' participation in a society moving from conflict towards peace. By providing safe learning environments youth workers can test out ideas with young people and encourage them to reflect upon risk taking behaviour without feeling threatened by the consequences. One important drawback however, is the fact that youth work processes are frequently time bound and young people must return to their own contested spaces. It is important therefore that the Youth Service in Northern Ireland attempts to clarify the role, purpose and contribution of youth work in a post conflict society. Also important is the need to find additional resources in order to develop more creative and alternative ways of supporting young people who directly experience political conflict and violence. Critically however, challenges to delivering youth work in contested spaces are not solely about resources. Youth work raises ethical questions about the motivational factors of youth workers and the extent to which their subjective political beliefs influence their relationships with young people. Clarity is also needed in regard to how youth work defines political and civic education and the extent to which this should be part of a youth worker's role. These

are challenging but important issues that should be addressed by the Youth Service in Northern Ireland. Particularly as supporting and involving young peoples' participation in shaping the future of Northern Ireland is so high on the agenda of funders and policy makers. If youth work is to realistically support young people during the transition from conflict towards peace, it must become much more articulated about exactly what it is trying to achieve.

5.4 Professional Issues within Youth Work

One important issue that arose from the research was the diversity of services aimed at meeting the needs of young people. There was strong indication that some of the issues that affect young people necessitate a more specialist approach. Clearly the complexity of young peoples' lives cannot always be addressed within traditional generic youth provision. Over the past number of years there has undoubtedly been a significant 'paradigm shift' from a more generalist orientation of youth work to specialist programmes. Underlying tensions between generic and specialist approaches to youth work were evident in the focus groups and the interviews suggest that youth work may have to develop practices that are either supplementary, complementary or offer alternative approaches to current practice.

The Youth Service in Northern Ireland extends to a wide range of provision for children and young people between the ages of 4 – 25. Examples of this variety include full-time youth centres, school-based youth projects, community based projects, detached and outreach projects, church based groups, uniformed youth groups, after school clubs, health projects, organizations providing for disabled young people / for ethnic minorities / for young people from the Travellers Community, special programmes for young people in the 18 – 25 age group focusing on the needs of young men / young women / young mothers, preparation for employment, helplines, counselling projects, peer education projects, cultural / environment / citizenship projects (Department of Education, , 2003). Youth workers in Northern Ireland come into contact with young people who are affected by social processes, such as environment, unemployment, consumerism, adolescent development, sectarianism, crime, social exclusion and poverty.

From this study, it was evident that all those who worked with young people were passionate, committed and serious about their work. Despite this, the research

highlighted the need for youth workers to reflect more seriously on the concept of progression beyond the initial relationship-building phase of youth work intervention. It was also apparent, that qualified youth workers were better able to articulate the purpose and value of their work than non-qualified workers. While all those working with young people understand and appreciate the issues confronting young people, qualified youth workers were much more articulate about what they are trying to do. Professionally trained youth workers in particular reported feeling frustrated that the perceived status of youth work was often considered by others as something *"anyone can do."* They believed this was a key factor leading to youth work being undervalued, misunderstood, under-recognised and under-resourced as a profession.

The findings from this study suggest that the nature of youth work in Northern Ireland is changing. For example, in many contexts young people are increasingly referred to Youth Services rather than participating voluntarily and youth workers are sought as 'experts' in reaching difficult or marginalised young people. This developing emphasis undoubtedly presents new challenges to the historical way in which youth work has formed with its focus on relationships and voluntary participation.

Whilst volunteers and part-time non-qualified youth workers have historically underpinned the Youth Service in Northern Ireland, one possible outcome of this may be that the status of youth work has been undermined. There are few other professions where those who are not professionally qualified are given the same title as professionals. For example, it is very unlikely that unqualified schoolteachers would call themselves 'teachers' in the same way that anyone working with young people can, theoretically, call themselves 'youth workers.'

Throughout the focus groups it was apparent that non-qualified youth workers were as animated and committed as professionally qualified workers. Importantly however, there were major differences in regard to experience, perceptions of role of the youth worker, understanding the purpose of youth work, understanding youth transitions and wider socio-economic forces, training needs of youth workers, emphasis on aims and objectives and monitoring and evaluation. Professional workers believed the lack of theoretical articulation in youth work contributed to the perception that *"anyone can do youth work."* Conversely, non qualified indigenous youth workers believed their accessibility and local knowledge enabled them to work effectively with young people. It is clear that perhaps there are aspects of youth work that anyone can

do whether they are qualified or not. Indeed, this may be a key reason why youth work as a profession is so unique.

It is crucial to acknowledge that youth work has a clear ethos and set of principles that underpin its approach. In this sense it is clearly a profession – yet undoubtedly a profession like no other. Nevertheless, there is a perhaps a need to re-evaluate the way in which youth work is structured. For example, there could be a post called 'youth helper' or some other title that denotes that the person is not a professional youth worker. This person would have a brief that emphasised that the person could only carry out certain duties under the supervision of a professionally qualified worker. Such a model would help employing bodies set appropriate salary scales and allow those working with young people to move along a continuum to an advanced youth work level. At the advanced level the worker could supervise those at the developmental levels and progression could be rewarded. This developmental model of professional training acknowledges the diverse nature of those who work with young people. This may mean that different levels of work be accredited (For example, see the Wales Youth Agency Model) and youth workers can progress through this process. In practice it means that the role of the youth worker is made explicit at every level as to what they can and cannot do. In addressing the issue of professionalisation, it is critical to acknowledge the contribution of voluntary hours that thousands of volunteers make to young people each year. The challenge is, perhaps, to have procedures in place where volunteers, and others involved in initial youth work, have access to developmental training and support that enables them to progress from volunteer status to recognised youth work status.

Directly addressing issues of professionalism will in itself help challenge the perceived low status of youth work as a profession. It is important to acknowledge however that the development of a more professional youth work framework will depend on more than providing professional training to non-qualified youth workers. France & Wiles (1997:13) have argued in the UK that there must be improvements in 'project management, monitoring and evaluation.' They also suggest that youth work lacks a coherent, self-governing professional organisation and also at times lacks the necessary leadership to develop the new skills and thinking a modern Youth Service requires. The recently formed Youth Service Liaison Forum (2004) has identified the lack of a clear co-ordinated strategy as a stumbling block to the development of the Youth Service in Northern Ireland and has produced a 'Draft Youth Work Strategy' for

consultation. The setting up of this body is a very positive step forward particularly as there has not been a fully inclusive period of consultation with youth workers about their profession.

Most of those professionally trained in Community Youth Work in Northern Ireland come through the only course available at the University of Ulster. The programme offers an academic and vocational experience built upon the previous experience and knowledge of students (at 18 years of age all potential students are interviewed for a place on the course and all need to show direct evidence of practical youth work exposure). The curriculum covers related discipline areas such as psychology, social policy, sociology, legal studies, management, informal education and three or four placements depending on the exit point of the student. The course offers generic skills but can be quite specific depending on the nature and choice of student placements. Some look for specialist experience to increase their knowledge and skills in an area they intend seeking employment in, for example, working with the homeless. It is important to note that this is initial training and therefore only provides limited opportunities for students to receive more 'specialist' training.

5.5   Funding Issues

Participants perceived that the increase in short term funding over the past ten years in Northern Ireland, primarily through European Peace and Reconciliation monies, has ushered a spirit of competition into youth work practice, particularly in the community and voluntary youth work sectors. There has been increasing pressure for youth workers to evidence specific outcomes from their work. The ability to set targets, identify hard performance indicators and tangible outcomes, have been fundamental components of successful funding applications in Northern Ireland. It is also important to note that funding application processes are often cumbersome and time consuming. This is particularly true for youth workers in the voluntary sector, most of whom have not received training in this area. Therefore, many youth workers spend large amounts of time filling in applications forms, not only for the benefit of young people, but also to secure their own posts. The impact of short term funding upon the practice and development of youth work has not been fully measured. What is apparent however is that many youth workers perceive they are no longer able to say that they simply work with young people. Funders, policy makers and government

initiatives all require youth workers to more effectively demonstrate the value of their work in terms of outcomes. It is apparent however, that this shift in emphasis is something youth workers in this study wrestled with as they attempted to adjust to changes and emphases in contemporary youth work, changes or bureaucratic demands that they believed *"deflects them from the real purpose of youth work."*

5.6   The Role of the Youth Worker

A number of respondents suggested that youth workers were role models for young people. Others professed to address issues of right and wrong and various aspects of morality. Such an approach assumes that youth workers are suitable role models. Without a doubt, the vast majority of people working in this area are both hard working and well intentioned. However, being a role model is a very onerous task; young people will mirror both good and bad behaviour. Similarly, the belief that youth workers come to their work without beliefs and values of their own that might influence the moral judgements of young people or indeed, their own moral judgement is naïve. The need for youth workers to engage in reflexive practice around these issues cannot be overstated.   Indeed, there is argument for compulsory professional development courses in this area. This is particularly the case given the current lack of regulation over the titular use of the term 'youth worker'.

5.7   The Nature of Youth Work in Northern Ireland – Concluding Remarks.

The research findings revealed that youth work in Northern Ireland is delivered to many young people and in particular those who are not well serviced by mainstream agencies in society. While youth workers strive to work with all young people, they perceive themselves as working primarily with young people on the margins of society. Youth workers engage and build relationships with young people irrespective of their academic capability, their social position, and even their behaviour. In this capacity, youth work can be perceived as addressing social exclusion. Whilst youth workers may understand why young people behave in a certain way, they do not condone this behaviour. Nevertheless, the nature of youth work places youth workers in a unique and powerful position to initially contact young people and develop meaningful relationships. This is underpinned by the

principle of voluntary participation and the fact that a young person can, at any time, choose not to become involved in youth work programmes. While this voluntary principle can be undermined because of the often prescriptive nature of policy and funding led initiatives, the emphasis on relationship building and voluntary participation remain fundamental aspects of all youth work. Indeed it could be argued that without the unique relationship between a young person and a youth worker, the development and learning potential of a young person is seriously stifled. One of the implications of this is that youth workers need to understand and fully appreciate the significance of 'relationship' in the developmental process.

Those involved in youth work do not claim to work with all young people. In fact there are large numbers of young people who choose not to become involved in youth work at any stage of their lives. Despite this, youth work approaches are effective in engaging young people, in particular marginalised young people, and are strongly positioned to help young people develop and appreciate talents other than their academic abilities.

Given that youth work has historically been engaged with both education and welfare provision, it is perhaps not surprising that youth work should be seen as having an important role in tackling social exclusion amongst young people. In Northern Ireland there are manifest forms of poverty, violence, anti-social behaviour, hooliganism and paramilitary influence that impact upon the lives and development of young people. While youth work has potential to engage and support young people, it is unrealistic to suggest that youth work can become a panacea for all that society perceives as 'wrong with young people.'

Youth work as an informal educational tool to learning appears to be justified by the fact that many young people fail within the formal education sector. A major challenge facing youth work and educationalists is the need for a new system or way of educating and learning that can tackle issues associated with growing up in a post conflict society. It is perhaps in this context that formal approaches to education such as schools could be combined more effectively with informal educational youth work approaches. While there are apparent difficulties in regard to ethos, purpose and expected outcomes within schools and youth work, there is clear evidence in this research of the many benefits to young people that would accrue through combining formal education with youth work.

While formal education is focused on a prescriptive curriculum, youth work is much more diverse, leaving the outcomes nebulous and difficult to measure. Although there is a danger of being too specific about measurable outcomes, there are growing demands from funders and policy makers for youth work to produce more tangible forms of measurement and accountability. This suggests that youth work must become more effective in articulating who it is they work with, why youth workers are doing what they do, what they hope to achieve from this work, and why they are in a strong position to effect change in young people's lives.

In this study, the majority of workers were unable to articulate concrete outcomes beyond the initial phase of contact, relationship building and the learning of basic skills, values and beliefs. Although youth workers spoke of increased confidence and self-esteem amongst young people they worked with, they struggled to quantify these as hard outcomes. While this person-centred approach has always been fundamental to youth work, in an ever-changing funding and policy context more concrete outcomes are being required. This growing trend creates particular tension within youth work, forcing workers increasingly to concentrate on the 'product' aspect of their programmes rather than the historical emphasis on 'process.' Findings from this study reveal that the shifting trend from a 'process' to a 'product' oriented profession is proving difficult for many youth workers. Indeed, this reorientation in youth work appears to be happening without the consent or engagement of those at the forefront of youth work. Funders, and those interested in monitoring youth work and its effects, need to take into consideration the difficulties that youth workers are experiencing adjusting to this new paradigm. Paradoxically, the majority of youth workers in this study believed that focusing on 'products' in some way deflected them from what they were trying to achieve in their relationships with young people. It may be unrealistic to expect time-bound youth work programmes to provide the types of outputs that funders require or alleviate the extensive and pervasive social problems that many young people experience. The fact that some socially excluded young people actually participated in a youth work programme was in itself seen as a 'product' by many participants.

The issue of 'product verses process' in youth work presents a significant challenge for the future direction and focus of youth work in Northern Ireland. Conversely, the ability to offer more concrete and tangible evidence of the effectiveness of youth work, offers enormous opportunity for the status and value of

youth work to achieve greater recognition amongst funders, policy makers and other professions. This research suggests that no one profession can claim to meet all the needs of young people in our society. It also claims that there are many potential benefits to young people through professional collaboration. It is important therefore that youth work becomes more articulate in demonstrating what it can accomplish with young people. The three core principles of youth work as outlined by the Department of Education (2003) are broad and inclusive but perhaps too vague to enable specific outcomes to be identified. In order to align itself more strategically with other professions, youth work will need to find better ways to measure its contribution to the young people it claims to serve.

A key finding from this study is that it is perhaps no longer appropriate to call everyone claiming to work with young people 'youth workers.' There is a need for much more sophistication in the interpretation of the roles of those who engage with young people at certain ages, in certain communities, in a certain way, with specific purpose and outcomes. By its nature youth work is difficult to define. Indeed it could be argued that there is no one way of doing youth work. At one end of the continuum youth work can appear 'simplistic' i.e. anyone can do it! Indeed this may be a key reason why so many people initially get involved as volunteers in youth work and make such a valuable contribution to their communities. At the other end of the continuum the role of the youth worker can be complex and extremely demanding, such as in schools or when a community is in conflict. Working in circumstances such as these necessitate that youth workers are highly skilful and empathetic towards young people and their needs and issues. The unique relationship between youth workers and the young people they come into contact with is undoubtedly central to why youth workers are increasingly sought after by other professions. It is along this broad continuum that each individual working with young people should be able to place themselves according to their experience, training and qualifications. At present this is not clear and therefore anyone who comes in contact with young people can, in theory, call themselves a youth worker.

Youth work in Northern Ireland is at an exciting yet crucial stage in its development. It is encouraging that the skills and experience of youth workers are increasingly being recognised and appreciated by other professions. While there are important challenges presented within this study, the findings reflect a profession

where its workers are passionate, dedicated and committed to young people and their issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   Professional Issues Within Youth Work:

1.1   Youth work should move towards a formal registration of all those who work with young people in order to protect youth workers and young people, in particular vulnerable young people.

1.2   There should be an accredited and sequential pathway from 'novice' to 'professional' that explicitly reveals the stage of development / training / skills of each individual working with young people. (At present the Dip HE in Community Youth Work carries the only necessary qualification for professional status).

1.3   Unqualified youth workers should carry titles such as 'associate youth workers' that clearly denote they are not qualified to carry out some duties unsupervised and that differentiate them from professionally qualified youth workers.

1.4   Employing bodies should be explicit about the level of competency required for individuals working with young people, in particular vulnerable young people.

2.   Formal and Informal Education:

2.1   The potential for tension between informal youth work approaches to learning, assessment and personal development and approaches within the formal education sector should be taken into consideration when planning and delivering youth work in schools. This would involve the school in determining the precise role and function of the youth worker and subsequent programming in the context of a formal educational establishment.

2.2   Teacher training programmes should include modules designed to familiarise teachers with the informal approaches to learning similar to those on youth work courses.

2.3 The unique role of the youth worker and the voluntary nature of a young person's participation should not be compromised when working in co-operation with other professions.

3. Youth Work Curriculum:

3.1 Youth work in Northern Ireland should be underpinned with conceptually based knowledge on stages of youth development in relation to particular age groups.

3.2 The Youth Service in Northern Ireland should differentiate between the types of outcomes associated with personal and social development and other outcomes such as numbers and targets for participation and attendance on programmes.

3.3 The Youth Service in Northern Ireland should seek to offer indicators that can measure youth work outcomes such as self-esteem, confidence building development and social skills.

3.4 Consideration should be given to performance indicators, outcomes and targets in order to better assess the effectiveness and impact of youth work with marginalised young people.

3.5 There should be constant acknowledgement that youth work alone cannot alleviate social and economic ills.

3.6 Through expertly designed training programmes youth workers should be enabled to understand their model(s) of work and more importantly to begin the process of reflecting on the concept of sequential 'progression' from the initial relationship-building phase to addressing and supporting the more challenging aspects of young peoples lives and behaviour as they move through periods of transition related to age, abilities and gender.

4. Resources:

4.1 Youth work should be accepted as an important and complementary prong of educational approaches in Northern Ireland and funding should be

secured on a more permanent basis. This is especially important in the context of educational failure amongst socially excluded young people.

4.2   Funding bodies should consider 'long-term' investment for continuity and coherence between youth projects and youth development.

4.3   Increased resources should be made available to support innovative youth work with marginalised young people.

5.   Youth work training:

5.1   There should be a review of youth work training that includes assessment of the extent to which youth work training needs to take cognisance of specific skills rather than the current broad generalised approach to training.

5.2   Youth workers would benefit from some initial training before they are required to work in a different context or in partnership with a different profession. This would help identify what skills youth workers need to develop in an unfamiliar context.

6.   Future research and discussion:

6.1   There should be debate within the Youth Service around the concepts of 'generic' and 'specialist' youth work argued in the report, particularly in the context of youth work in 'contested spaces.'

6.2   Research should be carried out to help clarify the role, purpose and contribution of youth work in a post conflict society.

6.3   Research should be carried out in order to clarify the concept of 'empowerment' (and its underpinning philosophy) to the Youth Service in Northern Ireland.

6.4   Research should be carried out into the effect of 'short-term' funding on youth development.

6.5   Research should take place into the role, value, purpose and intended outcomes of youth work within schools.

6.6   Research should be carried out in order to examine why there appears to be an increasing conceptional reorientation within youth work from a 'process' oriented profession to a 'product' driven profession.

APPENDIX 1.

RESPONDENTS IN FOCUS GROUPS

1)	Youth Worker	Monkstown Centre Based. Belfast	Male
2)	Youth Worker	Ballymena Centre Based	Male
3)	Youth Worker	Youth Action	Female
4)	Youth Worker	Community Based Belfast	Female
5)	Youth Worker	Derry Centre Based	Female
6)	Youth Worker	Challenge for Youth Programme	Female
7)	Youth Worker	Rural Project	Female
8)	Youth Worker	Youth at Risk	Female
9)	Youth Worker	Rural Community Setting	Female
10)	Youth Worker	Voluntary youth project. Belfast	Male
11)	Youth Worker	Voluntary youth project.	Female
12)	Youth Worker	Probation Service.	Male
13)	Youth Worker	Out-reach Work. Belfast	Female
14)	Youth Worker	Portrush Youth Centre	Female
15)	Youth Worker	Simon Community. Belfast	Female
16)	Youth Worker	Christian Organisation. Belfast	Female
17)	Youth Worker	Extern West, Omagh	Female
18)	Youth Worker	Peer Youth. Belfast	Male
19)	Peer Educator	Opportunity Youth, Belfast	Male
20)	Youth Worker	Dungannon, Outreach Work	Male
21)	Youth Worker	Youth Holidays Director	Female
22)	Youth Officer	Omagh Youth Work	Male
23)	Youth Worker	Derry	Female
24)	Youth Worker	Youth Service. NEELB	Male
25)	Youth Worker	Youth Service. NEELB	Male
26)	Youth Worker	Youth Service NEELB	Female
27)	Youth Worker	Youth Action. Belfast	Male
28)	Youth Worker	Youth Action. Belfast	Male
29)	Comm. Worker	Volunteer Sport. Belfast.	Female
30)	Comm. Worker	Rural Community Network	Female

31) Comm. Dev	East Belfast	Male
32) Comm. Dev	Markets area Belfast	Male
33) Comm. Dev	West Belfast Project	Male
34) Comm. Dev	Antrim Road. Belfast	Male
35) Comm. Dev	Banbridge Community Dev.	Female
36) Comm. Dev	Rural Banbridge Community	Female
37) Comm. Dev	Dungannon	Male
38) Comm. Dev	Antrim City	Male
39) Comm. Dev	Carrickfergus	Male
40) Comm. Dev	Downpatrick	Female
41) Comm. Dev	Markets Area Belfast	Female
42) Comm. Dev	Womens Project Belfast	Female

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEWEES

1. Youth and Community Worker from North Belfast interface area.
2. **Youth** Worker in charge of youth work in schools project.

APPENDIX 3

Focus Group Questions.

Youth Work.

- What do you consider to be the main (broad) purpose of youth work?
- What would you say is definitely NOT youth work?
- Are there certain components / aspects that are core to all youth work?
- What do you think of the notion that 'anyone can do youth work' ?
- What type of young people do you work with?
- What are the factors that determine what you do with young people?
- Does youth work need a curriculum?

Informal education?

- What does the concept of informal education mean to you?
- How is informal education different from youth work?
- What is the difference between formal and informal education?

Learning.

- When does learning occur in youth work? Are all activities learning?
- Are all activities learning?
- At what stage does learning occur?
- How do you measure youth work?

Youth work's contribution to social exclusion.

- What does the term social exclusion mean to you?
- Do you perceive the young people you work with as socially excluded?
- How does youth work contribute / promote social inclusion?
- How do you measure social inclusion?
- How does youth work practice address inequality?
- Has you agency clearly stated policies on equality?
- Can youth work effectively address social exclusion?

Qualities and skills of a youth worker.

- What qualities does a youth worker need?

- What skills does a youth worker need?

- Are these skills / qualities different in other agencies who work with young people?

- How does training support the youth workers in terms of needs, the development of skills, increased knowledge and the qualities necessary to be an effective youth worker in Northern Ireland currently?

APPENDIX 4.

Interview Questions.

Youth Work.

- What do you consider to be the main purpose of your specific project?
- Are there certain components / aspects present in your work that are core to all youth work?
- What do you think of the notion that 'anyone can do youth work'?
- What type of young people do you work with?
- What are the factors that determine what you do with young people?
- Does youth work need a curriculum?

Informal education?
- What does the concept of informal education mean to you?
- How is informal education different from youth work?
- What is the difference between formal and informal education?
- Is your project informal or formal (relates to youth work in schools only)?

Learning.
- When does learning occur in youth work? Are all activities learning?
- Are all activities learning?
- At what stage does learning occur?
- How do you measure youth work?

Youth work's contribution to social exclusion.
- What does the term social exclusion mean to you?
- Do you perceive the young people you work with as socially excluded?
- How does youth work contribute / promote social inclusion?
- How do you measure social inclusion?
- How does youth work practice address inequality?
- Has you agency clearly stated policies on equality?

- **Can youth work effectively address social exclusion?**

Qualities and skills of a youth worker.

- What qualities does a youth worker need?

- What skills does a youth worker need?

- Are these skills / qualities different in other agencies who work with young people?

- Do you need any particular skills to do your specific work?

- How does training support the youth workers in terms of needs, the development of skills, increased knowledge and the qualities necessary to be an effective youth worker in Northern Ireland currently?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrahamson, P. (1997). Combating poverty and social exclusion in Europe. In B. Wolfgang; L. Van Der Maeson and A. Walker (eds), *The Social Quality of Europe*. Bristol: The Polity Press.

Acheson, Sir Donald, (1998). *Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health.*

Atkinson, A. B. (1998), Social exclusion, poverty, unemployment. In A. B. Atkinson and J. Hills (eds), *Exclusion, Employment and Opportunity*, CASE paper 4, London: CASE, London School of Economics.

Audit Commission (1999) *A Life's Work*: Local Authorities' Economic Development and Regeneration.

Bamber, J. (2001/02) Educational Groupwork and Active citizenship. *Youth and Policy*, 74, 1-16.

Banes, A. Youth Work, Self-efficacy and Young men – How self-efficacy can raise motivation. Paper presented at the conference '*Living at the Edge – Young people and social exclusion*'. University of Strathclyde, September, 1999.

Banks, S. (1999). *Ethical Issues in Youth Work*. London: Routledge.

Bentley, T. & Gurumurthy, R. (May 1999). *Destination Unknown: Engaging with the problems of marginalized youth.* Demos.

Burchardt, T., Le Grand, J. and Piachaud, D. (1999), *Social exclusion in Britain 1991-1995,* Social Policy and Administration, 33, 3: 227-44.

Butters, S. & Newell, R. (1978). *The Realities of Training.* Leicester: National Youth Bureau.

Beatty, C. & Fothergill, S. (2001). *Labour Market Detachment in Rural England.* Countryside Agency.

Bostock, L. (2001). *Pathways of Disadvantage? Walking as a mode of transport amongst low-income mothers.*

Callender, C. (1999). *The Hardship of Learning: Students' Income and Expenditure and Their Participation in Learning.* South Bank University.

Campbell, H., & McCready, S. (1997). *The Development of Youth Work Values.* Social Education Department., University of Ulster, Newtownabbey.

Coleman, J. (1999). *Key data on adolescence.* Trust for the study of Adolescence.

Commission for Integrated Transport survey, 2001.

Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution (March 2001).

Demos: *Destination Unknown,* 1999(a), Demos, London.

Department of Education (1994), *The Education Service in Northern Ireland: A Strategic Analysis.* Department for Education, Northern Ireland.

Department of Education (1997) *Youth Work: A Model For Effective Practice.* Department for Education, Northern Ireland.

Department of Education: *A Youth Service for a New Millennium,* 2000. Department for Education, Northern Ireland.

Department of Education (2003) Youth Work: *A model for effective practice.* Update 2003. Department for Education, Northern Ireland.

DfEE (2000). Report of PAT 11, *Building Learning Communities: Improving the educational chances of children and young people form disadvantaged areas.*

DfES (2002) Transforming youth work. Resourcing excellent Youth Services. Nottingham DfES

Doyle, M. E. & Smith, M. K. (1999). Born and Bred? *Leadership, heart and informal education.* London: YMCA George Williams College/Rank Foundation.

DSS *Opportunity for all: tackling poverty and social exclusion,* First Annual Report 1999 (Cm 4445), TSO, 1999.

Furuseth, O. (1998). *Service Provision and Social Deprivation.* In B. Ilbery (eds). The Geography of Social Change. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.

Gallagher, T. (1995). *Social Exclusion, Social Inclusion.* Democratic Dialogue.

Gallagher, T. (1997). *New schools for new times in social exclusion/social inclusion.* Democratic Dialogue.

Geraghty, T., Breakey, C. and Keane, T. (1998) *A Sense of Belonging: Young People in rural areas of Northern Ireland speak about their needs, hopes and aspirations.* Youth Action Northern Ireland: Youth Action Publishers.

Gillespie, N., Garner, W., & Lovett, T. (1992). *Youth Work and Working Class Youth Culture.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Goddard, E. & Higgins, V. (1998). *Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in 1998*, ONS.

Gough, I. (1997). Social Aspects of the European model and its economic consequences. . In B. Wolfgang; L. Van Der Maeson and A. Walker (eds), *The Social Quality of Europe.* Bristol: The Polity Press.

Gregg, P & Wadworths, J. (1999). *The State of Working Britain*. Manchester: University Press.

Graham, J. (1998). *Comprehensive spending review of provision for young children – supporting papers, volume 2, HMT.*

Hand, J. (1995). *Raising standards in schools.* The Youth Work Contribution. Leicester: Youth Work Press.

Harland, K. (2001). *The Challenges and Potential of developing a more effective youth work curriculum with Young Men.* Child Care in Practice, 7, 4, 288-300.

Harris, S. (2004) Employers put social skills ahead of degrees. Daily Mail, January 17th.

Health Education Authority (HEA) (2000) Health Update – *Environmental Health: Road Transport.*

Hendry, L. B., Shuchsmith, J., Love, J. G. & Glendinning, A. (1993). *Young people's leisure and lifestyles*. London: Routledge.

Henriques, B. (1933). *Club leadership*. London: Oxford University Press.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons' Annual Report, 1996-97, The Stationery Office.

Hine , J & Mitchell, F. (2001). *The role of transport in social exclusion in urban Scotland* Scottish Executive.

Home Office, *Survey of Police Arrests and their Outcomes*, 1993/94.

Home Office, *British Crime Survey*, TSO, 1996.

Home Office, *Youth Lifestyles Survey*, 1999.

Home Office, *Community Cohesion*, 2001.

Jeffs, T. (1997). Changing their ways: Youth work and 'underclass theory'. In R. MacDonald (ed.). *Youth, the 'underclass' and social exclusion.* London: Routledge.

Jeffs, T. (2001). Something to give and something to learn. In R. Gilchrist & T. Jeffs (eds.). *Settlements, Social Change and Community Action.* London: Jessica Kingsley.

Jeffs, T. & Smith, M. K. (1990). *Young people, Inequality and Youth Work.* London: Macmillan.

Jeffs, T & Smith, M.K. (1998/99). *The Problem of 'Youth' for Youth Work.* Youth and Policy, 62, 45-66.

Jeffs, T. & Smith, M. K. (2001a) Youth. In M. Haralambos (ed.) *Developments in Sociology* 17, Ormskirk: Causeway.

Jones, H. (1997). *Towards a Classless Society*. London: Routledge.

Jones, G (2002). *The Youth Divide – Diverging Paths to Adulthood.* Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Kane, G (2001). *Education, Social Inclusion and Social Exclusion*. Research Paper 22/01, Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Library Service.

Katx, M.B. (1993) *The Underclass Debate: Views from History.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Kiernan, K. (1995). *Transition to Parenthood: young mothers and young fathers: associated factors and later life experiences.* London School of Economics.

Kiernan, K. (1997). *The legacy of parental divorce: social, economic and demographic experiences of adulthood.* Case paper 1. London School of Economics. King, K & Stedman, J (2000). *Analysis of Air Pollution and Social Deprivation.*

Kilmurray, A. (1995) *Beyond the stereotypes in social exclusion.* Democratic Dialogue.Belfast

Leonard, L., Henry, McDonald, P., Geraghty, T., and McCready, S. (2002) *R City Centre*. Belfast: Belfast City Council.

Loader, I. (1996). *Youth, Policing and Democracy.* London: Macmillan.

Louden, and Mc Cready, S. (2000). In D. McVicar, (eds). *Young people and social exclusion in Northern Ireland: Status 0 Four Years on (NIREC).* Report published in conjunction with University of Ulster, DHFETE, and the T&EA.

Malpass, P. & Murie, A. (1999). *Housing policy and Practice*. Bathingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Mac Donald, R. (1997). Informal work, survival strategies and the idea of an underclass. In R. Brown (ed.) *The Changing Shape of Work.* London: Macmillan.

McCartney, Clem: *Unattached Youth Programme*, undated, NIVT, Belfast.

McConville, B. (1998). *The State They're In*. Youth Work Press.

McGlone, F., Park, A., & Smith, K. (1998). *Families in Kinship.* Family Policy Study Centre.

McVicar, D. (2000) (ed). *Young people and social exclusion in Northern Ireland: Status 0 Four Years on (NIREC).* Report published in conjunction with University of Ulster, DHFETE, and the T&EA.

Meltzer, B. G., Petticrew, M. & Hinds, K. (1995). *The Prevalence of Psychiatric Morbidity Among Adults Living in Private Households.* OPCS.

Ministry of Education (1960). *The Youth Service in England and Wales.* (The Abermarle Report). London: HMSO.

Moore, T., & Widdis, H (2001). *New targeting social need* (New TSN). Research paper 04/01, Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Library Service.

Morgan, T., O'Hare, B., & Campbell, H. (2000). *The Excluded Adolescent.* Research funded by YouthNet and the Northern Ireland Council for Northern Ireland.

Morse,W., Cuttler, R. and Fink, A. (1964) *Public school classes for the emotionally handicapped: A research analysis.* Reston: Council for exceptional children

Muldoon, O., Reilly, J., & Byrne, C (2002). *Brief Report on the Long term Evaluation of a Violence Intervention Programme for Young Men.*

Murie, A. (2000). How can we end inequalities in housing? In C. Pantazis & D. Gordon (ed). *Tackling inequalities: Where are we now and what can be done?* Studies in Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion.

Murphy, H. (1999). *Purposes – Why is Youth Work important?* Concept reader in conjunction with Scottish Youth Lobby, Edinburgh. Community Learning Scotland.

Murray, c. (1994) *Underclass: The Crisis Deepens.* London: Institute of Economic affairs.

Murray, C. (2000) Baby Beware: Are they and the country in peril? The Times. Feb 13th. 2000.

National Travel Survey (NTS) 1998/2000.

National Youth Agency (2002). *The NYA guide to Youth Work and Youth Services.* www.nya.org.uk.

Northern Ireland Youth Committee (1973). *The Northern Ireland Youth Services Act.* Belfast: HMSO.

OECD, *Education at a Glance*, 1997.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2001) Omnibus Survey. November, 2001.

ONS Labour Force Survey 1997/98, TSO, 1998.

ONS Labour Force Survey 1998/99, TSO, 1999.

Ord, J. (2004) The youth work curriculum and the 'transforming youth work agenda.' *Youth & Policy*. Vol, 83. p43-59.

Pearce, N. & Hillman, J. (1998). *Wasted Youth: raising achievement and tackling social exclusion.* IPPR.

Pearson, G. (1983) *Hoologan: A History of respectable fears*. MacMillan.

Philip, L. & Shucksmith, M. *Conceptualising Social Exclusion.* Paper presented at the European Society for Rural Sociology XVIII Congress, August 1999.

Powis, B., Griffiths, P., Gossop, M., Llyod, C., & Strang, J. (1998). *Drug use and offending among young people excluded form school.* Drugs, Education, Prevention and Policy, 5: 3.

Pring, R. (1984). *Personal and Social Education in the Curriculum*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Robinson, P. (1999). Education, Training and the Youth Labour Market. In p. Gregg and J. Wadsworth. (eds.). *The State of Working Britain*, Manchester University Press. Rodgers, G. (1995). What is special about a 'Social Exclusion' approach. In G. Rodgers, C. Gore, and J. B. Figueiredo (eds), *Social Exclusion: Rhetoric, Reality, Responses.* London: International Institute for Labour Studies.

Saraceno, C. (1997). The Importance of Social Exclusion. In B. Wolfgang; L. Van Der Maeson and A. Walker (eds), *The Social Quality of Europe*. Bristol: The Polity Press.

Sheffield Hallam University and ONS. Parents' experience of choosing a secondary school.

Smith, M. (1988). *Developing Youth Work: Informal education, mutual aid and popular practice.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Smith, M., K. (2002). *Transforming Youth Work – Resourcing excellent youth services. A critique,* the informal education homepage, www.infed.org/youthwork/transforming_youth_work_2.htm.

Smith, M., K. (2003) From youth work to youth development. *Youth & Policy* 79, p46-59

Smyth, P. (2003) Contested Spaces: An attempt at a definition. *Discussional Paper.*

Social Exclusion Unit (1998). *Truancy and School Exclusion* (cm 3957). London: The Stationery Office.

Social Exclusion Unit (1999). *Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training.* London: The Stationery Office.

Social Exclusion Unit (1999). Chapter one: *Making the Connections: Transport and Social Exclusion.* London: The Stationery Office.

Social Exclusion Unit (1999). *Teenage Pregnancies*. Crown Copyright.

Social Exclusion Unit (2000). *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, Report of Policy Action Team 12: Young People.* Crown Copyright.

Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (SCODA) and Children's Legal Centre, *Young People and Drugs,* 1999.

Strafford, B et al (1999) *Work and Young Men*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Swadi, H. (1989). *Adolescent substance use and truancy: exploring the link*. European Journal of Psychiatry, 3, 2, 108-115.

Tackling Drugs to build a better Britain. (1999) *First Annual Report and National Plan of the United Kingdom Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator,* The Stationery Office,

The Children's Society (1999). Still running: Children on the streets in the UK. *Safe on the Streets research team.*

Thompson, B., & Harvey, C. (1997). Conversations in Clubland. From Politics: the next generation. *Democratic Dialogue.*

2020 Vision Summary Report (1997). *The Industrial Society.*

White, D et al, (2000). *Road accidents and children living in disadvantaged areas: a literature review.* Scottish Executive.

Williamson, C. (1995). *The Dropout society: Young People on the Margin.* Youth Work Press.

Wilson, V. (1997) Focus groups: a useful qualitative method for educational research. *British Educational research Journal.* Vol. 23, No 2.

Wiseguys Project (2002). Signpost - research funded by National Youth Agency, Partners In Innovation and Youth Work Development Grants.

Young, K. (1999). *The Art of Youth Work.* Dorset: Russell House Publishing.

Young People Now (2004) Modern Folk Devils, Jan, p14-15.

Youth Council for Northern Ireland. (1998). *Benefits of the Youth Service: A study of the experiences of 14-18 year old members of the registered youth groups in Northern Ireland.* Youth Council for Northern Ireland Publications.

Youth Council for Northern Ireland (2001). *The debate on Social Exclusion: Causes and Manifestations.*

Youth Lifestyles Survey, Home Office (1999).

Youth Service Liaison Forum (2004) Draft Youth Work Strategy 2005 – 2008.