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Maurice Devlin (Editor),
Applied Social Studies,
National University of Ireland Maynooth,
County Kildare, Ireland.
Tel. + 353 (0)1 7083781
Fax + 353 (0)1 7084708
Email: maurice.devlin@nuim.ie

Paula Mayock,
Children's Research Centre,
Trinity College Dublin.
Tel. + 353 (0)1 8962636
Email: pmayock@tcd.ie

Sam McCready,
Community Youth Studies Unit/Centre for Young Mens'
Studies,
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Tel. + 44 (0)28 90366457
Email: sh.mccready@ulster.ac.uk

Majella Mulkeen,
Applied Social Studies,
Institute of Technology, Sligo.
Tel. + 353 (0)71 91555354
Email: mulkeen.majella@itsligo.ie

Administrator/Secretariat

Fran Bissett,
Irish YouthWork Centre,
Youth Work Ireland,
20 Lower Dominick Street,
Dublin 1.
Tel. + 353 (0)1 8729933
Email: fbissett@youthworkireland.ie

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Tel: + 353 (0)1 8729933

Fax: + 353 (0)1 8724183

Email: fbissett@youthworkireland.ie

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Tel: 01 6212007/6212008

Fax: 01 6212017

Email: info@metaphor.ie

Web: www.metaphor.ie

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Comparing the New Zealand Curriculum and Young People's Conceptions of 'Ideal Citizens'

Re-examining Trust, Participation and Responsibility¹

Bronwyn Elisabeth Wood

Abstract

While citizenship has almost a 'universal appeal' (Faulks, 2000: 1), there remains much more debate about what type of citizen is 'ideal' for society and how citizenship education can contribute toward this end. In this paper I address the space which falls between the policies and ideals of a citizenship curriculum, and the understandings of citizenship held by the students to whom this curriculum is directed. I begin by examining the conceptions of the 'ideal citizen' conveyed in the official narratives of the most recent New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). I argue that 'Third Way' and 'knowledge economy' policy ideas have been influential in the nature of the 'ideal', personally responsible, participatory and entrepreneurial citizen conveyed in this curriculum. I then compare and contrast this with conceptions of the 'ideal' citizen held by school-aged young people. Comparisons between curricula and youth conceptions indicate a similar 'personally responsible' and participatory vision of 'ideal' citizens. However, closer examination of youth discussions also highlight some of the tensions related to issues of trust, participation and responsibility, thus challenging many of the assumptions upon which citizenship education in New Zealand (and other countries, including Ireland) is premised.

Keywords

Citizenship education; curricula; social studies; trust; responsibility; participation; youth

Introduction

The need for an active, responsible and informed citizenry is widely recognised by many governments as a prerequisite for an effective and strong democracy. To this end, recent trends that report falling rates of participation in democratic institutions and the perceived loss of social capital (Putnam, 2000) alongside the associated 'democratic deficit' (Crick, 1998) have led to the rise in educational initiatives designed to equip and create 'better' citizens. Citizenship programmes such as compulsory citizenship education in England (QCA, 1999), the Republic of Ireland's Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) programme, Northern Ireland's 'Local and Global Citizenship' programme (since 2003) and the *Discovering Democracy* programme in Australia,

illustrate the considerable ideological and economic commitment of governments toward education for citizenship. The motivation toward citizenship education stems from a belief that this will produce 'better' citizens. Whether it is explicit or implicit, citizenship curricula promote a version of the 'ideal' citizen within whom the social, economic and political hopes of a nation lie. However,

While there is much consensus that citizenship is a desirable thing, there is much less agreement about what the status should entail, what kind of community best promotes citizenship, and whether the status is inherently exclusive. (Faulks, 2000: 2)

In this paper I address the space which falls between the policies and ideals of citizenship curriculum developers, and the understandings of citizenship held by the school-aged young people toward whom this curriculum is directed. The focus of this paper is on the recently released New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) (NZC), alongside an examination of the 'ideal' citizen held by school-aged young people from New Zealand. These young people were not educated under this new curriculum, so I am not attempting to draw direct links between their conceptions and the new curriculum as a result of their schooling. Rather, through this comparison I aim to explore the potential alignment or mismatch of these visions to provide some insights and critique of the complex and contested space between policy and practice, between adult decision-makers and young people that lie at the heart of creating citizens in a democracy. I also intend to approach this with an explicit examination of the social and cultural context within which curricula are created. Addressing this contested space is vital if citizenship education is going to be relevant and meaningful to young people whose alienation and disengagement from political areas has been reported by many (see Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Print, 2007; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001).

Contested notions of the 'ideal' citizen

The concept of the 'ideal' citizen is a contested one. Is the 'ideal' citizen one who is law-abiding and pays his or her taxes, or one who gets involved in local communities and donates to worthy causes, or is it one who marches on the streets to protest about a government's decisions? The multiple positions taken in response to this question are likely to reflect the diverse ideological positions inherent in democratic society, which in turn influence policies and practices within a nation. The malleability of the concept of citizenship is perhaps part of its 'almost universal appeal' (Faulks, 2000: 1) – by providing a concept that is potentially instrumental to both radicals and conservatives according to how they employ it. As a concept it can provide a degree of general agreement as well as a cover for the more ambiguous aspects as it has the potential to serve the aims of both the right and the left (Brooks & Holford, 2009). Rather than a static position then, citizenship has a 'dynamic identity' (Faulks, 2000: 6) and can not be divorced from the context in which it is developed or fail to reflect varying political and ideological positions held by governments (Faulks, 2000; Kennedy, 2008a). In turn, citizenship education programmes and curricula are subject to political and social changes depending on the salience of particular ideologies. It follows that ...

[s]uch a curriculum is never value-free or neutral: it will always reflect current conceptions of the 'good citizens' as the ends toward which the curriculum is directed. (Kennedy, 2008a: 486)

The extent to which citizenship education should focus on the rights of citizens *vis-à-vis* their responsibilities, and the capacity citizenship education has to address structural inequalities within society is also a source of tension within conceptions of the 'ideal' citizen in citizenship curricula (Brooks & Holford, 2009). This presents dilemmas to educators who are charged with delivering citizenship programmes as to whether they should stick with the kind of citizenship that is highly adaptable to the status quo (thus creating 'employable and quiet' future citizens/consumers), or whether they should encourage citizens that critically engage and challenge existing structures in society (Openshaw, 2004; Ross, 2008; Wolmuth, 2009).

Theoretical and methodological considerations

My analysis in this paper draws from a critical theoretical framework which draws attention to the legitimacy of power within society and how some groups use power to regulate the participation, inclusion and freedom of others (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). In the first half of this paper I employ a critical analysis of curriculum through which I view the selection of the knowledge contained in curricula as 'neither neutral nor innocent' (Cohen et al., 2000: 33), but instead as a 'socially contextualized process' (Cornbleth, 1990) reflecting the inherent political and ideological tensions that are present in society. I undertake an analysis of the conception of the 'ideal citizen' by purposively selecting aspects of the NZC as illustrative of citizenship by direct content (of the words 'citizen' or 'citizenship') or implied by association with concepts of participation in society, engagement and/or citizenship values. Similarly, through a critical youth studies stance, I aim to contextualise young people's experiences within social, cultural and historical factors, yet also recognise their role as competent social actors in their own right (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; White & Wyn, 1998; Wyn & White, 1997).

In the second half of this paper I draw on discussions with eight focus groups of Year 12/13 young people (age 16–18) ($n=35$) who all attend a co-ed, decile six school² in a South Island city. Two Year 12 or 13 senior social studies classes were invited to participate in the study and were asked to 'opt in' rather than 'opt out' (one opted out). The gender balance in these two classes reflected a higher number of females than males (females = 26; males = 9). The timing of these interviews, two weeks before the New Zealand 2008 general election, and the age of the participants (16–18) made the findings from this group of participants especially interesting, and enabled me to capture some of the political aspirations of these young people (five of whom were allowed to vote in the National Election for the first time)³. Confidentiality of students was protected by their selection of a 'code name' (pseudonym) for the project and identifying features of their town/school have been removed.

Data collection took the form of eight café-style focus groups. The idea for this method was derived from 'world café-style groups' (Brown & Isaacs, 2005) and adapted for the classroom context. Students selected groups (between three and five per group) and grouped around a table, were provided with an audio recorder,

coloured pens and a set of posters⁴. The posters included open-ended statements such as ‘a “good” citizen is ...’ or ‘responsibilities/right of young people are to ...’. By adapting the traditional facilitator-led focus group approach to that of a ‘café-style’, I aimed to employ a research approach which enabled ‘naturalistic’ conversation beyond the direction of an adult interviewer. So, whilst I was in the room at all times, and moving between groups working on their posters, the groups were largely self-directed in the production of these posters. My role was to encourage dialogue, clarify some points, ask for expansion on others and introduce a new poster when group discussion dried up or moved off-topic. When I did join in discussions, my questioning did encourage participants to elaborate on points in greater detail. Yet, group discussions in my absence were often very rich in data, and enabled me to capture more of their ‘everyday’ conversations that were also surprisingly political at times (for an example, the ‘I think the government are bad citizens’ discussion described below was held entirely in my absence). Groups also had an opportunity to report back to the others at the end of each session. The findings are not intended to be representative or comparative, but instead provide insights into conceptions of citizenship held by these young people.

Policy contexts and citizenship education in New Zealand

While countries including Australia, England, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, the United States, and many European nations now include explicit aspects of citizenship education within their official curriculum documents (see Nelson & Kerr, 2006), New Zealand has historically preferred to take a subject-based approach to citizenship through the curriculum area of social studies (Archer & Openshaw, 1992; Barr, 1998; Mutch, 2005a, 2005b; Openshaw, 2004)⁵. However, research indicates that social studies teachers rarely are explicit about citizenship in their teaching, preferring a model where citizenship attributes and values are ‘caught not taught’ (see Archer & Openshaw, 1992; McGee, 1998; Mutch, 2008; Openshaw, 2004). Aitken (2005: 96) has pointed out that the failure to make explicit the links between social studies and citizenship education has also contributed to the ‘general silence’ of citizenship education in New Zealand. The end result has been a muddled, tentative and inconsistent approach to citizenship education through social studies.

The 2007 New Zealand Curriculum marks a break with this tradition, with much more explicit references to citizenship attributes and education now appearing in the social sciences curriculum explicitly, but also as an integrated theme across curricula and extracurricular areas (Nelson & Kerr, 2006). The heightened promotion of citizenship education across the curriculum in the 2007 NZC therefore warrants further attention to the political context in which it was formulated.

‘Third Way’ policies

In the nineties, a new form of governance known as the ‘Third Way’ began to be discussed in the United States (under Bill Clinton) and the United Kingdom where it was closely linked to the rise of Tony Blair’s Labour government (Wolmuth, 2009). ‘Third Way’ proponents speak of a ‘third’ political pathway which embraces the mutual benefit of a strong society and a strong economy by arguing that strengthening the bonds of community and trust within society will lead to economic prosperity and

stability (Giddens, 2000). Ideas about a ‘Third Way’ began to emerge in New Zealand in 1999 with the election of the fifth Labour government who introduced policies (later renamed as the ‘new social democracy’) to promote the contribution that ‘social capital’ and high levels of community participation have in developing a ‘productive’ economy and society, whilst still maintaining many of the free market neoliberal ideals that Labour inherited from the National government (Kelsey, 2002).

While many of the ideals promoted by the ‘Third Way’ have not seen fruition, and much of its claims have been heavily criticized, the Curriculum Stocktake Report (Ministry of Education, 2002) which served to guide the subsequent 2007 curriculum development, ‘picked up on the notion of fostering citizenship as a means to addressing social ills’ (Mutch, 2008: 210). The Stocktake called for a greater recognition of the ‘future focused themes’ of citizenship, social cohesion, enterprise and sustainability. A second key idea that I propose has influenced the new curriculum and the nature of the active citizenship within it is that of the ‘knowledge society’.

Knowledge society policies

Rapid technological change and intensifying globalisation processes during the 1990s began to highlight the key role that knowledge played in an information-rich and networked society (Castells, 2000). Knowledge economy proponents argue that instead of producing items and products, the ‘new’ global economy requires ideas, innovation, creativity and critical thinking to ensure economic competitiveness (Gilbert, 2005; Kennedy, 2008b: 13) as promoted by the OECD publication *The Knowledge-based Economy* (1996). Ideas about a ‘knowledge economy’ began to surface in New Zealand in the late 1990’s, notably when the Information Technology Advisory Group submitted to the New Zealand government their landmark report, *The Knowledge Economy* (1999). This report marked a clear shift in thinking for the transformation of New Zealand from ‘a pastoral economy into a knowledge-driven economy’ (Information Technology Advisory Group, 1999: 1).

These shifts in thinking about knowledge have similarly demanded shifts in thinking about how education is delivered. The need for ‘learning how’ rather than ‘learning what’ (Kennedy 2008) is seen as pivotal within this framework and the OECD’s notion of Key Competencies (OECD, 2005) has become a crucial part of this reconceptualisation of approaches to knowledge. Educational models which promote more individualized and flexible pathways in education (rather than the ‘one size fits all’ approach of the industrial age) have also seen a rise in popularity (Gilbert, 2005). Finally, as education can no longer be seen as static or complete within a set period of time, the concept of ‘lifelong learning’ is now ‘almost a mantra’ (Kennedy, 2008b: 17) in official government and curricula documents around the world, placing the responsibility firmly on individuals to meet the changing needs of the labour market by re-educating themselves in a process of ‘individualized and recurrent continuous learning and qualification pathways’ (Chisholm, 2001: 65).

The New Zealand Curriculum (2007)

The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007) was launched in late November, 2007 amidst claims that through it, students will ‘learn how to learn’ ... ‘innovate and problem-solve’ ... and become ‘creators of new knowledge’ (Trevett &

McKenzie-Minifie, 2007). The profile of citizenship has been both raised and integrated across the whole curriculum (Electoral Commission, 2007). The language of citizenship now cuts across many areas of the NZC whereas previously it was largely the domain of the social sciences. For example, citizenship is referred to within the *principles* which are the ‘foundations of curriculum decision making’ as one of the *‘future-focused issues’* along with sustainability, enterprise and globalisation⁶; it is also supported in the new section on key competencies (such as *participating and contributing*) and most specifically in the learning area of the social sciences where students ‘explore how societies work and how they themselves can participate and take action as critical, informed, and responsible citizens’ (Ministry of Education, 2007: 9, 13, 17).

The place where the concept of the ‘ideal’ young citizen is most clearly articulated is in the *vision* statement, as ‘what we want for our young people’.

Our vision is for young people:

- who will be creative, energetic, and enterprising
- who will seize the opportunities offered by new knowledge and technologies to secure a sustainable social, cultural, economic, and environmental future for our country
- who will work to create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and Pākehā⁷ recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contributions they bring
- who in their school years, will continue to develop the values, knowledge, and competencies that will enable them to live full and satisfying lives
- who will be confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners. (Ministry of Education, 2007: 8)

In the second half of this paper I explore the conceptions held of ‘ideal’ citizens by social studies students as a way of delving into the complex space between policies and practices of citizenship education. In doing so, I am not advocating for a linear causality between conceptions of curricula and those held by young people just because they have passed through the education system, but rather, seeking to explore the similar and contrasting understandings between the writers of curricula and those to whom they are directed.

Youth voices: Conceptions of ‘good’ citizens

In this part of the paper I turn to the findings derived from eight café-style focus groups with New Zealand students. In order to classify conceptions of the ‘ideal’ citizen, I have drawn on Westheimer & Kahne’s (2004) framework for a critical analysis of the kinds of citizens society can work to produce. The first is a *personally responsible citizen* who has good character and is honest and law-abiding. The second, *participatory citizens*, actively take part in activities that contribute to their community. The third, *justice-oriented citizens* question established social structures and work against injustice in society in the ilk of critical educationalists such as Freire & Shor (1987) (see Appendix 1 for greater detail).

For the poster which asked young people to complete the sentence ‘*a good citizen is ...*’, the most common responses could be classified as ‘personally responsible’ citizens (Table 1). The image of a personally responsible ‘good’ citizen could be summed up by a 17 year old student as ‘someone who did their part for society, had strong morals ...

someone who is selfless'. Many groups referred to personal attributes of citizens, such as being 'polite, respectful and friendly toward others'. All groups referred to obedience of laws and respect for the government. All focus groups also included conceptions of a 'participatory citizen' on their poster and in their discussions. These 'good' citizens moved beyond personal actions to participatory actions, such as 'someone who is willing to help strangers or others in need'. Focus groups also suggested 'good' citizens 'care for the environment', 'do their part for society', and 'work for the community'. Only three responses could be classified as 'justice-oriented', and even these responses could also be placed in the 'participatory' category.

Personally responsible citizens	Participatory citizens	Justice oriented citizens
Shows respect (to others and government) [2]	Do their part for society/the community	Someone who stands up for the rights of themselves and others
Law-abiding [2]	Someone who isn't self-involved	Takes social action
Role model [2]	Services to others	Fights for good things
Responsible	Someone who stands up for the rights of themselves and others	
Selfless	Cares about the environment [2]	
Informed		
Pays their taxes		
Strong morals – honest, polite, friendly, considerate [2]		
Someone who doesn't litter		
Someone who accepts other races cultures and backgrounds.		

Table 1: *Examples of students' conceptions of a 'good' citizen*⁸

The findings in Table 1 suggest that that these young people held a predominantly passive, personally responsible, and to a lesser extent, community and service-minded view of the role of citizens in society. These findings show many similarities to other studies which found young people's conceptions of 'good' citizens drew heavily on a constructivist social participation model which endorse personally responsible and community-service minded conceptions of citizens, but rarely advocated for political or dissident citizens (see Alazzi, 2009; Lister, Smith, Middleton, & Cox, 2003; Taylor, Smith, & Gollop, 2008).

It is worth making a comment about methodology here, because if I had just collected the data in the posters (as reported in Table 1) in the form of an open-ended survey, for example, without also collecting the café-style informal conversations that accompanied them, it is likely that my findings would conclude that young people's conceptions of 'good' citizens are rarely contested or critical. However, in my examination of the discussions that were occurring alongside the creation of their posters, I realised that my data was also showing some different trends. These revealed far more nuanced, complex and critical conceptions of citizens, and highlight some of the tensions related to issues of trust, participation and responsibility from the perspective of young people, and took place as young people discussed the creation of their posters of 'good citizens' and 'rights and responsibilities of young people in society'.

Trust

Contrary to the findings of many researchers who have drawn attention to the lack of political interest and participation shown by young people (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Print, 2007; Putnam, 2000), the young people interviewed in this study had high levels of interest in political issues, participation and the political process. This was particularly apparent in male participants, whose comments are included frequently in the discussions noted below. Within the Year 13 students, five were to be first-time voters in the national elections in two weeks time. At the time of this research the Labour Party (under the Prime Minister Helen Clark) was in the final weeks of a nine year period of power. Many of those who were still aged 17 spoke of their disappointment at not being to vote:

Rhymenoceros: *Me and [student] are one or two days too young. (17 yrs, female)*

Hip Hop Potamus: *I'd love to vote. So many people don't give an arse about voting. ... I'm so keen. Do you think it is illegal to try and influence those that can vote? (17 yrs, female)*

Bella: *Well, it's not really. You can sort of influence them. You're not really forcing them. (18 yrs, female)*

Other groups raised aspects of politics in passing throughout their discussions as illustrated by the following:

Demonlayer5000: *Labour will probably get in. (16 yrs, male)*

Miley Syrus: *No they won't. (17 yrs, female)*

Demonlayer5000: *They'll get back in.*

Miley Syrus: *No they won't [...] I want the Green Party to get in power.*

Kirk: *[interjects from next table].*

I want the Bill and Ben Party. You can actually vote for them. (16 yrs, male)

Demonlayer5000: *It'd be a laugh if they were elected. [later] So can we actually go and register your name as a party ... that'd be sweet.*

However, many also showed a cynicism about the political process, such as in a discussion about not signing petitions because 'petitions don't do jack ... they don't listen to them' (18 yrs old male). Others showed a distrust of politicians, such as the statement from a 17 year old girl: 'I don't believe that anybody who's trying to be our government right now is worthy enough to be our government'. Expressing a similar sentiment, in the following discussion four 17/18 year old girls illustrate the cynicism they had toward politicians and the political process before any of them had ever had a chance to vote.

Skinny Malinky

LongLegs: *I think the government are bad citizens. Because this whole election is supposed to be about trust and yet they're sitting and actually bagging each other down. (18 yrs, female)*

Claire: Starting with Helen Clark I must admit. She said this was going to be a clean fight and she was the first one to come out with a bad advert. (18 yrs, female)

Leaf: Did you see the one with John Key – “This is John ... this is John”⁹? (18 yrs, female)

Skinny Malinky

LongLegs: Yeah. But no one has actually sat down and said this what we’re going to do to help you.

Claire: That’s because they’ve got nothing that they can do ... they’ve got no good ideas.

Inky Pinky Ponky: Well, Labour does – with the student loans. (17 yrs, female)

Claire: But whether she actually acts on that is another thing. She’s been in government for how many years, and she probably won’t act on it if she’s re-elected. No offence. But it’s true.

This discussion highlights the critique that the young people subjected politicians to and their lack of trust in some of their practices.

Participation

The findings in Table 1 also fail to capture the more radical and participatory views of citizenship held by one focus group of two males and a female (IT Master, Labour4life and Nananana ... Batman). This group made reference to a recent news event in New Zealand in an attempt to define a more active and interventionist type of responsible, participatory citizen:

IT Master: It’s our responsibility to find criminals (18 yrs, male)

Labour4life: To find criminals? (17 yrs, male)

IT Master: Yes. Like if someone was getting away from you, who like stabbed someone in the back like Austin Hemmings¹⁰. You are responsible to like go and catch the bastard ...

This group’s discussion went on to a debate lasting over thirty minutes about the need for citizens who could implement civil disobedience in society, showing a much more critical and ‘justice-oriented’ (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) understanding of what it meant to be a ‘good’ citizen:

Labour4life: Can we say though, that sometimes a ‘good’ citizen has to break the law in order to ... (17 years old, male)

IT Master: Yes, oh, absolutely, absolutely ... (18 years, male)

Labour4life: When you get like civil disobedience, which is in a form like breaking the law ... you get in trouble with the police. There are sometimes you have to do that in order to fulfil your responsibilities as a citizen. In the Springbok Tour, for example, a lot of people broke the law then, but we look back and say they are heroes.

Later when I talked to the group they were trying to define the fine line between a criminal and someone who broke the law as a form of civil disobedience, such as being a protester against the Springbok Tour¹¹:

Bron: *But what's the difference between [a Springbok protester] and a criminal?*

IT Master: *A criminal goes out there and deliberately breaks the law. An activist does it because they have to get a point across.*

Nanananana ...

Batman: *Or someone who stands up for the rights of themselves and others. (17 yrs, female)*

Labour4life also demonstrated sophisticated knowledge of historical perspectives by arguing that perspectives of actions taken can change over time. He later summarised this debate on the difference between a criminal and civil disobedience for the class:

Labour4life: *Its how history sees it I suppose. Because you can only tell if it is justified [in hindsight]. It's like in the American Revolution. The revolutionaries killed a lot of people. And we could say 'No, they killed people – evil!' But (it was like) then when we look back we say 'oh, they were justified'.*

Labour4life illustrated a complex and rich understanding of citizenship and civil disobedience. When asked if the ability to protest (and even break the law) was what we wanted from citizens in society, this whole group concurred 'definitely'. Yet, when I examined their poster, they had written that a 'good citizen is ...' someone who 'pays their taxes, doesn't litter, isn't self involved and stands up for the rights of themselves and others'. Only this final statement was classified as 'justice oriented' in Table 1.

At the same time as describing many of their own participatory actions as citizens, four of the eight groups identified their status as young people in society as a significant barrier to their participation and motivation. For example, their statements included:

'We're not respected because of our age' (Shaz, female, 16 yrs).

'[O]ur status in society – since we're younger...and we won't get listened to much' (Shan, female, 17 yrs).

'I think young people find it really hard to get involved cos they don't take us seriously that we want to get involved. Like we often want to help but we're not treated how we should be treated'. (Female, 17 yrs).

Miley Syrus (female, 17 years) referred specifically to teenagers as a state of limbo in terms of status in society:

Young people are kind of like not taken seriously. 'Specially when you're a teenager. It's like maybe if you're 12 and that, its like 'wow, a little 12 year old', but now [they just think] you're taking the piss. Me and [student] went home and asked if we can have money to give to African children and it was like 'no way'!

This in turn affected young people's perceptions of their own ability. As one seventeen year old girl put it: 'I reckon a lot of our age people think that we're too young to make a difference'. Kirk Penn (male, 16 years) surmised that the reason young people didn't participate in society was because they are 'thinking it's pointless and thinking that our help won't make a difference'.

Responsibility

Another issue raised by many of the groups was the weight of responsibility that they felt on their shoulders. For example, one group wrote that it was their responsibility 'to be the future'. This same group had a strong sense of responsibility toward environmental and social issues. One young person took the idea even further arguing that in the absence of social action, the world could spiral into mass murder or mass genocide. He referred to social action in terms of a moral imperative:

IT Master: Social action is something we HAVE to do or else we're in the crappers. Crappers is defined as we will have no world to live on. (18 yrs, male)

Bron: Is it a feeling you HAVE to do it or can it be voluntary?

Nananana ...

Batman: No, we have to. (17 yrs, female)

IT Master: I believe we have to.

Bron: For the sake of ...?

IT Master: For the sake of human life. For the sake of people's jobs, for the sake of hunger and ... poverty. It should be our responsibility to fix it.

Bella took issue with ITMaster, disagreeing strongly with this feeling of 'moral imperative'. She agreed that social action was needed, but that it needed to be a voluntary action.

Bella: Yeah, but that's a choice. It's like a responsibility that we CHOOSE to take on. Society can still function if you don't. (female, 17 years)

IT Master: So you're encouraging mass murder, mass genocide, mass ...

Bella: No, I'm not encouraging genocide, I'm just saying it's a responsibility that you choose to take. Not a responsibility that you HAVE to take to make society function.

IT Master: But why would you NOT choose it?

Bella: I'm just saying it's a choice.

Bron: Can I re-word it? What would you say a 'good' citizen is?

Bella: Someone who does actually take these social actions and does something about it. Or at least doesn't contribute to the problem even if they can't do anything to help it.

What is interesting in the above discussion is Bella's response and rejection of this weight of responsibility being placed so firmly on individuals in society, advocating instead that this needs to be a choice and not imposed on individuals.

Comparing young people's conceptions of the 'ideal' citizen with the curriculum's

A comparison of the findings of my analysis of the new curriculum and the young people's discussions about the 'ideal' citizen show a fair degree of similarity. Both favour a primarily 'personally responsible' conception of an 'ideal' citizen – one who 'shows respect' and is 'law abiding' (research findings) and 'is able to relate well to others' and is 'motivated and reliable' (Ministry of Education, 2007: 8). And both also support the idea of participatory citizens becoming actively involved in communities and schools as 'participants in a range of life contexts' (Ministry of Education, 2007: 8). The 'ideal' citizen described appears to endorse a type of flexible, active citizen who meets the needs of a changing (knowledge) economy by being innovative and entrepreneurial. 'Third Way' ideas that encourage a growing participatory citizenry appear to have a general consensus amongst the youth participants in this project and the curriculum developers of the NZC. Although youth participants offered far less discussion on 'knowledge society' ideas in their conceptions of 'ideal' citizens, I would argue that the integration of these ideas into the NZC will further the potential for the 'employability' agenda as a key part of the creation of ideal citizens in society.

Where the conceptions of the 'ideal' citizen between this group of young people and the curriculum start to part ways, is in the dilemmas raised in their discussions about many of the core features which underpin citizenship. The more critical conceptions of citizenship presented by young people draw attention to the uncontested conceptions of the 'ideal' citizen presented in the NZC. This small group of young people could be described in many ways as highly motivated participatory citizens, yet, their perceptions of politicians and political processes have been tainted by what they see as examples of 'bad citizens' (in government). Their degree of active participation is significantly affected by what they perceive as their own poor status in society, and this in turn affects their own perceptions of their ability to make a difference or enact change. Further, their discussions also problematise the concept of responsibility by debating just how great a weight of responsibility should be placed on young citizens in society. I will re-examine the concepts of active participation, trust and responsibility in light of the points raised by the young people in this study.

Re-examining trust, participation and responsibility

Trust lies at the heart of many practices which democracies rely on to work. The cynicism toward politicians and political processes exhibited by some of these participants makes their citizenship participation now and in the future more tenuous (see, for example, Spring, Dietz, & Grimm, 2007). Giddens (1991) notes that in circumstances of uncertainty and multiple choices, notions of trust have particular application. In his words, trust generates the 'leap of faith' which practical engagement and participation in society demands. In the absence of this, these young people are much less likely to participate fully in society –something which jeopardizes the shared responsibility advocated for in 'Third Way' and citizenship policies. The theme that

these participants raised about their low status in society and lack of respect, alongside a cynicism for many political processes and politicians has significant implications for citizenship education and the future of democracy. Many argue (see for example Catt, 2005) that if people do not learn the 'habit' of active participation in their youth, they may never develop that practice later in life. The conflicts and tensions related to issues of active participation, trust and responsibility underpinning conceptions of the 'ideal' citizen in society raised by participants in this study, challenge many of the assumptions upon which citizenship education is premised.

The concept of 'participation' was raised as a problematic one by young people in this study. At one end of the spectrum, some young people saw the participation of 'ideal' citizens in a more active and radical light than some curriculum writers or governments may be comfortable with. However, the promotion of participation in the NZC opens wide the potential for more radical interpretations. Kidman (2005) suggests that the current advocates of youth participation within curricula and policies fail to address the potential for radical politicized youth, preferring instead to promote a form of participation '... within carefully delineated *economic* and social parameters that reinforce neoliberal ideologies' (Kidman, 2005: 96). How will adult society respond if these young people enact these conceptions in terms of more radical forms of citizen participation such as attending a strike during school hours or organising a protest?¹² The failure of the NZC to address more radical forms of participation exposes young people, teachers and communities to political fallout if they do take action and serves to reduce young people's role as citizens to that of 'apprentice citizens', excluded from a rights-holding, active and critical role in their society (Harris, 2006).

Other young people spoke of the weight of responsibility they felt to 'be the future' and be the ones who had to address societal challenges, else the world would be 'in the crappers' (ITMaster). ITMaster's ideal of citizen responsibility for social ills echoes some of the rhetoric of 'Third Way' policies introduced earlier in this paper with its insistence on the recovery of community and active citizenship (Latham, 2001). Lister et al. (2003) similarly found that the young people of Leicester had a greater sense of their responsibilities than their rights. Whilst youth participation has been helpful for encouraging the inclusion of young people in decision making, there is concern that the discourse of participation, on its own, serves only to further 'responsibilize' children and youth, and ultimately blame them for their failure to engage (Harris, 2006: 223). 'Third Way' policies also open up the potential for making individuals, rather than the state, responsible for coping with the consequences of a free market economy (Fitzsimons, 2006).

These findings also raise some interesting questions about methodologies employed to research young people's political awareness and conceptions of citizenship. The findings of Table 1 clearly do not report all that was happening in the course of poster making. Yet, it appears that much of the complexity of their discussions was reduced to a couple of words for the sake of recording simple points on the poster. It is likely that some of their discussions were not even perceived to be related to the poster construction. These findings appear to support calls to move beyond adult-centric definitions of engagement and conventional research designs when researching with young people in this area (O'Toole et al., 2003).

Conclusion

Whilst recognising the enhanced opportunities for citizenship education in the new curriculum, the findings in this paper draw attention to the competing and often conflicting philosophies that underpin these curriculum reforms and policies. I would suggest that the close links made in the new curriculum between 'knowledge society' ideas and active citizenship are problematic when you start to examine the kind of citizens evoked by these ideas. The 'ideal citizen' reported in the vision statement of the NZC (Ministry of Education, 2007: 8) ignores the immediate tensions in this 'ideal' citizen image. There is an inherent tension between ideas that promote innovative, enterprising entrepreneurs able to respond to the needs of the economy and ideas that promote active citizens able to critique democratic processes and practices. A citizen who supports economic sustainability may at times directly contravene practices which support *environmental* sustainability. Similarly, an enterprising citizen committed to seizing new technological opportunities, may find that these could work directly against the creation of shared partnership upheld in the Treaty of Waitangi. The underlying economic, utilitarian themes present in knowledge society ideas have the potential to be taught at the expense of other citizenship issues of wellbeing and identity (Wyn, 2009). Yet, how are citizens prepared to face such complex decisions if educators fail to acknowledge the often contradictory and conflicting philosophies that underpin citizenship statements?

This raises questions about whether schools will simply become the training grounds of the corporate workplace (Giroux, 2003), fulfilling the 'employability agenda' which Wolmuth (2009) argues is one interpretation of the integration of 'Third Way' policies into citizenship education. Or will citizenship education offer opportunities to develop citizens in a democracy who can also critique existing structures in society, and display agency and reflection to address issues and ideas of concern? If it is critical, active and justice-oriented citizens that that we actually want, then opportunities in citizenship education which are afforded in curricula need to look beyond the status quo of the 'ideal' personally responsible, participatory citizen and consider the nature of citizens required for the future of democracy. Citizenship education is fraught with conflicting models and values about which kind of citizen a society could actually want. Exposing these issues within the classroom is an important step to providing young people with opportunities to untangle, embrace and explore the 'maximal' potential of citizenship (McLaughlin, 1992). Ultimately, citizenship education must be judged by the society it produces (Osler & Starkey, 2005).

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Notes

1. A version of this paper was delivered at the conference, *All Change for Young People?: Mobility, Markets, Media, Models of Practice*, held at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, June 2009
2. A school's decile refers to the socio-economic communities from which it draws its students. A Decile 1 represents a 'low' SES community and a Decile 10 a 'high' SES community.
3. In New Zealand, eighteen is the minimum age for voting in national elections.
4. Discussions took place over three consecutive days and a return visit to the school was also undertaken to discuss and clarify findings.
5. Social studies is a compulsory curriculum area in New Zealand, providing an integrated approach to the social sciences for all students from Years one to ten (ages 5–14). Mutch (2005a) contends that the Health and PE curriculum in New Zealand has also played a (lesser) role in citizenship education.
6. Citizenship education is defined within the future focused themes as 'exploring what it means to be a citizen and to contribute to the development and well-being of society' (Ministry of Education, 2007: 39).
7. Pākehā: Māori word to denote those who are non-Māori.
8. Where more than one group recorded a similar description is indicated by a number in brackets (e.g. [2]). Some of the examples given don't fit strictly into a discrete category, so are placed in two columns.
9. Referring to a Labour-sponsored advertisement defining John Key – leader of the opposition at the time (Prime Minister of New Zealand following the election referred to) as flip-flopping/changing.
10. Austin Hemmings stopped and tried to help a woman being attacked in Downtown Auckland and ended up being stabbed to death himself on 23 September 2008.
11. The South African Rugby Union tour of New Zealand in 1981 is often referred to as the Springbok Tour. It resulted in heated protests against the apartheid regime in South Africa at the time.
12. See Beals & Wood (forthcoming) for a discussion on adult and media reactions to radical youth activists in New Zealand in 2006.

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Appendix 1: Kinds of Citizens

	Personally responsible citizens	Participatory citizens	Social-justice oriented citizens
Description	Acts responsibly in their community Works and pays taxes Picks up litter, recycles and gives blood Helps those in need Obeys laws	Active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts Organises community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development or to clean up environment Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks.	Critically assesses social, political and economic structures Explores strategies for change that address root causes of problems Knows about social movements and how to effect systematic change Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice.
Sample action	Contributes food to a food drive	Helps to organize a food drive	Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes
Core assumptions	To solve social problems and improve society citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible and law-abiding members of the community.	To solve social problems and improve society citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures.	To solve social problems and improve society citizens must question and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time.

Source: (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Biographical Note

Bronwyn Wood is a doctoral candidate at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand where she is completing research in youth participation in active citizenship. Her research interests include youth sociology, youth geographies and citizenship education.

Contact Details

Bronwyn Elisabeth Wood,
Faculty of Education,
Victoria University of Wellington,
c/o Postgraduate Office,
PO Box 17–310,
Karori Campus,
Wellington 6147,
New Zealand.

Email: bronwyn.wood@vuw.ac.nz

'You just have to figure it out for yourself'

Young LGBT Women and Healthcare Services in Northern Ireland

Duana McArdle

Abstract

There is a dearth of research on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) young women in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to health. This research addresses some of these gaps in knowledge and understanding of the issues through exploring the perceptions of a sample of young LGBT women aged 18–25 towards access to and provision of health services in Northern Ireland. A qualitative, exploratory approach was employed, using semi-structured face-to-face interviews as the data collection method. Obtaining a sample was difficult, due to the hidden nature of the population. Issues with chain referral as a sampling method are described. Following transcription, narratives were analysed using thematic content analysis according to Newell and Burnard (2006). Nine young women who identified as either lesbian, gay or bisexual were interviewed. Participants recalled negative perceptions of school-based health provision where the issue of homosexuality was often silenced. Findings indicate a reluctance to disclose sexual orientation to health care providers, perceptions of invisibility within health care and health information environments, and a lack of tailored provision that adequately addresses the needs of the young women. There were some positive experiences of occasions when the young women's sexual orientation was acknowledged and accepted. Future health promotion strategies addressing the needs of young gay or bisexual women should consider their sexual identity as an integral component and should take steps to ensure that those promoting such strategies are perceived to be trustworthy. The research has implications for all those working with young people, particularly with minority groups.

Keywords

LGBT; young women; health services; health promotion; Northern Ireland

Introduction

Northern Ireland is a society in transition, one in which the traditional conflicts have receded and a more diverse society has been revealed. Within this evolving society more attention has recently focussed on minority groups such as those with disabilities, minority ethnic groups and those who identify as other than heterosexual, typically Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT). In many ways, particularly in

Northern Ireland, young people's health has been hijacked by 'risk'; risk of obesity, smoking, teenage pregnancy and a focus on 'lifestyle' changes to prevent disease. An area where there is a dearth of research relates to young LGBT women's experiences and interactions with health services in Northern Ireland. The aim of this research was to explore the perceptions of a sample of young women who identified as either lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, aged 18–25 towards access to and provision of healthcare services in Northern Ireland. Specifically, the objectives were to examine the perceptions of young LGBT women of health care services, to identify examples of good practice where they exist and to identify gaps in health care services as identified by the young women themselves. By doing this insight is gained into good practices where they exist and the findings can help inform all those working with young people to better address the diverse needs of young LGBT women and other minority groups.

Health issues for young LGBT women

Mayock et al. (2009) in a large scale Irish study report that young LGBT people as a whole are more vulnerable to psychological distress. They report that over 60% of respondents directly attribute stress and depression directly to their non-heterosexual identity. There is a large body of evidence which supports the claim that poor emotional health can be as a result of homophobic attitudes and heterosexism in society leading to lowered self-esteem and confidence and increased stress particularly for young gay women (Meyer 2003; Douglas-Scott et al., 2004; Dolan, 2005; Greenfield, 2007; O'Hanlan and Isler, 2006). The Northern Ireland Young Life and Times Survey (2005/2006) showed that young women's sexual orientation (when not heterosexual) can have an adverse affect on mental health, with one in two same sex attracted young women registered as suffering a mental health condition (Young Life and Times, 2005). Research suggests that internalised homophobia, the transformation of external negative societal messages into self-hatred, denial and an impaired sense of self (Greenfield, 2007) and feelings of shame have all given rise to health problems such as self-harm (Herek, 2007).

Much of the sexual health research available specifically relating to LGBT women is from the USA (Dolan, 2005) and examines older women rather than younger women. In the UK a number of large scale research projects have recently reported a lack of awareness of sexual health issues generally among LGBT women (Hunt and Fish, 2008). In Northern Ireland research carried out by Loudes (2003), Quiery (2002/2007) and McAlister and Neill (2009), point to a worrying lack of availability of sexual health information for young LGBT women.

Health environments for young LGBT women

For many young people school serves as an important (and often the only) source of health information (Schubotz et al., 2004). Rolston et al. (2005) discuss how in Northern Ireland sexual health provision in schools is invariably modelled on the biological aspects of sex, rather than any frank discussion of emotions, pleasure or desire. McAlister et al. (2007) identify that the failure to discuss homosexuality at school can lead to feelings of shame which can be detrimental to emotional wellbeing (see also Rolston et al., 2004; Rolston et al., 2005; Mayock et al., 2009). Along with abortion, homosexuality is one of the most avoided topics in Northern Ireland schools,

particularly in Catholic Maintained Schools, leading to the isolation of LGBT young people (Rolston et al., 2004; Schubotz et al., 2004; McNamee et al., 2008). Loudes (2003) state that the religious ethos which often prevails in Northern Ireland schools can lead to invisibility of young LGBT people.

A European report (Takács, 2006) identified fear of discrimination and stigma as barriers to accessing health care settings for young gay women. It also highlighted the fact that lesbian and bisexual women do not tend to access health care services in the same way as their heterosexual counterparts, in the form of regular health checks or attendance for screening procedures. This has been widely reported in research from the USA (Diamant et al., 2000; Dolan, 2005). There is a substantial body of evidence to support the claim that many LGBT women worldwide have experienced negative reactions from health care providers (McNair, 2003; Henderson et al., 2002; Mayer et al., 2008). A recent Irish report states that many LGBT women have faced homophobia when accessing mainstream healthcare services (Mayock et al., 2009), while Loudes (2003) reports young LGBT people in Northern Ireland as having had negative experiences also with their General Practitioner (GP).

Safe spaces and assurances of confidentiality have been identified by Garofalo and Bush (2008) as critically important in any health care or health promotion for young LGBT people. Loudes (2003) highlighted that in Northern Ireland young LGBT people are often afraid to disclose sexual orientation to health practitioners due to fears of breach of confidentiality. Many young LGBT women may not be 'out' to their immediate family and therefore are reluctant to reveal their sexual orientation to health care professionals, particularly in rural areas where the young person's family is known by the practitioner (Mayock et al., 2009). From the literature, *assurances* of confidentiality appear to be important and may need to be stressed with LGBT young people; this is recommended by Garofalo and Bush (2008).

Potential barriers to accessing services

McNair (2003) and Mayock et al. (2009) state that the assumption of heterosexuality can be enough to silence a young gay female into non-disclosure of sexual orientation to any health care provider. Westersta et al. (2002) also cite this heterosexism as contributing to the invisibility of LGBT women within health care services. A recurring issue in research relating to young LGBT women and their interactions with health care environments is the visibility or invisibility of issues relating to them in the physical environment (for example the waiting area). Visibility of literature relating to non-heterosexual relationships has been reported to put young LGBT women at ease when they access a service and posters can also help in this regard (Dootson, 2000). If healthcare environments were more conducive to gay identities this could lead to improved self esteem and thus improved health outcomes (Rosario et al., 2006).

A lack of dedicated services specifically for young LGBT women in the health service in Northern Ireland has been recognised by Loudes (2003) and Quiery (2007). It is important therefore to investigate whether young LGBT women themselves perceive that there are gaps and to ascertain what they would like to see implemented. This information can inform health promotion and youth work for young LGBT women and lead to a deeper understanding of how future programmes, initiatives or services should be structured.

Methods

Since limited research exists on the subject of young LGBT women's perceptions and experiences of health services, particularly in Northern Ireland, the approach was exploratory. Semi-structured interviews were utilised as the data collection method. As young women were the focus of the research and as it was about their perceptions and experiences, the approach taken was one of feminist research, which recognises women's stories as legitimate sources of knowledge (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). The approach to interviewing was collaborative, emphasising that the young women themselves were the primary experts in terms of their knowledge and perceptions of healthcare services.

Generating and accessing a sample

Estimates in relation to the size of LGBT community in Northern Ireland vary. The Northern Ireland Young Life and Times Survey (Young Life and Times, 2005) reported that 8.8% of the young people surveyed indicated they had been attracted to someone of the same sex. The Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative estimates that there are 75,000 lesbian and bisexual girls and women in Northern Ireland (Quiery, 2007). This is based on the OFMDFM figure (OFMDFM, 2004) of 10% of the population being LGBT. Keenan (2009) estimates that there are approximately 12,650 lesbian and bisexual women in Northern Ireland aged between 16 and 25 years. The age range of 18 to 25 was chosen for this research because this age group is most commonly associated with 'coming out' for young LGBT people (Floyd and Bakeman, 2006; YouthNet, 2003; Quiery, 2007).

The difficulties in accessing this group of young women and gaining a sample cannot be overstated. Many youth groups were contacted in the voluntary sector in an attempt to gain a pool of young women who might potentially be able to take part in the research. In practice this did not come to fruition. An issue raised by leaders of LGBT-specific groups was that young people in their groups had been heavily consulted of late for other research (consultations unrelated to healthcare), and that they were reluctant to take part as they had not received feedback or finished reports from previous research. Funding issues represented a further barrier to accessing a sample as some youth groups had folded or become inactive. Even when young women were accessed, more often than not they did not wish to participate.

Nine young women were eventually recruited using a sampling method called chain-referral or 'snowball sampling'. This method used several key contacts made through previous work colleagues to access three young gay women who then referred the researcher onto their friends and contacts who were willing to participate. A drawback of this sampling method was the homogeneity of participants it yielded in terms of ethnicity, religion, background, class and educational attainment. This problem has been identified by Meyer and Wilson (2009) and Malterud et al. (2009) when sampling lesbian, gay or bisexual populations particularly using chain referral. Because it was based on networks of friends and peers in the Northern Ireland context and it began with a Catholic respondent, the sample was almost completely Catholic (n=8), illustrating how groups of young people in Northern Ireland are still polarised between the two main faiths. This may be somewhat surprising in the LGBT context as there is some evidence that young gay people have more diverse contacts than young people

who are not LGBT (Leach, 2009), although other research confirms that in Northern Ireland sectarian divisions still remain in terms of contact and mixing, even socially, irrespective of sexual orientation (Hughes et al., 2007; McAlister et al., 2009).

Data collection

The areas of interest during the semi-structured interviews were young women's perceptions and experiences of health services including sexual health services, mental health services and sources of health information. Interviews were held at a time and location convenient to the young women and were recorded with their consent. Thematic analysis was applied using Newell and Burnard's (2006) framework. This coding framework suited the exploratory nature of the study; it also enabled the diverse answers to be coded and analysed in a structured way. It is a seven stage framework, which begins immediately after data collection by drafting up fieldnotes and then producing verbatim transcripts. Following this each transcript was read, re-read and notes made on the margins based on general themes becoming evident. Subsequently, open coding was carried out on all the themes emerging; the themes were then reduced if necessary by merging those which were similar. A shortened list of category codes was then produced. The codes were verified by an independent second party to enhance credibility and trustworthiness of findings, as recommended by Granheim and Lundman (2004).

While every effort was made to represent a variety of young women it is recognised that the findings are not generalisable to the lesbian population as a whole. Nevertheless, by using in-depth interviews it is hoped that this research will contribute to a greater understanding of young lesbian women's experiences of their interactions with health-related services in Northern Ireland. In-depth interviews are commonly used to explore perceptions of health care services including issues relating to communication and how to make care more 'patient centred' (Chapple and Rogers, 1998; Evans, 2002).

Profile of participants

All of the young women were white, able-bodied and did not show any presenting signs of physical disability. At the time of interview the young women were living in a variety of locations across Northern Ireland: although they all lived in urban areas at time of interview, only four young women were originally from cities, the remainder were from smaller towns and villages but no longer lived there. Their ages ranged from nineteen up to twenty five years, with the mean age being twenty two. At the time of interview four were in full-time employment, two were at university and working part-time, one was in full-time vocational training and one in part time vocational training and not in employment. One young woman was not in employment, education or training (NEET) at the time of interview. With regard to educational background, all of the young women had completed second level education, four had completed third level education (university, two in progress), and eight had attended Roman Catholic Maintained schools, while one attended an integrated school. With regard to involvement in youth provision, three of the nine young women interviewed had been involved in LGBT specific youth work provision, and another had attended many courses in a women's centre for a number of years. One had been involved in non-specific youth provision for many years and the remainder had not been involved in

any youth provision. Eight young women identified as either gay or lesbian, while one identified as bisexual and none identified as transgendered.

Many of the young women in the study were 'out', confident about their sexuality, articulate, educated to university level and involved in youth work activities. This may have had an impact on the young women's perspectives and outlook on services they had received, for example an increased self awareness or increased awareness of their rights as a service user. However, it also serves to illustrate some of the difficulties accessing populations with low visibility for research purposes.

Results

Perceived health Issues for the young women

Many of the young women spoke about specific health issues which were prevalent either for themselves or their peers. When asked specifically about health issues affecting young women who identify as LGB the issues raised were mainly in relation to mental health. The majority for example felt that depression and stress were more common among young gay women than among their heterosexual peers. A typical response was '*em I think there'd be ... easier for like a gay woman to get depressed*' (Megan, 19). The impact of stress on physical health was also apparent, particularly during the stage of 'coming out' to friends and family. Katie (19) described some of the stress she was under at that time:

... around the time that I came out I was also doin' my exams in school..it was really really stressful ... see it was my parents I was really worried about ... it did put a lot of stress on me like an' I noticed like my appetite an' stuff went down ... // like I lost a lot of weight ... cause the stress of the exams an' stuff just made it really really hard on top of everything ...

'Coming out' therefore appears to have exacerbated stress that young people already experience at this age, and can be illustrated in both Katie's and Megan's narrative, where they use terms such as 'burden', 'hard', 'pressure' and 'triggers' indicating frustration or mounting anxiety. Many of the young women attributed stress or anxiety to their having to come to terms with their sexual orientation and /or negative reactions of others finding out.

Another related health issue raised by several of the young women was self harm. Alexandra (22) explained:

they [gay women] just have to deal with a lot more stuff ye know comin' out and just the general prejudice an' all the rest of it ... // ... you do turn to things like that ye know to make the pain inside go away ye know you do try to ... // ... I know a lot of people that used to do it [self-harm] when they were younger and eh and ye know they almost they turned out to be bisexual or gay or ...

Most of the young women thought that alcohol is a large part of the gay social 'scene' and described it as being important and necessary to gay identity, 'fitting in' and personal confidence. They clearly saw a relationship between alcohol/drug use and mental 'feelgood', a feeling of self-confidence, and they were aware of how the resultant loss of inhibitions impacted on physical and sexual health. Some directly

attributed to the use of alcohol or drugs a short-term release from poor emotional health and well-being.

School as a source of health education

Overall there appeared to be a perceived lack of health information and provision in schools as recalled by the young women in relation to mental health, sexual health and emotional wellbeing. Health information was sparse and none of the young women recalled seeing any literature or promotional material which was not targeted towards heterosexual young people. Among the most frequently used phrases used when describing the sex education they received were 'shit' or 'crap'. The impact of the religious ethos on a school's teaching particularly in relation to sexual health is illustrated by Phoebe (20) as she described 'Education for Love', the programme of sex education that is still used in some Catholic schools:

... they're very em tame em language like em gettin married before you have sex, um, no contraception all this here em basically just what the religion is they would teach ...

Most of the young women described the heterocentric focus of sex education in their schools, noting how the issue of homosexuality or same sex relationships was ignored and effectively silenced. Katie (19) also recalled how any discussion around relationships or sexuality in her school was '*always boy girl, man wife*' and Ellie (24) stated that relationships which were not heterosexual were '*not even talked about or considered*', or '*brushed under the carpet kinda thing*' (Megan, 19). Phoebe (20) described an instance in which a teacher in her school was much more forthright in silencing the issue, by actively condemning homosexuality:

the teacher at the time said 'oh yeah homosexuals go to hell' and I had just came out to my friends that week and my friends started lookin' at me ... // ... eh, so, so that kinda thing, so that kinda scared me ...

The examples given of how issues relating to homosexuality were 'hushed' or 'brushed under the carpet' illustrate that the young women experienced degrees of silencing ranging from disregarding or ignoring homosexuality completely through to outright condemnation. Phoebe's example of a teacher proclaiming that homosexuals 'go to hell' is a more explicit, damaging and demeaning example of silencing the issue and provoking shame. The findings of this research concur with Rolston et al. (2004) who describe what they call a 'pervasive conservatism' in the Northern Ireland school system, particularly in relation to 'sexual morality'. Recent work by McAlevey and McCrystal (2007) describes school-based health education in Northern Ireland as being largely driven by a religious or moralistic paradigm. However, other research points to a lack of awareness among teachers on issues relating to sexuality teaching and more generally in health promotion. Jourdan et al. (2008) state that many teachers are not aware of their role in health promotion and that their role is poorly defined with minimal training.

Sources of support at school

When discussing the provision of information and support relating to mental and emotional health at school, the young women tended to focus on school counsellors. The perceived attitude of school counsellors towards homosexuality also impacted

upon the young women's willingness to approach them. Phoebe (20) described one of her teachers who was also a school guidance counsellor in the following way: *'I wouldn't a went to the teacher no, the teacher was pretty old fashioned ... // ... I knew that he [the counsellor] ... just woulda been just against it [her being gay]'*. Generally, the school ethos, through silencing discussions of sexual orientation, and on some occasions not challenging homophobic bullying, had inculcated in the young women a feeling that school was simply not the place to discuss, or even reveal, their sexual orientation. Alexandra (22) for example recalled her experiences of bullying in school and how nothing was done by her teachers to alleviate her distress:

*the school **knew** it was goin' on ... that I was getting **harassed** by people but ... they didn't do anything about it they didn't try and eh sort it out or ye know tell these people to back off or ye know **it's natural it's not like she's doin anything wrong ye know** [bold denotes speaker's emphasis]*

The young women had all left school from three to seven years ago and Ruby (25) expressed a faint hope that things may be different now: *'then again I left school seven years ago so things might be different now but I doubt it'*. Almost all of the young women recalled having at least one teacher whom they could confide in or felt comfortable talking to if they had problems. While this was obviously of value to the young women, it appeared to be very much based on the individual teacher. Also, while individual teachers can be supportive, the larger school structure and ethos can effectively undermine such support due to the pervasiveness of heterosexism and at times outright homophobia, where it exists.

Invisibility of young LGBT women within services

A common issue identified by the young women was the lack of health services that addressed their specific needs, in both urban and rural areas. Many noted that services targeted at the gay population generally were primarily male-focussed. Megan (19) spoke of her perceptions of a sexual health clinic:

The only place I have seen was for gay men it wasn't anything about lesbians in it I think it was about like same-sex relationships like about Aids and like HIV an' everything it wasn't like there was nothin' about like lesbians.

The perceived lack of services appeared to be exacerbated by the relatively more visible presence of gay men, and many identified specific health services for gay men. The language used by the respondents in their description of services (*'you have to go searching', 'there's nothin'*) points to an overall lack of specific provision for young gay women.

In terms of health education and information specifically targeting young lesbian or bisexual women the general perception was that this was greatly lacking in much the same way that health service provision was. Regarding sexual health information Alexandra (22) illustrated some of the confusion that she felt around issues surrounding sexual health:

there's no information about any of these and if there is you know it's all directed towards straight people and how straight people can prevent it and ye know gay men too with the whole condom thing but then it brings it back to the subject topic about how do women prevent it.

Health information searching involved a complex navigation of sources and hunting rather than it being readily available to the young women. Active seeking of information was also more likely to risk outing themselves. Again, the volume of literature and visibility of Aids and HIV in relation to gay men in health campaigns was recognised by the young women. This is significant; since the dearth of information relating to lesbian women's sexual health could perpetuate the myth of 'lesbian immunity' which is stressed by Dolan (2005).

Many of the respondents also discussed the lack of visibility of the health concerns of young lesbian women in mainstream healthcare environments such as GP's surgeries or GUM clinics. Phoebe's comments provide an example:

*... normally if you went into like your doctor's surgery you didn't see any posters ... //
... there's no direct eh posters eh directed at our audience there's nothing like.*

Most suggested that the environment of mainstream health services could be made more conducive to young gay women and more 'gay friendly'. Increasing visibility in the form of posters in the waiting area or notices displaying acceptance of same-sex relationships and also the use of inclusive language by staff may give young women 'clues' to a positive acceptance of their sexual orientation and alleviate the stress or fear of homophobia or discrimination in the care they receive.

Perceptions of practitioners

All of the young women said that if they had a health issue they would first approach their GP. The relationship with *their* GP appeared to be crucial to their perceptions of doctors generally; many said they liked a doctor because they were 'dead on'. The gender of the GP, did, however appear to play a role in how comfortable the young women felt. Phoebe (20) originally had a male GP but asked to be changed to a female practitioner to feel 'more comfortable'. Such a change was not always a possibility, as illustrated by Emily (25):

... my family GP is a man for a start an' ye know there's no em option to say ask for a female doctor, ye know that's just never an option ...

Disclosure of sexual orientation to a GP more often than not resulted from having to answer questions related to their assumed heterosexual orientation. Ellie's (25) example illustrates this point:

*... they (doctors) made me give like a urine sample for a you know pregnancy test and I said look I'm not pregnant an' they made me take it anyway and I was **look I'm not pregnant** and they said 'how do you know you've said you're sexually active? how do you know?' I said 'well my partner's a girl' an' stuff an' they made me do it anyway ...*

Most of the young women thought that the onus was on the doctor to obtain information about sexual orientation from the young woman, rather than the other way around. Some suggested a doctor should ask them their sexual orientation; others suggested that the use of more neutral language by practitioners (e.g. 'partner' instead of 'boyfriend') would present less of a hurdle for them to 'come out'. Respondents appeared to be less likely to reveal their sexual orientation to a doctor when the doctor

knew the family and many of the young women described a wariness of disclosing sexual orientation when they were younger, when many had lived in smaller communities. Fear of confidentiality being breached was a big issue. Comments such as *'everybody knew everybody else's business'* (Ellie, 25), *'oh god ye wouldn't tell your doctor for fear he would tell your ma'* (Emily, 25) *'you'd be the talk of the town'* (Ruby, 25) *'I'd be very wary'* (Isabella, 21) were common. Though none of the young women actually recounted experiences of confidentiality breaches, it was clear that this posed a significant barrier to their disclosure of sexual orientation, particularly when they were younger. There was a general perception that in larger cities there was increased confidentiality within health services, in part due to anonymity as Ellie (25) described:

... people who are brought up in the rural communities feel a lot more comfortable comin into the city to use services because like they don't know anybody.

Under the right circumstances (preferably a female GP, welcoming environment, assurances of confidentiality, trust and a good relationship) some of the young women said they would disclose their sexual orientation.

Examples of good practice

Many of the young women had had positive experiences where they had discovered networks and peers who were sources of support. Jessica (25) had attended courses and had received counselling in a women's centre:

... I done counselling there and it was great it really was, and there was life coaching in there as well so classes in that on Thursdays... //...Yeah it was great // I only started chattin' when I was at, when I was at the women's centre for a while.

Clearly Jessica's story reveals the importance of having time to create a bond and trust with the workers in order to feel comfortable enough to reveal herself and open up to others. Three of the young women interviewed had been part of a youth group which was specifically for young women who identify as other than heterosexual. Each of these young women spoke fondly and positively about the youth group as somewhere where they 'could be themselves', 'feel comfortable' and about how it was a 'safe space'. Ellie (25) described how she felt 'lucky' to have been part of the group and would recommend it to other young women. Phoebe's positive recollections of attending the youth group largely centred on her *'bein in a group of people the same as you'* and *'not judged in any kinda way'*. More generally though, most of the positive examples of activities, programmes or providers given by the young women contained an element of their sexuality being identified and accepted, places where they could feel safe.

Discussion

The young women's discussions around drug and alcohol use illustrate difficulties they had in expressing their sexual identity openly. Clearly 'coming out' to friends, family and to themselves was a period of increased stress and anxiety. At this point many of the young women were coming to terms with a sexual identity which was different from the assumed heterosexuality. Carving out a sense of self within a possibly hostile environment had lead some of the young women to feel 'down' or 'depressed'. This was identified by the young women themselves as a trigger for alcohol or drug use. The

concept of 'fitting in' was also important. The gay 'scene' represented a space where they could be themselves, but within that there is the need to 'fit in' by possibly conforming to a different norm, one which may include the use of excessive alcohol or taking drugs. The reasons for using drugs or alcohol were cited mainly as a release of pressure, acceptance and to increase confidence. This is corroborated by other research (YouthNet, 2003; Sarma, 2007). There are tensions evident between – on the one hand – *fitting in* to mainstream society, a desire for open recognition and acknowledgement of their sexual orientation and – on the other – an acknowledgement of *difference* within service provision and by health care providers.

The Department of Education in Northern Ireland issued all primary and post-primary schools with 'Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Guidelines' in August 2001 (Department of Education Northern Ireland, 2001), stating that RSE should be taught 'within the school's moral framework'. This leaves much room for interpretation and a lack of consistency across schools could result. The majority of the young women in this research had attended Catholic Maintained Schools, and there did appear to be a lack of consistency in what sex education they received. The influence of the 'moral framework' was often criticised by the young women themselves, as illustrated by their comments that the sex education they received was 'shit' or 'crap'. Rolston et al. (2004, 2005) report that ignoring and silencing of issues relating to homosexuality is most pronounced in the Roman Catholic Maintained Sector and that teachers were actually instructed to leave these issues out of sex education teaching. The absence of structured sexual health education covering all aspects of sexuality, including sexual orientation, appeared to increase the invisibility that the young women in this research already felt.

Among the young women interviewed, there was a general sense of holding back their sexual orientation from practitioners unless it was absolutely necessary to divulge. There was an apparent gap to be bridged between themselves and the practitioner in raising the subject of their sexual orientation. There was also a feeling that the health care provider should facilitate this 'coming out', wishing the doctor would 'just ask' rather than the young women themselves having to broach the subject of their sexual orientation; this was also found by Eliason and Schope (2001). The issue of the right to privacy and the need for tailored health care is complex: on the one hand one young woman in this study said it was 'not the doctor's business' while another young woman thought it was good for a doctor to know 'sexual preferences'. Recent research carried out in Northern Ireland by Thompson et al. (2008) report the findings from a study of GPs and practice nurses that the majority were likely to avoid LGBT issues altogether unless specifically asked. Hinchliff et al. (2005) also found that many GPs would feel uncomfortable discussing issues relating to homosexuality with patients. It is clear there is a substantial communication gap to be bridged. Malley and Tasker (2007) describe this conundrum as a 'Catch-22', and recognise that there is increasing recognition that sexual identity should be addressed by practitioners in the way that other variables are dealt with such as age, culture, family status or dis/ability.

Some common themes emerged through analysis of the young women's perceptions of existing services, their examples of good practice where they exist and the gaps in provision they identified. Central to their positive perceptions of health services was the concept of 'being themselves'. Many of them recounted positive experiences and a

commonality among them was the venue, person or family member allowing the young women to be themselves without judgement, where their sexual orientation was acknowledged and recognised, a finding that echoes research carried out by Crowley et al. (2007). This meant a physical 'escape' for some in the form of a move to a city that was perceived to be more anonymous, a deliberate strategy of seeking out LGBT specific organisations, or accessing counselling services. Examples of good health outcomes for the young women were generally based on positive emotional wellbeing and avenues of increased social contact rather than physical health outcomes.

Their discussions also alluded to the lack of available social venues apart from bars or nightclubs on the gay 'scene' generally. They expressed the wish that they could socialise, meet other gay young people and form meaningful friendships somewhere that was not on the 'scene', a scene which some of them felt was male dominated and surrounded by alcohol and drug use (see also Valentine and Skelton 2003). Many felt that this would have a positive effect on emotional wellbeing. The young women in this sample who *had* the opportunity of attending specific services or LGBT groups appeared to have had resoundingly positive perceptions of the impact of these on their emotional and social health. Central to recollections of positive spare-time activities was the acceptance of their non-heterosexual identity (see Fish and Anthony, 2005; Crowley et al., 2007; Mayock et al., 2009). By sharing stories and engaging in peer support networks, these young women could identify the issues that were important to them.

Trust and assurances of confidentiality were important for the young women in this research. There was a particular issue around the women's recollections of being younger and fearing breaches of confidentiality with their family doctor. This was most pronounced for those from rural areas. Loudes (2003) also recognised that fears around GP confidentiality were extremely prevalent amongst young lesbian and gay people. Similarly, the fear of being identifiable as gay by approaching an LGBT society stall for fear of being 'outed' to peers or friends is one which has implications for both the location of health services which are targeting young gay women and also for the way in which health promotion messages in general are communicated. Future health promotion initiatives for this group may need to pay particular attention to strategies that explicitly assure confidentiality. They must be *perceived* to be confidential so that they are more attractive. The qualities of the person who facilitates the delivery of any health message to young gay women appears to be vital. Certain characteristics such as gender, perceived empathy, understanding, trustworthiness, acceptance of identity other than heterosexuality and the delivery of the message in a non-judgmental way all improved perceptions of the service.

The value of factors protective of their health was also evident among the respondents. Group involvement, friendship and leader support gave the young women involved in specific LGBT youth provision a 'safe space' to grow and learn. Many of the young women described a family member (or the collective family), a teacher or youth worker as being significant in promoting their self-esteem or acting as a 'protector', especially in relation to the school setting. The quality of responsiveness in those providing health messages appeared to be key in the young women's confidence in them. Gilligan (2000) also describes how just one of these supportive relationships can counter the harm of negative relationships. This is illustrated by the experience of Phoebe (20) who, despite having some negative experiences in school, recognised that

having good family and friends around her alleviated the potential stresses arising from negative comments from teachers or peers. This suggests that health promotion is more than simply an exercise of 'information giving'; it is a complex myriad of interpersonal relationships, supports, belonging and resilience. Ellis (2007) found in an investigation of British lesbian identity that the use of informal support systems was extremely important. Srof and Welsor-Friedrich (2006) also state that the combination of families, health care providers and peers can be an important source of engaging marginalised young people in health promoting activities in a positive way.

The research participants recognised the need for greater training for those working with young LGBT women (for example teachers and doctors), particularly in their use of language. Recent UK NHS guidelines have been produced to deliver improved care to LGBT young people (Department of Health 2007a; 2007b). Locally some organisations have published sexual health resources for young lesbians (McAlister and Neill, 2009), while others have published resources for use with young women who identify as other than heterosexual (Neill and McArdle, 2008). A training resource to tackle homophobia for use with school staff and pupils has also been produced (Youthnet, 2009). While these developments are obviously of value, real equality of opportunity cannot be achieved without first addressing the structural reasons for existing discrimination (Casals, 2004). Four of the young women in this study made reference to comments made by Iris Robinson MP in 2008 who had compared homosexuality publicly to paedophilia saying *'there can be no viler act, apart from homosexuality and sodomy, than sexually abusing children'* (Belfast Telegraph, 2008). Non-discriminatory policies are, for the young women in this research project at least, having little direct impact on their perceptions of health care systems or society at large. Policy makers cannot be separated from the policies they introduce. Kitchen and Lysaght (2003) state that much of the legislation relating to sexual diversity in Northern Ireland is weak and does little to change sexual conservatism and institutionalised heterosexism and homophobia, particularly in health care services. In a similar vein, McNamee et al. (2008) and King and Bartlett (2006) state that while legislation can improve the status, visibility and awareness of homosexuality, legislative frameworks do not automatically lead to more favourable attitudes, or changes in structures to increase equality. This also requires an increased level of resources for work to provide awareness training and actively promote equality in the education or health care systems. This general point of course also applies to other marginalised groups such as Travellers, minority ethnic groups and people with physical/learning disabilities.

Conclusion

Many of the young women in this research described a sense of being different while growing up, along with feelings of isolation and difficulty in accessing other gay or bisexual young people particularly in arenas which are off 'scene'. School was not a particularly valuable source of health information or support; it was a place where the issue of homosexuality was silenced to varying degrees. Such silencing ranged from being 'brushed under the carpet' to students being told that homosexuals 'go to hell'.

There is a strong sense that the young women in this research feel invisible; invisible within mainstream health care services (i.e. lack of services), invisible within health care environments and invisible within gay men's health, young people's health and women's health services. This research makes it apparent that young women are

acutely *aware* of this invisibility. It is likely that such invisibility is in part due to much current health policy rhetoric and focus being on 'risk behaviours' such as teenage pregnancy, gay men's condom use and other 'lifestyle' factors. The causes of such invisibility are structural (policy, society), institutional (schools, services) and professional (practitioners, teachers) and the issue requires attention on all three fronts if it is to be addressed satisfactorily.

Issues of confidentiality, trust and disclosure of sexual orientation appear to be complex both for health care practitioners and the young women themselves. Positive recollections of health promoting people or 'spaces' all included the recognition and acceptance of the young women's sexual identity. Finally, the research poses some questions about degrees of exclusion: if these are the perceptions of young gay women who are educated, articulate and reasonably confident, what are the perceptions and experiences of those who do not have these advantages and who may be 'beyond reach' of research such as this? There are implications here for all those who work with young people in minority groups.

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Biographical Note

Duana McArdle has an MSc in Food Biotechnology and recently completed an MSc in Health Promotion at the University of Ulster. She works for the Women's Resource and Development Agency delivering health awareness programmes to community groups in disadvantaged areas working with marginalized women. She also works in a research capacity for the Public Health Agency and has a keen interest in work with women of all ages and backgrounds.

Contact Details

Duana McArdle

Tel: 0044 7835592411

Mobile: 00 353 87 2843315

Email: duanamcardle@yahoo.ie or duanamcardle@gmail.com

Research Digest

The Benefits of Youth Work

Young People's and Youth Workers' Perspectives

Maurice Devlin and Anna Gunning

Introduction

Last June saw the publication of the report *The Purpose and Outcomes of Youth Work*¹. It was the result of a research project commissioned by the 'Interagency Group' of major youth organisations: Catholic Youth Care, City of Dublin Youth Service Board, Foróige, Ógra Chorcaí and Youth Work Ireland. The research was financially supported by the Irish Youth Foundation. It set out to explore the nature, purpose and outcomes of youth work in Ireland today, prompted by a concern that at a time of very significant change in the social, economic and policy contexts, it is more important than ever to articulate the distinctive nature of youth work and what its benefits are not just for young people but for adults, communities and for society as a whole.

It was decided at the outset by the researchers and the Interagency Group that the research objectives could best be achieved by a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, involving semi-structured interviews, focus groups and a questionnaire survey. It was also agreed that the research would be of most use to the broader youth work sector if it engaged in a close examination of projects or groups that were well established and known to have a track record of effective and successful practice, rather than a study of what is necessarily typical or 'representative' of current youth work in Ireland. As a result five case study sites were identified, reflecting the composition of the Interagency Group and also including a range of types of provision and context (community-based project, local youth service, volunteer-led youth group, urban and rural settings). The case study sites were:

- Blanchardstown, County Dublin (Blanchardstown Youth Service, Foróige);
- Ennis, County Clare (Clare Youth Services, Youth Work Ireland);
- Loughlynn, County Roscommon (Loughlynn Foróige Club);
- Rialto, Dublin 8 (St Andrew's Youth Project, CDYSB)
- Ronanstown, County Dublin (Ronanstown Youth Service, CYC).

Within each of the case study sites, and as indicated above, a number of methods were used. Firstly, semi-structured interviews with key informants (managers and/or senior practitioners) were used to contextualise the research and gather background information. Secondly, focus groups were held with youth workers (paid and volunteer) and with young people; in total there were 33 adult focus group participants and 41 young people. Finally, in order to gather more comprehensive data at the level of individual young people and youth workers (demographic information, part-time/full-time/volunteer status

of workers, duration of young people's involvement and perceived benefits, strength of agreement or disagreement with specific attitudes or opinions, and so on) and tentatively explore the relationship between certain variables (for example duration of involvement and perceived benefits) it was decided to conduct a questionnaire survey within each case study site, going beyond the focus group membership.

The case study sites in this research were selected 'purposively' (that is deliberately, because of certain attributes already known to the researchers) rather than on a randomized probability basis. The participants in the focus groups responded to an open invitation to take part, so there was a strong element of self-selection involved; and the distribution and collection of questionnaires took a form which social researchers would call 'convenience sampling'. Existing opportunities and contacts within each site were used to distribute as many questionnaires as possible and people were encouraged to respond, but given the small number of sites the overall number of responses is of necessity quite low (61 adults and 172 young people). For all these reasons it is very important to stress that the findings make no claim to being representative of the Irish youth work sector in general. They do however provide insights into the attitudes and experiences of selected groups of young people and youth workers and certainly suggest lines of enquiry for further research, both qualitative and quantitative.

Literature review

The Interagency Group and the researchers agreed that the research report would take as its starting point the definition in Youth Work Act 2001, according to which youth work is:

A planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is:

- (a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and
- (b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.

This definition was chosen because, apart from its status in law, it had been designed to take into account the views of youth work organisations and interests and was broadly in keeping with the approach to youth work taken in successive policy documents over the previous twenty years (Department of Education, 1980; National Youth Policy Committee, 1984; Government of Ireland 1985, 1995; NYCI, 1994). The definition stresses 'the fundamentally developmental and educational nature of [youth] work; the fact that it rests on the voluntary participation of young people; and the fact that it has been, and is, in the main provided by voluntary organisations' (Department of Education and Science, 2003: 13).

Notably, the definition also stresses both the personal and social aspects of the development that is intended to take place for young people through youth work. It is suggested in the report that, despite many national differences, these two dimensions taken together might provide a common denominator for youth work in Europe. A Council of Europe/European Commission partnership publication comments that:

[Generally] youth work is defined as a domain of 'out-of-school' education and thus linked to non-formal or informal learning ... Most definitions

contain two basic orientations reflecting a *double concern*: to provide favourable (leisure time oriented) experiences (of social, cultural, educational or political nature) in order to strengthen young people's personal development and foster their personal and social autonomy; and at the same time to offer opportunities for the integration and inclusion of young people in adult society by fostering societal integration in general or preventing the exclusion of disadvantaged groups (Lauritzen, 2005; ECKYP 2008).

The literature review of the Purpose and Outcomes research report goes on to highlight a number of other key features of youth work about which there appears to be increasing consensus, including:

- the broad range of *activities and programmes* it encompasses, and the fact that it is not just the activities but the way they are *planned, facilitated and evaluated* that matters;
- the integration of both *non-formal* and *informal* education and learning;
- the importance of underpinning *values and principles* such as: young people's voluntary participation; 'starting where young people are at' but also challenging them to go further; treating people of all ages with respect; recognising and upholding equity, diversity and interdependence; involving and valuing peers, family, community and culture; working in partnership with young people and with other relevant agencies; recognizing the importance of feelings as well as knowledge and skills in human development; empowering young people and giving them a voice; and safeguarding the welfare of young people (based on Lifelong Learning UK, 2008);
- the emphasis on *process* (how things are done as well as what is done), *participation* (young people actively and appropriately involved in all aspects of youth work) and *positive relationships* (among young people and between young people and adults).
- the commitment to a vision of youth work 'which *values diversity*, aims to *eradicate injustice and inequality*, and strives for openness and inclusiveness in all its dealings with young people and adults' (Department of Education and Science, 2003: 15);
- the provision of opportunities for promoting and *enhancing intergenerational solidarity* and building 'social capital' (resources of trust, reciprocity, mutual regard and support) throughout society as a whole.

The remainder of the *Purpose and Outcomes* report presents the findings of the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires with youth workers and young people. A selection of the findings will be given below.

Youth workers' perspectives

The purpose of youth work

While the precise words used varied, there was virtual unanimity within the focus groups that the key purpose of youth work is primarily educational and developmental. It might be suggested that the 'dominant discourse' of youth workers, when they are asked spontaneously to identify the purpose of their work, is personal development within a community context. This worker's view was not untypical:

One thing I hold dear is the sense of our mission or our purpose. That to me is the point I bring most people back to about what we're doing, what we're trying to achieve ...

enabling young people to develop themselves and contribute to the development of their communities.

The 'universal' benefits of youth work

The prevailing view was that youth work should be available (and can be beneficial) to all young people regardless of socio-economic status, although there was also a recognition that funding is currently not adequate to reach out to all young people who wish to participate. One worker commented:

And then there's pressure on us to go into the other direction in the other part of [the community], where there is a huge youth population, but it's not a disadvantaged area. Sometimes I think that's a problem for youth work, it's become ghettoised, it's become seen as a response to [the] disadvantaged.

Relationships

The findings suggest that youth work rests on the simultaneous operation of multiple different types and levels of relationships. One is the relationship of the young people to the adult workers, who may be the only adults outside their own families (or unfortunately in a small number of cases even including their own families) with whom they consistently engage in constructive and positive interaction. Youth work also facilitates the development of positive relationships between young people themselves, within the peer group or across different age groups, where the model of the youth worker-young person relationship can act as an example. A further dimension is the way in which young people have the opportunity to observe positive relationships *between adults* or within adult groups, and – most importantly – adults have the opportunity to have positive experiences of young people. This can have a very important knock-on effect on local intergenerational relationships and community spirit – significant elements of social capital as mentioned earlier. One worker summed up the multiplicity of the relationships at play as follows.

They get important social skills developed inside the youth club because they are with their own age group, they are with the members, the senior members, the leaders, they are kind of speaking to all different age groups, they are speaking to their own age, younger age[s], their peers, older groups, so there is more confidence there.

Participation and empowerment

It is an explicit part of youth work's concern as described by these workers to facilitate the active engagement and participation of young people, to promote their empowerment and the development of a sense of working together as partners. On a number of occasions the youth workers (like the young people) drew comparisons between the formal educational setting and the youth work context. One volunteer worker who was also a teacher made the following point.

The big difference between the teacher relationship and the leader relationship is the leader is encouraging a member to take control, they want them to take control ... of the situation and handle the situation and they are just there to support them, to just point out something that is going on that maybe they don't see. You were asking

about what they've got from it ... For me, observing members, I would say the one big thing I see and you can actually see it happening as the year goes on, the way they can speak ...

Positive attitudes towards young people

Many workers stressed the importance of taking a positive view of young people and their potential and noted that this was in contrast to how young people are frequently perceived and portrayed elsewhere.

I suppose the underpinning [value] is the passion for young people and to see young people doing well, I think that is common across the youth service. I suppose the approach in how you treat people, probably, I would have to say there is a Christian approach here, I won't say a Catholic approach but there is definitely a Christian approach here ... I suppose you are looking at young people and you want the best for them.

Youth work takes time

Respondents frequently stressed that for youth work to be successful, sufficient time has to be allowed for relationships to develop and for growth and development to take place.

... in my experience I get a lot of particularly vulnerable young people, they come in and they have very little self-confidence, they have very little attention span, very little want or need, they think, to learn. So it takes a lot of time to actually build them up to the stage where they are actually achieving things and recognising their achievements. Once you see them actually doing that and once you see their faces, when something clicks and they realise, God, I've done this myself, I never thought I could do this, it's just that glimmer.

There were numerous references in the focus groups to the need for patience and the importance of recognising that while there are often valuable outcomes for young people in the short term, more profound benefits can often take years to emerge.

I mean [it's been] four and five years and some of them now are coming through as leaders, when you really feel a huge shift, a huge change, really measurable change, but that's over a period of time of them buying in as children. It's over a long time, there are a lot of highs, a lot of lows as well within that and they've worked with different youth workers and very strong relationships with the youth project ...

Positive outcomes

The focus group participants were asked to identify examples of positive outcomes of youth work, drawing on their own direct experience. Among the main themes emerging were the following.

- Positive *feelings* (a group of workers spoke of a young man with low self-esteem who was rarely given the chance to excel being 'cock of the walk' when they deliberately created the opportunity for him to display his angling skills to other young people).

- Positive *experiences* (a worker remarked of a community event at which the group had given an arts performance: ‘the smiles on the young people’s faces ... it’s great’).
- Positive *behaviour* (one young man who was training to be a leader was able to look back and think about his own negative behaviour and relate that to how he would go about working with young people himself).
- Positive *influences* and social *integration* (‘We have a really good mix of youngsters on a lot of the projects. Which I think has real benefits for [all of them]’).
- *Practical skills* (‘I’ve known ex-members who are involved in societies in college who were amazed at how lacking in skills their peers were when it came to organising’).
- *Qualifications* (in one project young people who were alienated from the school system – in some cases actually expelled – were being given the chance to study for formal state examinations in the centre itself and there were some notable success stories).
- *Jobs* (career opportunities have been improved through young people’s enhanced knowledge, skills and confidence: ‘We’ll have our few doctors and solicitors very shortly [who were members of the project] ... We have our first teacher ever in the area’).
- Enhanced *family life* (‘Whatever experience they have on one of the projects, they go home and ... can influence the people who are surrounding them, a chain reaction that we can never put numbers on or put in a report at the end of the year’).
- A better *sense of community* (‘... the centre is twenty four years in the community ... I know it’s a youth service, but it is also community based in that you have parents and grannies and everyone coming in ... They would come in with lost cats or anything ...’).
- Improving *local conditions and services* (‘Everything which has been set up since [twenty years ago], the youth project has been instrumental [in it]. Whether that was the the youth initiative, the information centre, the family centre...’).

Rewards and challenges

In the questionnaire survey youth workers were asked in an open-ended question what they find rewarding and challenging about their work (they could identify more than one thing). Figures 1 and 2 show the results broken down by gender. With regard to rewards, it is clear that young people’s achievements are experienced as by far the most rewarding aspect for these workers: almost two thirds of those surveyed identified this aspect, with significant proportions also mentioning relationships, young people’s enjoyment and the appreciation shown by young people to workers. There is however a somewhat different pattern for men and women: young people’s achievements rank even higher among men, being mentioned by four out of five male respondents, while relationships are mentioned by more than five times as many women as men.

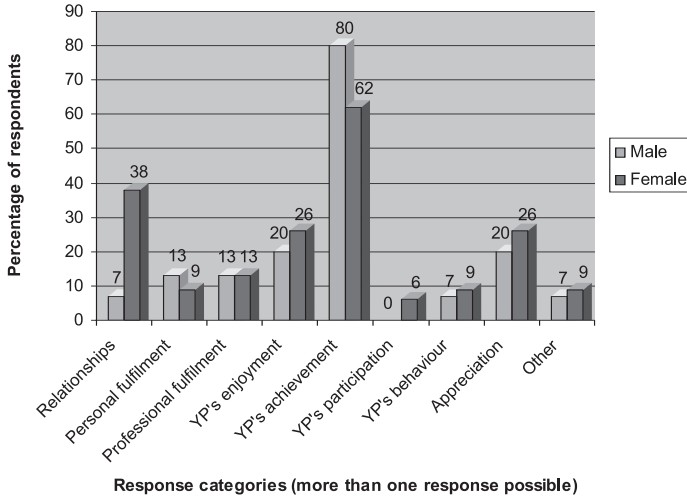


Figure 1: Rewards by gender

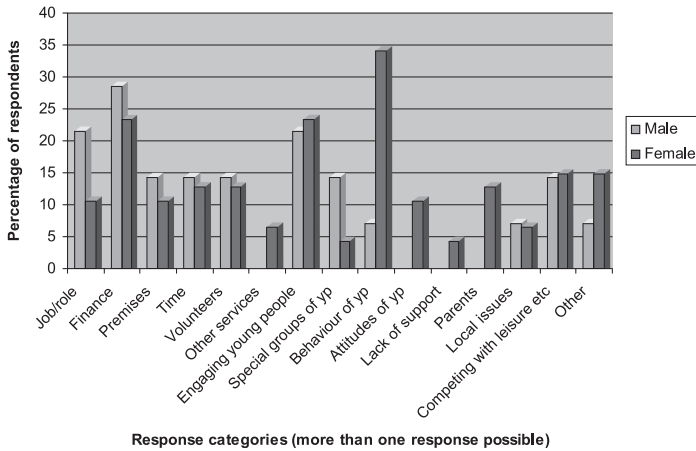


Figure 2: Challenges/difficulties by gender

Regarding challenges, behavioural aspects, funding/finances and engaging young people are significantly more commonly mentioned than any other dimensions. Once again there is a difference by gender, with five times as many women as men identifying young people’s behaviour as challenging, and slightly more men than women identifying funding/finances.

The distinctive nature of youth work

When the youth workers were asked in the questionnaire survey what makes youth work distinctive (again in an open-ended question with the option to give more than one answer), the five most commonly identified aspects, in order of frequency, were:

- Providing a *voice* and a *role* for young people (36.5%).
- The youth work *process* (31.7%).
- Young people’s *voluntary involvement* (30.2%).
- Youth work is *needs-based* (28.6%).
- The youth work *relationship* (22.2%).

Once again there were some interesting differences by gender (see Figure 3). Firstly, women identified a broader range of features than men. Secondly, they ranked all of the top five aspects (above) higher than men did, notably so in the case of the voice of young people and the importance of relationships (the figure being exactly double in each case: 40%/20% and 26%/13%). Thirdly, the men in this small survey are a lot more likely to identify the nature of the activities in youth work as something which makes it distinctive (27% as opposed to 15%).

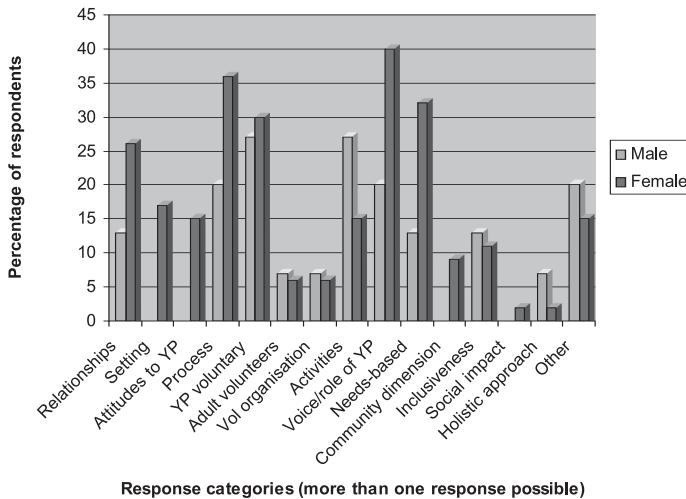


Figure 3: Distinctive nature of youth work by gender

Taken together, the findings in this small scale study relating to rewards and challenges and to the distinctive features of youth work raise the issue of whether in some respects quite traditional gender differences continue to be reflected in men’s and women’s perspectives on and experiences of youth work. This could usefully be explored through further research.

Young People's Perspectives

When asked what they most enjoyed about attending the youth group, by far the most common response among the young people related to socialising (mentioned by 64% in total, 70% of young women and 58% of young men), followed by reference to the particular activities or programmes on offer (mentioned just over one third of both groups). The voluntary nature of their participation was regarded as very important.

Anna What is it that is different that happens here in the youth service than if you went to just an art group?

Val Like in school, you have to do it. It's voluntary participation if you want to do it in the youth project, they would encourage you to do it, but it's up to yourself whether you actually want to do it or not.

Anna What keeps you coming back?

Val You have fun and you get the choice whether you want to do it or not. Obviously if you want to do it, you will come back to do it.

The fact that even though youth work is voluntary the youth workers actively encourage participation was highlighted a number of times.

Maurice Does it make a difference that you can choose to be there or not ... how does that make a difference?

Una I don't feel you have to go, but in the youth club if you don't want to go they'll ring you and say are you coming but if you don't come they're not going to give out to you. If you have something else to do, they're not going to mind whereas in school you'd be in trouble and they'd be ringing your ma and saying were you coming. It's more of a choice in the centre, it's more relaxed.

Like the youth workers, the young people were asked to identify positive outcomes and benefits from youth work. The main findings are summarised below.

Friends

In keeping with the importance attached to being able to socialize in an enjoyable atmosphere, friends were frequently the first benefit mentioned, as in the case of the following two young people.

Friends, I wouldn't have met any of these, if I wasn't here. We all met at the bands night. We met around here.

I have a friend who moved down from Dublin a year or so ago and he didn't really know anyone, so I brought him here one day and it's great here because the atmosphere here is like the first day, whenever I walked in it was, hey what's up and the first day he came in, ten minutes later he was having a laugh with everyone. So he was up by twenty friends that day anyway.

New activities and opportunities

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they had taken part in activities in their project or group which they had not taken part in before or would not have been able to take part in otherwise. Well over two thirds of the respondents (69.2%) answered that they had. When those who responded positively were then asked what types of activity youth work opened up to them, 'recreational programmes' was the most common category, followed by 'outings/trips', 'new hobbies', 'new skills' and a broad category of 'educational programmes' (as with most of the other questions in the questionnaire, the question was open-ended and these categories are based on the researchers' classification of the responses).

Generally speaking – and not surprisingly perhaps – the longer young people in this survey have been involved in youth work the more likely it is that they have experienced new activities or opportunities. This is shown clearly in Figure 4, where just over half of the young people involved for less than three months gave a positive response, whereas among young people involved for three years or more the figure is 83%.

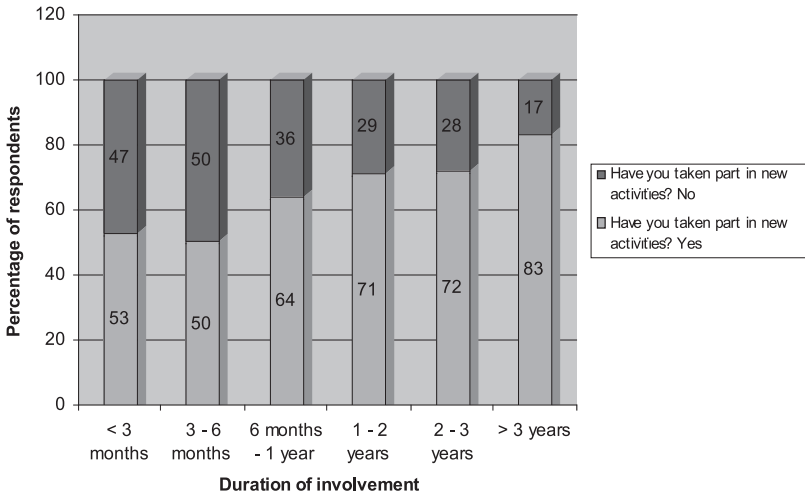


Figure 4: New activities/opportunities by duration of involvement

Informal and non-formal learning

The young people appeared to be very aware that both 'non-formal' and 'informal learning' take place in youth work, even though they did not use these terms.

Carol Yeah, you don't even know its happening, it's just, you know we learned how to cook and we didn't realise it, I just remembered how to do it and rowing and orienteering and aerobics, and all about the environment, they teach like how important [it is] when all the trees and everything are getting cut down, they teach you that's bad and they tell you why it's bad and all.

Anna But you could learn that in school too. What's different about how you learn it here?

Carol It's more relaxed. In school you have to learn it because you'll be tested on it and if you don't know it you're in trouble but in this place they're not going to give out to you.

Ben It's more enjoyable that way.

Formal education

For some young people, their experience of formal education was also a more positive one because of their involvement in youth work. In one case a young man described how a youth worker had quickly discovered he was having difficulty with school and took steps to support him.

I came in just for a day and he asked was I in school, I said no, I was kicked out I think I was, and I didn't go for six months and then Peter just got me into school and then he got me into a load of clubs ...

A young woman commented that 'they [the youth workers] help you a lot. They got [her friend] Patrick back into school, they got me a better course in college'. It has also already been mentioned in the section on youth workers' views that there are now cases where youth work projects and premises may actually go so far as being the direct providers or facilitators of formal educational programmes.

Anna So to sum up, what would you think is the biggest thing you got from being a member here? ...

Colette I'm doing me Leaving Cert here as well, so I wouldn't have got that. I'd have left it. I'm doing it with the project now

Von Yeah, things like the FETAC and that like, I wouldn't have done anything like that, only for the youth project. Wouldn't have went to America.

Advice and information

The young people also drew attention to youth work's role in providing them with important advice and information, often in relatively informal ways. As one young woman said, 'they have loads of leaflets on the table and when you're just sitting there you see them so you read them and you learn a lot of stuff'. A young man had no hesitation when asked what he could talk to youth workers about so as to gain information or support: 'Drugs, alcohol, sexual health. Responsibilities, relationships, loads'.

Positive changes

As shown above, the adult workers described what they perceived as positive changes in young people as a result of participating in youth work. The young people themselves tended to agree. In the questionnaire survey the young people were asked whether they could 'see any changes' in themselves 'as a result of being involved' in youth work. Overall, more than two thirds of the respondents (67.2%) said that they could, and generally speaking it appears that after a relatively short period of involvement the young people in this survey are likely to report that they can see changes. Among those

involved for three months or less, 40% said they could see a change, whereas among those involved for more than three years the figure is almost double that, at 77% (although the pattern is not clear cut - see the full report for details).

It is also instructive to explore the relationship between the type of change perceived and the duration of the young person's involvement in youth work. Figure 5 summarises the pattern. It is notable that the longer the young people in this survey have been involved, the less likely they are to mention greater sociability as a change they see in themselves, and the *more* likely they are to highlight positive personal development. The latter category replaces the former in frequency of mention as the duration of involvement increases. Of course the questionnaire can only gauge the *perceptions* of respondents rather than actual changes over time, and it does not in any case claim to be representative of all young people involved in youth work, but it might be tentatively suggested on the basis of these findings that in the early stages of their involvement young people are most conscious of how youth work helps them to relate to *others* (overcoming shyness, becoming more outgoing and so on) whereas later they may come to take these social skills for granted and are more conscious of how youth work is enabling them to develop as individuals.

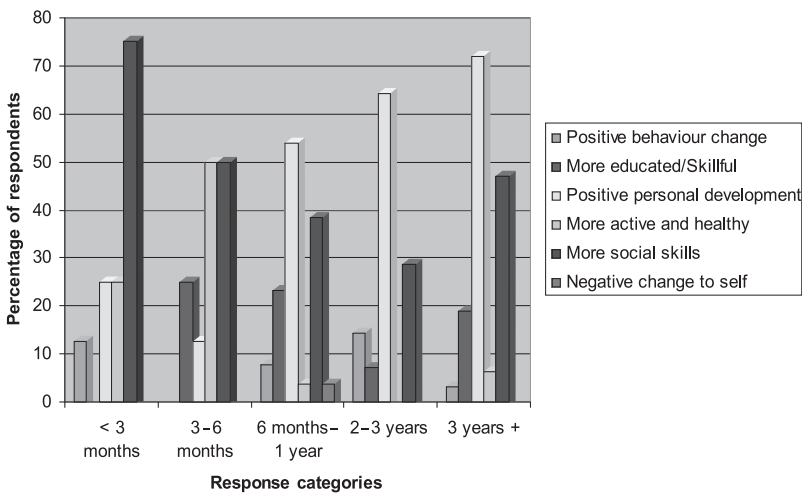


Figure 5: *Type of change by duration of involvement*

Participation

Generally, the chance to be involved in making decisions was very highly valued by the young people in the focus groups – it was regarded as both challenging and enjoyable. As one young woman put it, ‘you feel powerful when you can do that’. Participation was often described in terms of negotiation.

Anna Would you have much of a say in what happens here?

Val Yeah, if you're in a group they won't just say ... they will say what do you want to do for the year.

- Joe* *It's fifty/fifty, we meet them half way.*
- Anna* *How did that get worked out, did you have a negotiation with them, they say no you can't do it and you keep pushing to do it or what is the conversation like?*
- Colette* *It's not only their point of view, they come and ask you your point of view.*
- Val* *If you can't do it, they explain why you can't do it. They just don't say, you can't do it and that's the end of it, they say we can't do it for these reasons.*
- Maurice* *And you trust them if they tell you it can't be done for a particular reason?*
- Val* *Yeah.*

The questionnaire findings also suggest that young people do think they are involved in decision-making in youth work. When asked if they had a say in decision-making in their group or project, four out of five respondents (80.4%) said that they did, and when they were then asked about the nature of the decisions which they had a part in making, 'choosing activities' was the most common response (52.3%), with 'voicing your opinion' (in an unspecified way) and 'electing a committee/voting' the next two most common, at 25.8% and 19.7% respectively.

Relationships and respect

Active participation and involvement in decision-making requires that positive relationships exist between young people and adults, and this was a further area explored in the research project. Sometimes the young people drew attention to the way the relationships developed over time – a point also stressed by the adult focus group participants – and to the 'balancing act' that is required on the worker's behalf.

- Joe* *[A]t some point you cross the line where they are youth leaders and then they become friends, and that's good*
- Jill* *But you still have a kind of respect as well for them, because you know, they are our friends as well, they are only trying to do their job and we understand they wouldn't ever really give out to us, but when they tell you to stop doing something, you listen to them more.*
- Joe* *It's not like a thing that they are angry, just disappointed. They make you feel horrible. You come in the next week and*
- Maurice* *But they do have authority then?*
- Carol* *Yeah they do.*
- Maurice* *And you recognise that and respect that?*
- Joe* *There's a line.*

This latter point was echoed a number of times in the focus groups: youth workers have a distinctive type of authority (partly based on the friendship component of their relationship with young people) and/or a distinctive style of exercising it.

The purpose of youth work

In the questionnaire survey the young people were asked the following open-ended question: 'What do you think is the main purpose of having a youth project/group like this in your area?'

Three closely related categories of response were much more common than any others. The most commonly cited purpose was that of encouraging positive – as opposed to negative – use of leisure time, including 'keeping young people out of trouble' and 'off the streets' and away from drugs and alcohol: helping them 'to get away from drugs and the bad ways of life'. This response category was mentioned by more than one third of respondents (36.4%). Just a few less identified the purpose of providing a recreation space or facility for young people (32.4%). Almost one quarter (23.9%) mentioned the provision of a place for young people to socialise together. A general purpose of 'helping young people' was mentioned by 15.9% of respondents and smaller but not inconsiderable proportions mentioned encouraging young people's participation in the community (14.2%) and providing learning opportunities (10.2%).

It is notable that so many young people emphasise what might be termed the 'diversionary' aspect of youth work. This seems to be because for many of them youth work had the very direct impact of diverting – or encouraging – them away from behaviour that was harmful to themselves and others.

Sharon ... I used to be a troublemaker, but when I started coming up here I stayed out of it.

Anna And you think just by coming here that's changed?

Sharon Yeah, it keeps me out of it.

Sometimes the view that youth work helps to prevent, or divert young people from, anti-social behaviour was stated very bluntly.

Anna Do you think that if two years ago or four years ago or whatever, if you hadn't joined the youth club, I know it's kind of a hard thing to ask ...

Kevin Ah, we'd run riot.

Anna Do you reckon your life would be different?

Kevin We'd run riot.

Paul I'd say we would, you just don't know.

Kevin If there were not youth clubs or youth workers around, there would be total chaos.

More positively however, it is also very evident that the respondents do not see youth work as being *only* about keeping young people off the streets and that they attach considerable importance to the precise nature of the alternatives provided. The comments of one young man express very well the way in which youth work creates the space for different – more positive – types of relationship between young people and adults, based on different assumptions and 'mindsets'.

[The Centre] is a place to get away from the idea of getting into trouble. It's just a time ... [In other places] if you're not doing anything you get kicked out by the guards, security guards or whatever, and here there is none of that.

Conclusions

The findings in *The Purpose and Outcomes of Youth Work* suggest that when youth work is done well (and as already indicated the case studies were chosen on the basis that they had a track record of success and represented ‘good practice’) it can have a wide range of beneficial outcomes that are evident to both young people and youth workers (although of course there are differences of emphasis and terminology between the two groups). The benefits include:

- enhanced personal attributes and qualities such as confidence, self-esteem, awareness (personal and social), amicability and sociability;
- opportunities for association with others in a positive context, strengthening bonds with existing friends and making new ones, often from diverse backgrounds;
- new and more diverse experiences and opportunities (which are more likely with longer periods of involvement) which in turn enhance personal development;
- enhanced positive and pro-social behaviour and diminishing negative and anti-social behaviour;
- practical skills (for example making decisions, planning and organizing, budgeting, cooking, teamwork, group work, communications, arts and creativity; and numerous sports, games and physical activities);
- information, advice and advocacy in relation to (for example) health, relationships, sexuality, the law, careers and formal education;
- practical support in young people’s engagement with formal education and in some cases direct provision of (and support for) alternative routes to qualifications;
- support for young people’s families by youth workers, integration of family members within the work of the youth group/project, and more positive approaches to parenting (and to young people in general) by adults involved in youth work;
- improved communications and relationships between young people and adults within communities; opportunities for practical intergenerational cooperation at local level;
- improvement in local conditions and amenities, developing local leadership (among both young people and adults), cooperation and coordination with other local services which may avoid duplication and facilitate sharing of learning, resources and approaches.

As the list above makes clear, the most obvious benefits of youth work are for individual young people (including ‘concrete’ benefits such as information, practical skills, enhanced educational or employment opportunities; and less tangible ones such as confidence, self-esteem, tolerance and sociability). But there are also benefits for the adults involved, both paid staff and volunteers – much the same range of benefits as for young people. There are benefits at the level of neighbourhoods and communities as well – more positive relationships between old and young, reduced tension, better amenities or an enhanced physical environment, more coordinated and effective service provision. Furthermore, because youth work clubs and projects at local level are very often affiliated to regional or national and even international networks, and

because the young people and adults who participate in a youth group carry the benefits of their involvement with them into many other areas of social action and interaction, there are broader societal benefits as well.

The report concludes that in terms of positive intergenerational relationships – a key aspect of social capital – youth work has a vital and distinctive role to play, one that may in fact have few parallels, given the voluntary nature of young people's involvement and the fact that they speak so positively about their relationships with adults and the mutual respect which they perceive to characterise those relationships. Their views are borne out by the contributions of the adult respondents, paid and volunteer. Taken together with the other examples in the report of what Putnam (2000) calls 'bridging social capital' (strengthening relationships between different groups), for example in terms of socio-economic diversity or 'social mix', these findings suggest that all those concerned with youth work policy and practice should renew their focus on the social as well as the personal outcomes of youth work, and on the ways in which the two are inextricably linked, all the more so at a time of unprecedented social change.

Notes

1. M. Devlin and A. Gunning, *The Purpose and Outcomes of Youth Work*, Dublin, Irish Youth Work Press, 2009. For more information contact: Fran Bissett, Irish Youth Work Centre, Youth Work Ireland, 20 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin 21. Tel: 01 8729933. fbissett@youthworkireland.ie

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Notes on Practice

Essential Guidelines for Good Youth Work Practice

Extracts from the City of Dublin Youth Service Board's *Toolkit*

Introduction

The provision of quality services for young people is high on the public policy agenda in Ireland as the development of the Quality Standards Framework by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs indicates. With increased investment has come increased accountability and the need for youth service organisations to be able to document and illustrate quality of service in working with young people.

In 2009 the City of Dublin Youth Service Board published and launched *Toolkit: Essential Guidelines for Good Youth Work Practice* as a resource to assist in the ongoing professional development of youth workers in working with young people.

The *Toolkit* has been designed to provide a set of simple, user friendly, good practice guidelines which will assist youth workers and management committees to plan, deliver and evaluate good quality youth work practice with young people.

The *Toolkit* contains the following components:

- Essential Guidelines for Good Youth Work Practice covering three areas:
 - (1) Youth Worker and Young Person;
 - (2) Programme Provision and Development;
 - (3) Policy and Service Development.
- A series of Guides to Developing Policy on 18 different aspects of working with young people.
- 16 sample forms and templates covering Direct Work with Young People; Staff Support and Development and Health & Safety.
- A series of other resources to support good youth work practice namely: Potential and Needs Assessment; Complaints Procedure; Charter of Rights and Framework for Writing a Report on a Young Person.

This Notes on Practice section contains the following content from the *Toolkit*:

- Two Statements of Good Practice extracted from the main body of the Essential Guidelines for Good Youth Work Practice:
 - 1.1 Building Relationships; and
 - 2.5 Outreach Work.
- One of the guides to developing policy: the one on Child Protection and Welfare
- One of the additional resources; namely the Charter of Rights.

1.1 Building Relationships

Statement of Good Practice

The relationship between the youth worker and young person is central to the youth work process and should be honest, respectful, developmental and have clear and appropriate boundaries.

In practice this means that:

- youth workers are welcoming and open towards young people
- youth workers ensure that young people are aware of relationship boundaries and the youth worker's role and responsibilities in relation to young people's care, safety and well-being
- youth workers are non-judgmental in their dealings with young people
- youth workers engage with young people in a non-discriminatory manner, with particular reference to gender, age, religious belief, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, race, disability or membership of the Traveller community
- youth workers are inclusive and consistent in their engagement and interaction with young people and do not engage in favouritism
- youth workers engage in active listening with young people both on an individual and group basis
- youth workers communicate information and decisions to young people in a clear and easily understood manner
- youth workers use humour in an appropriate manner and ensure that young people are not offended by its use
- the relationship between a youth worker and a young person should be purposeful, developmental and focussed on responding to the potential and identified needs of the young person
- when dealing with matters of a sensitive, personal or emotional nature with a young person or group, youth workers need to be aware of and not exceed their own level of skill and expertise
- youth workers use the unplanned opportunities that frequently arise in youth work to engage with and develop their relationship with young people
- youth workers observe the youth project/service's child protection policy and procedures when engaging in relationship building with young people
- youth workers observe the youth project/service's health and safety and fire safety policies and procedures
- youth workers use team processes and supervision sessions to discuss, explore and develop their practice in relation to relationship building
- youth workers avail of opportunities to participate in relationship building skills training

2.5 Outreach Work

Statement of Good Practice

Outreach work is undertaken to encourage young people to avail of the programmes and activities on offer in the youth project/service.

In practice this means that:

- youth workers ensure that outreach work is based on stated objectives, clear methods, is systematically planned
- youth workers ensure that planning involves young people as appropriate
- youth workers plan and account for the budget in relation to areas of work for which they are responsible
- youth workers inform young people, parents/guardians and other relevant agencies of the range of services provided by the youth project/service
- youth workers observe the youth project/service's child protection policy and procedures when engaging in outreach work with young people
- youth workers undertake and record ongoing risk assessment for any piece of outreach work for which they are responsible
- outreach work can be undertaken by one youth worker, however in particular circumstances a second worker may be required
- youth workers engaging in outreach work carry the youth project/service's identity card and a mobile phone
- youth workers make contact with young people in places where they meet and socialise
- youth workers visit the homes of young people in order to build relationships with parents/guardians, inform them of available programmes and activities, and discuss the young person's participation in the youth project/service
- youth workers network via local community structures, agencies and schools with a view to securing the referral of appropriate young people to the youth project/service
- youth workers keep records of outreach work in line with the youth project/service's policy
- outreach work is reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis by youth workers and young people
- youth workers undertake outreach work in line with the youth project/service's policy and procedures
- youth workers use team processes and supervision sessions to discuss, explore and develop their practice in relation to outreach work
- youth workers observe the youth project/service's health and safety and fire safety policies and procedures
- youth workers avail of opportunities to participate in training in outreach work

A Guide to Developing Policy on Child Protection and Welfare

Introduction

It is *essential* to have a policy on Child Protection and Welfare. A child is defined under the Child Care Act 1991 as a person under the age of 18 years. Child abuse is categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse and a child may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any given time (Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children). In order to promote the welfare of young people youth workers need to develop practice that is both holistic and young person-centred. The safety and welfare of young people is a core principle of youth work practice. A youth project/service has a responsibility to respond and take appropriate action when there is suspected abuse of a child.

Child protection and welfare is complicated and demanding however there is support, information and clear advice available for youth project/services who want to develop and improve their practices and procedures.

Things to think about

When creating a policy in this area, the following questions are designed to get you thinking. They do not cover everything but should help to get you started.

Planning

- Are you clear about what 'abuse' is, do you know what constitutes neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse or sexual abuse?
- Are you clear about the legal requirements in relation to child protection and welfare?
- Are you clear about the guidelines and codes that support youth workers in their work with young people at risk?
- What help might you need in writing this policy, e.g. other agencies similar to your own, the HSE?
- Who should be involved in the process of writing this policy?
- What particular skills, qualities and knowledge are needed for this type of work?
- What training is required and do you ensure that youth workers are kept up to date with developments in this area?
- What systems of support and supervision will be offered to youth workers involved in child protection and welfare concerns?
- Who must observe this policy?
- Who will be appointed the Designated Persons to deal with child protection and welfare concerns?
- Are you developing a Code of Behaviour and Good Practice for youth workers as part of your Child Protection and Welfare Policy?
- Does your recruitment and selection policy including garda vetting requirements?
- How will parents/guardians be involved in dealing with child protection and welfare concerns?
- What will happen if someone does not follow this policy?

- How can you ensure that there is interagency co-operation, partnership and sharing of information between the youth project/service and other appropriate services?
- Have you considered how this policy links with a range of policies for example, IT/Technology, Residential?
- What is your procedure for handling a disclosure of abuse from a young person in your youth project/service?
- How do you evaluate the effectiveness of these procedures for the youth worker, other staff, young person and their family?

Promoting a culture of awareness of child protection and welfare

- How will you create a culture where young people can speak freely to youth workers about any concerns they might have?
- How will ensure that the youth workers and other staff use active listening to respond to young peoples concerns and issues?
- When will you review the policy?
- How will you work with other agencies and services in relation to child protection and welfare concerns?
- Have you created a youth-friendly version of your child protection and welfare procedures for young people, their parents/guardians and the wider community?

Roles and Responsibilities

- What are the responsibilities of youth workers and other staff to make this policy work?
- What specific responsibilities does a Designated Person have?
- Have you considered having a different person who is responsible for managing an allegation against a staff member in the youth project/service?
- How will the youth project/service support young people and their families to participate in family welfare conferences/case conferences?

Reporting, Recording and Evaluation

- When should a report be made to the HSE/Gardaí?
- What is the procedure for reporting a concern?
- How can you ensure appropriate follow up after a report has been made by the youth project/service?
- How will you consult with the family of a young person you have concerns about?
- What counts as 'reasonable grounds for concern'?
- What might your approach be to underage sexual activity e.g. involving two young people?
- When will the youth project/service refer young people to other appropriate services, e.g. mental health services?
- How will the youth project/service monitor and record ongoing concerns about young people?
- How will confidentiality be maintained, is information shared on a need to know basis only?
- Recording information is really important, how might you do that?
- If a young person that you have concerns about leaves the youth project/service, what might the follow up be?

Key things to ensure

- Involvement in the design of the policy of all people you expect to follow it.
- The policy recognises the principle that children and young people are of paramount importance.
- That the youth project/service has a safe place where documents relating to child protection and welfare are stored and that access to such information is limited
- Clear boundaries so that youth workers and other staff are not left carrying responsibilities beyond the scope of the youth project/service
- Responses to concerns in are conducted in a non judgemental manner

Relevant Legislation/Guidelines

In designing any policy, it is important to be aware of the wider context in which your youth project/service exists. In many cases, how you have to act is dictated or influenced by the law:

- Code of Good Practice, Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector, 2nd Edition May 2003 Department of Education and Science
- Children's First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (1999)
- Our Duty to Care (2002)
- Child Care Act (1991)
- Non-fatal Offences against the Person Act (1997)
- U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1998)
- Protection for Person Reporting Child Abuse Act (1998)
- Domestic Violence Act (1996)
- Children Act (2001)
- Sexual Offences Act (2006)
- Freedom of Information (2003)
- Data Protection Act (1998–2003)
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998
- Protection of Children (Hague Convention) Act 2000

Where else to get information and resources

A good policy keeps up to date with current practice, trends and legislation. Your policy should be a living document which directs and underpins the work you do and how it is done. Policy development takes time and effort but the return is worth the investment. There are a range of information sources and resources available to help you. Here are a few to get you started.

The Child Protection Unit was set up in 2004 and works primarily with youth work organisations in addressing the needs of the youth work sector in relation to child protection. It is available at www.childprotection.ie

To access the Duty to care document on line go the department of health and children website and look under publications or follow this website address www.dohc.ie/publications/our_duty_to_care

Heath Services Executive local health offices will have a list of social work teams and Child Care Manager. www.hse.ie

Barnardos' website is very useful and this also includes the National Children's Resources Center in Christchurch Square Dublin 8. www.barnardos.ie

The ISPCC provide a range of services including a helpline for children. www.ispcc.ie

A policy on Child Protection and Welfare might use the following structure

- 1. A Cover Page** with the following; the name of your youth project/service, the title of the policy, the date it comes into action, person/people responsible for signing it off and a date for its' review.
- 2. A policy statement.** This should state clearly, but in broad terms, what you want the child protection and welfare policy to cover. It is a statement of intent and vision, saying what your youth project/service believes. It can be quite short and need not go into all the practical details; these are covered by the sections below.
- 3. Reasons for the policy.** This section should give, in clear bullet points, your reasons for creating this policy. Ask yourself questions such as: "Why is such a policy helpful?" and "What concerns would arise if we did not have a policy?" There are some practical reasons for having a policy like this, while other reasons may reflect values that are important to the youth project/service. All these reasons should be listed: they will help all those who are required to comply with the policy to understand its importance and accept it.
- 4. Those who must comply with this policy.** This section could again be bullet-pointed, listing all those whom you expect to follow the policy. For a policy as important as this that really means everyone engaging in any way with the youth project/service.
- 5. Implementation.** This will be the largest section of the document, setting out the practical details of how you intend to put the policy into practice. It states who is responsible for what, and how, in practical terms, you intend the policy to be carried out. It might name the tasks for which various people are responsible, e.g. what are the responsibilities of the 'designated person', what training will be provided or how concerns should be recorded. See the section on 'Things to Think about' above for some more prompts.
- 6. Links to other policy areas.** This section should list the other policies of your youth project/service that link into your child protection and welfare policy. Links to other policy areas, such as your health and safety policy, recruitment policy should be identified in this section. All your policies must inter-connect; otherwise the vision for your youth project/service may become confused and pull people in different directions.

Charter of Rights

Introduction

A 'Charter of Rights' is a formal statement that names clearly the rights that young people have within the youth project/service. It is desirable that a youth project/service draw up a 'charter of rights' in consultation with young people.

Working to raise awareness of young people's rights is part of the youth work process. Young people in particular may feel disempowered and unaware of their rights.

Drawing up a Charter of Rights

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) recognises and promotes the link between young people's rights and their responsibilities. Youth work as a non formal education process has a key role to play in developing the connection between rights and responsibilities.
- It is vital to involve young people in the preparation, creation and development of the charter of rights.
- A charter of rights does not have to be written as a formal document, the more creative it is the more engaged and interested the young people will be.
- A charter of rights cannot cover every experience a young person will have but should foster a climate of inclusion and entitlement.
- The youth project/service should set dates for reviewing, amending and updating the charter of rights.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) groups the rights of children under four headings. They are as follows:

- **Survival rights**, naming the things that all children and young people need to stay alive. These things include food, clean water, sleep, a place to live, and proper health care.
- **Development rights**, saying what all children and young people need to help make the most of their talents. These rights include: the right to education, the right to play, the right to get information, and the right to get involved in leisure and creative activities.
- **Protection rights**, children and young people must be protected from every kind of neglect and abuse. Protection rights cover lots of different issues such as the right of young people who get into trouble with the law to be treated fairly and with respect.
- **Participation rights** are a group of rights in the Convention that recognise young people as citizens and as people who have a lot to offer to the communities and countries in which they live. These rights include the right to have a say and to be heard when decisions are being made that affect them.

These headings might be a useful framework to use when designing the youth project/service 'charter of rights'. Some youth projects/services may decide to create an all encompassing, customer or service charter. If this is the direction you choose to take it is necessary that the rights and entitlements of young people are clearly stated and are of paramount importance.

Relevant Legislation and Guidelines

The Irish Government published the *National Children's Strategy* in 2000. It is a ten-year plan to improve life for all children and young people under 18 years of age in Ireland and will be reviewed shortly. The Strategy's goal is to improve the experiences that are available to children and young people through listening, thinking and acting, for example, in health, education, protection and play/leisure. See the Department of Health and Children website www.dohc.ie/publications/.

The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* is an international agreement on the rights of children that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in November 1989. It came into force as international law on 2 September 1990. It is the most complete statement of children's rights ever published and provides an internationally agreed framework of minimum standards necessary for the well-being of the child to which every child and young person under 18 years is entitled. For more information see the UNICEF website at www.unicef.org/crc/

In April 2002, a law was passed to set up the *Office of Ombudsman for Children* that has as its mission the protection and promotion of children's rights. For more information see the website at www.oco.ie

Where else to get information and resources

There are a range of information sources and resources available to help you. Here are a few to get you started.

The Children's Rights Alliance is a coalition of 80 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working for children's rights and welfare in Ireland. The Alliance aims to secure the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Ireland and their website is at www.childrensright.ie

For examples of charters that have been designed in consultation with young people see the following websites:

www.childrens-charterofrights.com

www.whocaresscotland.org

www.lgbtyouth.org.uk

Acknowledgements

This Notes on Practice has provided only an introductory sample of the Toolkit, which is designed as an integrated resource to support good youth work practice.

The Toolkit was developed by CDYSB with inputs from youth projects and services in Dublin City under the guidance of a Working Group comprising Bill Blake, Anne Cheevers, Gwen Doyle, Celene Dunne, John Farrelly, Anne Meehan and Mary Robb. The Essential Guidelines for Good Youth Work Practice were written by John Farrelly, Celene Dunne and Gwen Doyle, City of Dublin Youth Service Board.

Contact Details

The full *Toolkit* is available for purchase from:

City of Dublin Youth Service Board,

70 Morehampton Road,

Donnybrook

Dublin 4

Tel: +353 1 4321100

Web: www.cdysb.ie

Past Perspectives

Young Women's Christian Association

Report for Ireland, 1887

“Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for Thou hast also wrought all our works for us.” – Isaiah xxvi. 12 (R.V.)

In presenting the first general account of the work of the Young Women's Christian Association in Ireland, it is with heartfelt gratitude to God we acknowledge that the blessing and success now manifest in its various departments and Branches is altogether due to His working in us and for us – His servants – to whom He has given the joy of holding forth the Word of life amid the surrounding darkness and trying circumstances which prevail throughout our beloved land.

Looking back to the origin of our Association in Ireland, it may interest our friends to know that the first Branch was started, about the year 1860, among the mill girls in the North of Ireland, and it was characterised by the simplicity and earnestness of the members, who used to meet in a barn loft with their teacher, and spend hours of happy intercourse over their Bibles. The next Branches were formed in Kingstown and Dublin, in the years 1870–1872, under the superintendence of the late Mrs. Sullivan (Cripples' Home, Bray), who afterwards became the first President for Ireland. During this time and until 1878 the Association consisted of Prayer Union members only; but, in consort with England, we have since agreed that the membership should stand as follows:

Honorary Associates

These are chiefly elder members, who aid in diffusing the publications of the Association, and information about its various departments, giving, where needed, advice and sympathy to junior members, and whose distinctive recognised position is that of sustained interest in the work and readiness to communicate their ripener experience in Christian service for the help and counsel of others.

Working Associates

Are those who can give their time and labour freely in the various departments of work. The many agencies of the Association demand a large supply of earnest unselfish workers – such as have known the Saviour's grace and desire to be His messengers, for the spiritual and temporal blessing of others. How sorely such loving workers are needed many a touching incident has shown.

Prayer Union Members

Are those from which our Working Associates are drawn, and this membership is the very core and nucleus of the Association. From it all our members of Councils or Committees are taken. The members meet together at stated times for study of the Scripture, prayer, and consultation about work; and the days and hours of meeting for each branch are known, so that any member from a distance coming to any place

where a Branch has been formed finds herself at once united in the Christian sympathies and activities of fellow-workers. Scattered members of the Prayer Union Circle study the same portions of Scripture and unite in the same petitions, and the membership is a means of strength to many an isolated Christian girl.

The General Circle Members

Are those to whom all the advantages of our meetings – Libraries, Institutes, and organisation – are open on the payment of a small annual subscription. We seek, while offering every temporal advantage in our power (especially to such as have to work for their own support), to draw all our members into a full understanding and union with us in the main object of the Association – winning souls to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before forming this extended basis of the Association we had only 19 Prayer Union Branches; but what hidden power lay in this solid foundation of the work is constantly being shown. The years of prayer have yielded blessed results, which are surely a call to fresh workers to join the band of the Lord's remembrancers.

After the death of our beloved President, Mrs. Sullivan, the vacant post was accepted by Mrs. Hatt-Noble, in 1882, whose untiring zeal and personal effort has given a great impetus to the work throughout Ireland; and it is with thankfulness we can now record the fact that we have over 240 Branches and more than 9,000 members in Ireland.

Annual Association Conference

A yearly gathering (usually held in the month of October in Dublin) for all our Secretaries and workers throughout the country has come to be regarded as a red letter day in the experience of those privileged to attend. An opportunity is thus given to any who have the one aim and object at heart, although their fields of labour are far apart, of meeting together for prayer, conference, and friendly intercourse, also to hear of the progress of work in each county in Ireland. The increasingly large attendances at these Annual Conferences is a proof of how much they are appreciated, and of the deepened and widespread interest in the work of our Association.

We believe one result has been that our Secretaries have returned home with hearts cheered, strength renewed, and zeal stimulated to carry on with increased earnestness God's work in their various Branches.

Secretaries' Quarterly Conference

These are held with the object of drawing together in bonds of closer sympathy and fellowship our Secretaries and Prayer Union members. For unitedly waiting upon God for the fresh anointing of His Spirit upon ourselves as workers, and to seek for further blessing in every department upon our work. Remembering the injunction of the Apostle – "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," we endeavour to encourage prayer for and sympathy in each other's sphere of service. Information is given of the progress and development of work in its various departments, and where fresh helpers are needed we seek to enlist the co-operation of our Prayer union members, that they with us may share the joy and privilege of being workers together with God.

All Secretaries who can avail themselves of these Quarterly Meetings will be cordially welcomed.

Central Monthly Bible Readings

For Secretaries and members are held at the Institutes, as centres for the north and south districts of Dublin. On the *first* Thursday in the month at 75 Harcourt Street, and on the *last* Thursday at 8 Rutland Square, at 2 30 p.m. At these meetings the subject for the month is studied, and our President's words are much valued, both in the Scripture study and in the earnest pleadings with the young hearts present to devote themselves to the blessed service of the Master. The members of the Prayer Union meet on the *second* Thursday, at 2 30 p.m., at 75 Harcourt Street, and it is hoped that all Secretaries and workers connected with the Association will avail themselves of this opportunity for prayer and consultation about work.

This report may supply a need expressed by many who ask what our Association is doing, and how they can help us.

In the variety of work organised, we can offer delightful fields of labour to those who wish to use their consecrated talents to the master's glory. We are thankful to be able to report satisfactory progress in nearly every department, and also the additional development of many fresh plans of working. We expect that when our new office is in working order at 75 Harcourt Street, the work will be much simplified, and that the secretaries will find it a good centre for all association literature and information. It will be the work of the whole Association to support the Central Office, which will be rented from the South Side Institute Committee.

The Heads of Departments have furnished us with the following interesting information:

Evangelization and Extension Department

We are glad that, from the very commencement, we are able to tell of much blessing in the fields already white unto the harvest, and we believe Eternity alone will reveal the sheaves which will be laid at the feet of the Lord of the Harvest. We cannot give details of His Spirit's work in hearts, but we can most gratefully testify to his gracious answers to prayer offered for visits and tours, though in some cases the results have only been known "after many days."

In October, 1884, we sent out a leaflet, explaining the objects of this Department, which was started that month, when Mrs. E.W. Moore, from London, visited Dublin. Our balance-sheets only show part of the work done, as some of our band of workers kindly defrayed their own expenses.

During 1885 this Department opened a large proportion of the sixty-four new Branches started that year, besides visiting others. In country districts our workers have been specially welcome, though some of the larger towns sent in earnest pleading for a visit, and our secretaries and members have been cheered and encouraged as they realized afresh the strong bond of union in the Association; and often the worker who arrived as a stranger left the Branch a warm and valued friend.

In 1886 a far larger number of tours and visits were made, not only by those mentioned in the balance-sheet for that year, but by some of our District Referees, who have visited the Branches in their several counties with much success and blessing.

When a branch asks for a visitor, as far as possible we try to arrange that the neighbouring Branches should have the option of meetings. In this way sometimes a tour springs from a single request.

It has been suggested, in places where meetings are held, that a thank-offering collection should be made towards the funds of the Evangelization Department. This we leave to the Secretaries as well as the suggestion of a yearly subscription where it can be given, feeling sure that the work so owned and blessed by the Master will be cared for by Him Whose are the silver and the Gold.

We would ask for earnest prayer for increased blessing on this Department, that in all the meetings taken by our workers souls may be won for Christ, and His children strengthened and refreshed.

"Now, therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name!"

Employment Agency

We would draw attention to the excellent work our Registries have done, both in Belfast and Dublin. In the latter place, from October to December we have got more than thirty situations for servants, besides finding temporary employment for others, and in various ways helping them. Some of these servants were strangers in Dublin, having no friends, far from their homes, and with *very* little money. One young girl had been waiting in some registry office for weeks, having paid nearly 5s. When she came to the Young Women's Christian Association Registry we got her a situation at once. We are continually getting letters from girls for whom we have got situations, and they write so gratefully.

Hospital Nurses' Union

There are 45 members, though this Branch has only been lately formed. Social evenings are held for them, as their duties often prevent their attending the ordinary meetings. It is hoped when this becomes known ladies will kindly lend their drawing rooms, and so brighten the lives of those who are always ministering to the wants of others. These gatherings are intended to be held fortnightly during the session from 7 to 9 o'clock, commencing with tea, after which there is a short address given sometimes by a clergyman, and the rest of the evening is spent listening to music and readings. Few can realize the happiness cordial words of sympathy give to those who are weary, "which have borne the burden and heat of the day," and how truly any effort made to this end is gratefully appreciated.

The patients are often comforted with cheering visits, while the Nurses who minister to them are not, in many cases, even greeted by a passing word.

Holiday Clubs

This is a branch of work only just entered on, and rather late this year to permit us to organise any very widespread effort to afford country change to many of our members whose constant toil renders a brief time of relaxation and change to country air absolute essentials for continued health and working power. The constant daily labour not only hinders many being able to make the best use of their vacation by previous

well-considered arrangements, but also the expense and loneliness of separate lodgings in many cases absolutely precludes the possibility of change. Our Holiday Clubs will seek to meet these difficulties by providing country lodgings, or renting a house for two months in the summer, where, under the care of one or more of our workers, as many of our members as can be accommodated will be received at a very moderate charge.

In connection with the Nurses' Branch there will, we hope, be a very efficient Excursion Club formed this summer.

Institute Work

The following places are centres of Institute Work in Ireland:

- Belfast – 9 College Square, North.
Cork – 13 South Mall.
- Dublin – 8 Rutland Square.
- Dublin – 75 Harcourt Street.
Enniskillen – 17 Darling Street.
- Newtownards – Gordon Institute.
Sligo – Wine Street

The growth of these Institutes is a sign of real progress in the Young Women's Christian Association, and we trust that the effort will meet with the hearty support it merits, and that many who are not members of the Association will yet contribute to the maintenance of these houses, as in the large towns rent is heavy. Various evening classes are held in these Institutes – Sunday Bible Classes, Working Parties, Missionary Meetings, and Library and Registry Work are carried on. Further information can be had on application to the Secretaries

Library Department

This is making fair progress. During the last year twenty-six boxes of books were sent to country Branches, most of which met with approval. We have over seven hundred volumes now in the Central Library, and hope by next quarter to increase the number considerably, money having been supplied from the Association for that purpose. We shall also be most grateful for gifts of interesting books, which may be sent to the Librarian, Harcourt House, 75 Harcourt Street.

Monthly Packets

The work of sending out the monthly packets is steadily going on, very few of the workers having grown tired of their work since its commencement seven years ago, and fresh ones are being constantly added to the list, which now numbers 76. The number of those to whom they send steadily increases. There are now 194 in different parts to whom the packets are regularly sent each month. So much seed scattered must surely bear fruit, and we are not left without proof of this in many cases. It is believed that nearly 100 letters have been received during the past year, in reply to those written, expressive of gratitude, and, in many cases, real spiritual help. With some, also, substantial temporal aid has been given, chiefly in the way of helping to employments of various kinds. We ask for prayer for a continued and ever-increasing

blessing, and also to be remembered both as to the supply of workers and names to whom we send, so that we may be constantly "lengthening our cords and strengthening our stakes."

Monthly Packets to Foreigners

We send these to all Swiss and German governesses, whose names we have, who are living in the country, such packet containing four kinds of religious papers in their own language, and we often hear how much they are prized and that they are passed onto friends. Many of the governesses are Prayer Union Members of the Young Women's Christian Association, and prize the link of prayer which binds us together. We have most interesting letters from them; and as since the five years during which this work has been carried on many of those we knew have returned to their own homes, we do not even then lose sight of them, as they still like to hear from us and receive their motto card and almanac as each year comes round.

Missionary Efforts

We gratefully acknowledge that the threefold missionary command of our Lord – "*Give ye, Pray ye, and Go ye*" – has been, by His grace, in some measure obeyed this year by our Irish Branch of the Young Women's Christian Association. From 90 branches help has been received from members, for missionary work, particularly for the special collection for work among Women in China, instituted by Mrs. Robert Stewart during her visit to many branches in 1885. Several of these, notably Limerick, Tralee, Bray, Clontarf, Monkstown, Mariners' (Kingstown), and South Dublin Servants' Branches, have made themselves responsible for the support of one or more Bible Women, trained by Mrs. Stewart, and sent out to work in country districts, in the province of Fu-Kien, at a cost of £10 annually; for this purpose, a sum of £96 has been contributed; while, in answer to the more general appeal for funds to send out at least two ladies to work in China, 60 Irish Branches have contributed sums varying from 1s. to £57 (the largest sums being subscribed and collected by Delgany, £57 0s.10d.; Clontarf, £34; Blackrock, £12 4s.8d.; Dalkey £7; Kingstown, £5 10s.; Bray, £5) making a total of £174 16s.7d. Many Branches have begun missionary work meetings, and valuable contributions of work for sale, at home and abroad, have been the result. Several have contributed to the Church Missionary Society, and missionary work in India. We trust that this increased interest in *giving* to the Lord's work abroad is very much the result, the natural result, of a more hearty acquiescence in His command – "*Pray ye*". We believe that in many cases the missionary subjects for prayer, as given in our Almanac, have been most heartily joined by our members, and have, in our Father's mercy, brought about the result that Ireland can now look abroad, and find many members obedient to their Lord's "*Go ye*" and working for Him, to some extent, as our representatives in India and China. We trust that during the present year a missionary spirit may be unceasingly sought after by both workers and members, which may result in a further acceptance of even our very small gifts, by the great Husbandman, for the extension of His kingdom on earth.

Missionary Working Party

This was continued until June, and the work sent with that of the Ladies' Afternoon Working Party to Japan. Some contributions came from country branches – Killucan, Kenagh, and Grey Abbey – the value of the box sent out amounted to £79. We have received an acknowledgement of this box from Rev. J. Andrews, Church Missionary at Hakodate. He has written his thanks, and says – “We had a most encouraging and unexpectedly large sale this year of the fancy work you sent us. Before the door was opened, many purchasers had arrived. Half an hour after, they were allowed to enter. All the best, as well as the cheapest, things were sold. By evening we had only had £3 worth left. The proceeds of this year's sale, and also some of last year's, are to help to build a school for the Aino children, and on Sundays to use the building for preaching purposes. With part of the money we are supporting a little Japanese girl, and educating her; her parents are Christians, but poor. She is seven years old, and a bright, intelligent little thing.”

Contributions of money, for the purposes of materials, also articles of work, will be thankfully received by Mrs. Marrable, 49 Waterloo-road, Dublin.

Home Mission Working Parties

Parcels of clothing have been made up at several of our Branches suitable for young girls preparing for emigration, or for domestic service at home, through the agency of the Dublin Prison-Gate Mission or Girls' Training Home. The value of this help is very great. Many young girls brought down to poverty and distress, through the recklessness of criminal parents, have been aided in the hard up-hill struggle to honest self-support. Some whose outfit has been supplied by kind and busy hands here, now have happy homes in distant Canada. Similar and much needed help has also been afforded by working parties to the Elliott Home, Bird's Nest, Coombe and Luke Street Schools.

“I was naked and ye clothed Me.” As an incentive to humble untiring effort for others, these wondrous words have not lost their force through all the sorrow and turmoil of nearly nineteen centuries.

Scattered Branch

This has unavoidably been in abeyance for some time, but since November 1st, 1886, it has more than doubled its numbers. There were then 63 on the books. Many of them express much appreciation of the monthly letter, which they like extremely to receive.

Several members of existing Branches have joined for the winter, on going to the continent, in order to have a link through the monthly letters with the Young Women's Christian Association, and to be put in communication with the foreign Branches. Some have joined through having come in contact with the work of the Young Women's Christian Association, having found it helpful to themselves.

Total Abstinence

In consequence of the resignation of Miss Emily Foot, this Department has not made so much progress as we could desire; still we are glad to be able to report that, although several Branches have not supplied us with the number of abstaining members, we find

that, at the autumn returns of 1886, we have considerably over 3,000 total abstainers in Ireland amongst the members of our Young Women's Christian Association. This fact is most encouraging, when we consider the influence which may be exerted by each in her life. We have a special medal which is worn by abstaining members, and becomes also a means of recognition. We invite all interested in the subject to communicate with our new Secretary, and strengthen each other's hands to stand firm in this noble cause.

Travellers' Aid

Our efforts have hitherto been directed to obtaining permission from railway and steamship companies to place large placards in waiting-rooms and on vessels, giving information to young women of various Institutions and Homes where they can obtain respectable lodgings.

The need for this comparatively new agency has been forced upon us by the knowledge that many young girls come up to our large cities with the vague hope of getting employment, and without any definite idea of how this is to be obtained, or where they shall meanwhile find a suitable home.

We also undertake to meet girls on their arrival in Dublin or any of our large towns, on application being made, and three days' notice given. We have already been enabled to give a helping hand to many young travellers who greatly appreciated this timely aid.

Feeling it to be of the highest importance to get the cooperation of the managers of our railway and steamboat companies, we would earnestly ask our friends, who have personal influence, to bring it to bear upon them in enlisting their sympathy and active help in this cause.

Hospital Branches

Through these, our members who for a time are laid aside are visited, and fresh members are enrolled. Many are glad to avail themselves of membership, and are either attached to the nearest Branch to their own home or to a Scattered Members' Branch.

Drawingroom Meetings

For young ladies have proved very successful, not so much to spread interest in the work of the Association as to win the young hearts to yield themselves to the lord Jesus Christ. We need more friends willing to give their drawingrooms for these meetings, and, above all, the power of the holy Spirit to work the desired result.

Care of Young Girls

This is one of the chief objects of the Young Women's Christian Association; and we endeavour, whenever an opening can be obtained, to reach young people who are workers and earners with encouragement, sympathy, and help, which shall not interfere with independence or wound susceptibilities.

A nobleman recently speaking in London on behalf of working girls stated that there were "as many as 150,000 working girls battling with misfortune and with all the

difficulties and dangers young people could meet with in the beginning of life. These poor girls had a continuous war with want and suffering. The iron genius of competition had not been much more Christian-like or lighter than the car of Juggernaut.”

If we, in our Young Women’s Christian Association, do not seek to lighten the burdens of our home-toilers, to lessen to them the terrible struggle of life, and bring the light and rest of true Christian love into their lives, we are false to the chief object of our Association, and, worse than all, false to Him who came to undo the heavy burdens and break every yoke.

Oh! when shall we rise to the grandeur and dignity of our high calling in Christ Jesus, and bear to parched lips the cup of blessing such as Christ taught us to mix, by Himself mingling for us that blessed cup of *human* and *divine* love.

None so weary but they can understand the sweetness of human love, and learn through it, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the Fatherhood of God, the fathomless tenderness of Christ.

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord”

May, 1887.

Note

Youth Studies Ireland is very grateful to the Young Women’s Christian Association for making a copy of the *Report for Ireland, 1887* available from its archive.

Voices of Young People

Introduction

Voices of Young People is an occasional section in Youth Studies Ireland which features the direct contributions of young people themselves without the formal editorial or 'peer review' process that applies to other sections of the journal (although these too, of course, are open to younger readers). In this issue we reproduce some contributions to a website/blog appropriately called Voices of Youth, about which further information is provided at the end of the section.

Spot and Swot the Mosquito Device!

Posted by: voy09 on: November 11, 2009

Imagine this scene: you're walking down the street, minding your own business, maybe enjoying a day of shopping, or perhaps just on the way home from work. Then, without warning, your ears start to ring, you may feel a little dizzy and your head might start to ache. You are forced to flee the area as quickly as possible, your hands clamped over your ears, your previous plans hastily forgotten. Well this is not just fiction for thousands of young people. Every day this is their reality, persecuted for crimes they didn't commit. This is because of a device called the Mosquito alarm. The 'Mosquito' or 'Mosquito alarm' is an electronic device which emits an ultrasonic sound, similar to the buzz of a mosquito. Howard Stapleton developed the Mosquito after his 15-year-old daughter was harassed by youths hanging around a local shop. The device is typically heard by people less than 20 years of age because the ability to hear high frequencies deteriorates with age. The device is marketed as a safety and security tool for preventing anti-social behaviour such as loitering. In March 07, Letterkenny became the first town council to install the technology in a public place. When teenagers (and children) walk down the stretch of road outside any business that has installed a mosquito alarm they will hear a high pitched squeaking noise, whether they are doing anything wrong or not. The noise of the mosquito is annoying and makes it very difficult for the teenager to stay in the area. And it's not just annoyance it can cause; the alarm has been known to cause onset of dizziness, headaches, nausea. Some people do not believe that the mosquito is safe.

In Ireland there have been many issues raised. Under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997, anyone who "directly or indirectly applies force to or causes an impact on the body of another ... without the consent of the other" (force including "application of [any] form of energy"), is guilty of committing assault. This issue has been raised in relation to the Mosquito device by Ireland's Ombudsman for Children. The Ombudsman for Children is concerned about the "mosquito devices" that are being used by business premises to disperse children – and which could constitute an assault.



The issue was raised by the Children and Young People's Forum with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Barry Andrews, who was shocked and is now committed to investigating the alarm further.

The German Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health issued a report on the mosquito entitled *Use of ultrasonic noise channels not entirely safe*. In this report they were unable to certify the device as completely safe.

'We have had legal advice on it and it is an assault under the Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997 if the noise is deliberately and intentionally targeted at a person as opposed to a general noise', said Michael McLoughlin of Youth Work Ireland.

This device is supposedly intended for the minority of young people that are prone to anti-social behaviour, but it seems to have the opposite to the desired effect, as it can be described as none other than an anti-social device itself, as it affects not only the 'trouble makers' but the majority of perfectly law abiding citizens, be they over 18 or not. Not only does it affect teenagers and young adults that have done nothing wrong, the mosquito alarm targets all young people, including babies, disregarding whether or not they're doing anything wrong. Small children and infants are especially at risk, due to lengthy exposure to the sound, because the adults themselves do not perceive the noise. In fact advertising for a new mosquito device now boasts that different frequencies can be used against older people and the range of the device has been extended to 40 metres (130 feet)! So the mosquito alarm cannot possibly be considered socially acceptable? Putting all young people at risk? Is it fair to punish all adolescents for a so called 'crime' committed by a minority? To cause all teenagers annoyance and discomfort, sometimes even pain as they walk down the street? Some companies seem to think so. Even if it prevents adolescents from shopping in the area, or even walking down the street minding their own business. Even with all these health and social implications for young people, some companies continue to use the alarm. So I ask you, why should we give them our business? When they disregard our welfare this much? They need the teenage market, as much as any other age categories, to rake in as much money as possible and yet they ignore what they're doing to these teenagers outside of their shops. Of course anti-social behaviour needs to be targeted, but even if that is the case who said it was ok for these businesses to appoint themselves judge, jury and executioner? Is this really an acceptable solution? In my opinion punishing all young people is much more anti-social than loitering! Some people, like Voices Of Youth, have already started the battle against this discrimination. Join the fight, help spot and swot the mosquitoes! If you see an alarm like the one pictured above on the outside of a building, report your annoyance on its presence to the police; although the alarm is not yet against the law, the Gardaí are obliged to make the businesses aware that they are not approved of by the state. You can also show them your personal objection by not giving them your custom!

Catholicism: Is there a place in schools for it?

Posted by: *alicekinsella* on: December 15, 2009



Recently, a friend of mine went to our principal and asked to leave religion class, which is compulsory in our school. I managed to get out at the beginning of the school year by pointing out that I'd never been baptised and that religion was wasting my valuable study time. My friend, however, was told that it is a Catholic school, therefore she must attend. Our school is not Catholic. It is funded by the state. We have a

'Catholic ethos', a priest on the board of management and mass twice a year. But, none the less, we are a state school. They cannot refuse to admit children of other religions. But, religion classes are compulsory for the full five/six years of education. During these classes they preach about god and catholic meaning. Buddhism got mentioned once in 2nd year, evidently they come up short when compared to the 'religious education' and objective view of all world religions they once promised us. In our school, religion is a compulsory exam subject in the junior certificate. And last month our Irish (Irish, NOT religion) teacher gave out to the class for not saying our prayers.

So if you walked in the door, and saw a four foot man nailed to a cross staring down at you you'd probably think it was run by the church, right? Well it's not; it is being paid for by the tax payer, the NON DENOMINATIONAL tax payer. I've found that this is the case in many schools around the country. "You pay, we pray".

So I ask the reader, is it fair that as young people in Ireland we are still being subjected to the controlling, brain washing, backwards ways of the Catholic church when we are supposedly being educated? Don't get me wrong, Catholics can believe what they want, as can any religion, they can practice and pray until they're blue in the face for all I care, but should they be allowed influence little children from the moment they step in the door? I don't think so. We live in diverse and multi cultural society, a society full of people of different race, religion and sexual orientation. And yet, the majority of children still have no other option than to go to schools backed by a single religion, and that religion having openly stated its contempt for the LGBT community. Is this the kind of thing young people of today should be taught?

I live in a field, that field is in a bog, that bog is in a townland, that townland is in the sparsely populated, very wet, kind of green county of Mayo. Schooling wise, there aren't many options. As far as I'm aware, there isn't a single non-denominational school within a 20 mile radius of my home. But there are six that have a 'Catholic ethos'. So I've come to the conclusion that if you're a teenager, scratch that, if you're a kid of any age in Ireland living outside of Dublin you're pretty much stuck with the church. Sure, they won't kick you out, if you're lucky they won't even force you into mass, but you'd better get used to being looked at as if everything you think is ridiculous.

When I was a kid my national school was Catholic school too. It was so close to the church, the 6th class kids used to play dares in the church bathroom. I was continuously scoffed at by teachers, the priest used to be left in our classroom for hours on end and tell us whatever he wanted. We were told all kinds of rubbish, dinosaurs

didn't exist, babies are gifts from god found in fields, every time you masturbate god kills a kitten, the usual. We couldn't question it. He was the priest. End of story.

So what if I'd been Muslim? What if I was a Lesbian? Are kids today in that position? Do they feel that what they do/are makes them a bad person? And all because someone else's superstition has been given a leading role in their education? I don't think this is fair.

In countries like France and USA religion and state are kept separate, and people grow up being all the more accepting for it.

It's the 21st century; it's time for Ireland to realise that the minds of young people is no place to force varying superstitions as fact. It's time we all had access to safe, open minded, religion free schools!

Fare's Fair

Posted by: jhoop09 on: December 5, 2009

You're sixteen, you can't vote, you can't drink and no one's really sure if you can have sex or not.

But there's damned sure one thing you can do: pay full price. On trains, planes, boats and at the cinema. You don't have the basic rights of a citizen of the state but you sure as hell can pay as if you do.

In those nowhere years between 16 and 18 I was continually fleeced by cinemas and trains. If ever I got away with a child ticket I never felt guilty, like I was committing a crime, which in effect I was. I felt like I was merely getting a Fair Fare. At the same time at work I was being paid the minimum under-18 wage. So I was being paid less and charged more. Classic Capitalism in action.



Like the age old American revolutionary adage goes:
No Taxation Without Representation.

They shouldn't have the right to charge you full price if you don't have the ability to exercise the most basic right to any Democratic society.

When you're sixteen in Ireland you're in a catch-22.

So I think the Government can do one of two things; they can charge you full price all they like if they gave you the right to vote.

Alternatively, and more realistic, there should be a standard charge for persons under 18.

None of this paying-adult at 16 bull. A standard charge for everyone under 18, who can't vote or pay tax.

Who's with me? Eh? Are you sick of being paid less and charged more? Let's start a campaign for Fair Fares!

About Voices of Youth

Voices of Youth is an organisation of young people that are interested in getting young people's views across. And now we're online!

We want to promote the achievements of young people in our country, as well as drawing attention to important issues surrounding young people.

Voices of Youth is a group by the young people, about the young people, for the young people. *We care about what young people have to say!!!*

Contact

Voices of Youth, 20 Lower Dominick Street. Dublin 1.

Email: voicesyouth@gmail.com

Web: www.voicesofyouth.wordpress.com



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

Department of Applied Social Studies

Youth Research Programme

In addition to pursuing the research and scholarly interests of staff in the Department of Applied Social Studies, the Youth Research Programme at NUI Maynooth conducts a range of research projects which are commissioned, funded or otherwise supported by external organisations and agencies, currently including the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, the National Youth Council of Ireland and Youth Work Ireland. Other commissioners of research recently conducted by departmental staff include the Equality Authority, the Combat Poverty Agency and Kildare Youth Services.

The programme is integrally related to the Department of Applied Social Studies' *professional education and training programmes* in community and youth work, and welcomes proposals for *MLitt and PhD research*. For details of undergraduate and postgraduate professional programmes and of research opportunities visit: <http://cappss.nuim.ie/>

The Youth Research Programme also has extensive links with *international partners*, for example as part of a consortium developing an MA in European Youth Studies. For more information see:

http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/about/MA_presentation.html

The Youth Research Programme is very pleased to be associated with *Youth Studies Ireland*, itself a partnership initiative at national and international level.

For further details contact: maurice.devlin@nuim.ie. Tel: 353-1-7083781

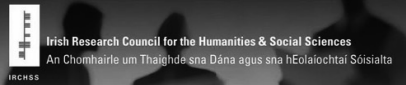


UCC

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
University College Cork, Ireland

Civil society, youth and youth policy in modern Ireland

This Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) funded research project aims to provide a historical social scientific analysis of youth policy in Ireland.



The research will chart the changing nature, form and consequences of youth policy from the time of the formation of the state to the present day.



The research will explore the historical role played by youth organisations in civil society, and their impact on Irish social life.



The project also aims to survey the contemporary provision of youth work in Ireland.

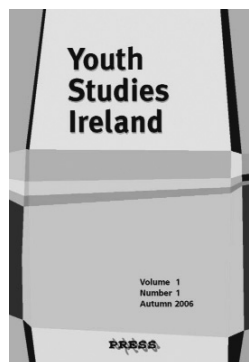


Research team: Prof. Fred Powell; Dr. Martin Geoghegan; Dr. Margaret Scanlon; Ms. Katharina Swirak.

Youth Studies Ireland Subscription Form 2010

“There has to date been relatively little social scientific research into the lives, needs and circumstances of young people in Ireland and the services and policies which are or might be provided for them This journal will fill that gap, and will also hopefully act as a spur to further research as well as contributing to best practice in work with young people”

Dr. Maurice Deolin, Youth Studies Ireland Editor



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Youth Studies Ireland

Notes for Contributors

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Maurice Devlin,
Applied Social Studies,
National University of Ireland Maynooth,
County Kildare, Ireland.
Tel. + 353 (0)1 7083781
Fax + 353 (0)1 7084708
E-mail: maurice.devlin@nuim.ie

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