

Developing Critical Youth Work Theory

Building Professional Judgment in the
Community Context

Brian Belton



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INTRODUCTION

*I set goals, take control, drink out my own bottle
I make mistakes but learn from every one
And when it's said and done
I bet this brother be a better one
If I upset you don't stress
Never forget, that God isn't finished with me yet*

–Tupac Shakur

This book sets out to be critical of the theory, practice, language and policy of youth work in the context of community education. At the same time it will examine and problematise the practice environment; land, place, locale, attitude, and condition which have come to be known collectively as ‘community’.

It is not my intention to put right various wrongs, or to critique for the sake of it. Youth work has failed to gain the status its practitioners deserve for two main reasons. Firstly it has not been served well in terms of critical theory. Secondly – and as a consequence – it has largely failed to facilitate the honing of professional judgement. Youth work is in danger of becoming a craft, following various versions of the same set of instructions that can more or less be identified in most of the literature relating to the profession.

During the contemporary period, informal education has attempted to step into this breach in the foundations of youth work. However, as one trawls through the writing relating to it, the shoals of ‘shoulds’ and ‘musts’ might cause anyone weaned on the custom and practice of youth work to despair. Traditionally youth workers devoted themselves to working with others to find pathways in life through taking chances and opportunities for themselves. Hence, from a very long list of precepts, telling youth workers to educate young people (who have not asked to be educated) while insisting, for instance, that we should ‘*make compassion the kernel*’ of our work, all the time promoting a rather vague notion of democracy, is both prescriptive and confused.

If we are giving people stuff they have not asked for, and making ourselves operate to a prescribed attitude and conduct of informal education, how is it democratic? This is not what we have sought to do in terms of best practice in youth work; it is the diametrical opposite. How can we develop as a largely non-directive, but developmental, force in the life of society if we are to adhere to a collection of one-size-fits-all, formulaic

coaching schedules, set-in-stone codes and apparently unquestionable rules? I am not talking about health and safety issues, nor child protection procedures, but maxims like ‘I must never impose my opinion on young people’. Most young people I have known have not treated me or many other adults as a voice that must be followed – often very much the contrary. Another often recited mantra is, ‘I never encourage dependence’. However, the act of insisting on independence is in fact dependent on that assertion. Someone supposedly working on someone else for them not to be dependent is a contradiction in terms.

Statements of this type are premised on deficit models, which I will expand on below, and simple professional ego. For example, to imply young people have no choice what to do once I’ve given my opinion is to see them both as dependent and in deficit with regard to making up their own mind. But are people under a certain age, 16, 18, 21, that malleable? Such deficit perspectives also imply that people are looking for any and every opportunity to be dependent, which again is something not really understood as a common trait among teenagers and those in their early twenties.

What follows is not so much an instruction manual but analysis, views, narrative, critique, discussion that includes, most importantly perhaps, thoughtful contemplation of and deliberation on ‘real life’ experience and practice. This has been achieved via an eclectic and lively mix of perspectives that embraces academic, practitioner and journalistic contributions reflecting on social, economic, political and historical considerations.

The book uses several recurring themes. Prominent among these are deficit awareness and related colonial attitudes. I have also consistently reminded the reader of the capitalist social and economic structure within which youth work is framed and formed, and which it confirms, and what Foucault calls the ‘Carceral’; the idea that society as is effectively a reflection of the prison. Public space is transformed into defensible space, dominated by forms of surveillance and control mechanisms. Such social environmental considerations are mostly ignored in much of the literature relating to youth work and informal education perhaps because these are stark foundations. But they provide a firm footing on which to develop strategies and professional judgment for meaningful practice that has impact and purpose. We are more secure and potentially more effective starting from a point that resembles where we are, rather than setting up practice direction from where we wish we could be.

This stance is not about conjuring up good guys and bad guys, and bears no resemblance to conspiracy theories. However, I am implicating the nature of social formation into analysis – the structure, process and dynamics

of society. Geoffrey Kay and James Mott set a standard for this in the 20th century context in their concise epic *Political Order and the Law of Labour* (MacMillan, 1982). I have attempted to set out a continuous sociological and political theme that understands, for example, that although politicians might well have every good intention in framing legislation, the character of society, its networks and mechanics, will cause the effects of the same to follow a number of logical, although not always straightforwardly predictable, channels. These conduits are shaped by social conditions, power relations, authority structures and historical influences, the likes of which Foucault, Fanon and others have confronted, deciphered, deconstructed and critiqued. Overall, this book, embracing this tradition, provides a determined, sociologically analytical perspective that offers a novel critical response to youth work within community education practice that energises and provokes the development of professional judgement.

What follows is designed so that professional practitioners, and those training for the profession, might gain some means to initially question what passes for theory in the youth work/informal education realm. Within this an effort is made to justify the terms we use almost reactively, one of the basic characteristics of higher education. This is not done for its own sake, but to promote understanding of what our aims mean, and a consciousness of what it is we seek to do. This combined endeavour can be part of the means to produce much needed new theory for the individual development of professional judgement, finding pathways through taking chances and opportunities.

To quote Harry Batt an 11 year old I worked with in my first post after I qualified: ‘Why should you do what anyone else tells you?’ Why do they know better than you?’ Not just good questions, but Harry may have possibly worked out a radical way of honing professional judgement. Much of what follows is based on this attitude using deconstructive logic, biography, practitioner consideration and analysis of practice and theory. Overall it provides what I think constitutes the first really close and critical look at some of the sometimes meaningless, terminology that infects youth work, its site of practice (the community) and the rhetoric of informal education.

I have tried to avoid pointless citation of much of the familiar literature. However, the more academically demanding analysis, for example, when referring to race and ethnicity, has necessarily included relevant references. In general I have tried not to write an entirely academic book as I want the work to fit in with professional needs, be accessible and quick to read. This said, most of what follows has been run by hundreds of undergraduate students in youth work and related fields and been usefully used by the same, so the work is track tested.

INTRODUCTION

As a piece this book seeks to

- Question if community education is a viable framework for youth work practice
- Demonstrate that informal education is not an equivalent to, or replacement for, youth work, but a set of tools and precepts that youth workers have deployed which can be shown to be founded on anachronistic attitudes and as such redundant
- Provide the seeds of a new paradigm of youth work that while it might have educational impact, does not necessarily have straightforward educational outcomes
- Argue that youth work can be an enterprising and novel facility for ‘world building’ via the implication and embracing of the young as a source – and an inspiration for – social renewal, rather than as a population category that functions as a focal point of professional treatment
- Motivate questioning and critical approaches across the practice spectrum to generate clear professional judgement to enhance service delivery, quality of client experience and the production of policy that is both appropriate to society and pertinent to users.

The material also aims to politicise a group of professionals who have become almost terminally depoliticised through decades of surveillance and control-oriented policy from successive governments presiding over a society increasingly suspicious and fearful of its youth population. This politicisation includes definite strategies and tactics that can be implemented at individual, area and professional levels. This is not so much about accepting the manipulative role of agents of change, framed as that is in the conventions of promoting a non-politicised status quo, but offering a means to take on a responsibility as a vanguard in the socialisation of knowledge and meaningful social action. This is not strung around the deficit perception of ‘personal development’ or the illusion of ‘community education’ but a definite desire for pragmatic social development.

The logical premise of individual development is social development. Environments that inhibit social and political development restrict developmental room for the individual. This is not saying youth workers can change society, or should even try to, but it is suggesting that they can be part of the means to influence social reformation and challenge authority structures. The Solidarity movement that arose in Poland in the 1980s was premised on ordinary working people creating enclaves of freedom within a State structure founded on ‘unfreedom’. This developed into a framework of freedom throughout a whole population that eventually brought down a Soviet dominated government in an essentially non-violent

way. Three months later, in November 1989, the Berlin wall was opened, the prelude to the erosion of the Iron Curtain and the demise of the USSR in 1991. This is a historically recent example of how people, when they become aware that authority taken by a minority is reliant on the majority giving up their authority, can take back that authority.

Youth workers know better than most that authority does not follow gravity, that this perception is the result of a sort of conjuring trick. Authority arises from the base of society. Youth workers are in what maybe an ideal position to demonstrate that via the pooling and processing of collective influence, authority can be made to push up from its actual roots.

Forms of instruction tend to introduce a series of ways of doing things that are comparatively easily to connect with what has been done before. This can be a comforting process wherein we can feel better equipped, having developed our expertise. But education is something a bit different from this. The expert, knowing how to do something, is not necessarily the most educated person in terms of intellect. When two or more people apply their intelligence to something disagreement is likely at some stage. This is not always a comfortable experience as it probably involves argument. If a person is not acclimatised to this the risk is that they may be offended by the process. However, as Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver had it, *Too much agreement kills the chat*.

It is probable that most discoveries of any significance, from the earth not being flat to genetic engineering, have caused at least somebody somewhere offence in that their beliefs and understandings have been questioned. Successful education, unlike instruction, has a relatively high chance of being recognised by the level of offence, objection and dissention it provokes. But if this can be embraced the turbulent experience of education can stoke and work with the imagination on to creating new and exciting possibilities. It was Albert Einstein who insisted that *Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand*. That feels more a bit more alluring than, for example, merely looking over one's shoulder at what has happened in the past and applying that to the present and the immediate future, as if what 'is' is a mirror of what 'was'. The pubescent confusion of Alice as she ventured through the looking glass – 'reflecting-in-and-on-action'.

I know that these pages will not please some or indeed many readers. People sometimes like to be told what they already know rather than have well loved and nurtured ideas challenged or taken apart. I make no apology for not doing this. I, like most people, do not wish to be unpopular or to

INTRODUCTION

offend. But the more one's investment in a field, the more likely is the pain when that asset is depreciated. However, I would say that I have not set out to provide a 'balanced position'. As my first sociology teacher once said: 'Perhaps consider both sides of the coin, but particularly the other side.' This book is something of that other side, written from a background of 35 years in youth work as a practitioner, tutor, supervisor and lecturer. It is the fruit of contact with thousands of youth workers across the world and many more thousands of young people. These ideas have been more welcomed than spurred and are offered here not as the 'once and for all story' but as a means of redressing the balance – to say what many youth workers have wanted to say and for many reasons have not been able to. I trust they will be taken in the spirit of healthy questioning and an attempt to break a mould that I believe needs breaking. I'm not even sure that youth work can have a mould at all. It is a thing constantly in the making. That is what I aim to do and facilitate.

I don't mean to sound sleezy but tease me. I don't want it if it's that easy – Tupac Shakur

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THE PARADOX OF COMMUNITY

The only thing that comes to a sleeping man is dreams

–Tupac Shakur

The community is often seen as the site of practice with young people – but where is it? Traditionally communities have been understood as having a geographical basis, such as a rural village or inner-city neighbourhood, but in the contemporary era community is not limited by geography. Communities can arise around common interests or identity, even be virtually based. Community doesn't even seem to be restricted by size as we now talk in terms of the 'national community', even the 'global community'. Community is everywhere and ever present. Disturbingly, anything that is everywhere is logically nowhere. If everything were white there would be no white. We can only call something white because some things are not white – comparatives are needed if particulars are to be identified. However, the number of books, articles and papers written about community incline one to believe it might be among the most thought about concepts in human relations, certainly since the Second World War.

THE GENUS OF COMMUNITY

The condition of modern human beings is quite curious when viewed from the perspective of other times. We are now all individuals. We have a notion of 'self' and can describe ourselves in terms of being 'unique'. I can list propensities and characteristics that I perceive to be more or less particular to me. Modern sociology, neurology, psychology and even anatomy seem to confirm this prognosis. I am me, you are you, she is her, he is him.

In an age of gender confusion and botoxic agelessness much more is up for grabs. To a certain and growing extent we can become who or what we want to be. We exist in what is a very self-centred universe wherein we are thought to construct ourselves (See Nemeth 2002 p. 6). This is comparatively new. The widespread use of the notion of community has been a post-World War Two phenomenon. But here we are, each one of us

individualised human beings, seeking to express ourselves, while at the same time showing a desire to be part of greater wholes. We wish to 'commune' with others.

This anxiety not to be alone is a primal feeling close to other deep seated drives such as sex and eating. It is the force behind family and tribal affiliations epitomising the basis of our social psychological make up. It harks back to a time when the individual had no responsibility or identity outside the clan or settlement. One was of one's 'tribe' and later trade and that is what defined who one was. Later the notion of duty to God and a monarch kicked-in, but even then if a peasant was walking down some remote lane carrying a sword a knight riding by would be well within the bounds of justice to kill the peasant. To carry a sword was a prerogative of the knightly class; the only way the peasant could have got hold of a sword was to steal it from, and maybe kill, the rightful owner, another knight.

This was the fate of 'out-laws', banished from the protection of the law, the structure of order of the time. One was placed 'outside the law' not only because of the way one conducted oneself, but the how; your social category played as much of part in your condemnation as whatever it was you did to offend the ruling social elite.

The peasant with a sword would have represented anarchy and a threat to the feudal precepts of society which were based on everyone knowing their place and staying in it. From birth one was assigned to one's position in the social strata within a hierarchical society that had God and the King at the top and the peasant and eventually hell at the bottom. It was not possible to move around this order. One couldn't go to college and take a GCSE in 'Nobility' or an NVQ in 'Chivalry and knightly conduct'.

Mark Twain's novel, *The Prince and the Pauper*, first published in 1881, set in 1547, and tells the story of two boys identical in appearance – Tom Canty, a pauper who lived with his abusive father in Offal Court, London, and Edward VI, son of Henry VIII. The boys get to know one another, each becomes interested by the other's lifestyle, and fascinated by the fact that they have an uncanny resemblance. They switch clothes and lives temporarily. But a pauper cannot take the place of a prince. This would turn the world upside-down. This is what the English Revolution, the Civil War that pitted commoner Cromwell against King Charles I, was said to have done in the 17th century. Within the feudal order, relative to today, individuals had little responsibility. The section of society or order they were part of held their destiny within tight boundaries and this was seen as the Will of God or God's order. The King was seen as God's representative on earth just as the Pope was, and still is, seen to be descended from St Peter. The King was believed to be descended from King David. This faith

continues to apply today as part of the justification for the British monarch being the head of State. The responsibility for a great deal of life therefore could be abrogated to the Will of God, the social order, the part of society that one was trapped within. This people trap is the archaeology and the genus of community.

The wish for community is an echo of a time much less complicated. Ours is an epoch where the individual fills up the space of thought. It was Freud who did much to open up this path laid by industrialisation and the coming of consumer society. We now account for everything as an individual. Our beliefs, taxes, system of justice, government and financial position are all premised on individual responsibility. Within the post-modern, post-industrial, capitalist world, the individual is the start and end of everything. The very basis of the capitalist system is the individual consumer buying things for themselves. But in the same way as our social evolution has outrun our biological evolution (standing upright has not helped our bowels, we have not really adapted to the modern stress of city living or curbed our animal aggression) our individualised state appears to be something we have yet to completely manage. The post-modern, individualistic existence has hit us so swiftly that we seem not to have had the time or the space to acclimatise. It seems that many of us do not feel emotionally secure with this state of being to the extent that we dig up all sorts of archaic attachments. This is perhaps most noticeable in the USA but it is becoming a western phenomenon. People seek out great, great grandparents in Ireland in order to be able to feel ok about marching in the St Patrick's Day parade. They return to Scotland to attend gatherings of clans that distant forebears were not slow to abandon given half the chance to get away from the tyranny of the Laird.

A typical 'born again' Scotsman showed me his family tree last year. His name was Grabolski. His grandmother's father, McCrimmon, was forced to leave Scotland and his family because the Laird had sold the tied farm that his ancestors had tilled for centuries, more or less condemning the family at least to destitution and maybe starvation. But McCrimmon had escaped via migration and met a woman in the US who was the daughter of a Native Canadian of Tatsanottine people and a French Carpenter named Lussier. Their daughter (Grabolski's grandmother) married a Jewish tailor from Poland whose son (Grabolski's father) married the daughter of a Jamaican couple, the mother being half Chinese and half black Jamaican. The father was the son of a poor 'red-leg' man of Irish decent and a woman who was the illegitimate daughter of an Italian naval engineer and a black sail maker from Kingston, Jamaica. Until Grabolski's lifetime the family had not been well off, living, since his grandparents' time, in the Lower East Side of

New York, below Delancey Street. Grabolski had made his fortune selling mats by mail-order. He was now, as an octogenarian, the honoured guest of the Laird. He paid thousands of dollars a year into his clan's finances that were mostly spent on the upkeep of the Laird's estates. For this he received an invite to the annual gathering, a newsletter three times a year and a bottle of clan 20 year, fine malt every New Year (Hogmanay).

This example provides some indication of how anxious we are to find affinity, a way of being with a group we can admire or gain the admiration of, or even just confirmation of our own existence as individuals who are connected to others 'like' ourselves. Finding confirmation of our own existence is perhaps a hard thing for the isolated, lonely individual in the sometimes harsh world we live in. We use football clubs, churches, community centres and many other ports in our storm of isolation to provide a sense of interpersonal 'coagulation' and/or psychic conglomeration in our lives.

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

The concept of community has caused what seems like endless debate with no real agreement about what it means or what it is. Over the years I have given this task to hundreds of students and the result has been little more than confusion. However, community continues generally to be accepted as a positive entity. It is a good thing, because it just is. It has warm and friendly associations of solidarity, commitment, mutuality and trust. It is something said to bring about closer, more harmonious bonds between people, or a place or situation wherein those bonds exist. Since some halcyon time, Western societies have apparently mourned for the loss of a 'spirit of community' although it is never quite clear what this spirit is. This is apparently a bad thing. Therefore, as the literature advises, professionals working with people should 'engage' with others in order to 'foster' their and our own 'sense of community'. This implies getting involved in building communities, community cohesion and community action to name but a few professional ambitions for community. These are the things one is advised to do though how we know when they have been accomplished remains at least an approximate vision. At what point do I recognise that a community has become cohesive? When might we be able to say a community action has been sufficient or completed?

From all the activity devoted to interpreting and/or acting out community, we can conclude that the idea or the hope of community is exceedingly important to contemporary society. The need or want to belong to a community has been portrayed as a central desire of what might be called post-modern humanity. A yearning for unity, safety and the sense of

belonging certainly seems to be associated with community. But does this ideal community really exist outside the individual, social, academic or professional imagination? Is it anything more substantial than a conceptual metaphor? Why do we want to be some reshaped version of the Waltons or live in another Albert Square?

A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Community as a notion is a double-edged sword. The stating of its existence implies a boundary, a division between people. It establishes those who are a part of it and those who are not a part of it. The defining of a community places some people within and other people outside of that community. The tighter the affiliation of any given community, the more impermeable its boundaries appear to be in terms of entry or exit, for example, the American Amish or North London Hassidic Jews.

People in a community have supposedly something in common with each other that distinguishes them in some way as different from members of other groups. The resulting labelling creates an 'inner' and an 'outer' – a them and us. The more binding the connections within a community tend to be, the more distinct is the division between those of the community and those alien to it. This makes the community a difficult place to leave for the threatening and relatively unknown outside, where the former community member will themselves be foreign. At the same time the interlocked community is almost impossible to get into, especially if one comes from a similarly comparatively impervious social situation. For example, it would be hard for someone born into a Hutterite community to leave that situation, and even more difficult for them to join, and be totally accepted by, a group of devout Zoroastrians. In this sense, while a community can be defined as a place inclusion it is also a means of exclusion – 'You are not like us, therefore you do not belong'.

We can see examples of this form of community exclusion from the international to the local arena. History is littered with groups being excluded from areas or countries to the end point of ethnic cleansing.

In order to be accepted by a community one must, to a greater or lesser extent, subsume oneself into the whole. Certain codes and ways of being that promote acceptability must be adopted and adhered to. Not to do so would mean becoming an outsider or being identified as a member of another community. In order to ensure continued connection, the community member needs to comply with the perceived needs of the community, which tend to override the need of any single member or minority of members, or their possible desire to dissent. A very 'solid' community will regard any departure from accepted norms as unacceptable. For instance,

not wearing (or wearing) a particular hat at certain times or places, playing disapproved of music, eating ‘unclean’ food, looking at someone else in the ‘wrong’ way.

Is it not strange that we crave the sense of belonging we believe a community will bring at the same time as we are so ‘individualised’, demanding a notion of ‘self’? We ask the question of who ‘we are’ and that this be both noted and celebrated. We insist that our ‘personality’ or ‘persona’ needs to be understood and catered for. We want to be distinct but also subsumed and the very last thing most of us want is to be totally and permanently alone but we also feel reticent about ‘following the herd’.

LONELINESS AND THE BUZZ OF COMMUNITY

Loneliness is probably the most feared of diseases in the modern world. As a social condition it stands in contrast to the great desire of our times to be famous. Anonymity, the antithesis of being known, is the fearful fate of the early 21st Century. A person of no importance is the damned of contemporary society. ‘Billy no mates’ is the syndrome the likes of Facebook and Myspace exist to address (or sometimes confirm – a piece of cheese had 500 friends on Facebook at one point!)

The community seems to have the magical power to make the least of us more than we are. We can enter into a symbiotic (parasitical?) relationship with it. We can ride on its back as ‘a part of’. We can disappear into the mass or hibernate in the conglomeration of individuals founded on dichotomy and yet still be ‘somebody’ – a member of a Scottish clan, the Ku-Klux-Klan, a Masonic lodge, a town called Dodge, a tribe, a vibe, a race, a place, a class, a caste, a culture, a Brazilian carnival salsa, a gender, a group of lads out on a bender, a political party, the same fly fishing club as J. R. Hartly, a rave, a Mexican wave, an ethnicity, a community.

For all of this we have to give up something to be part of a community. We are torn between our desires to be a unique ‘I’ and our need to be a ‘we’ and/or an ‘us’. Is this why so few of us go to community centres or take an active part in the community? On the whole, the community does some pretty naff things – car boot sales (worse still ‘table top’ sales) and bingo spring to mind. There is of course ‘Carnival’, the appreciation of which even if you secretly hate it has become a Brownie badge for the ‘funky middle-class’ looking for a ‘proletarian groove’. For all this, it is often much more of a ‘buzz’, especially for young people, to set up ‘counter communities’ that reject the values, rites, traditions and norms of the so-called community. But of course, there is nothing more conformist than mass non-conformity.

FREE MEN BREATHE CITY AIR

As we study community or ‘engage with communities’ it might be worth bearing the above in mind. Community is a phenomenon that is, in many ways, remote to our times. What is its place other than that it might make us feel good? If it just does this then why is it any better than soft drugs or booze? You might answer that it does an individual no harm and some people from tight or closed communities would agree with you. But others might see things differently. Those obliged to grow up in situations where relatively little knowledge permeates the walls of community have had to live with the often resulting pooling of ignorance that breeds prejudice towards outsiders. As this is going on, the community, keeping both distant and distinct, invites prejudice against it via stereotyping in the absence of any information coming out of the community to disprove the same.

An old Greek saying has it that ‘free men breathe city air’. The anonymity of the metropolis, the escape from the prying eyes of the village or the tribe, was seen to be the most desirable way of living. It may be telling that it is often those who have never known the crushing nature that closely collective ways of living can promote who seem most avidly to seek to propagate community life, even though from Jonestown to Waco and the Heavens Gate cult, the whole idea has been shown to be tragically flawed.

Community has the ability to suffocate individual expression and openly persecute those who might seek to move away from the community’s beliefs and norms. It is often the site of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and exclusion.

The whole notion of community is based on the idea of members complying with a particular, sometimes quite rigid, set of norms. To be outside those norms is likely to mean that one will be chastised or expelled from the community, usually to the distress of relatives and friends who might remain in the community. As such, the community rewards those who personify its norms and punishes those who do not reach its collective expectations. The community is authoritarian in this respect. It is reactionary, punitive, tyrannical and not interested in consensus. It is about the rule of the few by the many, the dictatorship of the majority, the creator and oppressor of minorities. It represses the wants and needs expressed by the minority to the whims and fancies of the majority.

OFFSIDE

In his film ‘Offside’, the Iranian director Jafar Panahi portrays a group of dedicated, rebellious and football-mad young women who want to attend a

crucial World Cup qualifying match for Iran's national football team. The problem is that women are banned from the country's football grounds. To infiltrate the crowd the group are obliged to disguise themselves as young men. Panahi explained that the restrictions on women attending football matches only came after the Iranian revolution of 1979.

Because of this kind of ideology, the mentality of the people has changed, and so it is this 'official' mentality which is causing all the problems. But in my opinion, the majority of men do not have a problem with women attending matches. But since women were banned from attending, the whole atmosphere of the matches became very male and chauvinistic and rude, and it has by now developed its own momentum...Of course when you try to restrict something or implement a restriction it has to be based on some sort of law. But there is nothing in the law which has been approved by the Iranian parliament or anybody else which bans women from taking part. It has become a kind of unwritten law. The policemen and the soldiers too, have to follow these unwritten laws and they are answerable to their superiors for it.

This is how many community norms come into being – as unwritten laws that impact on people's ways of being, thinking and action. Very often these norms go unchallenged because to challenge them means punishment or shunning. It is much easier to fade into the mass, to be a part of the relatively warm, seemingly friendly, conforming but harmonious throng. I just have to undermine my 'self' for the 'good' of the whole (as defined by elders, priests etc.) and all will be well.

But what of those people who do challenge or kick against the community's standards and expectations, those who rebel against either the codified or unwritten rules that dictate how they should behave - like the young women in 'Offside' and possibly like many of the young people we work with? What, at the end of the day, changes for the young women in Panahi's film or for any young person resisting their community's rules? Does rebelling against your community ultimately change anything? If it did it wouldn't be rebellion but revolution. To what extent does hegemonic thinking affect the way in which professionals engage with communities? And for what purpose are we engaging with these apparently well-chosen communities in which we work, which all seem to fit into particular social strata (we do not work with 'rich' communities – if such a thing exists)?

COMMUNITY AS CONTROL

Perhaps you might by now be getting a feeling for the primitive, carnivore nature of community and its reactionary and, at times, regressive use as a means of social control. Foucault's ideas relating to the individual demonstrate how people can be categorised and detached from the general social landscape as individuals being labelled as mad, criminal or young and so on. Foucault (1977) argues that this arises out of a need that contemporary society has to predict and control behaviour. Professionals, as agents of the State, look at someone, observe their behaviour and others who are thought to be like them. Records are then generated that enable us to make predictions about the future behaviour of those we have observed, which means effective control mechanisms can be put in place that will channel and/or deflect their activity into behaviour that we, our organizations, institutions and the State prescribe for them or approve of – community writ large.

Community can be seen as an idea that has evolved out of our society, a social system based on exploitation (that is what capitalism is) as another form of control. The more community controls, observes and corrects behaviour, the less there is for the State to do in this respect. The ambition for community in our society is for it to be used as a corrective instrument (as community police officers, community wardens and 'community watch' exemplify). That is why it is seen by many right-wing community enthusiasts, alongside the family, as having a responsibility in terms of social control.

Foucault would regard community as an aspect of the 'carceral' society and part of a general control process like prisons, schools or youth projects, which are all locations where 'specialists' are busy observing, recording, naming and predicting behaviour. The end of this process is the desire (albeit maybe sometimes driven by anxiety) to control. This might be for the best or the worst of reasons.

AN ALTERNATIVE

Jürgen Habermas (born 1929) wrestled with these issues for many years. For him the means for us to be in association in a more positive way need to be premised on communicating in what he called a non-distorted way. While he does not devote himself to the question of community we can see that the least community requires from us is compromise. We need to distort our communication to the needs or requirements of the community. It is such forms of distortion which Habermas wishes to address.

For Habermas, the starting point in communication is not the need to look like or conform to the ways of others. He suggests that we do have an innate wish to communicate with others, sharing a mutual need to understand others through interaction. We are bound together by the process of understanding whether it is an agreement about 'what is' or a belief about the fundamental nature of existence. This could be seen as a kind of advanced survival mechanism. As such, anything that interferes with this need, the isolation of individuals or groups from as wide a plane of interaction as possible can be understood as damaging to everybody. So, for instance, single sex groups, forms of racial apartheid or the ghettoisation of people with disabilities, would be seen as not altogether useful by Jürgen the German.

The task Habermas sets us is to strive to understand others. In order to do this he does not ask us to highlight difference but seek similarity and promote forms of mutual participation in the experience of those to and from whom we wish to transmit or receive communication. This is what he calls intersubjectivity. From the start, the lines of communication are cleared of possible obstructions, such as perceived or actual difference, and the channels of potential understanding are opened.

The attempt to understand gives us an internal link with that which is external. My internal faculties are tuned to comprehend the person or group that is outside. At the same time, if all is going well, the person or group I am attempting to understand is also involved in the same task. This gives us a chance to become involved in, what Habermas calls, the 'life-world' of others and involve others in our life-world. The non-distorted communication is effected in the merger of life-worlds, the 'fusion of horizons'- no more 'outsiders' or 'insiders'.

Now this might all sound a bit new-age but it is quite a departure from our current way of doing things. A good deal of the work done with young people involves cutting down their horizons; zoning them off into discreet categories ('EETs', 'NEETs', disabled, Muslim etc) and limiting participation within gender, age group, ability, ethnicity, culture and so on. It does not, to any great extent, do what Habermas might suggest is the most expansive of activity i.e. formulate notions of what the life of others is like. Mary Wollstonecraft, in her 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women', makes a similar point with regard to the need for young women to communicate with their male counterparts.

Compared to notions of intersubjectivity, much work with young people is introspective or at least relatively limited in its breadth. Of course, there are reasons for this. The work may not be funded purely for the good of young people; the middle-aged, often white, often male, holders of the

social purse, with no class or social affinity to the young people being worked on, may be inserting an element of control.

For Habermas, all situations (communities, cultures, traditions) are similar in terms of meaning. There is more commonality between say a group of white, working class, unemployed young people on a poor estate in Newcastle and a group of alienated Black youth in south London than there is dissimilarity. In order to communicate effectively it is probably necessary that this is understood. It is in the interest of the racist to point out overt and insurmountable racial differences. It is the tyrant's interest to divide and rule.

If culture is able to develop, if there is to be, as Habermas puts it, 'cultural and social reproduction', it is this coming together of life-worlds that will be promoted. The cutting off of life-worlds will cause the opposite reaction and lead to the stagnation and withering away of cultural and social environments. Our life-world interacts with and translates other life-worlds. They, at the same time, interact with and translate our life-world and a new life-world is born out of this expansive and expressive dialectic.

The project of intersubjectivity, through non-distorted communication, involves us in communication of rationally reached accord rather than the consensus of community, which is really a *fait accompli* implying that you are either 'in' or 'out' of step with the majority. Rational accord is essentially a social process that, unlike forms of community, enlarges collective and connective autonomy. It welcomes the character of the modern individual as a free, unaffiliated social actor, in that this extends the possibility of the discursive expression of another unique life-world, to enrich and be enriched. This offers the potential for an endless personal and group intellectual, social and spiritual growth by the interaction of the internal with the external.

The really difficult thing in all this is that it involves embracing our individual nature. It is not achievable by way of acquiescence to the assimilating bunch of human conformity that is the community, gender, nation or race. We have a need to accept our post-modern form - lonely individuals who, for all that, have the authority over themselves to become more, reach out, touch and enter into intersubjective relations with other individuals.

With the expansion and increased sophistication of electronic communications over the last few decades our potential to establish this intersubjective nexus has never been greater. Habermas begs us to accept and express our individualism to the utmost, to assert our autonomy and cease to abrogate our nature to the majority. For this we need the courage to see ourselves as separate, the strength and wisdom to deny the forces that

would have us regress into self regulating and controlling tribal/community affiliations.

We are now potentially a planet of viewers. We are fascinated by looking at each other and ourselves. We are hooked on our uniqueness and our, often surprising, generality that paradoxically arises from the same. We, in our individuality, can derive freedom from the collectivity and the rejection of the mindless, slavish affiliation that community can't help being. That I am me and interdependent on the other 'I's' (the generalized other) is a liberating notion. The 'I' is most threatened by the amorphous mob wherein exists 'treason' and intolerance of diversity. However, we have not been brought up to what Habermas proposes. We have learnt to want to merge with the whole, to disappear into the wallpaper. I would suggest that this is dangerous for that which is 'us' – the collective 'I'. The great tyrannies of Russia, China, and Germany were all based on the anonymous individual and the priority of the mass.

My hope is that we can make the most of what Habermas calls our 'cultural pre-understanding', our shared life-world, to create the 'communicative reproduction of society'. This seems a noble enterprise for the professional working with young people and it does not take too much imagination to see how the most straightforward activities can facilitate this adaptation of the inner to the social, to start to create a world made up of freely interacting 'I's', a ceaseless growth of life-worlds and the collective life-world.

So be wary of books and academics that wax lyrical about community. What is the reason for their enthusiasm – to whom does their message give power? I would counsel, nay implore you to behold the ambition for community with the greatest of scepticism. But equally I would ask you to hear this argument with cynical ears. I may be lying, joking, mistaken or simply mad. I may have been frightened by community when it snuck up behind me whistling the theme tune to *EastEnders* and never got over it. I offer you but one reality. However, Habermas offers us an alternative paradigm that can produce the effective communication of ideas in a world that often distorts efforts to communicate.

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COMMUNITY WORK IN THE UK – CONTEXT, ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Community Development and Community Work in the UK

The context of youth work is the community; for much of its history many of those involved in the profession have qualified as ‘youth and community workers’. Today, youth workers will also be involved with, and qualified in, forms of community education, while youth and community work have long been in close proximity in terms of their professional genesis and political origin.

In this chapter I will look at the development of community work and discuss how the professional operating in the community, as we might be familiar with today, evolved as a profession with national recognition and a broadly acknowledged practice repertoire. This will provide a notion of the place and meaning of professional activity in the local social setting, which includes community education, community action, informal education and youth and community work. The practices associated with these disciplines have become set in the locale identified, cleared and claimed by and for community work. At the same time the tradition and purpose of community work has been translated into these related fields. This being the case, it is important for youth workers, educators and social workers to understand the development of community work because, as a widespread precursor of systematic community intervention, it has shaped the delivery and attitudes of professions following it historically into the local social system. This heritage is influential in terms of how youth workers, taking on the mantle of community educators, might understand the meaning and purpose of their role and the work they are tasked to undertake.

THE SIXTIES – THE BIRTH OF ‘COMMUNITY WORK’ AS WE KNOW IT

The 1960s saw the emergence of youth culture out of the post-Second World War social milieu. Identifiable groups of young people, by way of music, fashion, and in some cases political activity, began to assert values that seemed to contradict those held by the generation born between wars.

It has been said that if you can remember the 1960s you weren't there. As a teenager in the middle of that decade I can say that there is some truth to this adage. Certainly for some it was a golden age but for others it was a decade that saw their scaffold of morality, authority and discipline collapse in a confusing and contradictory torrent of youth riot, protest, noisy electronic sounds and free love courtesy of what many saw as the indiscriminate use of birth control.

The growth of the civil rights movement in the USA, together with the rise of a discernable voice and presence of youth espousing a heady mixture of idealism, protest and rebellion, backed by a soundtrack of popular music based on Afro-American influences, promised an optimistic but less predictable future. This made for a strange fusion with the ethos of the Cold War and the seemingly imminent threat of nuclear oblivion. Compared to the drab post-war-time atmosphere of the 1950s, the following decade seemed like a brave new world wherein, in the words of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan (born in 1894) those in the UK had 'never had it so good'. While ringing true, juxtaposed with the possibility of Armageddon, it didn't convince everyone.

The publication of the Albemarle Report (1960) was something of a recognition of this great flux. However, while looking to restructure the outlook and response of youth work, the Albemarle Committee seemed in part to be motivated by a vague sense of threat posed by 'teenage consumption' – *a kind of selfishness which will not yield itself to any demand outside its own immediately felt needs* (1960: 33-34).

Music had become a form of international communication, inspiration and escape for young people. Change in how personal relationships were seen and what might be the appropriate context of sexual behaviour was motivated by a new boldness and candour in literature that infected television and theatre. The relaxation in censorship, the formation of the Feminist movement, fired by the myth of bra burning, alongside the concept of Gay liberation, gelled with affiliations to underground and counter-culture ideals proposing that new, deep and novel depths of spirituality and psyche could be plumbed.

While much of this atmosphere was quite dark, led partly by those influenced by the late 1950s social culturalist Beatniks, it was generated out of a faith that a better world was coming. Formally rigid social hierarchies, such as the notion that women were subordinate to men and children to parents, were becoming anachronistic and little more than the butt of jokes framed within the satire of David Frost (or more accurately his impersonations of his mentor Ned Sherrin). As a consequence, attitudes to sex were liberalised, racism for the first time was challenged, and the

formally unquestioning respect for the authority of the family began to be scrutinised both publicly and privately. The formally relatively uncritical attitude to education, government, law, religion, and the concept of nation was weakening.

It is in this environment that community work first became politically and socially identifiable as an occupation separate from social work. And it was this 'sector' that became the host of youth work, its tool informal education.

As ideas about the role of the community worker in society arose out of ideals founded in government policy about the value of community leadership and participation, range of working methods and intervention techniques were developed. Community work, as a national phenomenon arose in this fluctuating social, political and cultural climate. It was made up of a range of initiatives and was to have an influence on the changing ideas of social and youth work. Some writers insist that the relatively isolated examples of endeavour in earlier times can be seen as a sort of primal precursor of the discipline. However, almost any group or local historical movement will have aspects that could be labelled community action. But it was in the swinging decade that the occupation of community work, as we recognise it today, began to take shape.

SOCIAL WORK PARENTHESIS

The primal roots of community work in Britain might be understood as part of the reform and radicalisation of social work. It developed as a method of social work rather than as a separate occupation. However, community work as a definite, emerging discipline in its own right had been proposed by Dame Eileen Youngusband in a report she wrote for the United Nations in 1959. In her book, *The Newest Profession: a brief history of social work*, she explains that community work had been previously practised in settlements and other settings, but that it only started to be more widely recognised as such in the last part of the 1960s. She states that it was used to help local groups to bring about desired change. Social surveys, social action, inter-agency co-operation and social planning were all aspects of community work.

These examples of developments in the decades after the Second World War show that new ideas, methods, attitudes and services were all struggling with old ways and attitudes but only really began to come to fruition in the 1960's. (Youngusband, 1981; 28)

Youngusband developed ideas about the place of community work within social work, looking to a closer working relationship between professionals

and their clients that might be of mutual benefit. In effect, this approach was understood to be able to contribute a variety of useful ways to enhance community development whilst enlarging the ambit of social work by obliging the profession to apply its knowledge and skills across this wider horizon. Cynically, this might be understood as a means of professional empire building while at the same time recruiting local populations to the greater cause of social betterment.

SEEBOHM: A STRATEGY FOR COMMUNITY

Community work was to be further elaborated and enlivened in 1968 by way of the Seebohm Report. This was a time when it became clear that social work theory and the organisation of social services were in need of significant development given the changing demographics of the modern welfare state. The reforms in social work, education, the youth service and in other areas such as health and planning had formally been seen to have absorbed community work. The emergence of the notion of ‘people work’ during the mid to late 1960s worked to push community work into becoming a profession in its own right. This process was energised by the desire of those taking up community work from social movements and political groups who saw the discipline as the means not just to achieve their specific political goals but also as a conduit to reform the conventional practices of these interest/pressure groups. Community work became a depository of all sorts of social agenda, a growing melange of purposeful reform that had more to do with the personal and political desires of practitioners and policy makers than members of any particular or general community.

The 1959 Younghusband report identified community work as one of social work’s three methods being aimed at helping people within local communities to identify social needs and consider the most effective ways of meeting these needs. This foundation remained much the same over the following two decades. Younghusband noted that professional training in community work was almost nonexistent. This did much to provoke the development of professional training in Group Work and Community Organisation at the National Institute for Social Work Training. But it was nearly six years before community work became politically recognised as a strategy of social welfare. It was finally introduced into the State vernacular, perhaps tellingly, in a government draft white paper on the prevention of family breakdown and juvenile delinquency – a progression that as we shall see later may well have been related to the political and social upheaval in Britain at that time.

The introduction of community work as a separate discipline might be understood as part of the State's community strategy that looked to re-establish a credible relationship between the State and the working classes. Given the social, cultural and political changes taking place at the time, this relationship had been undermined while more conventional ways of nourishing the relationship (representative democracy for example) had become ineffective, subjected to waves of scepticism fuelled by the more liberal and growingly ubiquitous media. However, the development of community work was ostensibly based on humanitarian desires and social concerns which focused on improving relationships with and amongst the working class and other groups. These had become fractured as social and material improvements came about during the long post-war boom as the division between the poor and those advancing above the poverty line became more obvious.

For Younghusband (1981), economic and sociological studies of poverty demonstrated that large-scale change was required to tackle the structural causes of social inequality. But even if poverty and poor housing were eradicated, complex factors would continue to exist that contributed to social and personal distress:

In the whole period (of the 1960's) knowledge grew about people who were delinquent, deprived, single parents, uprooted, homeless, grossly inadequate parents, alcoholic, addicted, handicapped; or suffering from acute or chronic or terminal illness or psychiatric disorder, or bad housing, chronic poverty, or destructive relationships, or social rejection, or other damaging experiences beyond their capacity to cope successfully. Naturally there were conflicting theories about contributory causation and appropriate interdisciplinary action, and the relative significance of personal and social factors (p. 28-29).

The adoption of new community work methods and aims within social work was confirmed by the report of the Seebohm Committee in 1968. The resulting report pressed for a community-orientated family service. Other strategies such as social development areas, citizen participation, voluntarism, social planning and the community development role of the area social services team were included. This all seems pretty familiar language to the contemporary professional ear.

Together with the urban aid programme announced in 1968, the Seebohm Report was the most important single event in the creation of the occupation of community work. Not only did it provide widespread publicity and legitimisation for community work within social work but in recommending the formation of a unified social services department it

gave, in the last years of prosperity facilitated by relatively protracted economic boom of the time, the chance for an unparalleled growth in the numbers of community workers. It made a place for community work within the welfare state.

COMMUNITY WORK: PROGENY OF CONTRADICTION

It is important to recognise that community work, although partly recognisable as we would know it today, was, before Seebohm, orientated mainly around political campaigns rather than a professional occupation. The definition of community work tended to be tied to the particular issues of the day or to the agendas of the professional workers involved at any given time. Programmes of community groups were often built around the goals of the people who intervened to organise and, fairly straightforwardly, help community groups. Thus in the 1960s community work was often defined in terms of the social and recreational needs of say residents in housing development areas. By the 1970s it had become identified with protest, conflict and campaigns around a number of inner-city issues. Later, the features of intervention remained relatively constant. Although the priorities of community groups and professional workers changed, they were often relatively ambiguous, partly because these constants, of which informal education was to become one, were not adequately defined in terms of purpose or method.

So the heritage and founding spirit of professional practice in the community context can be seen to have been set within forms of well meaning activism on the part of socially aware and/or politically conscious individuals and interest groups. However, the laddling of government policy, the means to implement State aims, over community work practice has predictably been a recipe for a culture of tension in the profession. The work has been practiced by those looking, with a variety of motivations, to defy or protect those at the nub end of society from the worst impositions of an exploitative State. However, these 'activists' took on the garb of a professional status that in practice recruited them to the cause of that very same State. The community worker from the 1960s became both an agent of the State and the enemy within. Phrases like 'working inside the system to change the system' rapidly became a mantra within the profession, although everything known about the nature of social environments indicates that individuals are more likely to adapt to contexts than radically change extensive and complex milieu.

THE DUAL DRIVERS OF DEVELOPMENT

The social, cultural and political changes of the 1960s, had much to do with defining nature of the work and the extension of its methods within social work. However, the initial movement towards community work can be split along two distinct lines.

Intellectual Radicalism/Bourgeois Guilt

A number of professional and academics groups, mainly those influenced by the political left, came together in the new universities and polytechnics that were part of the expansion of further and higher education in the 1960s. These groups were crucial in the generation of a number of new cultural and social issues. There was increased interest in alternative political structures and a fascination with the reification of the ideas of the 'left' as promoted by figures such as Che Guevara as well as Feminist and race movements such as Black Power. This was part of a search for alternative conventions to those that had been established during the post-war era. Ideas relating to 'change from within', 'evolution rather than revolution' as promoted by the Fabians began to gain credence.

At the same time the rise of counter-cultural ideas propagating alternative ways of being that demanded different values and expectations of society seemed to promote a more humanitarian form of social relations. These political and social ideologies informed and maintained veins of upper-middle class socialism (a historically strange amalgam of bourgeois guilt and the protracted adolescent rebellion of the 'chattering classes') that energised the development of the new professions. However, this was just one side of a social maelstrom out of which community work emerged.

State Agenda/Social Mechanics

The other side of what could be seen as the drive towards community work was the government ambition for economic recovery and social stability, two intimately related conditions in terms of the smooth running of capitalist social mechanics, which had been evident since the end of the Second World War, a period of relative social stasis.

Wartime rationing had ended and people were rebuilding their lives around changing family structures, a symptom of years of conflict and the concomitant expansion of industrialisation. Industry and businesses were rebuilt and by the 1960s an economic boom was blossoming, largely funded through the effects of American finance. It was a time of promises of a better world despite the shadow of the Cold War. The threat of nuclear

holocaust to some extent brought people together under a common fear of Communism, stoked both by the government and the media. This also played a part in enhancing and strengthening the nation-state within the Western, non-Communist bloc. England's march to World Cup victory in 1966, symbolically over the footballing might of West Germany, was something of a peak point in this process.

The two sides of social, intellectual, cultural and political change, conspired together to create a feeling of solidarity in Britain at the beginning of the 1960s. In the changing environment their joint impact raised awareness about social and community work and the potential function of the forms of intervention that were becoming implicit in its practice.

SOCIAL DISAFFECTION/SOCIAL WORK INNOVATION

However, the early 1960s also gave rise to social disaffection and the emergence of poverty connected to the shortage of housing which grew to a chronic level. Family break-up and homelessness were increasingly becoming cultural and social issues. Social problems were recognized for the first time as moving beyond the personal to the public and social. As Youngusband (1981) put it,

To a considerable extent interests shifted from personal to social constituents of private sorrows and public issues as sociological studies demonstrated the effects of social attitudes and the environment on individual behaviour. These studies included social structure and institutions especially the class structure and marriage, family relationships and expectations and child-rearing practices, cultural patterns and values, social control and social conflict, social deviance, work and other roles, socialisation, social networks and social change. (p. 29).

Britain had become an economically wealthier nation but the distribution of this prosperity was uneven. The situation of increasing poverty, social disaffection and housing difficulties appeared not to have been adequately addressed by the welfare state. With the rise of television and the mass media concerns about welfare, social work began to move from being mostly concerned with the personal arena to being involved with public issues. Mirroring this, the methods of work and intervention shifted from being focused on personal and childhood malaise (Freudian interpretations) to a concentration on the social and environmental causation of society's problems and personal difficulties.

Changes in the social structure and cultural understanding gave rise to developments in the methodology of social work as a response to the expectations and demands of a changing social demography. This included systematic assessment which was an attempt to identify the crucial aspects of a situation in order to target what, where and how to intervene. This might be thought of as the precursor of the common assessment framework.

Previously social work had been characterised in a comparatively shallow, often futile endeavour that lacked concrete aims and regular assessment. The new methods acknowledged the influential consequences that emotions might have on behaviour whilst recognising that providing for people's material needs could be a crucial aspect in meeting their social and emotional requirements. Anxieties around creating dependence were less to the fore. Two connected innovations were detailed case study records and supervision (dual and complimentary forms of surveillance and quality assurance). The objectives of community work were seen to be built on long-term contact and significant alterations in the client's lifestyle and outlook, both of which could be recorded and used as a means to establishing recognised and/or conventional practice. These aspects and characteristics of practice have endured into the present day as part and parcel of professional ambitions and strategies in the community context.

SOCIAL/PERSONAL PATHOLOGY

These innovations in the social work practice of the 1960s continue to influence the function of youth workers and social workers today. The assumption of social pathology that is evident in many of our justifications for intervention have their source in that time. Society is seen as being responsible for many of the problems individuals face and a communal or supportive response to problems is accepted as an effective strategy. However, the focus on individuals has become more intense. A young person can be seen as being involved in a double bind of social and psychological (personal) pathology. For example, one can be portrayed as lacking self-esteem because of poor parenting arising out of poverty and ignorance. Conversely, those accused of poor parenting can be seen as having a lack of self-esteem as a sort of interim causation. These opinions are cobbled together on the basis of both vague generalised criteria and sometimes an uninformed estimation of individual personality applied generically. However, they exist to justify intervention both at a personal and public level.

UPRISING AND THE CATEGORY OF 'YOUTH'

The 1960s was also a time of youth uprising both in the UK and abroad. The youth rebellions against tradition and the State were perhaps one of the strongest motivations for the rapid development of community and youth work. Young people at this time, began to protest about the nature of society on an international scale. This was the first time young people had been seen in a political light and this obviously posed a threat to the expectations of government. The notion of 'youth' as we know it today became an accepted political category rather than just a biological age group as it had been previously. They were given a social, cultural and political label and seen as needing to be treated as a category in their own right.

This rise of the category of youth was supplemented by a number of subcultures ranging from popular music to drugs, fashion, sex and religion. Rock stars moved from childhood rebellion figures like Elvis Presley (British incarnations included Cliff Richard, Joe Brown, Tommy Steele and Billy Fury) to propagators of revolutionary ideas through protest songs with singers like Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Donovan. According to Wenborn (1989),

A revolution in fashion, music, literature and the arts took place as the opening up of mass communications helped create and sustain a world-wide youth market. Mini-skirts and caftans made it to the streets of London and San Francisco. The music of bands such as the Rolling Stones and The Doors came to symbolise their young audiences' rejection of parental values, while the 'pop art' of Andy Warhol and his bizarre entourage drew a cult following for its parodies of the images of mass-production. The word 'permissive' entered the vocabulary as sexual and social taboos were eroded by the contraceptive pill and the marijuana joint. (p. 342)

The rise of the flower-power movement, together with the pursuit of 'heightened consciousness', grew alongside the expansive recreational use of drugs and the international interest in Eastern meditation and oriental religions. While the vanguard of these collective phenomena were mainly upper middle/middle-class young people on both sides of the Atlantic, the search for a radical alternative to western culture dug deep into the younger population of Britain. However, the seminal working class incarnations of 1960s youth culture were the working class Mods and Rockers who, with a heady mix of heavy drinking, drugs and at times all out internecine war on the beaches of southern Britain, created a moral panic and genuine fear of youth. Made mobile by relatively high earnings with their Lambretta

scooters (Mods) and motorbikes (Rockers) these youth tribes filled newspaper headlines and cinema newsreels with quite a different perspective of the young. Following hard on the heels of the Mods and Rockers in the gallery of intimidating youth were the more ill defined and barbarously rampaging football hooligans.

While youth had for decades shown the potential to present a threat to adult conventions (the Zoot-suited, Spiv-like pre-National Service age groups in the 1940s and the Teddy Boys in the 1950s) the young had never grabbed the level of political attention they commanded in the 1960s. What also needs to be remembered was that in the Mods and Rockers, for the first time, both genders were implicated. The black leather clad, Nihilistic Rocker females were the antithesis of the mini-skirted, white booted, pillioned, dolly bird Mods, but each were distinguished by an urge for liberation via the rejection of the norms of their relatively domesticated elders. The uprising of youth both against one another and against the conventions embodied in the State posed a threat to the social norms that had not been present in the past.

The youth phenomena grew to possess an international profile with mass student protests in Paris, the USA and Britain. Some of these were on a huge scale with powerful radical agenda. They often involved violent clashes with the police and in the USA and France paramilitary and National Guard interventions became a regular feature of such events. Student protests formed part of what some understood as a swing towards global, left-wing anarchist programmes. Movements like the Situationists in France, the first stirrings of Baader-Meinof in Germany, Black Power and the Black Panther Party in the United States, the Feminist movement in both Europe and the US seemed to confirm the breadth and character of youth.

An extract from The Situationist International in the early 1960's read as follows ...

A new form of mental illness has swept the planet: banalisation. Everyone is hypnotised by work and by comfort: by the garbage disposal unit, by the lift, by the bathroom, by the washing machine. This state of affairs, born of a rebellion against the harshness of nature, has far overshoot its goal – the liberation of man from material cares – and become a life-destroying obsession. Young people everywhere have been allowed to choose between love and a garbage disposal unit. Everywhere they have chosen the garbage disposal unit. A totally different spiritual attitude has become essential and it can only be brought into being by making our unconscious desires conscious, and by creating entirely new ones. And by a massive propaganda campaign to publicise these desires. (in Home(ed.), 1996; 4-5).

In Britain publications like *School Kids Oz* and the *Little Red School Kids Book*, which included sexual advice, information about the consumption of drugs, and how to organise protests and riots, played a part in politicising young people in a manner that seemed to many adults indecent. These publications coincided with a number of school riots in the 1960s. Perhaps one of the most publicised was the action at Islington Green School where students walked out and held a sit-down strike against homework, but uprisings were taking place all over Britain with different emphases and motivations. My own experience of school strikes were associated with coming out in support of adult trade union/industrial action or in sympathy with student protests against the Vietnam War, sometimes with the active support of teaching staff. Mr Jeffries (a geography teacher would you believe) took a group of us to the historic anti-war protest in 1968 centring on Grosvenor Square, home of the US ambassador to Britain. In 1975, following his example, I accompanied a group of young people I was working with to Red Lion Square to counter Fascist National Front protests against immigration. This demonstrates something of the political legacy created by young people in the 1960s.

As well as the youth uprisings which caused headaches for those supposedly in control, other social changes were taking place which created further complexities in Britain. Communal perspectives and ideas of self-enhancement created new expectations of social welfare services and community provision. The demand for equality of opportunity was first formulated during this period and could be understood to link directly to the changing perspectives on feminism, racial equality and co-operation highlighted throughout the 1960s in debates, riots and student protest.

SOCIAL TURMOIL

For all this, although many might have balked at the suggestion or implementation of economic equality, the liberal perspective was energetically expressed in practice, arguing that everyone should have the opportunity to realise their potential and overcome barriers of health, economic considerations and other obstacles. This was the background to the push for the universalism of services and benefits.

The development of social welfare could be seen to add to the complicated network of relationships that made up the political and civil rights already established. The introduction of social rights and expectations into the welfare equation brought the individual and the community into a more intense relationship based on engagement in and control by the nation-state.

Housing

Housing in particular needed radical reformation. The 1960s saw growth in housing associations and owner-occupied housing. This was largely split along social class lines. Owner-occupation was depicted as being the better of the alternatives but the State had taken on the responsibility of providing accommodation for those who could not afford to buy houses. The aspirations of the New Town movement were to produce socially co-ordinated communities, but in the main State housing was understood as being mainly the resort of the working classes. This was effectively divisive and it played a part in the environmental causes of poverty, poor-health and crime. In caricature, the salaried middle-classes lived in owner-occupied suburbia; the waged working classes were accommodated on municipally rented urban estates.

Housing expenditure rose from £2.7 billion in 1960 to £7.3 billion in 1980. After 1954 there was a definite shift to resettlement and redevelopment located in the inner-cities, much of it of a high-rise nature. However, by the 1980s, this policy was largely regarded as flawed and much of this type of housing was demolished or refurbished by the 1990s. However, many of these over-spill or redevelopment sites were subsequently to become the location for inner- and outer-city social problems. Because of the impetus of the private market, and the presumed desire that everyone wanted to be home-owners, housing was never made the subject of a disciplined and socially cohesive programme. This situation was part of what fired the sub-prime disaster and subsequent recession of 2009.

Education

Education was also undergoing extensive changes with the introduction of new universities and colleges and an increasing agenda of equality of opportunity which did much to fire a restructuring of most of the country's educational services. Immigration became a political issue. The numbers of immigrants was to rise dramatically over the 30 years after 1950, fuelling the boom years of the 1960s. In the initial part of this period, demand for relatively cheap labour was the engine of immigration. However, as labour needs changed, limitations on immigration were called for. The age profile of immigrants was comparatively young relative to the rest of the UK at that time. This meant that the education and youth services were stretched more than say the health service.

Employment

Employment for most of Britain's new immigrant population tended to be poorly paid and concentrated in certain areas. It became increasingly evident that this created social disadvantage in employment, housing and education, perhaps inevitably sparking racial discrimination. The controversial Rivers of Blood speech by Enoch Powell (see [http:// www.martinfrost.ws/ htmlfiles/ rivers_blood2.html](http://www.martinfrost.ws/htmlfiles/rivers_blood2.html)) pre-empted and ignited major disturbances. The race riots in Notting Hill, and those in the United States, alongside the assassination of Martin Luther King, evoked more frustration and anger. These problems continued to be exasperated by insufficient adequate housing, rising levels of poverty, inequality and racism.

All this saw Britain enter a period of increasing turmoil during the 1960s. The UK was perhaps the most tumultuous State in the western world at that time. In France, for example, there were student riots that produced a disturbing level of violence but these were not coupled with the type of social problems that appeared to be inherent in British cities. In the USA there were race riots and the emergence of political movements emphasising the need for revolutionary change. However, although these were at least as violent as their European equivalents, they took place across the massive American nation with many areas simply immune from their impact. In the UK, because of a more condensed urban population, the concentration of poverty and inadequate housing was higher. Britain also had a highly agitated and politically educated class, led mainly by graduates from the new universities, who took on the ideas of Lenin, Sartre and Che Guevara. The social, cultural, political and intellectual position of Britain was, in the 1960s, the centre of a world social whirl.

Police, Social Control and the Mediation of State Violence

All this perhaps explains the birth of community work as an occupation in its own right, and the increased political agenda for the use of youth work as a vehicle for the re-creation of social responsibility and values of citizenship. It became clear that young people and the population as a whole could not be policed in conventional ways. These traditional, on the whole consensual, means of control relied on the agreement and support of those policed. At the same time, Britain in its politically democratic situation, proclaiming adherence to the spirit of liberty and the extension of freedom, could hardly be seen to bring in a National Guard or the military, as in the United States and France, in order to curb the violence of students and young people. However, at times, because of pressure on police resources, it was a close run thing.

Fighting on so many fronts, it was becoming impossible for the police alone to maintain order from the newly created housing estates, which had become havens of violence and drug use, to the coastal battles between Mods and Rockers. Add growing trade union and student unrest as well as the rise of the football hooligan, it was clear that there had to be some innovation in the realm of public order or private property would become so exposed that there would be no other option but to call in the troops. Not a few right-of-centre commentators had repeatedly demanded just this.

A re-interpretation of social control was needed if Britain was to avoid a form of social instability that appeared irrevocable with just the recourse to traditional methods of control. The rising threat of unpredictable ripples of both chaotic and revolutionary inclined violence threatened to undermine the whole environmental premise necessary to allow for capitalism to flourish. In addition, attempts in Ulster to curb civil disturbance and unrest through the use of the military had been shown as inherently flawed; using the naked force against mob violence appeared only to incite and nourish forms of organised resistance such as the UDA and the IRA. The State held a monopoly on the legal use of violence but the deployment of the same merely served to provoke an equal and counter response in Belfast.

Crime

With the social uprisings occurring on the continent and in the US it is not surprising that the political and social response to crime rose tremendously, even contributing to the enhanced perception of the need for increased numbers of community workers. The numbers of police officers rose from about 70,000 in the early 1950s to 107,000 in 1975. By this point over 14,000 staff were employed by the prison service with some 135 prison units to control and contain approximately 50,000 prisoners. This might be thought of as the start of the unprecedented growth in the UK's prison population that has grown unabated to the present day wherein record percentages of the British population are behind bars (outstripping any European counterpart). It is worth noting that this prison population is disproportionately black and young.

In 1962 there was a Royal Commission on the police as the approach of the force seemed insufficiently to challenge the growth in crime. This led to the 1964 Police Act which rationalised the system and clarified and strengthened police responsibility and authority. During this time the death penalty was abolished – temporarily in 1965 and permanently in 1968.

It can now be understood that the rise in crime during this period was caused by a complex mixture of social and cultural factors which were at the time hard to explain and even more difficult to change. Everyday life

was, relative to the past, energized and volatile within a growing acquisitive ethos. The seeming collapse of respect for organised, communal, civic and domestic authority constituted a threat, particularly to those whose financial interests were dependent on the same.

The general instability resulted in a rise in police powers and more clarified civil responsibilities. These changes in policing were hastened by the increased professionalisation of the police force but overall this seems to have affected the social belief and trust in the police in a negative way. Some commentators state that it was during this time that the public's opinion of the police moved from consensus, dependent on communal consent and a helpful flow of information from the public, to military policing. This is seen to work in a suspicious way with little trust from the general public. The move towards our current 'surveillance society' had started.

Crime for the first time in modern history was highlighted on the political agenda. Violent crime was of particular concern, having risen by 5 or 6 percent during the 1930s and 1940s, it grew at an average of 11 percent annually after 1955. There were just under 6,000 reported crimes of violence in 1955 but over 21,000 in 1968. Little wonder that, in 1966, law and order for the first time became a major general election issue.

One response to the social uprisings of the 1960s was the advent of greater covert control together with encouragement for people to become more responsible citizens. People were also urged to use the system to make 'changes from within' rather than 'fighting against the system'. This is in line with Eric Midwinter's point that *Societies are moved to social amelioration projects under the duress of likely social fracture* (Midwinter, 1994; 111).

At this time there appears again to be a strange connection between the professional, intellectual, politically motivated elite and the State in creating this alternative mechanism of social control.

The possibility of using community work as a profession in itself was initiated in the early 1960's by Dame Eileen Younghusband but was not taken on by the government until six years later, a point when conventional responses to the social uprisings had proven ineffective. The proposal for community work was set around a government agenda to curb the increasing break-up of families and the rise in juvenile delinquency. This was also tied in with the economic capacity to develop welfare provision. The number of people employed in health, education and welfare rose dramatically. In 1961 1.7 million people were employed in these areas, but by 1974 this had risen to nearly three million. The expansion of the welfare workforce was an economic measure which helped to maintain the principle of full-employment. Between 1960 and 1980 public expenditure rose by 100

percent with close to 70 percent of that increase being devoted to welfare programmes (Labour and Conservative administrations were both participants in this process). At present the National Health Service is the biggest single employer in Britain and the world's biggest employer after Indian rail and the Chinese Army, although both the latter workforces represent a far smaller proportion of the national populations.

LEGITIMATE CHANNELS

The role of the community worker was defined more clearly during this time. They were to work on housing estates with high crime, poor accommodation, poverty and a general lack of social motivation. Community workers were seen as co-ordinators and educators who could work with communities to use the tools of the State for change. Many of the initial models for community work were based on ideas about raising social and political awareness similar to the Freirian model of political education (an ideology that practically invites of corruption). Communities were encouraged to use legitimate, non-violent ways of working that encouraged the using of bureaucratic channels of communication rather than forms of protest (or riot). These could be seen to fit with the bourgeois systems and ways of working that were prevalent at that time.

The new methods of community work were also linked to a particular social ideology and the pathologising of people's problems which affected the methods that were chosen to intervene. In the first instance, caseworkers were inclined to focus on what might be broadly thought of as social pathology models rather than strengths. Their style was to be open-ended and non-directive. There was a propensity to overestimate the influence of the caseworker relationship and undervalue the impact of the social environment. In some extreme instances community workers claimed that social changes were their doing disregarding changes in housing or income for example.

In time this concentration altered again and what was understood as 'good' casework became whatever mode of practice seemed to be most effective in meeting the needs of clients. As such the demands on the caseworker grew and attention shifted from the emphasis on childhood experience to taking the current reality as a primal influence on conditions. Effort was placed on reinforcing the client's ability to manage and emphasis put on the strengths of existing and potential systems of support. The resulting methods of practice valued the self-awareness of the caseworker that was seen to improve their capacity to deliver an impartial service, untainted by personal preferences and dislikes. Later this was also seen to help preclude prejudices, culturally-based assumptions and values.

FROM INDIVIDUAL TO SOCIAL FOCUS (AND BACK AGAIN)

Within the social and cultural context, the move away from ideas of individualised living to more communal or co-operative ambitions had been another influence the changing motivations within social and community work in Britain. The social responsibility of the community worker shifting away from the individual to a more contextual, social response that sought social explanations for 'disaffection' or 'social ineptitude' on the part of the client had a political impact. Rather than problems being seen to be 'in' the individual as had previously been the focus of social intervention, community work took on, as part of its identity, the belief in community needs and responses, the causation of individual difficulties being seen to lie predominantly in the immediate social realm. Such situations were seen to increasingly demand a political response.

At the same time the focus within society at large moved from the individual to the community. It was perhaps inevitable that within community work that same alteration of focus took place. This affected the work undertaken and the very motives behind intervention in people's lives. The target ceased to be the individual and their personal history as the emphasis was put on the now and the individual as part of a social network. A more extensive range of techniques became available that were used in coordinated attempts to change individual experience by attending to their social context.

This broader perspective encompassed the influence of the family, neighbourhood, work or school relationships (negative and positive) and the ineffectiveness of attempting to alter isolated individuals. Consequently, the boundaries between casework, groupwork and community work became blurred as the goal was to use whatever methods and resources might be most effective in specific situations. A new emphasis was placed on the professional judgement of the individual practitioner. This was attractive to those who might have seen themselves as radical professionals as it offered a type of liberation from the constraints of State control. Over recent decades the room for professional judgement in the community context has been gradually curtailed by outcome orientations, targeted work, increased surveillance of client and practitioner alongside and part of assessment-led practice. This has been experienced as a clear reassertion of State control and the primacy of policy.

As the 1960s wore on, social change was encouraged, geared through consensus and partnership working with local government whilst encouraging community members to engage in legitimate political and social action for positive change. The phrase 'change from within' captures the ethos of the motivation of many community workers of this era and highlights the way

in which the system was seen to be capable of meeting the needs of the people through the services it provided.

COMMUNITY WORK AS AN AGENT OF THE STATE

In effect the community worker became part of the means for the State to regain control. By involving directly or indirectly state-sponsored community workers based in both statutory and voluntary organisations, in the midst of the life of local communities and by encouraging local communities to use the systems of bureaucracy set within the local and national State, ambitions for potential change and feelings about social problems and unrest were able to be transmitted and exposed at an early stage. Ideas about action and change could be raised in public forums and community workers were made, albeit unintentionally, informers about that potential action for local government.

With local and national government involved in these processes, the ideal was that the needs of the community could be met through the relationships built with the community worker who was in fact playing a mediation role. Local government could then provide services or responses as it interpreted the needs of the community, or the necessity to dilute or placate potentially unruly groups. In other words, the local State had a way of subverting change or giving people something that looked like what they wanted when actually it was probably something that they didn't need. The community worker became the tool of amelioration and interpretation, involved in an intermediate process that refined dissension into forms of consensus, in effect strengthening the hand of the State.

By transferring and reciprocating the bureaucratic models and methods of working, such as the committee meeting, voting, agendas, formalising groups, and budget plans, social action within local community groups can be subject to limited forms of representational democracy. Examples such as youth parliaments abound. Community action can also be subjected to interpretation through further bureaucratic proceedings that inevitably find excuses for changes in plans. By using mechanisms approved by State control agents within communities that are looking for change, those same mechanisms are strengthened and thus enforce the sense of 'citizenship' and personal relationship to the State.

The energetic, raw disaffection of communities on the edge of change – which in the 1960s was seen as the potential fuel for revolution – is effectively processed through forms of bourgeois bureaucracy by the efforts of community workers. This is then interpreted as action by the State but actually serves to strengthen the State. The consequence of this is that communities become used to not getting what they want but instead

receiving a State replica of what they wanted, or nothing at all. This leaves communities disappointed. It leaves them apathetic, unmotivated and potentially alienated from the decisions that are made about them. Consequently communities become apparently compliant and passive to State requirements.

An understanding of the context in which community work was established in Britain, the political and social motivations on which the establishment of community work was premised, demonstrates a clear political agenda underlying its development. It was so obviously related to the need to find alternative means of control to be allied to existing, more overt, means of State force.

So what has changed in respect to professional activity in the 'local social system'? Given the political, cultural and social environment we live in today, what justifications are given for professional incursions into the community? How have the methods of community infiltration and normalisation changed since the 1960s? Are we still as politically motivated or determined as workers or do we now have a general code of conduct that we are seen to adhere to? Do we still see society as essentially 'pathological' and its inherent problems being responsible for individual difficulties or have we moved away from this sociological understanding and towards characterising those we work with as being individually in deficit – lacking self-esteem, having attention deficits (ADHD) or conversely seeking attention?

CONCLUSION

The Younghusband, Albemarle and Seebohm Reports did much to inform each other in terms of techniques and purposes but they were all set within the social flux of British society from the late 1950s to the end of the 1960s and overall these seminal documents could not escape or fail to reflect the attendant fears, anxieties and hopes of the time. As such, the development of community work has shaped the delivery and attitudes of professions following it historically into the local social system and it is clear that the origin of British post-war State intervention into communities was premised on the perceived need to control sections of the population, youth being significant among these. This lineage has a definite impact on how community educators and youth workers might understand their role and purpose. Fear of the enemy within and the political instability this threatened at a time of perceived threat from without, together with the realisation that more direct or confrontational means of control were ineffective and impractical, provoked the development of more 'subtle' means of promoting social order; using social agents to champion the channelling of discontent

and unrest into traditional, bourgeois, administrative, pseudo democratic procedures. At the same time these mediators, arising as many did out of the very culture they were in reality being employed to pacify, needed to believe that they were largely advocates of the people, acting as a vanguard for progressive movement.

It gradually became clear to communities and professionals that this was never the situation. This has led to apathy on one side and low morale on the other. However, many professionals working in communities, perhaps not totally conscious of the history of their role, maintain a level of activism under slogans like 'working within the system to change the system'. Sadly, with a few notable exceptions, megalithic systems tend to change (or dispense with the use of) 'rogue' individuals rather than the other way round. At the same time, bold speeches at youth and community work conferences which basically prescribe the tearing up of job descriptions and/or leaving employment if it fails to live up to radical interpretations of community activism, dissipate as ineffectual and silly idealistic hot air. The adage that there is nothing more conformist than mass non-conformity again rings true when the self-acclaimed rebel, having alerted those they rebel against of their position, witness their dissent being digested into policy and as such ameliorated to the cause of the system.

In Britain community work practice, which now encompasses and is implicated by youth work and the role of the same in community education, is situated within the historical and social context of a society whose political, legislative and educational institutions grew out of and confirmed the values, aims and growth of Empire, colonialism and slavery. Even a glimpse at the post-Second World War period confirms that the influence of these comparatively historically recent global and social phenomena, which energised and prepared the ground for modern monopoly capitalism, have never really gone away. Their effects and legacy cannot be ignored, although in much of the literature relating to youth work and informal education they are.

The background to our work has been culturally shaped by the colonial era which has only in the last century reverted from naked physical 'engagement' to (mostly) forms of economic and professionally mediated colonialism. Like other considerations, these historical foundations have an impact on the contemporary social situation.

The above history of community work demonstrates that State action is taken not to primarily better any given group but to control populations to follow its own capitalist (exploitative) logic. It achieves this partly by corralling them into mostly competing and/or inter-threatening categories. Youth is one such.

This chapter asks the reader if the ambitions of social agents to work at ('incline') the 'shaping' and 'changing' of young people ('natives'), to 'acclimatise' them to particular interpretations of 'democracy' and 'citizenship' smack of the aspirations of colonial society?

The idea that professionals 'empower' assumes their clients are relatively 'powerless' compared to the 'professional giver of power'. The logic of any project to 'enable' is based on a deficit model, albeit not totally conscious on the part of any particular individual, which sees certain groups as relatively 'dis-abled'. Work founded on such assumptions, which are reminiscent of the basic premise of the well-meaning missionaries of bygone centuries, seems to beg reassessment. (They were at the same time also part of the justification for colonialism). It is hoped the analysis in this chapter will be beneficial in this respect.

Why do we, as supposed 'community educators' assume a particular community needs educating? Is it ignorant in some way, if so, how is this established? Who decides what facet of education to deliver? Should 'professionals' seek to 'change' and 'educate' a community when most of the people in the 'targeted' community have not asked to be changed or educated? Do professional ambitions for communities demand at least a bit more analysis? Does the 'professional' voyaging boldly, although uninvited, into the 'community' have echoes of the, albeit well meaning, missionary sallying forth to bring 'civilisation' and 'salvation' to the 'natives' of distant lands (see Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* and/or *The Wretched of the Earth*)?

The informal educator in the community, looking to promote 'learning' is directly or indirectly sponsored by a State which does not have 'helping' or 'supporting' others as its intent. As professionals we are historically part of a political strategy designed to achieve outcomes that are at least in part set in the macro-economic realm. How can we work 'effectively' unless we have theory that allows us to take this into account? Do many writers on community education (debatably themselves products of and adherents to the 'deficit' models indicative of 'colonial society') have the capacity to help us decipher and work within this milieu? If not, why are we directed to them and others with equally ill-equipped consciousness (see Carmichael and Hamilton's *On Black Power*)?

If something is bad, or flawed, or dangerous, it is enough if we expose it for what it is – Geoffrey Mason

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