Reviews

Dimitra Hartas
The Right to Childhoods: Critical perspectives on rights, difference and knowledge in a transient world
Continuum 2008
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pp. 205

Priscilla Alderson

There is a growing group of writers and others who, although their work involves child and youth rights, oppose them. Dimitra Hartas presents a range of their disparaging tactics in her book, and the following list covers some of these in italics, with my comments. Although Hartas writes long sections on childhood and knowledge, this short review concentrates on the rights sections.

Tactic 1. *Dismiss rights as modern liberal abstract ideas, irrelevant to most of the world*. Actually there were feudal rights in Anglo-Saxon pre-1066 law, reinforced in the Magna Carta 1215. The aims were: to stop tyranny through specific embodied freedoms; to stop kings (or governments) being above the law if they murdered, raped and imprisoned subjects and plundered their and their children's property; to replace arbitrary misrule with due legal process, the kind of basic justice, safety and freedom valued in every society.

2. *Dismiss rights as Western imperialism wrongly imposed on communitarian societies*. This claim ignores the long history of bitter struggles for freedom, especially in 13th, 17th, and 19th century Britain, in colonies in every continent, in civil rights movements for Black people, women and other oppressed groups. 'Community leaders', while eager to exercise their own rights, often reject rights talk for others when it challenges their power. It could be more imperialist to claim that only Western people value justice.

3. *Dismiss rights as individualistic*. Law to protect each person's body is the essential safeguard against murder, rape, torture, slavery, trafficking, arbitrary imprisonment, or attacks whether by monarchs, states, neighbours or violent marauders. Children who cannot safely collect firewood in Somalia or attend school in Afghanistan need these legal protections. Far from individualism, human rights involve equal rights for everyone, whether to available health care or to a seat on a bus in Alabama. So human rights inhere in relationships of solidarity, responsibility and mutual respect between everyone.

4. *Paradoxically propose personal individual rights-making*. This tactic claims that it is more 'responsible' when people invent their own rules and rights (Hartas, pp15-119. Page numbers in brackets refer to Hartas and give a few from her repeated examples). The tactic ignores centuries of legal and political debate and struggle, which developed rights as agreed basic international standards. It misunderstands that rights are practical legal freedoms and protections that can ultimately be enforced.

5. *Do not read the United Nations 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*. Refer to it only through secondary and often critical sources. Then you can misquote it and claim that UNCRC is 'abstract' (p18) and not about specific rights. You can invent things that UNCRC does not state: children's decision-making, or 'right to participate' (p99). You can blame UNCRC for omitting matters that it does cover (p115. For example, several articles refer to family and community, and there is great emphasis on children's diverse cultural rights (Preamble, articles 4, 17, 20, 23, 29, 30, 31) contrary to the claims that UNCRC imposes one universal model of childhood.

6. *Blame the UNCRC when children's rights are not honoured* (pp97-102) – instead of seeing how UNCRC is abused or misused or confused with other authorities.

7. *Imply that children's rights are disrespected because children are too weak or immature, instead of seeing how adults' rights are similarly violated* (pp108-9).

8. *Quote from a mixture of cross-referencing covertly anti-rights literature. This obscures children's rights in ever denser fogs, by overlooking how each critical group has different ideas of 'truth' and morality, with different methods and motives for questioning the validity and value of children's rights*. For example, many adults are averse to sharing power with children. Many educationalists and psychologists cannot reconcile child development theory and the steps from 'zero at birth' up to adulthood, with equal rights for all. Early years writers often infantilise all children and young people (pp109, 113). Neo-liberals and many North Americans oppose the United Nations and its Conventions as well as children's rights (p96). Feminists tend to see them as threatening women's rights. Academics (I write as one, though accurately here, I hope) like to show off with nitpicking fault finding. Anthropologists tend to oppose anything that might transfer across cultural difference – like the UNCRC. Postmodernists and social constructionists are wary of things that seem too 'real' and non-relativist (p131-7). Economists prefer measurable utilities to principled rights.

9. *Rely on jargon. Avoid giving explanations or examples to illustrate points*. I have taken care to quote the following, from many examples, accurately:

> 'Taking a dialectical approach to rights is likely to support young people in actively forming
> their own identities and negotiating crises in their life. Moreover, a dialectical approach is

likely to bridge seemingly contradictory views about the validity of knowledge as reason and knowledge and as a cultural artefact towards what Santos (1995) describes as a "new common sense" that encapsulates both logos (reason) and mythos (folklore)'(p118).

We are not told or shown how or why dialectics, or Santos's idea, like many other undigested *non sequiturs* through the book, are relevant.

10. *Do not systematically research children's rights*. Hartas's book is 'based' (p xxii) on a small needs analysis and an attitudes survey (pp181-3). Neither mentions rights.

11. *Assume that 'participation' equals respecting for children's views and rights*, *and that it inevitably undermines their protection and provision rights* – as if children are invariably unreliable self-harming beings. This ignores the countless times when adults can only really protect and provide for children though listening and being partners with them.

12. *Invent meaningless new rights such as 'to an open future' or 'the right to childhoods'.*

Priscilla Alderson, Institute of Education University of London

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Kate Wilson, Gillian Ruch, Mark Lymberry, Andrew Cooper
Social Work: An Introduction to Contemporary Practice
Pearson Education Limited: 2008
ISBN 978-1-4058-5846-5
£27.99
pp. 721

Claudia Bernard

Running to over 700 pages, *Social Work: an Introduction to Contemporary Practice*, contains a stimulating collection of writing that is intended to offer a comprehensive introduction to contemporary social work practice in the United Kingdom. Written by social work scholars at the forefront of their fields, this textbook captures some of the key practice areas in social work and stresses the necessity for relationship-based social work.

In the opening two chapters, the authors chart the historical development of social work and set out the contemporary discourses of social work. In doing so, they signify the social, economic and political issues that social work is rooted in and foreground the debates that have shaped the current legislative and procedural context of practice.

The book is divided into three parts: understanding social work; practice skills and practice theories; and relationship-based social work with user groups. Each section contains a number of chapters that begin with summaries setting out the learning objectives, and the relevant area of the National Occupational Standards for social work, and highlighting crucial points. The book is enhanced throughout by a wealth of case-study material, and practical exercises to signpost key learning points, spark reflection and encourage critical thinking. Significant themes are summarised after each section, and there are also pointers to essential pieces of further reading and links given to useful websites, thus providing additional learning resources.

The first section of *Social Work: an Introduction to Contemporary Practice* deals with understanding social work. It has chapters on the development of social work, the values, ethics and politics of social work, social work knowledge and skills, human development across the lifespan, law and using research in social work. This section thus provides a valuable introduction to some of the key legislative frameworks and procedural issues framing the practice context. For example, a chapter on law and social work provides good overviews of the relevant areas of law for work with children and adults, and highlights the fundamental importance of appreciation of the relevance of the Human Rights Act for social work practice. The ideas conveyed in this chapter both inform and promote critical thinking for understanding the legal framework within which welfare practice is delivered. Numerous practice examples and case studies are employed to illustrate the practical applications of the law to social work.

Section two of the book examines practice skills and practice theories. The six chapters in this section explore communication skills, planning and intervening, partnership working, user involvement and inter-professional and inter-agency working. Emerging from the reflections in this section are some key themes about service user perspectives and the quality of the user-worker relationship. The authors go on to explore relationship-based assessments as a way to grasp the challenging nature of assessment processes. There are some good offerings in this section that will contribute to understanding the professional relationship and the use of self in assessment.

The final section brings together a number of chapters that focuses on relationship-based skills and perspectives of social work. It includes chapters on working with children and families; work with young offenders, and social work and drug use. Drawing on psychodynamic thinking, the authors argue here that relationships are at the heart of effective social work practice. Good overviews of the substantive themes in the literature are given and the authors emphasise the important role of theoretical and experimental knowledge for working effectively with complex relationships. The chapters in this section raise some fundamental questions about the guiding principles of relationally-based practice. They are particularly engaging and offer rich insights for learners looking to broaden their knowledge of the relational focus of social work.

The analyses of the salient debates central to understanding the bases of modern social work practice make this volume especially important. It offers insights for discussion of the values of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice, by emphasising the importance of social justice as a starting point for effective social work practice. The collection is written in an accessible style and the layout of the rich diversity of material makes it a book that can be dipped into at different points, instead of needing to be read from start to finish to be beneficial. It is especially valuable for offering a comprehensive introduction to the knowledge base of contemporary social work, and the breath and quality of the material provides a significant contribution to the field. Although this book is primarily aimed at social work students and practitioners, it offers a wealth of knowledge for those working in youth services, as well as professionals in other occupational groupings working within a wide range of organisational settings.

Claudia Bernard, Senior Lecturer in Social Work, University of London

Kathleen A. Bogle
Hooking Up: Sex, Dating and Relationships on Campus
New York University Press: 2008
ISBN 978-0-8147-9969-7
£11.99 (pbk)
pp. 225

Katie Buston

Bogle's book, as the title suggests, focuses on 'hooking up': the practice she says is at the centre of today's sexual culture on many college campuses in the United States. Hooking up, she says *does not have a precise meaning; it can mean kissing, sexual intercourse, or any form of sexual interaction generally seen as falling in between those two extremes* (p. 27). It can comprise a one off encounter or a series of encounters over weeks or months, usually on weekend nights following alcohol consumption, but with no or little contact in between. One's partner may or may not be a member of one's immediate social circle. Hooking up rarely leads to the participants becoming 'a couple' and has replaced dating and 'going steady' as the primary means of young men and women getting together.

Bogle interviewed 51 college students, male and female, and 25 alumni in order to present her detailed account of what hooking up involves. She also spends time outlining how this practice is largely replaced by dating – the initiation of *romantic relationships by asking each other out to dinner or a movie with the hope that something sexual might happen at the end of the evening* (p.44) – once the college students graduate and move off campus. She attempts to answer the question 'at what point during the 20th century hooking up became common practice amongst

college students?' describing 'the calling era' and 'the dating era' which preceded this new, more casual era.

Amongst the most interesting parts of the book for me is Bogle's exploration of how young men and women tend to approach hooking up interactions and what they hope to get out of them. These are often very different things across the sexes highlighting that there are (still) more rules for women than for men who, Bogle says, can behave as they like without gaining a 'bad reputation'. Men, she asserts, (still) hold most of the power, evidenced in particular in many women feeling regret that hooking up does not lead to 'something more', with the men tending to feel much more satisfied with the hooking up encounter and its outcome (often nothing more than the satisfaction of the sexual interaction in itself). Whilst, then, hooking up is generally enacted in similar ways for men and for women, its meaning is often different for the two. Bogle suggests that it is usually the male participant's meaning that dominates, leaving the female dissatisfied. She does, however, caution, that this is a generalisation and individual men and women may feel differently. Her message about continued disempowerment for women in sexual encounters – from the dating era to the hooking up era – is, however, clear.

Throughout the book Bogle stresses the importance of environment in creating, and constraining, the sexual scripts available to the young men and women. Her analysis of post-college life is interesting in this respect as she describes how more formalised dating is the preferred sexual script in day to day life except during vacation time when the new graduates tend to decant to the beach where alcohol fuelled hooking up again becomes the norm.

Bogle goes into a level of detail extremely useful to researchers in the sexual health area. Having access to such micro-level analysis regarding the sexual behaviour of particular population groups is essential when considering the direction policy initiatives and health interventions in areas such as Sexually Transmitted Infections, contraception and prevention of unwanted pregnancy should take. She makes no claims to have written a book generalisable to all American college students, instead emphasising that she focused on two colleges, one a large state college on the East coast and another a smaller faith-based (Roman Catholic) college in the North-East, both largely residential and both largely comprising middle and upper class white students. Her resultant sample is overwhelmingly white and heterosexual. The in-depth quotes re-produced in this book, however, give the reader the confidence that she is representing the sub-sample of college students that she purports to. She also mentions deviant cases in her analysis adding a depth and complexity to the more definitive, and useful, conclusions she draws.

The work raised the question for me as to how similar, or different, findings from a study sited in British universities would be. In particular, would the very traditional pattern identified by Bogle, which essentially can be stated in the age-old statement that the typical young female wants love

and the typical young male wants sex, be mirrored in the British context? A number of recent studies (e.g. Jackson and Cram, 2003, Williamson, 2007) and media stories concerning practices such as 'daisy chaining' amongst young people (<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article386048. ece>) cast doubt on the simplicity of this. Bogle herself does, however, effectively illustrate how what may be so on the surface, measured by looking at behaviour, and even at discourses also (see Louisa Allen's (2003a, 2003b, 2004) excellent work in the New Zealand context), may become more complex if one looks at the emotions, feelings and aspirations which underlie the behaviour. Here is where variation between the sexes may become starker and far outweigh variation within male and female groupings. For me, Bogle's study highlights that more such work is needed in the British context, on sexual scripts that are the norm across particular groups of people. Taking the lead from Bogle, such studies should examine the meanings of sexual encounters for participants; such nuanced research is surprisingly sparse.

Easy to read, and fascinating for those for whom college life is a fading memory, this book is recommended for those interested in young people's sexual health. It provokes thinking on the fluid nature of sexual cultures and how (and why) practices and norms change over time as well as providing detailed information on the sexual behaviour, and its context, of a particular group of American young people.

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Katie Buston, MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, Glasgow

Mike Stein and Emily Munro
Young People's Transitions from Care to Adulthood
Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2008
ISBN 978 1 84310 610 4
£39.99 (Hbk)
pp 306

Steve Hargrave

I have always been struck by the contrast between the way young people leaving home for the first time and going off to University or College are supported and historically, the lack of structured co-ordinated resources that are directed towards young people leaving the Care system often at roughly the same age.

University bound students have access to accommodation, financial support (whatever the rights and wrongs of Student Loans) something meaningful to do with their time, the companionship of a like-minded peer group and structured support through the tutorial systems. Youngsters who are leaving Care are at a significantly higher risk of social exclusion, both in terms of material disadvantage and marginalisation, and yet, by and large do not have such a range of co-ordinated support available to them.

The basic statistics still have the power to shock and shame those of us who work with vulnerable children and young people:

In 2005, only 11 per cent of those in care attained five GCSEs at Grade A-C compared with 56 per cent of all children.

Some 59 per cent of children in care were not entered for GCSEs at all.

Shockingly, less than 5 per cent of care leavers in England go to university and the availability of support for those young people who do is patchy. Those who do make it to University are regarded as exceptions and not as role models showing the way for other looked after children.

Furthermore, their life chances outside the school gate are equally depressing. Of the 6000 young people who leave care each year many experience mental health problems, drug and alcohol addiction and end up on the streets (one-third of this country's homeless were raised in care) People who have grown up in Care are significantly over-represented in the prison population.

Fifty per cent find themselves unemployed within two years;

A quarter of girls are pregnant when they leave care and half become single mothers within two years.

This book, primarily aimed at academics, researchers, policy-makers and professionals concerned with improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people, comes therefore at an opportune time. It presents an international perspective, drawing on the experiences of 16 different countries. There is much to be gained from learning from other countries successes and failures. Improving policy and practice based on evidence of what works (and what doesn't) could and should lead to improved outcomes for vulnerable groups of young people.

There are of course as one would expect very similar themes to emerge. Case Studies are presented from each country and it is clear that young people making the transition from care to adult independence face many similar if not identical challenges.

It is easier of course to recognise what the problems are, than to define and articulate a coherent system of what interventions may be effective. There are no easily transferable solutions from one country to another but most articles stress the importance of factors such as placement stability, maintaining the consistent support of at least one supportive adult, the provision of post-18 support and so on and there is also a very clear message from several countries, not least the UK, that whatever negative experiences young people may have had to endure whilst in the Care system, a good quality leaving care service can play a vital role in offering a fresh start:

> *Research has highlighted the valuable contribution made by specialist leaving care services, especially in regard to housing, financial support, life skills and in reducing risks of social isolation. Improvements are also being made in education, employment and health services for care leavers.*

There are clear imperatives for policy makers in terms of ensuring that policy should clearly support the provision of services well past the age of 18 as nations throughout the world seek to responsibly discharge their collective responsibilities for continuing to parent these children of the state into adulthood.

John Pinkerton's article quotes a 2005 Recommendation of a Committee of the UNRC to back up this assertion.

Any international comparison has inevitably to include references to globalisation and the widespread opportunities and challenges which come in its wake through the pace of change, the ease of travel from country to country, even continent to continent and the impact of the accessibility of the Internet and mobile phones in all our lives but especially for young people. Not only do these issues have practical implications in terms of types of welfare provision, professional practice etc. but they also

create a level of uncertainty about the world into which young people are entering and introduce yet another variable over which they have little or no choice or control.

I particularly enjoyed Mike Stein's final chapter which summarises concisely, articulately and helpfully the very powerful messages which underpin the book. Improving outcomes involve improving the quality of care, providing young people with opportunities for more gradual transitions from care and that young people leaving care should be supported well into adulthood (from 21 to 25, addressing the core needs of care leavers for assistance with accommodation, finance, education and careers, personal support networks and health and well-being. But I think this is where I came in!!!

Steve Hargrave, Chief Executive of "faith in families"

Adam Abdelnoor
Managed Moves – A complete guide to managed moves as an alternative to permanent exclusion
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation: 2007.
ISBN No: 9781 903080 07 8
£8.50 (pbk)
pp. 112

Catherine L. Manley

When I considered the title of this book, I was intrigued by the suggestion of a 'complete guide' to 'Managed Moves', this challenged me to discover if this is a realistic and achievable goal for the author.

Following the publication of the 'Managed Moves' report, submitted by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on the 14 December 2007, efforts were made to address rising numbers of school exclusions with reports of over 9,000 annual permanent exclusions adding to rising numbers of fixed-term exclusions.

Abdelnoor defines Managed Moves as 'an alternative to permanent exclusion, enabling a child or young person to make amends and to move on to a new placement or programme in a planned way (2007:11.) The process involves a series of meetings and home visits, culminating in a 'Restorative Justice conference' with a neutral facilitator guiding the process, resulting in a move to a PRU, alternative education provider, new school or the maintenance of a current place following certain reparations.

The book is divided into four parts: part one, explains in some detail the concept, ethos and values

of the approach. Part two outlines key principles behind the approach and the specific roles of key players and explains the two conference themes (justice/family) adopted.

Part three, describes, in some depth, the Facilitator's role, outlining that s/he 'should be everybody's friend' (2007:71). Emphasis is placed on neutrality within the role, yet out of the three suggestions made in terms of the professional origin of the facilitator, two of them refer to the local authority. The conferences are described by Abedelnoor as 'a friendly dialogue, not a psychological assessment' (2007:82), it is suggested that a facilitator does not necessarily need professional training. There are, however, consistent mentions of the use of specific skills including: the use of cognitive interview techniques, knowledge of psychological processes and systemic family theory, all suggesting that, evidently, the facilitator is required to be a psychologist or counsellor in order to fulfil this role adequately.

Part four explores the role of the 'education community' supporting the utilisation of shared resources, effective communication and partnership suggesting the development of a 'boundary of inclusion' whereby the term 'exclusion' may inevitably reach its demise. This idea appears positive, although much work has to be done in terms of the classification of 'mainstream' within a more heterogeneous concept of education, in order to promote such a philosophy.

Much controversy has appeared in recent years regarding levels of exclusion, national targets have been set to promote the reduction in statistics. Following the introduction of the National Curriculum (1988), wherein the 'one size fits all' ethos prevails, we have witnessed the emergence of an internal market philosophy, aimed at promoting efficiency, cost consciousness and adequate utilisation of resources, resulting in a social construction of 'pupil marketability' reflecting via league tables the effectiveness of individual schools.

The idea of conformity to a model is very much prevalent in today's school. Reasons given for exclusions resonate the early 1990s: the contravention of school rules and refusal to attend. Pupils are almost subjected to demonization without clear identification and research into the origins of their voluntary non-participation or behavioural objections. Often individual underlying needs are overlooked, in favour of the marketability of the school, censorship and efforts to maintain conformity. Abdelnoor identifies the utilisation of 'Managed Moves 'as redressing social and development needs which cannot be met within the school (including learning difficulties). I do have a concern that a Managed Move may take place which potentially addresses SEN difficulties, and then classifies outcomes under the auspices of 'reparation' and 'justice'.

The approach to the idea of a process which draws in opportunities for dialogue and reflection is a very positive step, in my opinion. Over the years I have witnessed referrals by schools with no prior discussion (at any level) with pupils or parents/carers regarding the removal from mainstream

education. Often a telephone call from the provider to a parent/carer is the first contact and knowledge they have regarding the name and nature of the alternative option.

The Managed Move aspires to a very positive approach, identifying key issues early, hopefully resulting in a pro-active response from the school, in terms of addressing in-house training and internal additional support. Such an approach, underpinned by tolerance and understanding, could portend a dramatic relational change within the school, the community and the youth justice system. This book is a good tool to those aiming to improve communication between school and parents, and the fundamental guidance will prove very useful in terms of adopting this process.

Throughout the book, there is an emergence of varying contradictions to the process, for instance; whilst accepting that learning difficulties, resulting in challenging behaviour, is at the core of a particular incident/s, Abdelnoor also concedes that the 'wrong-doer is always a pupil, but the aggrieved may be a pupil, teacher or other professionals.' (2007:93). The restorative approach evidently reflects a judicial/punitive response to the situation, references throughout the book signal a name and shame approach including: 'public apologies, school community service and compensation' seemingly replicating a court hearing; if the crime is sufficiently serious then removal from the school community is the ultimate outcome.

The book is clearly written by an author who believes passionately about this approach, I believe it is a 'complete' and very thorough guide to the process, outlining scripts, administration and clear outcomes. One easy misinterpretation for the reader to be acutely aware of is the danger of utilising the process as a more succinct management of exclusion.

The focus of the book, for me, remains centred on the 'problem child', without satisfactory reflection of the structure, targets and heightened dependence on pupil conformity by the school. It would be illuminating to read a more balanced use of such an approach as I feel it has possibilities, yet for me the philosophy is disappointing. Abdelnoor concludes that schools are 'fundamentally humane organisations' (2007:110) and as such it is hoped that deep needs, however inadequately expressed, are addressed and evidenced using a pupil centred and humanistic approach.

Catherine Manley, Programme Manager, IMPACT / Alternative Education, Durham

Michael Newman
Teaching Defiance: Stories and Strategies for Activist Educators
Jossey-Bass: 2006
ISBN 13: 978-0787985561
£18.99
pp. 288

Mae Shaw

This book, by long-time educator and activist Michael Newman, is introduced by Stephen Brookfield, known widely for his prolific writing on critical thinking. In his foreword, he confesses to strong feelings of envy: 'I only wish I had it in me to write something so powerful, accessible and convincing'. This says much for Brookfield, but more for Michael Newman. And Stephen Brookfield has it right. The text is infused with a sense of conviction which is uncompromising, but always inflected with a feeling that this man not only understands the real dilemmas of practice but also the necessity and difficulty of confronting them. As the cover claims, this is a book about choice – the choices that have to be made in order to sustain an educational practice that challenges injustice and which, critically for Newman, includes defiance. For him, this is an intellectual and political task as much as it is an educational one.

The book is divided into five parts: Making a Start, Rebelliousness and Defiance, Choosing and Taking Control, Insight and Action, and Defiance and Morality. It is liberally subdivided into sections which make it easy for reference purposes. Besides problem solving, Newman explores why and how to teach rebelliousness, collective decision making, dialogue, negotiation, posing emotions like anger and frustration as the raw material for educators to engage creatively with rather than manage or suppress. The plentiful examples are drawn largely from trade union education. Although these may not always be readily transferable to community education contexts, one universal lesson is that the politics (like the devil) is in the detail as much as in the grand ideas. These examples demonstrate a systematic educational process which is meticulously planned in advance and revised in light of evaluation.

Whilst Newman's interest is in the reality of people lives, he does not treat 'experience' as an unproblematic business, instead grounding educational practice in theoretical frameworks which illuminate the importance and the difficulty of making sense of such experience. The opening section 'Taking sides' makes it absolutely clear that there is going to be no resort to an easy inclusivity. In fact, there are no easy resorts full stop – whether discussing educational practice or moral purpose. That is what makes the book so refreshing and so useful. Newman is contemptuous of the ways in which adult education has become seriously depoliticised, in part by the domestication of those very ideas which once served a more radical purpose. His attack on the way in which 'critical thinking' has become tamed and disconnected from educational and social purpose is one I find particularly

satisfying: 'Now critical thinking [is] to be found as just one in a list of higher-order competencies, capabilities or capacities, alongside others such as "the ability to work in a team" ' (p.10). This is particularly apposite just now when standardised benchmarks are being cobbled together for higher education in this field, as is his view that adult education has itself become 'simply too nice, too self-centred, or too concerned with maintaining the status quo'. For those practitioners who relate only too well, if uncomfortably, to this description, this book may offer a timely way out of the madness.

What is perhaps most significant about Newman's vision is his faith in the capability of educators to take sides, make choices and act competently and creatively with real people in real circumstances. The title could so easily have been 'learning defiance'. That it is not is precisely his point. He knows the difference between education and learning and is clear about where he stands. His interest is not only in what people learn, but what they learn for. It is this commitment to social purpose that leads him to suggest how educators can create the conditions for learning – using education as a means 'to stay critically alert'. This book acts as a broadside against the way we too often find ourselves on the defensive, cornered into arguing in all too familiar, yet alienating, discourses. The learning paradigm itself may be precisely one such discourse! Newman tells us to stop and reverse the process; to become assertive, if not awkward, and to know that we are in good company when we do so.

A number of intellectual superstars are drawn into the argument along the way – from Sartre and Camus to Freire, Habermas and Bauman – along with many who were new to me. This eclectic mix is reflected in the way in which Newman draws on insights from new struggles in order to extend, but still hold on to, foundational explanatory frameworks which no longer do the job they once did. As he says, we must 'nail our colours to the mast, but sometimes they shade into each other'. I found his synthesis of rational and non-rational discourse interesting and in obvious ways appealing, although it raises as many questions as it addresses, not least the basis on which such distinctions are made and on what intellectual frameworks they can draw.

In Newman's work, the whole is, in a real sense, greater than the sum of the parts. His sharp analytical mind and clear political conviction are enlivened by his wry humour and endearing self-deprecation. The result is both thought provoking and moving. The writing is elegant and entertaining and there is a pleasing mix of metaphor and narrative, theoretical analysis and practical illustration. He is a great believer in the value of telling stories and, to some extent, this is his. It may not be too fanciful to suggest that it reads like a retrospective meditation on his own life and work as well as a strident manual for action in the present.

As it happens, I was wearily trying to comment constructively on proposed benchmarks for community learning and development in the UK at the same time as I was reading Mike Newman's book. The contrast couldn't be more stark. In Newman's book, the words fly off the page and fill your imagination with real people in real situations with real struggles, and with real feelings of frustration,

anger or delight. The work of the educator is to create the conditions in which such legitimate feelings can generate a curriculum which equips people to challenge the status quo in the interests of social change. The participants are not simply objects of however well-meaning policy initiatives but are active subjects in social, political and cultural struggles. It is the connection between these kinds of struggle, and the difference committed educators can make that is central to the title. *Teaching Defiance* is explicit about its politics; benchmark statements are not, though they perform a deeply hegemonic task.

Reading this book revived my flagging energy and reminded me of the always present danger of teaching conformity, however we dress it up. The benchmarking project and other mechanisms of regulation which are presented as 'quality assurance' are only the latest examples. The capacity for reflexivity – 'helping us to see through ourselves' – is a way of keeping us straight on such matters. Defiance may be the next stage!

There is much more that could be said about this book. It consolidates a legacy of many years as educator, activist and commentator. There is a gentle but always probing empathy with human frailty in all its forms at the same time as an unwillingness to be deflected from serious political purpose. In a world of euphemism and hype, Newman dares to talk about love and hate as the primal driving forces of humankind. Once again, no resort to lazy moralising, but a recognition that these two foundational forces 'sit in uneasy dialectical relationship with each other, mediated by our own actions and relationships, by the mass media, by our culture and by the various so-called social norms set by our political leaders, our churches and our many and various role models and "moral guardians".' (p.275). This kind of expansive thinking is as rare as it is inspirational, offering an open, generative and enduring model of educational practice which is committed to social justice. This is a book about 'why' as well as 'how' and will be invaluable on the shelves of educational practitioners in any kind of setting, though it is focussed on adult education.

I am reminded of the words of the late Lee Hays, the great American singer-songwriter and political activist, which I think Michael Newman might appreciate:

> *Good singing won't do it*
> *Good preaching won't do it*
> *[Good teaching won't do it!]*
> *But if you get them all together*
> *With a little organising behind it*
> *You get a way of life*
> *And a way to do it*.

The ultimate strength of Michael Newman's vision is the recognition that things can, indeed must,

change, but that means in the first instance a concerted challenge to the idea that there is no alternative. His postscript explains his choice of an additional sub-title: 'A book written in wartime'. When he began writing it, the USA, UK and Australia were planning to invade Iraq. He finished the book while foreign forces were still engaged in combat and occupation there. As he says 'it's easy to lose heart'. But he counterposes this bleak landscape of despair with a moment of spontaneous energy and joy from an everyday human encounter he has, and which provokes unexpected camaraderie and laughter, concluding that 'beautiful surroundings, fine music and easygoing civility – a world worth defying the doomsayers, barbarians and bigots for'. It is just this kind of sceptical optimism which needs to be taken forward as 'a way of life' in adult education. Michael Newman shows 'a way to do it'.

Mae Shaw, Higher and Community Education, University of Edinburgh

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Tina Patel
Mixed up Kids: Race, Identity and Social Order
Russell House Publishing: 2008
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£18.95 (pbk)
pp.186

Paul Thomas

How fixed and pre-determined are our ethnic and 'racial' identities? Is that form of 'racial' identity the most important determinant of our experiences, especially for non-white people in a historically racist and highly racialised society? Many of us involved in anti-racist campaigning and youth and community work over the past decades would have traditionally answered 'yes' to both those question, but in recent years the fixedness and importance of 'racial' identity has become the subject of significant academic and political discussion for a number of reasons. The emergence of Community Cohesion as a policy priority is linked to the suggestion that past policy approaches emphasised separate racial/ethnic identities to the detriment of common identities as a young person, or as a British citizen. The recent furore over the marginalisation of white working class young people (Runneymede Trust, 2008) and the increasingly diverse educational and employment experiences within non-white communities suggests that 'race', as a form of identity and as a causal explanation, has been over-emphasised in comparison to class and place. Such debates are made more urgent by the fact that dual heritage or 'mixed' background is the fastest growing ethnic category, with this and the associated rapid growth in inter-racial marriages and partnerships suggesting that Britain has made more positive progress towards Paul Gilroy's goal of post-racial 'planetary humanism' than we sometimes acknowledge.

I've recently been struck by how suspicious dual-heritage students are of ethnic monitoring and its requirement to 'choose' one's ethnic identity, and in this context Tina Patel's *'Mixed up Kids: Race, Identity and Social Order'* is a timely and welcome addition to the available literature. Writing in an accessible style that makes the book useful for practitioners as well as students and academics, Patel's perspective is that policy has essentialised racial identities, seeing them as fixed, unchanging and of fundamental importance to experience. Whilst having obvious weight in terms of the history and continuing reality of racial prejudice and discrimination, Patel sees this approach as having been detrimental to some young people and uses her focus on young people subject to 'trans racial adoption' to illustrate this. Over recent decades, such adoptions, normally of black or dual heritage young people to white families, have been seen as damaging to the identity and esteem of the young people concerned, and Patel highlights how few such adoptions have happened in spite of the current Government's attempts to make 'race' just one of the determining factors. The core of this book is Patel's evidence from field research with six non-white adults who experienced trans-racial adoption during different policy approaches, with their fascinating and often moving testimony analysed sensitively and at length. Their varied experiences highlight the difficulties of 'growing up different' in a society where racialised norms are held by people of all ethnic backgrounds, and some of the experiences recounted do support the professional scepticism around trans-racial adoption. However, much of the testimony is also very positive about the experience, and questioning of the 'lost identity' thesis of critics, with respondents rejecting the need to fit neatly into pre-conceived racial identities and cultural patterns.

This testimony is the real strength of the book, and it backs up the wider, often American-based, literature on trans-racial adoption that is discussed and which suggests that on balance there is no evidence of trans-racial adoption being damaging to the young people concerned (in the context of adoption per se being a difficult and emotional experience for anyone who experiences it).Patel's suggestion that 'mixed heritage' adoption is a more helpful term, as it more accurately captures respondent's feelings that they have experienced/gained an additional racial identity through adoption , rather than having 'lost' one as the term 'trans-racial adoption' implies, is an important perspective that deserves wider consideration. 'Supply' issues of black and dual-heritage families prepared to adopt are discussed in frustratingly little detail, as this apparent lack has lead to non-white young people being over-represented in the failing care system, and renewed pressure for trans-racial adoption as a better alternative. Patel usefully makes concrete suggestions in the Conclusion as to how adoption and social work practitioners can navigate these complex issues without working on essentialised stereotypes.

For all the above reasons, this book deserves praise, but I had some concerns about its partial attempts to broaden the focus to dual-heritage experiences in society more generally. Some of the cover detail suggests this focus, and at times the text broadens to such wider perspectives. The problem here is that the book's core focus, and the field research data it draws on, are around the much more specific issues of

trans-racial adoption, and at times switching from one focus to another confuses rather than enlightens. For instance, on page 79, Patel states *'it seems that some trans-racial adoptees at times felt different and rejected because of their mixed-race status'*, but the testimony provided didn't seem to me to confirm that the dual-heritage background of that adoptee was actually the issue. Given that not all of the six subjects were of a dual-heritage background, this limited the book's impact here. In some ways, this may be unfair, as Patel has produced a really useful book on trans-racial adoption experiences and policies, but the wider focus on multi-racial identities in the Introduction left me wanting more on this issue. We urgently need more literature on dual heritage experiences, and what they say about racial essentialism, at a time when America has elected a dual-heritage President, and most of the 'black' footballers in the England football team are actually dual heritage. Tina Patel hasn't produced that definitive book, but she has produced a really thoughtful and important book on trans-racial adoption and in so doing raised important wider questions about racial identities that need further debate.

Paul Thomas, Senior Lecturer, Youth and Community Work, University of Huddersfield

Doug Nicholls
Building Rapport: A brief history of the Community and Youth Workers' Union
Bread Books: 2009
ISBN 0-9542112-8-6
£19.99
pp. 264

Howard Williamson

Ian Campbell, father of Robin and Ali of UB40 fame, was a socialist folk singer in the 1950s. The last verse of one his songs, *The Old Man's Lament*, an imagined life that took one man and his family through a sequence of real and metaphorical wars (Boer, WWI, the General Strike, the Great Depression, Spain, WWII, Vietnam) goes as follows:

> *And we're living on a pension now and it doesn't go too far*
> *Not much to show for a life that seems like one long bloody war*
> *To think of all the wasted lives it makes you want to cry*
> *I don't know how we change things but, by Christ, we've got to try*

In reading the remarkable history of the Community and Youth Workers' Union, these lines kept returning to my mind – though CYWU has rather more to 'show' for its recurrent struggles. The CYWU and its predecessor unions and associations, representing a membership concerned with youth work, community work and play work, evolved through the 20th century and into the 21st in an attempt to improve the lives of those with whom the membership worked and their own terms and

conditions of employment. Notable achievements were often matched by depressing setbacks, but there was incremental progress. The association/union itself had its moments of imminent collapse or implosion, and has often pondered on whether or not to be a small fish in a big pool, aligned to broader professional and trade union territory, or a bigger fish in a smaller pool. Either way, during periods of independence and those of integration with wider movements, it has, as the cover blurb claims, usually managed to punch above its weight, promoting the interests of its workforce and the standards of the profession.

The book itself is a glossy publication which has both visual and narrative impact. The photographs and images on every page are evocative of the times they reflect or the 'rogue's gallery' they portray of central and associated players in the union's past and present. Author Doug Nicholls, CYWU's national organiser and general secretary for the past twenty years and more, takes us through the union's history year by year. He endeavours to weave together a number of themes: the membership levels, procedures and finances that have kept the union going; personal stories and anecdotes conveying the humour and friendship that has usually underpinned its solidarity; and the campaigns and political action with the beneficial consequences for youth, community and play work that it often secured. The union has been at the heart of progressive thinking and practice on anti-racism and equal opportunities. Around this core framework is commentary on the wider political context in which the union had to operate (one that was rarely benign) and on the relevant academic output that contributed to more conceptual as well as operational development in the field.

The author has tried to cluster this account into seven substantive chapters covering very different lengths of time which themselves span some dramatically different political constellations. The periods therefore reflect the stages of growth and development of the union rather than the external landscape on which the union was seeking to perform and exert influence. Eight appendices supplement this text, listing things such as the presidents of the union and the venues of national conferences as well as key policy statements, various obituaries and tributes to departed colleagues and comrades that were first published in the union journal *Rapport*, and a small selection of pithy and relevant quotations from John Ruskin, Bernard Davies and others. It is a great achievement to have researched, rationalised and collated all this material. If you have been a member of CYWU for some years, whether on the fringes (like me) or more actively at its core, then the personal resonances and recollections will strike hard but warmly, as you recognise faces and recall events. If you have not been a member, there is still value in learning and understanding the contribution of CWYU to the development of youth, community and play work across the UK. And, of course, this history will be an important addition to the overall history of trade unions and the labour movement.

Given the considerable effort that has obviously gone into the production of this book, both through the author trawling the archives and gathering the documentary material, and in the technical layout which is impressive, it is a shame that the book is spoilt by a considerable number of minor

typographical and grammatical errors. And one of the photo credits is completely wrong, though I will not say which one.

Doug Nicholls elaborates on his choice of title in his introductory remarks (p.6). The idea of 'building' expresses something hard and durable; 'rapport' is something more fluid and subtle. But the two together seem to capture something of the essential culture of CYWU – some levels of contradiction that have generally been overcome by a sense of purpose and unity, and supportive personal relationships. The union has striven to be both organised (in a traditional union way) and professional. This dual purpose has been viewed, by the author and most in the union, as complementary, though not all have always agreed. No-one would disagree, however, that this 'brief' history is anything but brief. It covers so much that has hitherto remained unpublished. Nicholls has brought it to the surface. The union is now an 'old man' over pensionable age (arguably 70 in 2008): it should applaud what it has fought for with success but lament the waste of the many young lives still blighted by the absence of the kinds of educational and developmental opportunities and experiences that the union has long advocated for them. Metaphorically, the bloody war goes on.

Howard Williamson, University of Glamorgan