

Youth Studies Ireland

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Editorial

'Youth as a concept is unthinkable.'

This was the bold assertion in a short review article thirty years ago by Stuart Hall and two of his colleagues at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham¹. It was a deliberately provocative statement, and one which, taken literally, was nonsensical. The concept of youth had already been thought (and acted upon) for centuries, at least in some parts of the world. In the context of the article, however (and of their other work, which included editorship of the hugely influential book *Resistance Through Rituals*), it was clear that what the authors meant was that youth as a concept was *not worth* thinking, that thinking it had little sociological value; or worse, that it served the ideological purpose of distracting attention from more important matters, specifically analysis and action in relation to major social inequalities. 'If groups are positioned differently in society by virtue of their class, race and sex, experience very different types of youth in their trajectory to adulthood (and to very different adulthoods at that) is it even true that youth can be definitively claimed as a stage of life?'

This was a robust challenge to the conventional functionalist analysis (certainly dominant then, and still enormously influential today) which assumed that, whatever the differences between young people on the basis of the factors just mentioned (class, sex, 'race' and ethnicity) and others like disability and sexuality, 'youth culture' was a pervasive social reality and in itself a worthy subject for sociological analysis. While on the face of it sometimes troublesome and unmanageable, such youth culture fulfils important positive functions both for society (e.g. as a site of creativity but also, ironically, of conformity) and for young people themselves (all of whom, in this view, share the developmental psychological need to experiment with roles, norms and values on their way to formulating a secure personal identity). The CCCS challenge – 'Youth as a single, homogeneous group does not exist' – proved an important corrective to the former over-emphasis on what young people have in common, and forced the analysis beyond an 'obsession with age as the most significant factor of social stratification'. But in fact – another irony – it was this very assault on the 'thinkability' of youth which probably did more than any other contribution to establish youth studies as a relatively coherent area of social scientific investigation.

Nowadays, it is rare to see a consideration of age-related factors (whether psychological, such as 'developmental need'; or sociological, such as participation in education or employment) presented as directly oppositional to, or incompatible with, an examination of other structural factors and processes: youth studies encompass both an investigation of the many ways in which young people, depending on their backgrounds, identities and circumstances, are different from (and in some cases unequal to) each other; and also an exploration of how the transition(s) from childhood to adulthood, which everyone must make, are provided for and regulated – culturally, institutionally and legislatively – in different societies. In the context of globalisation, there are increasing points of correspondence between the experiences of young people (and of course older people) in physically very disparate parts of the world; and yet cultural differences remain highly significant in shaping attitudes towards and

experiences of 'youth', both between and within individual societies. And as the interaction of technology and culture exerts a transformative influence on the life-course in 'developed' societies, youth becomes much more than a chronological phase or a social category, adopting new meanings and resonances in both practical and symbolic terms.

The multifaceted nature of youth studies is amply reflected in this first issue of *Youth Studies Ireland*. The significance of ethnicity and culture, social inequality in education, 'moral panics' and community distrust of young people, urban change and social surveillance, the policy and practice of youth work in a 'post-conflict' but still divided society, images of youth and youthfulness and how these are institutionalised in media practices – all of these themes and more feature in the following pages. The editors were most gratified by the response to the initial call for papers; and the preparation of (we think) an equally interesting and varied second issue is well underway. There is, it seems, much more valuable youth research taking place in Ireland than might have been supposed. Up until now researchers have worked largely in isolation with little sense of being part of a community of scholars with shared and overlapping interests. This journal will hopefully remedy that situation, and in itself help to stimulate further research.

The diverse character of youth studies can also be seen in the range of partners who have come together to make the journal possible. Policy makers and funders, youth organisations (both statutory and voluntary), academics/researchers and young people themselves have opted into a collaborative venture aimed at better understanding the lives, circumstances, ideas and aspirations of young people, and at contributing to the development of better responses to their needs and concerns. It is particularly valuable that the journal has an all-Ireland representation and remit, all the more so as significant developments are taking place in youth work and youth service provision in both parts of the island (e.g. the youth work legislation and the *National Youth Work Development Plan* in the South; the Review of Public Administration and the *Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work* in the North; and the new professional endorsement framework for youth work training throughout Ireland). Other areas of policy for children and young people have also been subject to significant review and revision in recent years, for example in relation to education, justice and health. For these and other reasons, it is important that we continue to engage, rigorously and systematically, in thinking about the 'concept(s) of youth' and the lived realities of young people's lives.

Maurice Devlin

For the Editorial Board

Notes

- 1 S. Hall, T. Jefferson and J. Clarke, 'Youth: a stage of life?', *Youth in Society*, 17, May/June 1976.

Youth Work in Northern Ireland: An Exploration of Emerging Themes and Challenges

Ken Harland and Tony Morgan

Abstract

This paper presents the findings of a recent research project which explored the perceptions of youth workers in Northern Ireland of the nature and purpose of their work and their attitudes towards a number of important current issues, including the role of youth work in combating social exclusion, the measurability of youth work outcomes, the relationships between trained professional workers and volunteers, the place of youth work in schools and the tensions associated with practising youth work in a 'post-conflict' society. The paper reveals that while youth workers attach immense importance to relationship-building and attending to process, they appear to have difficulty identifying more concrete or measurable outcomes from their work with young people. The youth workers see their practice as being increasingly shaped by external factors such as the funding environment, policies for formal education, social exclusion measures and the persistence of sectarian social divisions. The authors suggest that youth workers have an opportunity to secure greater recognition for the value of their work by articulating its benefits more clearly, but they caution that funders and policy-makers should be realistic in their expectations given the scale of disadvantage and disaffection experienced by many young people.

Keywords

Youth work; social exclusion; Northern Ireland; youth work in a divided society; youth work issues.

Introduction: Youth Work Purpose and Principles

The transition from primary to secondary school, from education and training to the labour market and from the family home to independent living requires certain key skills. For some this process may be hampered by factors such as unemployment, a lack of social or educational skills, or lack of adequate housing. In such cases, young people may find it difficult to follow a narrow prescribed curriculum, not least due to factors such as minimal parental support, poor earlier schooling or absenteeism. This group of young people need an education that can start where they are, identify their specific needs and proceed accordingly (Morgan et al., 2000). Failure to provide opportunities for these young people to 'increase capacities' can lead to social exclusion (McCartney, 1999).

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

Of crucial importance is the quality of the youth worker's relationship with young people and the consequent influence on their learning and development. Learning can take place in planned and focused programmes, or it may be spontaneous through informal encounters with individuals or with groups offering programmes that attempt to meet the multitude of developmental needs of young people. Youth programmes aim to be flexible and relevant and ensure progression through what is being learnt. In many cases, the opportunities and experiences brought about by youth work are complementary to what young people encounter in school (Department Of Education, 1997).

Whilst the nature of youth work appears self-evident to many, it remains a contested field of activity in the sense that there are different and competing views as to its fundamental purpose (Murphy, 1999). However, according to Smith (2002) it is possible to identify some key dimensions that have been present to differing degrees since the early 1900s. These key dimensions include the following.

Age-Related Focus As its name makes clear, youth work caters for specific age groups. The group targeted can vary from one context to another and over time. In Northern Ireland at present the age range for the Youth Service is 4–25 (Department of Education, 2003).

Voluntary Participation and Positive Relationships Youth work's ethos and process strongly emphasise a voluntary relationship between the worker and the young person. As Jeffs (2001) has commented, the voluntary principle has distinguished youth work from most other services provided for this age group. The participant retains the right to freely enter into relationships with youth workers and to end those relationships when they want. This voluntary principle has implications for the way in which practitioners work as it encourages them to think and work in more dialogical ways through developing innovative programmes that attract young people whilst appreciating they have the choice to leave a programme at any given time (Smith, 2002). As noted by Bamber (2002) if engagement and participation of young people cannot be assured, neither can the ultimate outcomes of the work.

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

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

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

The official understanding of youth work in Northern Ireland today, as expressed in the Department of Education's 'Model for Effective Practice' (2003) is broadly in line with the view outlined above, but adds as a 'core value' a commitment to equity, diversity and interdependence (known by the acronym EDI). Equity is 'essentially about fairness...about ensuring that we do not directly or indirectly exclude people'; diversity 'is about seeing difference as something that can enrich us...It is crucial that the youth worker is a positive model in terms of attitudes and responses to difference'; and interdependence is about 'building robust relationships and developing our understanding of how the actions of individuals and groups affect each other' (Department of Education, 2003: 10). Building on this commitment to EDI, the 'Model for Effective Practice' sets out three core principles which underpin the personal and social development of young people and which should be reflected in all youth work. These are: a commitment to young people's participation; a testing of values and beliefs; and the promotion of acceptance and understanding of others (Department of Education, 2003: 13).

Through their active *participation*, good youth work practice gives young people the opportunity to shape and develop their own experiences and to make decisions on issues relevant to them. Little occurs in youth work processes, group activities, programme design or meetings without the involvement and co-operation of young people. Young people are given opportunity to veto or approve processes or activities, to speak, to lead and generally to be involved in their own learning in a thinking and creative way. This proactive and interactive approach, much more a feature of non-formal youth work than formal education and vocational training, enables youth workers to ensure equality of opportunity and to offer encouragement, support, stimulation and facilitation for the development of young people's potential. At its best, participation ensures that young people are at the heart of designing, managing and evaluating youth work policy and practice and have opportunities to make a meaningful contribution within their communities and within public and political decision-making processes (Youth Service Liaison Forum, 2005).

Acceptance and understanding of others is particularly important in the context of 'a legacy of violence and communal strife, alongside other issues that affect modern society' (Department of Education, 2003:16). It is increasingly recognised that youth workers possess a unique blend of skills, knowledge and experience that is particularly effective in building meaningful relationships with young people (Harland, 2001). One of the most powerful influences in encouraging young people to engage in potentially

contentious work is the trust they have with the youth worker. It is important that youth workers are aware of their potential to communicate to young people the values of compassion, understanding and acceptance of others. Youth workers have huge potential to serve as alternative role models and by their example can encourage these values both in the young people they are immediately involved with and other young people in the community. By doing so, youth workers can help young people achieve a broader understanding and tolerance of issues such as sexuality, disability, culture and tradition (Department of Education, 1997: 10).

Youth work should allow young people to explore and question the origins of their *values and beliefs* and to gain a deeper awareness of the opinions and beliefs of others. Youth workers can help young people gain understanding through discussing moral and spiritual issues, values relating to 'right and wrong', honesty, truth, integrity, rights and responsibilities, respect for other people and their property (Department of Education, 1997). It is important to enable young people to recognise bias, examine alternative viewpoints and look for reliable sources of evidence. Again, this principle has a particular resonance in Northern Ireland, where 'views are often entrenched and where community divisions have affected all aspects of life', even to the extent that other types of conflict, prejudice and discrimination are in danger of being obscured or ignored (Department of Education, 2003: 15).

Current Challenges

The values and principles outlined above, which emphasise such dimensions of youth work as relationships, participation and education, and which rest on an inherently positive view of young people, are not necessarily compatible with the broader social, political and policy environment in which youth workers operate, and this inevitably creates tensions and challenges.

One very significant factor is the pervasive perception of youth as a 'threat' which has led to a number of policy initiatives during the last ten years related to control and management (Jeffs & Smith, 1999). Some of these have involved increased surveillance. For example, there has been an increased use of closed circuit television in shopping centres and entertainment areas specifically aimed at identifying problematic groups of young people. Not only has the perception of young people as a threat created a new way of dealing with youth issues; it could be argued that youth work itself has been shaped and influenced by these policy changes and practices. Youth workers have found themselves undertaking work in areas where young people congregate and appear to engage in behaviours that are perceived as deviant. For example, in response to concerns expressed by shop-owners and police, youth workers have been appointed to Belfast city centre as detached workers to engage with young people on the streets. There is increasing recognition within society of the potential of youth work to address the perceived negative behaviour of young people. However, those who look to youth workers may have little understanding of the traditions or principles which have historically informed and shaped youth work practice. What they require is a 'solution' to a 'problem' – for example hooliganism, petty crime, teenage pregnancy, anti-social behaviour – and they are willing to try youth work as an alternative to CCTV or to employing a private security firm. If youth work is used in this way, its educational principles are likely to be compromised.

These principles are also under threat from an increasingly 'managerial' policy approach. While the government has in recent years (DfES, 2002) officially recognised the benefit of youth work, Ord (2004: 57) has argued that 'at the same time it is denying the main tool utilised for that benefit – the youth work process'. Smith (2003: 79) has warned that 'organising youth work around concepts like outcome, targets, curriculum and issue' means there is a danger of losing relationship as a defining feature of youth work practice through a reduction in the amount of time youth workers spend with young people.

A further challenge to purpose and principle arises from the provision of youth work in institutional contexts such as school or other 'contested spaces'. While demands placed on youth workers are likely to increase in future years as more professions see the potential that youth work approaches offer, the voluntary principle may be perceived by those professions as problematic (Jeffs & Smith, 1998/99). At the same time, youth workers question whether they can do their job effectively where attendance is compulsory. As Hand (1995) points out, school-based youth work has sometimes developed 'negotiated programmes' or the agreement of a 'contract' at the start of the project which blurs the voluntary issue. Much of the current school-based youth work is funded to target specific 'problem youth' such as 'truants', young people 'at risk', the 'disaffected' and those referred by teachers, parents or social workers (Jeffs & Smith, 1999). In such cases it is at least questionable that participation is voluntary. For youth workers this poses an ethical dilemma; whether to protect and control young people or respect their rights to self-determination (Banks 1999).

Finally, there are challenges posed by the emphasis on combating social exclusion through youth work. Given that youth work has historically been engaged with both education and welfare provision, it is not surprising that it is at the forefront of efforts aimed at tackling social exclusion among children and young people: those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with special educational needs, children in care, Traveller children, teenage parents, and those caught in a cycle of poor school attendance, low educational achievement and poorly paid employment (Youth Council for Northern Ireland, 2001). In the light of this, Young (1999) believes it is important for youth workers to keep focused on the fact that they do not work with young people solely because they are 'in trouble' or 'cause trouble'. Indeed, youth work programmes that focus on particular issues such as harm-minimisation or alternatives to school, may be criticised for addressing the symptoms rather than the root causes of the problem (Morgan et al., 2000). In this context it is both unrealistic and unfair to construct youth work as a panacea for social exclusion or other contemporary social problems.

Research Method and Sample

The rest of this paper documents some findings from an exploratory research project (Harland, Morgan and Muldoon, 2005) designed to investigate the perceptions of youth workers in Northern Ireland of the nature of youth work and of key issues in contemporary youth work practice, including how it applies to and addresses social exclusion. Four focus groups were conducted (total 42 participants) with youth workers who were experienced and currently practicing in the field of community youth work, including students enrolled on the Postgraduate Diploma in Community Youth Work at the University of Ulster. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted and

the respondents included both professionally-qualified and non professionally-qualified 'indigenous' workers. The participants represented a diverse range of agencies from the statutory and voluntary sectors, came from a mix of urban and rural backgrounds and were roughly gender balanced (19 males, 23 females).

The focus groups concentrated on a number of key issues: how workers defined youth work; how youth work's outcomes could be measured; how they understood the essential skills needed for delivering youth work; how learning is delivered in different youth work contexts and to what extent (and how) youth work addresses social exclusion. The groups were facilitated by an experienced researcher and a second researcher was present to take notes in line with best practice. All focus groups were taped and subsequently transcribed. Participants were sent a written summary of the preliminary analysis of the focus group findings and invited to validate the researcher's record and interpretations, as well as to make additional comments.

Youth Workers' Perceptions and Experiences

The Nature of Youth Work

In general it was found that no one definition of youth work prevailed in the focus groups and in fact many participants had difficulty coming up with a clear statement of its nature. Responses included: 'helping young people develop'; 'personal development'; 'helping socially disadvantaged young people'; 'providing opportunities for young people'; 'empowering young people'; 'it's about citizenship education'; 'encompassing everything from education to personal and social development to employment'; 'it's about self-esteem'.

In fact there seemed to be more consensus on what youth work was *not*. The following received broad agreement: 'youth work has a different approach to formal education, it is applied differently'; 'youth work is not about doing things for a young person, but doing things with a young person'; 'it's not like formal education or carried out for a set period of time'; 'you can't work with young people alone, you've got to work with communities'; 'youth work is not about controlling young people'. Many participants, therefore, defined youth work with reference to the formal education system which they saw as failing a considerable proportion of young people. Youth work could play a valuable role in supporting young people who were struggling at school. For these respondents, youth work is concerned with 'young people who have had bad experiences in the educational system'; 'those whom the school system has failed'; 'young people who leave school with no qualifications and live in areas of high social deprivation with little chance of getting a job'. For young people like this, the voluntary and non-obligatory aspect of youth work was perceived as crucial to the youth work process. Imposing attendance requirements were deemed counterproductive as it removed the locus of control from the young people.

An important aspect of youth work is that it is not obligatory and young people have a choice. You can never say this is what we are going to do for the first six weeks because after three weeks a young person may choose not to be there. So your goals must suit the needs of young people and be appropriate to what they want.

There was strong agreement that youth work should be 'process' rather than 'product' orientated and be rooted firmly in the nature of relationship between the youth worker and the young person. Perhaps because of this emphasis on process, many participants had difficulty articulating how youth workers set their goals when undertaking youth work. Repeatedly respondents stated that they primarily focused on building relationships with young people rather than specific or measurable outcomes. As one stated:

Youth work is definitely a process; there is no specific beginning or end. How can you say at the start what the end result will be? If a young person is empowered then he or she will decide the outcomes.

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

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

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

A further important guiding principle for many of these youth workers was positive role modeling. In communities that experienced high levels of social deprivation, anti-social behaviour and paramilitary influence, the young people they worked with were most likely to be exposed to negative role models, and many did not have access to interested positive alternatives, which is where youth work comes in.

In the communities where I work young people rarely look to adults or parents for support. They have little access to positive role models and feel left to their own devices. Through our relationship with young people we can become positive role models to them.

Many participants pointed to the importance of flexibility and creativity; a willingness and ability to find and use alternative solutions to problems that young people might encounter. Once again the process was deemed more important than the identification of specific measurable aims and objective.

All the young people I work with are different and at different stages of development so you have to work with each person differently. Our programmes try to reflect this difference. This is important, particularly when someone is fragile.

It was recognised that to many people youth work might appear to take place within a very loose framework. Despite this, participants were not concerned that they could not always articulate what occurs beyond the relationship phase of youth work. Indeed, they believed it was this flexibility that made informal youth work approaches unique and distinct from formal education. For some, the absence of a rigid curriculum was linked to the issue of labelling young people.

This is where non-formal education differs from formal education. We are not trying to get a specific number of people through an exam. We don't call them failures if they don't achieve a specific grade. This is a pessimistic orientation whereas youth workers have an optimistic outlook even when young people don't reach certain standards. We don't label people as they do in school. Some may think this is simply naïve but for me this is the core of youth work.

Social Exclusion

Most participants perceived themselves as working in some capacity with young people who were socially disadvantaged or excluded. For many this was fundamental to why youth work was so important in Northern Ireland.

Youth work has been going on all through 'the troubles'. There are many excellent examples of youth work going on behind the scenes and picking up the pieces of young people's lives and supporting them to understand issues that no one talks about such as violence, sexual and mental health.

The majority of participants worked in inner city and rural areas with young people aged 12–25. Their work was with the young unemployed, young homeless, ethnic minorities, young people underachieving at school, young people involved in crime, joy/death riders, teenage mothers and young fathers, young people abusing drugs and alcohol, young people with behavioural problems, young people with mental and sexual health problems, young people identified as marginalised within communities characterised by paramilitary influence, sectarianism, violence and marital breakdown. Typically the work took place in contested spaces such as interface areas, city centres, on the streets, schools, parks and in communities with little or no youth provision. Notably, it was in discussing these issues that respondents appeared most passionate and energised.

Some workers felt that this focus on social exclusion has been determined by the changing social and political context in Northern Ireland over thirty-five years of sectarian violence and political unrest. Initially, and to some extent more recently, Youth Service provision was primarily centre-based and located in the heart of communities. This trend has radically changed recently with many professionally

trained youth workers perceiving themselves as doing more 'specialist' project and outreach work using a variety of bases, leaving youth centres to be run by indigenous part-time youth workers. While some saw this as a necessary shift, others believed that youth centres were a valuable resource and their demise was detrimental to local communities. There was a general consensus however that the nature of funding sources and funding requirements have played a key role in the direction that youth work has taken over the past decade. For some participants this was not necessarily in the best interest of young people:

In order to get funding now you have to demonstrate ways in which you are working with 'disadvantaged young people'. This has meant that the focus of youth work has switched from a focus on all young people to a focus on disadvantaged young people. The danger therefore is that youth work becomes issue focused rather than young person focused.

There were participants who still perceived themselves as providing 'traditional' youth work in youth centres. Typically however, these participants were local people who are not professionally qualified and are either working voluntarily or part-time several afternoons or evenings per week. In contrast, the majority of professionally trained youth workers did not work in 'traditional' youth centres. One participant spoke of how youth work has changed over the past number of years:

In the past youth workers typically worked alone in a youth centre with part-time staff. Today there is much more emphasis on partnerships and working in the community with marginalised young people. It is good that the skills of youth workers are more appreciated by agencies such as Probation, Health Boards and even in schools. The danger is however, that youth workers are expected to be experts in these areas. It's good that things are changing but I'm not sure that youth workers can be all things to all people.

Assessing the Impact of Youth Work

The majority of participants believed that the effectiveness of youth work 'could not and should not be measured'. Others believed that its effectiveness was often self-evident. For instance:

I think working with young people in groups you can see development and growth even if it is just they are getting on better with each or showing more confidence.... You can measure it, but it is very, very hard to put it down on paper.

Another participant commented:

Youth work has been criticised because we can't measure outcomes. But how can you measure personal development or the impact that the work has had upon a young person. Sometimes it's only years later that a young person realises the benefit they have had from being involved in youth work programmes.

Two key markers of achievement frequently mentioned were levels of participation (both in terms of frequency and duration) and the extent of relationship with young people. For example, one participant stated: 'We measure the number coming through

the door. We know how many young people attend and their involvement in the club'. Another commented that 'as a detached youth worker we can measure how many young people we come into contact with'. These indicators should not be underestimated, particularly in socially disadvantaged areas, as they are evidence of young people entering into positive relationships with adults on a non-obligatory basis. For the most disadvantaged and excluded young people, this is a very positive 'measurement'.

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

An interesting perspective on the subject of youth work's impact was provided by a youth worker who did not participate in the focus groups but who was interviewed separately in another strand of this research project. He placed the issue of measurement in the context of his own work dealing with very disadvantaged young people and extreme inter-community tension.

For example at our last residential some of the lads came back saying I have never tasted water from the mountain spring. Instead of telling them it is 'boggin', you stop the van and get them to get two big bottles of water and drink it. Maybe it's because they haven't done that before ...a wee special moment. Whether you see simple things like this as community relations doesn't really matter. It mightn't be the big picture, but when you have to give indicators and measure things surely this is still important. How do you measure a change in someone's attitude? How do you measure someone who has been through an extremely bad experience and has moved a little bit compared to someone who has not been through much? If you take an area like [this one] then it may be ten times harder to get some young person on a cross-community project than it would be somewhere else. Yet how do you measure that?

Key Challenges

Many focus group respondents felt that they were responding to crises within their communities rather than being involved in supporting young people. For example, they were under pressure to address anti-social behaviour amongst young people in response to community concerns. There was a fear that youth work would overly focus on 'sorting young people out' rather than offering them supportive, creative and exciting learning opportunities.

There were serious concerns voiced regarding the nature of resource allocation and in particular funding arrangements for youth work. One respondent explicitly stated that youth work funding 'makes youth work problem-oriented'. The need for youth workers to be involved in securing funding for the continuance of projects was also a major concern. For many, the demands on time and energy to complete

cumbersome funding applications took them away from what they perceived as ‘the real business of working with young people’. Participants were also concerned that the ‘competitive nature of funding’ has had a negative effect on youth work. As one participant stated:

Youth work has become competitive and that undermines traditional youth work values. The nature of funding now determines what we do with young people rather than the issues that young people feel are important.

A number of participants believed that this problem was exacerbated by the top-down orientation of government policy.

We keep waiting on the next government policy or priority to tell us what needs to be done with young people. Often it is youth workers who are at the coal-face and know what the needs of young people are. But we are told what to do with young people by policy makers and funders.

Both the status of youth work and the role of the youth worker were also of concern to respondents, particularly those who had received professional training in youth work. Some felt uncomfortable with the fact that ‘anyone working with young people can call themselves a youth worker’. While acknowledging the fact that volunteers and non-qualified youth workers provide an important service to young people, some qualified workers believed that only those with professional training should be formally recognised as youth workers. They believed that initial professional training is essential in order for youth workers to understand the ‘skills, knowledge and experience needed to work with young people’. These participants expressed concern that youth workers were often perceived as ‘less professional than school teachers, social workers and other professionals’. In contrast, non-qualified participants believed that it was more important for youth workers to be ‘passionate about the work’ and prepared to be ‘available to young people at all times’. These indigenous youth workers felt they had more knowledge of the young people they work with and were more accessible. While the non-qualified workers were very articulate in discussing the issues confronting young people in their communities, they had more difficulty engaging in discussion about the nature and purpose of youth work.

Some participants with many years’ experience drew attention to the ways in which the nature of youth work in Northern Ireland has changed. They identified ‘the troubles’ and difficult socio-economic circumstances as having an adverse affect on communities and young people.

Being a youth worker is different now than it was twenty years ago. The essence of youth work is no longer simply to get young people off the streets and into youth clubs. Youth workers are expected to engage young people who have particular difficulties and provide a service that attempts to meet all their needs.

Another youth worker highlighted the increasing complexity of young people’s lives and therefore of the work itself.

It’s only in recent years that youth workers have recognised the need to address issues such as suicide and mental health and the importance of diet and the environment. Young peoples’ lives are becoming more and more complicated and the transition into adulthood is more prolonged.

A further significant challenge for youth work in the Northern Ireland context was highlighted in the in-depth interview with the youth worker in the area experiencing severe sectarian tension. In this area and others like it young people's involvement in rioting is commonplace, may even be seen as a manifestation of community solidarity. It also provides excitement, a regular 'buzz'. It is difficult for traditional youth work to compete with this.

There are huge numbers who don't even want to attend clubs. Most say the place is boring and shudder in horror at the thought of going to the youth club.

Discussion: Emerging Themes and Challenges

The comment just quoted makes it clear that a major challenge facing youth workers and educationalists is the need for a more innovative way of educating and learning that can tackle issues associated with growing-up in a 'post-conflict' society. Youth work in Northern Ireland takes place within the context of a contested and divided society emerging from over thirty five years of conflict and political unrest. Throughout this conflict, youth workers have consistently been at the coal-face of political, community and sectarian violence that has impacted upon the lives of young people. While themes of community relations, political education, citizenship and civic participation emerged throughout the research, there appeared to be a lack of clarity or agreement amongst youth workers about their role in this type of work or how it should be implemented. In certain communities it is perhaps aspirational to expect youth workers to be able to persuade young people that they have a future role in a civic society. Civic participation in the face of such disadvantage requires broader social initiatives than informal education, not just from youth workers, but from all those who work with disaffected young people.

It is certainly a challenge to find sufficient resources in order to develop alternative and more creative ways of supporting young people from communities who directly experience political conflict and violence. This is particularly pertinent as European Peace monies dry up and many projects which evolved as a result of the troubles in Northern Ireland are being abruptly terminated. The impact of short-term funding upon the practice and development of youth work and the effect of this upon young people in Northern Ireland has not been, and perhaps never will be, fully measured. Critically however, challenges to delivering youth work in contested spaces are not solely about resources. There are ethical questions about the motivation of youth workers and the extent to which their subjective political beliefs influence their relationships with young people. These are challenging but important issues that must be addressed by the Youth Service in Northern Ireland, particularly as involving young people and supporting their active participation in shaping the future of Northern Ireland is a high priority for funders and policy makers.

These funders and policy makers increasingly require youth workers to articulate more precisely the value of their work in terms of measurable outcomes. It was apparent that the majority of youth workers in this study struggled to identify outcomes beyond the initial relationship phase of their work. Although youth workers spoke of increased confidence and self-esteem amongst the young people they worked with, they found it difficult to express these in more measurable or quantifiable terms.

While a person-centred approach has always been a fundamental aspect of youth work, in an ever-changing funding and policy context, more concrete outcomes are now expected. This emerging trend has created particular tensions for youth workers who feel pressurised to concentrate on the 'product' aspect of their programmes rather than youth work's historical emphasis on 'process.' Indeed, this reorientation appears to be happening without the consent or engagement of those at the forefront of youth work practice. Those interested in monitoring youth work and its effects need to take into consideration the difficulties youth workers are experiencing adjusting to this new paradigm. The fact that some socially excluded young people actually participated in a youth work programme at all was in itself seen as a highly significant 'product' by some respondents. On the positive side, however, developing the ability to offer more concrete and tangible evidence of effectiveness and to adhere to agreed standards of practice offers youth work the opportunity to be accorded greater recognition and a higher status and value amongst funders, policy makers and other professionals working with young people.

Youth work in Northern Ireland has a clear ethos and a set of values and principles that underpin its approach. In this sense it is clearly a profession. Importantly however, there may be aspects of youth work that people may be capable of doing whether they are qualified or not. Indeed, this may be a key reason why youth work is so distinctive. In addressing issues of professionalisation it is necessary to acknowledge the myriads of hours that thousands of volunteers commit to young people each year. However, there are few other professions where those who are not professionally qualified are given the same title as trained professionals. There is a need for much more rigour and clarity in the definition of the roles of all those who engage with young people. This is all the more important when youth work is practised in complex environments such as schools and communities in conflict. It is given added urgency now that the decision has been taken by the relevant professional and educational bodies to raise the threshold for entry to youth work as a profession and all programmes of initial undergraduate training – including the only course available in Northern Ireland at the University of Ulster – are to become degree-level programmes.

It is important however to acknowledge that the development of youth work as a profession will depend on more than providing professional training to non-qualified youth workers and increasing the level and duration of such training. France & Wiles (1997:13) have argued in the UK that there must be improvements in project management, monitoring and evaluation. They also suggest that youth work lacks a coherent, self-governing professional organisation and the leadership to develop the new skills and thinking a modern Youth Service requires. The Youth Service Liaison Forum set up in 2003 identified the lack of a co-ordinated strategy as a stumbling block to the development of the Youth Service in Northern Ireland. In response to this the Forum produced a *Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work: 2005–2008* (Youth Service Liaison Forum 2005). The setting up of the Forum and the publication of the youth work strategy is a very positive step, particularly as there was a process of consultation with youth workers. It is to be hoped that the strategy, and any new youth work structures which emerge out of the recent Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland (2006) can go some way to addressing the key issues and challenges outlined in this paper.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the contribution made by the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) for funding the research project and the work of Dr Orla Muldoon in the original research.

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Youth, Governance and the City:

Towards a Critical Urban Sociology of Youth Crime and Disorder Prevention

Matt Bowden

Abstract

This article considers the historical and spatial context for the emergence of youth crime and disorder prevention initiatives in Ireland. These initiatives have to be understood in the context of their relationship to the broader 'urban question' and in particular the relationship of the peripheral housing estate to the rest of society and the economic sphere. More recent changes in the nature of society and the emergence of a 'liberal creed' have resulted in greater use of surveillance technologies for offsetting the opportunities for crime to be committed. In this context, youth crime prevention initiatives must be seen as an extension of an ensemble of devices for governing young people's behaviour. The rise of fortified locales in cities serves to reinforce exclusivity and to mask the working class and marginalized from the elite and vice versa. The paper suggests that the challenge is to create an active public sphere for young people.

Keywords

Youth crime prevention; young people and public space; urban studies.

Introduction

The public debate in Ireland about anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) in the two years since the publication of the Criminal Justice Bill 2004 has raised to prominence the question of how young people are policed and governed.¹ Critical commentators saw the orders as a retrograde step in the light of the welfarist-restorative principles underlying the provisions of the Children Act 2001 (O'Mahony, 2005; Bacik, 2005). The political rhetoric spun in the debate emphasised the need to protect the community from certain behaviour in public, mainly but not exclusively by young people. Alongside this, there has also been a growing demand in Ireland for high technology surveillance in private and public spaces.²

A variety of legislative and policy changes in Ireland, either already introduced or under consideration, highlight the need for discussion and debate as to the 'politics of community safety', all the more so since such developments are likely to encourage a realignment of governance nationally and locally.³ In addition, there is a consensus on utilising local authority structures on which to graft a national crime prevention strategy (National Crime Council, 2003). Some of these developments signal a reconfiguration

between the central state and 'the local' and as such a discussion of crime and disorder prevention, as it pertains to the city as a locale, is fitting at this point.

My intention in this article is to analyse the emergence of youth crime and disorder prevention from a perspective that draws on a critically informed urban political economy. The reason for this type of analysis is primarily that youth crime prevention strategies in Ireland have to a considerable degree been mobilised in response to social disorder in specific urban locales and have been represented in media as being associated with working class housing estates. Hence this article will focus specifically upon youth crime and disorder prevention as a set of combined actions by state and civil society actors in specific urban contexts. Youth crime and disorder prevention has largely been under-analysed in the Irish context apart from the occasional evaluation or descriptive account (Bowden 1998; Bowden and Higgins 2000; Quinn 2002; Seymour 2003). A critical perspective is offered in this article in an attempt to counterbalance the weight and influence of analyses based upon positivistic, risk factor modalities (see Kirton, 2005: 292). The dominance of the risk paradigm has given rise to 'prevention experiments' premised upon intervening to disrupt a 'criminal career' (see Farrington, 1982; 1994; 1996). Such approaches sit well with the politics of 'zero tolerance' and 'fixing broken windows' policies (see Kelling and Coles, 1996) and raise the spectre of actuarial social control whereby subsets of the population become 'targets' for surveillance and 'profiling' based upon abstract risk categories (see Castel, 1991). The article aims to build upon Wacquant's (2001) critical account of youth disorder in the city and on Garland's (2001) outline of the punitive discourses that take hold in late modern, developed societies. Thus this article might best be viewed as a process of the *naming* of issues as a prelude to further practice, research and debate among practitioners and academics alike. The particular focus is on the historical and socio-spatial conditions that gave rise to the Garda Youth Diversion Projects (previously known as the Garda Special Projects). The article then critically examines the question as to whether we are now entering a new mode of urban governance in which the state has rallied a range of actors in pursuit of 'retaking' of spaces in the city. To help cast some light on this I have drawn from a qualitative research project involving interviewing and participant observation over an eight year period.⁴ In addition, I have brought together a diverse literature, both theoretical and empirical, from criminology, urban sociology and Irish urban studies, to conjoin a critical urban perspective with a criminological and sociological approach.

Governance and the City: Some Theoretical Considerations

In this section, I sketch a conceptual framework for an understanding of crime control and urban governance; and briefly discuss urban political economy and how it might apply in this field.

Governance: Partnerships, Restructuring and Welfare

The last decade has seen a marked growth of both national and local crime prevention initiatives in Ireland (see Seymour, 2003). Some of these initiatives take the form of an array of local 'partnerships' that appear to represent a shift towards a model of network governance at local level. Commentators such as Crawford (1997) have suggested that this mode of governance rests upon appeals to a particular ideology of

community that gives privileged access to decision-making to local elites and hence enables powerful interests to construct the content and form of crime prevention.⁵ In this way, they ‘reinforce power differentials and associated processes of exclusion’ (Crawford, 1997: 224). Such partnerships have been referred to by Garland (2000; 2001) as being part of a process of *responsibilisation* and a dimension of a late modern ‘crime complex’.⁶ From this perspective, partnerships in the area of crime control are a means of extending the power of the state while it is simultaneously in the process of reducing its size and function (Garland, 1996). Garland’s (2001) overall point is that governments have restructured penal and crime control regimes in order to govern the poor and those marginal to labour markets at a greater distance.

Garland has been criticised on the grounds that his analysis has limited application outside of the Anglo-American world: Kilcommins et al. (2004) conclude that despite Ireland’s vulnerability to policy transfer from the UK and US, the ‘crime complex’ has only appeared in a ‘dilute and distinctive hybrid form’ (2004: 291). More recently however, the Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrats (PD) coalition has embarked upon a series of criminal justice ‘reforms’ (including the provision of ‘Behaviour Orders’ for young people) that mark a shift towards a greater emphasis on discipline.⁷ Despite the limited applicability of Garland’s ‘culture of control’ thesis, a *punitive turn* on the part of the state is nevertheless discernable.

While some have suggested the existence of a new ‘dense institutional web’ of governance whereby areas left behind by global processes are re-institutionalised by partnership structures (Saris et al., 2002), the nature of the Irish state differs substantially from the one presented in Garland’s version of the ‘governmentality thesis’ (see Foucault, 1977). Hence it may be necessary to look at the nature of discipline in Irish society through a different lens. As such, an understanding of the ‘glocalisation’ of the Irish state is central to an appreciation of the context for youth crime prevention.

Globalisation, Governance and the Irish State

New forms of governance may reflect the drive to restructure society and economy in Ireland as a means of underpinning the country’s international competitiveness. Bob Jessop has pointed out that the emergence of a more ‘flexibilised’ and re-scaled national space followed the decline of the Fordist-Keynesian state⁸ and the development of a post-Fordist production paradigm whereby the state has been ‘encouraged to focus on the supply-side problem of international competitiveness and to attempt to subordinate welfare policy to the demands of flexibility’ (Jessop, 1994: 262). This, according to Jessop, has required a ‘hollowing out of the state’ that has included the ceding of power to supranational bodies and devolving functions downwards to partnerships: in the spatial rescaling process there is thus a *de-centring of the state* (Rose and Miller, 1992) and a shift from *government to governance* (Jessop, 1994: 272). Thus the ‘spatial disorder’ that is created requires a new ‘institutional fix’ (Peck and Tickell, 1994). A drive towards competitiveness such as has happened in Ireland necessarily involves a degree of disciplining as economic and social restructuring entails a new realism regarding expectations: this serves then to reinforce an ideology that eschews the institutionalisation of the welfare state. In their consideration of the position of one peripheral housing area, Bartley and Saris (1999) point out that in the

context of the need for international competitiveness, the Irish welfare state has been rolled back and welfare spending diverted towards economic restructuring. Consequently, 'welfare recipients [were] identified as the source of their own unemployment and poverty problems, and as such, [were] becoming targets of criticism' (1999: 82). Part of that process of restructuring has involved labour market supply side measures which area-based partnerships have sought to provide (Bartley and Saris 1999; Geddes, 2000).

Ireland's 'institutional fix' has been quite an eclectic mix of neo-corporatism together with a key developmental role for the state and its agencies. Ó Riain (2000) has referred to this as the 'flexible developmental state' (FDS); it differs from bureaucratic, authoritarian and politically repressive 'tiger' economies in Asia (see O'Hearn, 1998: 9) by virtue of embedded and autonomous developmental agencies such that the FDS constitutes a 'networked polity':

In transforming itself to operate within a locally and globally networked economy and polity, state governance itself is 'rescaled' as the prior privileged role of the national level gives way to a 'glocal' form of state (Ó Riain, 2000: 166–167).

This networked, glocal polity is underpinned by a neoliberal ideology. This 'liberal creed' is manifested in the low tax, wage restraint and reduced social spending policy mix of the Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrats coalition and a persistent illusion of the hegemony of the market (Ó Riain, 2004: 28). This 'creed' may be the basis of Ireland's version of the 'exclusive society' (Young, 1999) as the protection of new wealth becomes a driver for mobilising new security technologies and a hardening attitude to those marginal to, or indeed outside of, production and consumption markets.

Urban Political Economy

Urban political economy has been concerned with analysing ways in which social space integrates with economic production and the ideologies supporting and underpinning that production. In analysing the layers of urban structure, Castells (1977; 1978) has suggested that the economic sub-structure revolves around relations to the labour market, the means of production, property and technology. The political-institutional apparatus organises space around two relations: (i) domination-regulation and (ii) integration-repression; in this regard, the institutional system segregates and officialises space while the ideological apparatus organises space by denoting it with a 'system of signs' (1977: 126). Hence the state and its control apparatuses need to be seen as permeating space as a means of organising and integrating it with capitalist production. The 'urban question' thus revolves, *inter alia*, around how residential space becomes integrated with the productive sphere, and so on. This question then revives itself for each productive generation, as argued by Brenner (2000), as a two-sided social and political problematic: first, the contradictions of capitalism are produced and fought out in the spatial arena; and second, the urban question involves interpretation and struggle in the life world of citizens (Brenner, 2000: 362).

An understanding of social and political phenomena such as youth crime prevention, and urban crime control more generally, can be enhanced by an appreciation of the dialectic between the physicality of the city and urban relationships,

or between the urban as a *thing* (its physical form) and the urban as a *process* (Harvey, 1997). Hence youth crime and disorder prevention needs to be understood in terms of its embeddedness in a locale together with the conflicts and coalitions endured and formed as an urban process. My main point here is to establish the idea that the socio-historic juncture bringing about advanced levels of urban marginality led to urban disorder (see Wacquant 1993a; 1993b; 1996; 1999) and modes of policing and prevention also arose in that context.

Historical Context I: Peripherality, Invisibility and Marginality in the Dublin ‘New Towns’

In the 1980s and 1990s, population and settlement trends in the Dublin region were influenced by a combination of market factors such as higher land prices in the city centre; policy factors such as the housing allocation policies and house building strategies; and tax and stamp duty incentives for private sector house purchasers (Drudy and MacLaran, 1994). This outward shift has also been explained as the result of the destructuring of the traditional industries and the containerisation of Dublin port (Drudy and Punch 2000; Drudy and Walker 1996). The running down of the inner city acted as a *push factor* that encouraged the out-movement of younger families leading to the skewing of the age profile of new suburbs (ibid., 11–12). A considerable level of population dispersal in Dublin resulted, leading to the Dublin region having an extended periphery and a relatively contracted core (CSO 2003; Drudy 1991; Drudy and MacLaran 1994; Drudy and Punch 2000; MacLaran 1993). Over a twenty-one year period from 1981 to 2002 the new suburban areas continued to grow relative to the declining trend in the municipal area, together with the development of housing estates on agricultural land in the county area.⁹

The two specific peripheral areas of North Clondalkin and West Tallaght were on the receiving end of this population dispersal: in the former the process had already begun by the late 1970s and growth in the latter began to surge during the 1980s. By the turn of the century, population growth had appeared to level off in North Clondalkin, leaving it with an increase of 65% over the twenty year period. Starting later, the population of West Tallaght continued to grow during the 1990s and grew by 200% in twenty years as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Population Change in selected urban peripheral locations 1981–2002*¹⁰

Peripheral Area	Population	Change	Change
	1982 n	1981–1991 n (%)	1981–2002 n (%)
West Tallaght ¹¹	6,926	16,786 (142.4)	21,333 (205.1)
North Clondalkin ¹²	12,419	20,915 (68)	20,487 (65)

Source: CSO Census of Population, Vol.1, 1981, 1986, 1991, 2002.

As a more general indication of population growth at the periphery, the 'New Town' of Tallaght had a population of 8,707 persons in 1971. This had increased by 432% to 46,366 by 1979, and to over 56,000 by 1981: growth over the decade of roughly 500% (CSO, 1981, 1986). This rapid outward expansion amounted to a complete reordering of Dublin city during this period, as planning attempted to accommodate economic expansion based on the recommendations of the Myles Wright (1967) plan. However, the 'New Town' planning experiment was a failure. First, the New Towns created social environments that were worse than the ones they purported to replace as they 'accentuated social segregation' (Bartley, 1999: 233); and second, the creation of transport corridors around the new towns and the screening of local authority housing estates from passing view, contributed to a sense of their 'invisibility' (ibid.).

According to two urban and regional analysts, such failures went beyond errors of planning practice, but were ingrained in the 1937 Constitution's underpinning of the structural position of the Irish propertied class. Thus the appreciation in land values could not be used for social gain which was

...eventually to be paid for by the working class through hugely inflated land prices. This became reflected in higher than necessary housing plot prices and resulted in a reduced capacity of the local authority to fund adequate community facilities (MacLaran and Punch, 2004: 36).

Local authority social housing policy in Ireland adds a set of complicating factors to the mix. First, such housing provision has been residual in character, part of the welfare safety net (O'Connell and Fahey, 1999: 37).¹³ Second, social order problems contributed to the poor reputation of so-called 'problem estates' (ibid.: 34). A third complicating factor resulted from a political misadventure by the Irish state in the form of the Surrender Grant Scheme which provided incentives to the most economically advantaged tenants to shift to the private sector. In the process this undermined the economic stability of the estates and rendered a damaging blow to the sector generally (O'Connell and Fahey, 1999: 40).

The New Towns After Fordism-Keynesianism

The capacity of the state to rescue the urban periphery from these various complications was seriously undermined by the end of the Keynesian economic welfare model and the Fordist production paradigm that supported it. In this context welfare spending would have to be kept within strict limits. The structural position of the urban peripheral housing estates was compounded by the failure of the Irish state at the time to resolve a glaring contradiction resulting from the post-1958 industrialisation policy, namely that the Dublin working class was further undermined by the type of jobs lost after the dismantling of protectionism and the type of jobs created after industrialisation. These required higher levels of skill and were dispersed over a wider geographical scale (Whelan, Breen and Whelan, 1992: 118-9). The peripheral estates and the new towns became the physical manifestation of a contradiction between a planning model that sought to cater for expanding pools of labour power and an industrial development policy that favoured dispersal. Hence, as Brenner (2000) has pointed out, the urban question was being played out as this contradiction manifested itself in everyday conflicts over order. The high

unemployment that existed at this time together with the undermining and greater residualisation of the peripheral housing estates created the conditions for clashes between the police and young people and led to a greater sense of state insecurity. It is to these events I now turn.

Historical Context 2: The Events at Ronanstown and the Interdepartmental Group on Urban Crime and Disorder

A stolen car driven down Neilstown Road on Tuesday November 19th 1991 travelled to a piece of open ground and the young drivers alighted. The police officers who pursued the vehicle were pelted with stones and when a fire engine arrived on the scene it too was subjected to stone-throwing by a large group of young people. Six fire fighters received injuries from the stone-throwing as they attempted to deal with the fires at Neilstown Drive.¹⁴ These events were carried as a main item of news the following morning on the radio and they made headlines in the various print media in the following days.

Within a week the Minister for Justice addressed an adjournment debate in Dáil Éireann on 'Violence and Vandalism in Dublin's Suburbs' during which he announced that he had set up the Interdepartmental Group on Urban Crime and Disorder (IGUCD).¹⁵ While the establishment of the Group had been drawn out over a protracted period, it was this one key event at Ronanstown that catalysed matters.¹⁶

The Group examined the Neilstown/Ronanstown area and its analysis then provided a framework to be applied to all urban areas in Ireland with policing problems.¹⁷ While the Group appeared to rely upon 'commonsense', its report did point out that the disorder was associated with the history of the peripheral areas in question. The characteristics of such areas they listed as being 'single class', having no amenities and lacking in access to services (Government of Ireland, 1993: 15). The 'problem', as stressed throughout the report, was to do with the dynamic between displacement and settlement in this newly created urban context in which a young population was decanted from the inner city to 'the middle of nowhere' (1993: 51).

The Group's analysis of the incidents at Ronanstown on the 19th of November 1991 had less to do with crime per se and more to do with the broader concern for social order, as the report argued that the problem was attributable to young people's congregations and 'stone throwing' resulting in the intimidation of the 'law abiding majority' (1993: 26). Moreover:

Underlying this concern is the perception that authority itself appears to be under attack and a fear that, unless the trend is "nipped in the bud", all of the conventions on which ordered society is based will be put in jeopardy with extremely serious consequences for society as a whole (1993: 26) [emphasis added].

Thus the measures that flowed from this and other similar statements in the IGUCD report have to be seen as an attempt to achieve social integration by seeking to reconstruct the 'conventions' that would restore or reproduce social order. According to the report, the situation at Ronanstown, were it to be repeated elsewhere, would have resulted in the breakdown of order in urban society as a whole. Hence the volatility of the situation at Ronanstown represented a threat to the social order but because it was seen as symptomatic of what was happening in other urban peripheries around Ireland, a wider threat was posed to economic recovery generally.

In stating its definition of the situation the Group pointed out in a number of paragraphs that it was a criminally-inclined minority that manipulated a law-abiding majority. In this regard, they proffered the theory that the problem was the result of the manipulation by deviant Others. No evidence was offered for this apart from the police view, which the Group accepted:

The Gardaí advised us that a tendency toward the emergence from time to time of general disorder problems involving groups of youngsters can be attributed to a significant extent to the presence of a small hard core of criminals who incline towards the view that (a) authority in all forms (Gardaí, fire services, etc.) should be ‘taken on’ and (b) that the local community should be made to understand that it is this hard core rather than the authorities who hold the *upper hand* (1993: 23) [emphasis added].

It followed then that a *strategy of persuasion* was necessary to wrest power from the ‘hard core’. It needed to convince the community that disorder was located with the hard core group and by a logical extension, order would be restored by the state in that it would or should reassert the ‘upper hand’. Two strategies were implied by this. The first of these was to minimise the power of criminally-inclined young people through a process of *selective incapacitation* (see Garland, 1993). The second was that of some form of *pedagogic action* was required on the part of the state in order to mobilise community sentiment in its favour.¹⁸ Hence while at a surface level the state responded with hard and soft policy options, it simultaneously entered into a form of *symbolic struggle* over its own legitimacy. The form of public policing thus became ‘symbolic policing’ (Loader, 1997) or a process of reinstating the symbols of the state where these were absent (for a discussion of this mobilisation in the case of French cities, see Body-Gendrot 2000; Crawford 2002).

The Group recommended the extension of a number of situational crime preventive measures like roundabouts on roads to ‘design out’ joyriding from the physical landscape. Alongside these, they extended the persuasive strategies deployed by the GRAFT project in Ronanstown.¹⁹ Hence the Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) were conceived in the context of an emerging urban crisis. State and civil society actors may indeed have been mobilised in response to these events at Ronanstown in order to pre-empt any deepening of such a crisis. Moreover, the remit of the GYDPs was framed in the context of the need for reclaiming the city from the young people who occupied the open spaces. In the housing estates, the open spaces were the only option young people had for a public sphere at that time. But more importantly, the young people involved in the clashes with the police represented a wider urban contradiction and so this may have added to the urgency with which the state responded.

The emphasis upon achieving state *upper-handedness* in the IGUCD report was a call for the mobilisation of both state and civil society actors as a (re)establishment of sovereign power over newly-urbanised space. Significantly, in this instance the Department of Justice stepped in as a last resort to co-ordinate a global response to the problem of order. The economic and social conditions in Ireland at that time precipitated such a response: the provision of welfare-based solutions appeared to be out and an extension of justice-based solutions appeared to be in.²⁰

Case Study: Youth Crime and Disorder Prevention after the IDGUCD Report

In this section I present a case study based on interviews carried out with practitioners, police and other state personnel in 1999 focused upon one Garda Youth Diversion Project in the peripheral area of Ballynew (area and interviewee names are fictional). The area has a population of about 20,000 persons in four main housing estates. The GYDP was hosted by a youth service run by a regional youth organisation. In Ballynew, the GYDP worked very closely with the Gardaí. The senior youth worker Willie and his colleague John, the paid co-ordinator of the GYDP, met with the police every two weeks or so. In addition, John said that he had reason to contact the local station almost every day. Both police officers and the youth workers co-operated jointly to respond to actual or potential public order issues and often contacted each other to decide who would be the most appropriate party to respond. Local people were often advised by the police to approach the GYDP co-ordinator if they experienced public order issues associated with congregations of young people. After that, the GYDP co-ordinator was despatched to persuade young people to move elsewhere as Willie explained:

John would probably go over [and] probably try and identify who is in the group and then go and have a word. And the word would probably be from the point of view of 'listen lads, okay you want to have a bit of crack or a bit of fun but do you realise that obviously you are rubbing some people up the wrong way and would you not consider doing your drinking a hundred yards further down the road where you'll get no hassle from the community, 'cause if you sit here and there are complaints being booked like, the Guards are going to get 'round eventually and one or two of you is going to get hurt'. So that'd be the starting point. (Willie, senior youth worker, Ballynew)

In this context the youth service brought to the policing function a pedagogic form in that it sought to actively persuade young people to congregate elsewhere or not congregate at all. It also sent out general house-to-house communications with a view to responsibilising parents. John explained how the youth service dealt with a particular situation:

Now we got rid of that simply by we done a leaflet up here ourselves and we asked a couple of questions, you know, we sent it round to all the doors. 'Do you know where your child is? Do you know that there is a huge increase in blah blah blah' and now by really sending that leaflet around in [the two housing estates] the problem virtually disappeared. (John, Ballynew GYDP Co-ordinator)

Here a 'cultural arbitrary' was imparted (Bourdieu, 1977) whereby young people and children *should be under the gaze of their parents*. In addition, the Ballynew GYDP took on a panoptic function whereby if young people were not under the gaze of their parents it would act in that capacity itself. The Ballynew GYDP then worked with the police to ensure that the effect of young people appearing in public was dissipated by reattaching them to family, school or work and in the absence of these institutions to incorporate them in some form of activity. In this regard, youth work extended into the domain of crime and disorder prevention, and in this instance acted as a surrogate institution. The welfare of young people and their engagement in the public sphere was secondary to the impact of their behaviour and the disorderly potential of their

play and spontaneous gatherings. In essence the youth service here extended a gaze over the area, and by logical extension, it spread the panoptic gaze of the network of agencies to which it was loosely attached. Hence rather than being an end delivery agency for a programme of welfare, the host youth service became the front end of a system of network governance whereby a criminal justice gaze could be cast over a wider area and over those who had no prior status in the justice system.

The Contemporary Context for Youth Crime and Disorder Prevention

What follows is a more contemporary analysis of the city as the conceptual backdrop to the emergence of a more recent tendency towards surveillance.

The Information Age, the City and the Taming of Nature

Dublin city centre has become a major site of consumption and there has been an attempt to redefine a centre through urban restoration most clearly expressed in the redevelopment of O'Connell Street (Corcoran, 2004). Since the 1990s, greater use has been made of public order legislation to remove poor and marginal people from the streets (see O'Donnell and O'Sullivan, 2001). This mirrors efforts by cities across Europe to revitalise and re-brand the city as a destination for tourism and capital investment (see Coleman 2003). In addition, the residential transformation of Dublin city centre has seen the invasion of a new and youthful urban middle class (Kelly and MacLaren, 2004) which has ushered in a pattern of development that Smith (1994) has referred to as 'urban revanchism'.²¹ Property supplement writers have encouraged the pioneers of this 'new frontier' (Smith, 1994) to retake residential areas where they will find the 'best bargains' or if they 'want to show real gains, [to] look on the margins' (O'Connor, 2003). So despite any redesignation of the city as distinct cultural zones or 'moral regions' (Park, 1925) a new entrepreneurship has grown up around the revalorisation of city spaces based upon their actual and potential market value. Elsewhere, such an urban process has been linked with the 'hardening of the surface' of the city towards the poor and marginal who are both priced and designed out of residential property and the new 'castles of consumption' (Davis, 1990).

The peripheral housing estates have remained largely in the same condition as before: they have both literally and metaphorically been 'by-passed' by the 'Celtic Tiger'. West Tallaght for instance still suffers the poverty of 'crumbling walls' and 'damp bedrooms' (Holland, 2005: 11). A recent-community based study in West Tallaght reported that this peripheral area had retained higher than average concentrations of unemployment, that one third of households were headed by lone parents and the risk of poverty posed to households remained high despite economic growth in the country generally (Axford et al., 2004). Moreover the *invisibility* of peripheral housing estates (Bartley, 1999) has been radically worsened given that they have become bound within the new corridors of flow comprising the network of transportation routes surrounding the outer city.

In more recent years, the city has become divided into zones that are policed with distinct styles. Thus policing of the urban periphery has remained 'confrontative', in contrast to a more benign style in the city centre (Institute of Criminology, 2003). For as Bannon (1999) suggested, Dublin city has been developing both outwards in terms of housing and industry, and at the same time concentrating commercial, office and residential development at the centre. This reorganisation of the division of labour between the core and periphery has come to be reflected in spatial variation in policing.

Thus the conversion of space into product (Lefebvre, 1991) has resulted in a new context for young people's autonomous participation in public space. As the city centre becomes more of a consumption space it is to be enjoyed through market relations, e.g. shopping and the 'night time economy' involving drinking and clubbing (see Lovatt and O'Connor, 1995; Hobbs et al., 2000). Indeed, in the Dublin periphery, young people continue to be defined out of 'community' and find themselves debarred from generic community facilities that results in them creating cultural lives involving the use of the streets, the alleyways and the open areas (Lynch et al., 2005).

Since the IGUCD there has been considerable economic and cultural transformation in Ireland. Persistent unemployment, which had dogged the urban periphery for two decades, and was the cause of much of its failure as an experiment (Punch and MacLaran, 2004) has now been reduced. In this connection, youth crime prevention programmes have become part of the state's ensemble of measures geared towards those most marginal to labour markets.²²

Informational Capitalism and the Exclusive Society

The information age has replaced the industrial age as the predominant mode of development (Castells, 1989). It has become the major structuring and organising dynamic of our time such that cities have become to be ordered around the needs of the advanced service sector elites (Castells, 1996; 2000).²³ Fundamentally, cities are based upon the primacy of flows: this includes the flow of information both as raw materials and end product, together with the flow of people through transport corridors. The primacy of flows has divided cities in *spaces of place* (neighbourhoods) and *spaces of flows* (protected elite locales often expressed as gated communities and advanced service centres packaged for the new urban professional middle class). Hence the informational city has emerged as set of segregated spaces reflecting greater social polarisation in the occupational structure.

In this context, the growth of surveillance technologies has accompanied the growth in property ownership and the need to protect both goods themselves and the enjoyment and consumption of these goods. Jock Young (1999) has pointed out that the greater the risk posed to property the more those in possession begin to construct a city that is based on the systematic exclusion of others and more particularly that a growing capitalised private security industry blooms whose very economic output is the exclusion of those without labour or consumer market currency. The city, he suggested, has become a system of filters that upholds a regime of 'sanitising and moralising geographies' or a 'cordon sanitaire' (Young, 1999: 18–20). But the cordon sanitaire might also operate within working class communities to (re)stratify the pro-social and the anti-social and reconfigure governance in such a way as to bolster local elite groups who have access to some level of governing power.

A Contemporary Case Study of Youth Crime and Disorder Prevention: Contested Governance in Leevale-Campanile Hill²⁴

The Pinevale GYDP operates as part of a youth service [the Leevale-Campanile Hill Youth Project (LCHYP)] which is a local branch of a large youth organisation. The Pinevale Project covers two local authority housing estates of Leevale and Campanile Hill (LCH) that have a combined population of 7,000 persons. On my first ever contact as a researcher with the Pinevale Project in 1999, they had established a strict set of boundaries between themselves and the police: the youth workers were not involved in Garda affairs including community policing or responding to public order issues; police officers referred specific young people to the youth service from among those cautioned under the Youth Diversion Programme.²⁵

I returned to the area in 2004 and worked mainly alongside Rick, the GYDP coordinator, for 12 weeks. By then, all of the original personnel had moved on; there was a tense and potentially violent environment surrounding the emerging cocaine trade; this pushed staff to work more in an outreach mode; and there was greater pressure put upon the staff at LCHYP by the police to revert to a form of high visibility, pro-police activity programme. By contrast, the Pinevale Project had developed a practice that centred upon creating dialogue with young people and used this as a platform to develop relationships. Morag, a senior colleague of Rick had sought to promote the idea of generating 'youth voice' as a means of improving young people's participation in the public sphere so that their perspectives would be taken seriously by development agencies and institutions. However, the youth work staff worked in an environment that was increasingly hostile towards young people to the point that a coalition had emerged consisting of Council officials, local residents organisations, senior police officers and the local parish committee who 'lord[ed]over the area'.²⁶ Morag indicated in an impromptu interview that this powerful governing network had developed an impenetrable discourse that stratified young people into 'the good' and 'the scumbags' which made it difficult to develop a pro-youth agenda. According to Morag, the 'lords' had been the major driving force for the erection of CCTV around the housing estates. During my time at LCH, the area had become dotted with these CCTV cameras.

While the youth workers at LCHYP understood and appreciated why local people wanted to feel safe, they remained unhappy that the CCTV cameras were erected. They continued with their dialogue with young people on the streets. This dialogue was therefore working against the consensual tide that was emerging in favour of digitised, technological solutions to young people's use of public open space. While the CCTV scheme appeared to work from an in-built mistrust of young people, the Pinevale Project on the other hand had a tradition of promoting a 'youth on the streets' agenda: this was achieved through celebrating young people's creativity and energy and giving voice to their concerns through drama, pageantry and the festive, especially around Halloween and other public occasions. In this local context, youth workers working within GYDPs were under continuing pressure to morph into crime preventionists which they actively contested and resisted.

Conclusion: The Future of Youth Crime and Disorder Prevention?

Bouts of public disorder in the urban periphery, which was acutely devoid of social infrastructure, drove youth provision away from youth welfare in the direction of youth governance – i.e. concerned with the regulation of behaviour.²⁷ It has been argued here that this has been influenced to a significant degree by the process of ‘glocalisation’. As time has advanced, the economic and cultural logics of globalisation have influenced the public sector institutions charged with managing Dublin City to the extent that the local authority has recently embraced an entrepreneurial ethic that has made it ‘pro-developer’ in the gentrification of the City (Kelly and MacLaran, 2004: 51–52). This is in line with the idea that the city is being developed around a ‘growth machine’ in which key decisions are sought by elites so as that ‘urban fortunes’ can be made and unmade (Logan and Molotch, 1987).²⁸

The more that governing elites adopt a ‘liberal creed’ (Ó Riain, 2004) the greater the need to reclaim space it seems. Coleman has suggested, based upon his study of Liverpool, that this dynamic is part of the roll-back of the welfare state and the roll-out of the neoliberal state where there is a struggle for ‘a hegemony of aesthetics regarding who and what should and should not be seen’ (Coleman, 2004: 32). Indeed, Kelly (2003: 177) has suggested that a re-imagining of youth as a dangerous Other reflects ‘an institutionalised mistrust of young people’ and as such risk management and disorder prevention strategies ‘emerge at the intersection of institutionalised imaginings of danger, risk and economy’. The ASBO and the Good Behaviour Contract have been offered as examples by British criminologists of ‘the progressive criminalisation of marginalised youth’ based upon an ‘ever-expanding government machinery of “mistrust”’ (Stephen and Squires, 2004: 368). Together these ‘situational’ devices for reducing the supply of criminal opportunities are bound together with the emergence of digital surveillance that supports a neoliberal economic agenda (Graham and Wood, 2003: 243). The ASBO debate in Ireland during 2005 perhaps gave us an insight into the future as there appeared to be a political re-imagining of some as the dangerous Other (especially working class and marginal young people). The future may hold a greater degree of human and digital surveillance for these young people. This being the case, there is a greater onus on those working with young people in the housing estates to resist such tendencies and indeed there is a challenge to the young people themselves to claim their ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre, 1996).

The case studies of Ballynew GYDP and the Pinevale Project at Leevale-Campanile Hill presented in this essay suggest that practice in this domain is confronted with a choice between (i) the active engagement in constructing youth discipline through the participation in panoptic network governance; or (ii) the conscious and active contestation and resistance to the greater disciplining and surveillance of young people. In the latter form, youth work may survive intact as a distinct practice whilst in the former it has already hybridised and adapted to the emergence of a more punitive social order. Only a practice that recognises young people’s right to participate in the public sphere has transformative potential: by enabling young people’s voices to be heard above the vested interests, such a practice may become a means of radicalising and ultimately transforming social institutions.

Notes

- 1 The British Crime and Disorder Act 1998 provided for 'anti-social behaviour orders' and the acronym ASBO quickly entered common use. It was the term used throughout the debate about the new criminal justice legislation in Ireland, including by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Minister for Justice himself. In the Criminal Justice Act 2006 as passed, however, the amendments to the Children Act 2001 provide for what are called 'Behaviour Orders'. See the critique by Hamilton and Seymour in this volume.
- 2 One such programme is the Community Based CCTV Scheme inaugurated by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 2005 (DJELR, 2005).
- 3 Some of these changes include new legislation restructuring policing; extending local authority structures to include some form of police accountability in the form of Joint Policing Committees under the Garda Síochána Act 2005; and the establishment of a Youth Justice Service in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (see Government of Ireland, 2006). See Hughes (2002) for a discussion of 'community safety politics' in Britain.
- 4 This article is based upon a wider research project exploring the relationships between state and civil society actors engaged in local level youth crime and disorder prevention programmes in urban Ireland. The data were gathered at three distinct time periods in 1998, 1999 and 2004–5. The research involved in-depth interviewing with policy makers, practitioners, senior police personnel and practitioners. Interviews were archived for subsequent analysis. The earlier data were part of a study carried out at the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin. The 2004–2005 module of the research was carried out at the Department of Sociology, Trinity College Dublin. The research has been partly supported by the Third Sector Research Programme, Royal Irish Academy.
- 5 As pointed out earlier, there appears to be a consensus for this mode of governance in Ireland, reflected not least in the recommendations of the National Crime Council's (2003) proposed national strategy on crime prevention.
- 6 In late modern society, according to this thesis, citizens are encouraged to become more self-provident as part of a cultural shift towards prudentialism and self-protection. Moreover, crime is considered to exist as a normal social fact or another late modern risk against which individuals and households can purchase protection from private security providers in the market. This is bound up with a heightened political consciousness about crime such that the state is forced into a series of adaptations. New forms of 'government at a distance' have emerged in this context by virtue of the constriction of the penal-welfare state and rolling out of a more punitive orientation. Partnerships between state, private and civil society actors in this context ironically serve to extend the reach of state power to areas of social life far beyond government offices (see Garland, 1996; 2000; 2001).
- 7 Similarly, there has been a climb-down from implementing the provisions of the Children Act 2001 in relation to the age of criminal responsibility. While that Act originally provided for an increase from seven to twelve years (a provision never actually implemented) the amendments incorporated in the Criminal Justice Act 2006 raise it only to ten years for murder, manslaughter, rape and aggravated sexual assault.
- 8 Fordism in the classic sense involves a 'virtuous circle' of production and consumption in which wage indexation is linked to productivity and so on. This is usually underpinned by a 'social democratic welfare state' (Peck and Tickell, 1994: 286). The Keynesian welfare state underpins the Fordist production paradigm by regulating the wage relation and directing demand in the economy together with supporting infrastructure and linking 'the interests of organized capital and labour in a programme of full employment and social welfare' (Jessop, 1994: 255).
- 9 Despite recent increases in the city centre, the overall population trend in the Dublin County Borough (Dublin City) is downward. Taking 1971 as a base year, the Dublin City population declined by 4% between 1971 and 1981; and by 15.7% and 12.8% respectively for the decades 1981–1991 and 1991–2002 (CSO, various years; see also Drudy 1991; Drudy and Punch 2000). The population of Fingal increased by 33% between 1981 and 1991 and continued to grow, increasing by a further 28% between 1991 and 2002 (CSO Census of Population; Drudy, 1991; Drudy and MacLaran 1994; Drudy and Punch 2000; MacLaran 1993).
- 10 There are two caveats accompanying this data. Firstly, these areas are not officially enumerated using these categories of West Tallaght and North Clondalkin. Both of these derive from popular and commonplace usage. Secondly, District Electoral Division (DED) boundaries came into use only after the 1981 Census. By then, North Clondalkin had a sizeable population relative to West Tallaght. Thus it was not possible to capture any surge in population for the former.

- 11 Tallaght West comprises the Tallaght DEDs of Jobstown, Killinarden and Fettercairn (see Punch 2002: 64). These DEDs are those identified in West Tallaght Rapid Areas (see www.pobal.ie/rapid) and generally referred to in research reports (see for instance Axford et al., 2004: 8).
- 12 North Clondalkin comprises the Clondalkin DEDs of Cappaghmore, Moorfield, Rowlagh and Palmerstown West (North Clondalkin Community Development Project, 2001).
- 13 It has also been in decline since the 1980s (O'Connell and Fahey, 1999).
- 14 Sunday Tribune, 24th November 1991.
- 15 Historical Parliamentary Debates, Volume 413, 27 November 1991, Adjournment Debate, Dublin Juvenile Vandalism.
- 16 This observation is based upon interviews conducted with senior officials in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform carried out in 1999. A fuller analysis of this data will be presented in subsequent publications by the author.
- 17 The report itself was written by an official who subsequently became the Director-General of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. As such the text represents a governmental discourse and provides a telling insight into the interpretations and meanings that the Group attributed to the causes and outcomes of urban disorder. The Group were not given specific terms of reference and were asked to propose measures that would address 'difficulties'. The Group reflects and represents the state in action: it was comprised of officials at a high level and there were no lay members or external expertise. There was no independent research commissioned. Hence, this was a purely state-driven exercise where the knowledge and understandings of state actors determined the eventual outcome.
- 18 I use the term pedagogic action as developed by Bourdieu in his foundation of the theory of symbolic violence. Pedagogic action is 'the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power'. Moreover: 'the symbolic strength of a pedagogic agency is defined by its weight in the structure of the power relations and symbolic relations (the latter always expressing the former) between the agencies exerting an action of symbolic violence. This structure in turn expresses the power relations between the groups or classes making up the social formation' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 7).
- 19 Give Ronanstown a Future Today (GRAFT) was set up jointly by the Ronanstown Youth Service, An Garda Síochána and the Probation and Welfare Service in 1991. It and a similar project in Killinarden, Tallaght evolved into Garda Special Projects by 1996 and such projects have been extended to at least 60 locations around the country since 2000. For a more analytical account, see Bowden and Higgins 2000. After the publication of operational and practice guidelines, this scheme of projects became known as the Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) (see Centre for Social and Educational Research, 2003).
- 20 This is connected to the new flexibilities and disciplines that are required in a post-Fordist order. John Lea (1997: 52) points out that in this connection: 'Crime control thus becomes "actuarial", concerned with risk assessment, incapacitation and the management of delinquency. This takes a juridical – as opposed to a welfare – form, as it did in the early nineteenth century. But the object is less that of preparing the new working class, through the experience of penal discipline, for the "responsibility" required by labour for capital – factory discipline – and more that of introducing new flexibility, dismantling social rights and keeping the "underclass" under control. The relationship between the workfare state and actuarial criminal justice continues to be that of reciprocity; the criminal justice system picks up those who are unwilling to bend to the new flexibilities of the workfare state'.
- 21 This refers to a process whereby spaces once occupied by the dispersed working class have been gentrified and commodified for a new, globally connected middle class of city dwellers.
- 22 This was best exemplified by the incorporation of the GYDPs as a social inclusion labour market measure in the National Development Plan 2000–2006 (Government of Ireland, 1999).
- 23 The new informational capitalism according to Castells (1996) sets off occupational polarisation. According to Breathnach (2002) despite the conceptual idiosyncrasies of the concept of polarisation, there has been a 'more definite tendency towards occupational, earnings and household income polarisation in the 1990s' (Breathnach, 2002: 3). Indeed an updated analysis by Breathnach (2004) suggests that polarisation has been occurring in the occupational structure given the rise in professional jobs, the reduction in intermediate and skilled jobs and the rise of unskilled and undeclared occupations.
- 24 This second case study is based upon a participant observation study carried out at the latter end of 2004 in Leevale-Campanile Hill (LCH), a similar area socio-economically to Ballynew except closer to the city.

- 25 The Youth Diversion Programme was introduced in An Garda Síochána in first as the Juvenile Liaison Officer Scheme in 1963. First introduced in the Dublin area, it was extended nationwide during the 1990s. It has since been placed on a statutory footing by the provisions of the Children Act 2001.
- 26 There are parallels here between Morag's term 'lords' and John Flint's (2002) term 'governors'.
- 27 That youth crime and disorder modalities began in the then 'new towns' was also a significant factor: firstly, because this was where most youth disorder occurred; and secondly, that there was no civic or municipal infrastructure to cope with the stresses of urban restructuring. These sites were also remote from the traditional working class organisations; and, grassroots activism was slow to emerge (see Punch, 2002).
- 28 In this vein, land rezoning has come under parliamentary and judicial scrutiny in the last decade to the extent that the commingling of the political and economic elites over land deals has been of considerable public interest. Indeed, a former Minister for Justice, Mr. Ray Burke, has been judged to have received a 'corrupt payment' from private property developers in 1989 for the purposes of supporting and 'influencing' the planning status of lands in North Dublin (Flood J., 2002: 139–140). Moreover, redeveloping space no longer utilised for Fordist based production requires both 'rescaling' and 'reconversion' (Swyngedouw, 1996). This involves the 'reconversion' of space evident in, for instance, the closing or rationalisation of industrial zones (such as Dublin port) and its 'reconversion' (ibid.) to a financial district; this process required a degree of institutional innovation on the part of the state (setting up of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority) together with the flexibilisation of the tax laws to facilitate the economic elite at senior levels in such developments (see 'Bid to Flush Out Tax Avoidance', *Irish Times*, 3rd February 2006). Internationally, such high visibility projects have been facilitated through processes that themselves occur 'through the formation of new elite coalitions on the one hand and the systematic exclusion or further disempowerment of politically and / or economically already weaker social groups on the other' (Swyngedouw, 1996: 1449).

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Addressing Youth and Being Young: Investigating the 'Bias of Youth' in Irish Advertising

Neil O'Boyle

Abstract

Advertising is a potent symbolic force that is intimately tied to youth culture. This paper examines what is referred to as a 'bias of youth' in advertising, suggesting that this manifests itself both 'textually' and 'occupationally'. Bound to the emergence of consumer society, youth culture has been identified as a site of change and uncertainty associated with a more intense aestheticisation of everyday life. As theories of global transformation increasingly centre on consumption, the market as a conception of the world has gained currency. In particular, it is argued that an acceptance by advertisers of theories of global 'flux' which construct the marketplace as a site of transformation, compels them to disproportionately favour youth when attempting to capture the *zeitgeist*. In addition, it is suggested that these ideas have infiltrated the professional ideologies of advertising practitioners, so that occupational suitability is equated with physically being young. It is further suggested that the category of youth itself shows signs of 'expansion' and is therefore prompting a re-examination of our conceptions of youth and age.

Keywords

Youth; advertising; Ireland; Celtic Tiger.

Introduction

Advertising has long been a subject of considerable social and academic interest, frequently in the form of criticism of its putative effects. Amongst those considered most susceptible, and by extension most vulnerable, to the influence of advertising is the ambiguously defined category of 'youth'¹. This paper attempts to link textual and occupational fetishisations of youth in advertising. My suggestion is that the semiotics of 'youth' in advertising must be related not only to a general cultural preoccupation with youthfulness in a globalised consumer society, but also to professional ideologies and routines amongst advertising practitioners which equate occupational suitability (particularly 'creativity') with physically being young. Drawing on the work of Marianne Lien (1997; 2004) and in particular her notion of a 'bias of temporality' in marketing, I will suggest that an aesthetic (or 'textual') prioritisation of youth in advertising derives in part from the need to manage what is perceived by practitioners as an environment of constant change, which in turn acts to reinforce an 'occupational' bias of youth. In other words, not only does ageism infiltrate the very ethos and

productive logic of the advertising industry but it also constitutes an important dimension of the self-images or repertoires of belief (Cronin, 2004) of advertising practitioners. As Mahoney (2004: 46) states: 'Advertising, after all, is obsessed with youth, and in turn, the make-up of agencies is skewed young'. In this paper, I partly draw upon empirical data deriving from in-depth interviews² with agency practitioners³ working in the Irish advertising industry. However the work is also shaped in some measure by my own experiences, observations and tacit knowledge as a past practitioner in Irish advertising⁴.

Youth, Modernity and the 'Textual' Bias of Youth in Advertising

The evolution of advertising to its present, ubiquitous form has been a gradual and incremental process that has developed in tandem with the advancement of 'consumer society' (Baudrillard, 1973). As practitioners, initially in the United States, developed more advanced techniques of persuasion and early signs of advertising's nascent omnipresence became more pronounced, critics and commentators (such as Packard, 1957) expressed concern about advertising's manipulative potential. In recent times, this has developed to include 'mainstream critiques of consumer culture such as Klein (2000), Ritzer (2000), Schlosser (2002), and film documentaries such as "The Corporation" and "Supersize Me"' (Kelly et al., 2005: 506). Against evaluating the ethics or morality of advertising in relation to the 'young', this paper examines the linkages between textual and occupational fetishisations of youth in advertising. In respect of the former, a predominance of youth representations and an under-representation of older people (in comparison to population demographics) in contemporary commercial advertising⁵ is revealed in various studies (Peterson and Ross, 1997; Peterson, 1995; Carrigan and Szmigin, 1999a, b; Carrigan and Szmigin, 2003; Bramlett-Soloman and Wilson, 1989; Zhou and Chen, 1992). While an argument cannot be made in precise terms, I will suggest that a more intense aestheticisation of the representations which accompany the circulation of consumer goods (Nixon, 1997) and the growth of an ideology of consumerism (Heath, 2001) manifested in 'lifestyle' have been important elements in this general shift. Moreover, I argue that late/post-modern theories emphasising societal 'flux' have been absorbed and perpetuated by the advertising community and partly explain the (double) 'bias of youth' in advertising. Given the paucity of research explicitly focusing on youth and advertising in Ireland, this section draws upon an assortment of international literature, encompassing studies of global consumer culture, cultural studies of youth and recent theoretical and empirical research on advertising. As such, this paper advances from a generalised discussion of advertising in a global economy to a narrower consideration of the views of Irish advertising practitioners in the next section.

Although 'the ideological linking of family, consumption and television fostered the post-war process of modernisation' (Bernold and Ellmeier, 1997: 198), youth culture was increasingly viewed as harbinger of change. Arvidsson (2003) suggests that in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s, the mass proliferation of consumer goods and youthful patterns of consumption were perceived as a threat to traditional values. Indeed, during the 1960s and 1970s, youth appeared to liberate class through style (Hebdige, 1979; Smee, 1997) and consequently 'came to symbolise the radical transformations induced by a rapidly expanding consumer culture' (Arvidsson, 2003: 80). Advertisers

recognised a powerful and untapped emotional territory in the uncertainty of youth and in response, advertising symbolism mixed messages of anxiety and aspiration – a combination that persists today (Corrigan, 1997). It appeared that in youth culture advertising had found a natural alliance: the apparent insecurities, aspirations and ‘openness’ associated with youth identities combined with a perceived need ‘to belong’ made young consumers disproportionately willing to invest economically and emotionally in advertising.

In youth culture, consumption invested the whole life of the individual. This indicated that consumer goods could be given meanings that went far beyond their actual uses; that they could be made to signify a particular way of life or, as the term would become, ‘lifestyle’ (Arvidsson, 2003: 118).

Married to its creative potency and vitality, youth culture during the 1960s and 1970s became increasingly politicised, capturing the attention of a budding ‘cultural studies’ field, chiefly associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University⁶. However, advertising proved highly successful in reintegrating counterculture (Goldman, 1992) and translating value revolutions, such as the punk movement and feminism (Corrigan, 1997) into a new variety of lifestyle consumerism. As such, ‘youthful attachments to consumption and, so it seemed, to life in general, appeared to be spreading to people who were no longer young in a biological sense’ (Arvidsson, 2003: 116). By the 1980s, not only did global media (and advertising in particular) appear to have succumbed to an ideal of youth but this period also witnessed the widespread emergence of theories of ‘globalization’ and ‘post’ or ‘late’ modernity, heralding a period of extensive social and cultural change. Contemporary advertising aligned itself largely in reaction to (and acceptance of) these theories.

If Mort (1997: 15) observed that ‘consumption has loomed large in the historiography of most post-war Western societies’, I suggest that this idea gained increasing popularity in theories of modernity from the 1980s onwards. In accounting for the widespread transformations that have seemingly attended an era of intensified ‘globalization’ – ambiguously defined (see Van Der Bly, 2005) – theorists have tended to prioritise the realm of consumption (Featherstone, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 1995; Slater, 1997). ‘Consumption is now taken as the crucial sphere where individual members of late modern society actively or reflexively express and construct ever more diverse, fluid, fragmented and hybrid identities’ (Preston, 2005: 62). Correspondingly, the breakdown of barriers implied by globalising market trajectories is held to intensify the individualisation of consumer society (Leiss et al., 1986; Beck, 1992) implying increased market dependency and an enhanced role for mediating institutions. With the apparent dominance of sign values (Baudrillard, 1998), marketing and advertising are not merely considered important but are afforded privileged status via their ability to link consumers to other cultural forms and hence, the boundaries between different categories within the mediascape become increasingly permeable (Falk, 1997). Going further, Wernick (1991) makes a compelling argument for the infiltration of a marketing and promotional ethos into all aspects of life giving rise to a culture of self-promotion⁷.

With the apparent triumph of capitalism and the collapse of planned economies by the 1990s 'the market as a conception of the world' has gained ground internationally (Garsten and Lindh de Montoya, 2004: 5). Several commentators highlight what appear to be signs of transnational (Hannez, 1993) and transcultural (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995) alignment. Robins (1997) describes a growing sense of a 'new world order' and the emergence of 'global tastes' attributed to the transnationalisation of economic and cultural life. In accounting for this, Robbins (1997) ascribes considerable importance to the globalization of media, to which he attributes a postmodernist, expansionist logic: 'Media geographies are thus becoming detached from the symbolic spaces of national culture, and realigned on the basis of the more 'universal' principles of international consumer culture (Robins, 1997: 33). In light of this, I suggest that youth as a primary 'universal' registers at the core of international consumer culture and transnational marketing efforts because, as De Mooij (1994) indicates, the youth market is increasingly considered 'single'⁸.

In this sense, youth culture represents the atypical 'consumption community' (Boorstin, 1973). This relates to my suggestion above that in view of apparent age-associated insecurities, youth culture appears to exhibit greater conformity (Sutherland and Sylvester, 2000) yet also, paradoxically, a greater variety of aesthetic expression. Thus, given the imperative by major consumer goods companies in the 1990s to promote most heavily those brands most likely to succeed in a global marketplace (Haden et al., 2004), it is perhaps understandable that those targeting 'youth' offered greatest appeal. As McRobbie (1994: 192) indicates: 'the commercial requirement of novelty as a condition of profitability reflects precisely the uncertainty of subjectivity'. In addition, the ideals of youth – beauty, recognition, romance – afforded advertisers a wealth of creative possibility to captivate consumers. As 'the internationalization of brands has been stimulated by the internationalization of media' (De Mooij, 1994: 211), myriad consumer-touch points have been generated and mainstream audio-visual media is increasingly dominated by a "MTV aesthetic" (Dickinson, 2000) and the floating signifiers of urban youth culture. Indeed, it has become almost axiomatic that brands are considered 'the preserve of young people' (Harkin and Huber, 2004: 44). There is growing evidence, however, that candidacy for 'youth' is changing, incorporating the cognitively, as well as the physically young. Thus, as I suggest below, we may require an expanded sociological notion of youth and specifically one that gives greater attention to its psychosocial aspects.

In tandem with the advance of (global) consumer society, the advertising industry became increasingly professionalised. Nixon (1997), for example, suggests that Fordism and flexible specialisation (or post-Fordism) were important elements in the shift towards mass consumer marketing. With the end of the so-called 'creative revolution' of the 1960s in American advertising, a new era of management science was ushered in (Fox, 1990). However, by the 1980s, 'creativity' once again became a priority in advertising, with attention this time shifting to the so-called 'second wave' agencies arising in the UK (Nixon, 1997). Not only was 'creativity' considered the primary means by which agencies could effectively tap into the emerging 'lifestyle' ethos of consumers via an increasing use of attitudinal and psychographic data, but the language of flux also produced a change in the organisational structures and cultures of advertising institutions, which were adjusted to fit developing notions of 'enterprise'

(Rose, 1990; du Gay, 1997) and ‘flexibility’ (Alvesson, 1998). Thus, in addition to the centripetal aesthetic hold ‘youth’ appeared to exert on global consumer society, I suggest – drawing on the work of Marianne Lien (1997, 2004) – that notions of ‘flux’ and ‘change’ were absorbed by the advertising community, ultimately serving to reinforce a bias of youth in commercial texts. In order to remain ‘up-to-date’ marketers and advertisers did not look to ageing consumers but disproportionately fixed their gaze upon youth trends (Swayne and Greco, 1987).

Employing data emerging from eight months fieldwork in the marketing⁹ department of a Norwegian food manufacturer, Lien considers ‘the ways in which marketing mediates and reconfigures notions of time, change, consumption and consumers’ (2004: 48). Drawing upon accounts which seek to describe widespread experiences of change, such as Gidden’s ‘high modernity’ (1991) and Bauman’s ‘liquid modernity’ (2000), Lien establishes a platform from which to investigate the processes of modernity (theorised in these accounts) as enacted and experienced within the context of a marketing department. Chief among Lien’s observations is that marketing is biased towards future scenarios and change: ‘Repeated references to novelties, news, the future and anticipated change serve to constitute what I will refer to as a bias of temporality in marketing discourse’ (Lien, 2004: 49). Reconfiguring Lien’s ‘bias of temporality’ to investigate youth, I suggest that a heavily futurist orientation and focus on change when producing advertisements inclines advertisers to prioritise youth in their texts. In submitting to an ethos of constant change, unstable identities and endless wants (Campbell, 1987), consumer culture perpetuates a logic of disposability and an ‘aesthetics of ephemerality’ (Appadurai, 1996). O’Barr (1994) suggests that all advertisements contain ideology. Thus, advertising representations provide paradigms for relations between members of advertising’s intended audience as well as those defined as outside it (Frith, 1997). In the case of commercial advertising, I argue that the ideology of consumerism condenses into an ideal of youth at the representational level¹⁰. Aging is arrested, ignored and resisted. My argument is not that a generally futurist orientation continually generates new kinds of appeals or techniques of persuasion but that the rhetoric of change and creativity – largely adopted to convince clients that ideas are contemporary and ‘up to date’ – drives advertisers to disproportionately draw from and subsequently appeal to youth. ‘Partly due to its constant promotion of novelty, advertising is imagined to be the sign of the times, representing the leading edge of social change’ (Cronin, 2004: 34/5). Advertisers desire to stay abreast of change and this pushes them to disproportionately consider youth when attempting to capture the zeitgeist; the apparent fickleness of youth tastes perceived as naturally aligned to the ‘creative’ imperatives of advertising. Furthermore, I suggest that professional notions of societal flux which help to anchor youth as a central aesthetic have in turn profound implications for industry mythologies, perpetuating a bias of youth in occupational terms. In the following section, I examine the linkages between textual and occupational fetishisations of youth via a discussion of interview work conducted with Irish advertising practitioners.

The 'Occupational' Bias of Youth in Advertising

One visiting an ad agency is always taken by the youth of its staff...ours is an occupation for the young (Kover, 1977: 36).

Carrigan and Szmigin (2003) suggest that advertising generally excludes older people (in representational terms) in favour of the youth market. In accounting for this bias, I suggested (above) that an explanation demands consideration of many factors, but is likely to include the following: a conception of youth as the pulse of modernity; the perceived aesthetic and creative potentiality afforded by youth appeals and themes; a demonstrable inclination on the part of youth to invest financially and emotionally in advertising derived, in part, from a putative insecurity and openness of identity; and an apparent synergy or affinity between global brands and 'universal' youth culture. In this section, however, I wish to examine a second (occupational) manifestation of the bias of youth, drawing from substantive studies of practitioners in advertising as well as incorporating some qualitative interview data deriving from my own research. While the empirical data included here is taken directly from interviews with Irish practitioners (using initials for the purposes of confidentiality and anonymity), the views expressed should be interpreted within the wider industry context discussed in the previous section.

However explained, it would appear that advertising has long been regarded 'a business in which youth has a special kind of moral advantage' (Tunstall, 1964: 17). Even today, Tunstall's description appears to hold true. Denise DeMars, director of human resources and worldwide compensation director for Foote Cone & Belding in the United States, recently commented: 'We have a higher [percentage of] Generation X in our demographics than the typical labour force' (quoted in Noe, 2005: 28). Similarly, Mahoney (2004: 46), drawing on Bureau of Labour Statistics figures, suggests that more than fifty nine percent of employees in the UK advertising industry are between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four. Unfortunately, there are no similar figures currently available from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) or the Institute of Advertising Practitioners of Ireland (IAPI). Nevertheless, my own findings offer some support to the proposition that 'advertising is a young person's industry' (Powell, 2000: 212). While commentators and journalists (such as Mahoney above) argue that what I have termed an 'occupational' bias of youth operates in advertising, an adequate explanation for why this is so is markedly absent in these accounts. Bird (1993: 330), for example, blandly states that 'the challenge and variety of work in the agencies appeal more to young people'. I want to suggest, in line with Cronin (2004), that advertising is constituted via 'circuits of belief' that flow between practitioners, clients, regulators, consumers and academics. In doing so, I will suggest that several of the abovementioned factors that can be used to explain the 'textual' bias of youth are also implicated in a corresponding 'occupational' bias. (In the language of 'discourse analysis', the metaphors and descriptions under the following headings might be described as 'interpretative repertoires'¹¹.)

Flexibility and Flux

As suggested above, developments in British advertising in the 1980s which prioritised ‘creativity’ (Nixon, 1997) and sponsored emerging theories of ‘flux’ and globalization, generated organisational responses among advertising agencies worldwide that were based on ideas of ‘flexibility’ (to manage change) and ‘creativity’ (to harness change). In explaining his personal philosophy of how advertising should function, the following comment from an account planner in an Irish agency reveals an explicit belief in both flux and adaptive business:

I think everyone should take an heuristic approach and the best people and the best companies tend to do that as well...nothing stands still so you need to have models that are fluid and I think that's pretty much our approach as well.

(SB: Account Planner)

Organisationally, agencies have drawn much from management discourses which promote ‘flexible’ business (Alvesson, 1998) and models of ‘commercial enterprise’ (du Gay, 1996). As the above quotation implies, a language of ‘flux’ and ‘flexibility’ is evident in industry discourse. Beliefs, such as the ‘pace of social change [is] much faster than in any prior system’ (Giddens, 1991: 16) infiltrate advertising discourse and are evident in the writing of industry gurus and specialists. Theodore Levitt (1983), for example, has argued that companies that do not adapt to the new global realities will become victims of those that do. This resonates with a description of her work by an Irish account executive:

I think you constantly try to improve and I think you're in trouble the day you stop trying to improve, and I guess its constant change, constant innovation...I think it is about constantly, constantly looking at new ways of doing things.

(DT: Account Executive)

Here again a language of flux is apparent. My suggestion is that a configuration of the market (and modernity) as a site of flux via the circulation of various discourses – academic, media, and industry specialists – is continually absorbed by practitioners and, as Lien (2004) notes, is increasingly useful when describing their dispositions, concerns and anxieties. I argue, however, that this futurist orientation compels advertising practitioners to increasingly look to youth culture as the site or ‘pulse’ of change and in doing so, reinforces an occupational bias of youth. Tunstall (1964: 17), for example, offers a direct correlation between the textual and occupational biases of youth, commenting: ‘most advertising is directed at younger rather than older people; advertising is obsessed with the new product, the new package, the new price, the new campaign; in turn it is generally agreed by young and old to be a “young man’s business”’. In a similar vein, the following comments from an Irish media executive construct advertising as a high-energy occupation that requires alertness and attentiveness and a competence in various skill sets, and consequently (he implies), is likely to prove too demanding an environment for older workers:

I don't know if older people could take the pace – computers, meetings, focus groups, pitches, search engines...I think it would probably be too stressful for them.

(NW: Media Executive)

'Technology', it would appear, is a crucial factor in the above explanation. This can be linked to a much larger debate concerning the flexibilisation of labour markets and a general imbrication of ICTs in working life associated with post-Fordism and the rise of Knowledge Intensive Firms (KIFs)¹², which arguably engender a more widespread occupational bias towards youth. In the above excerpts, advertising practitioners construct agency work as fast-paced, complicated and stressful, yet this is explained by a rationale for responsive and adaptive business in a world in which 'nothing stands still'. Thus, flux is considered both a (market) condition and a necessary (organisational) response.

Creativity and Connectivity

Another fundamental explanation for the occupational bias of youth in advertising appears to rest in the industry's demand for creativity. 'Creativity, indisputably the least scientific aspect of advertising, is arguably the most important' (Reid et al., 1998: 1). While the occupational bias of youth, I argue, permeates the entire advertising industry, there is considerable evidence to suggest that it is more pronounced among creative practitioners. 'We continue to associate youth and hip with creative. Age, it appears, has more to do with the logic of the advertising industry than aging itself' (Powell, 2000: 212). In several accounts, there is a sense that 'creatives' must either rise to the level of management by their late thirties or else run a high risk of redundancy:

There is a strong prejudice in favour of working copywriters and artists (as opposed to administrators) being fairly young; but the demand for youth is no less insistent than the demand for experience. This means that around their early thirties creative people in advertising reach a watershed in their careers; if they do not hold senior positions by their late thirties they have little prospect of advancement (Tunstall, 1964: 74).

In accounting for the pronounced bias of youth among creative practitioners, I suggest that this can be explained by the perceived need for creatives to 'connect' with (youthful) audiences. As such, I argue that it has become near axiomatic in the advertising industry that creatives should not merely strive to understand youth but ideally, should be young themselves. In explaining this rationale, a representative of the Institute of Advertising Practitioners of Ireland (IAPI) suggests that a shared cultural language is fundamental:

By the dint of having to engage with a generally young audience...you need empathy, you need to understand cultural values, the way of life and above all you need to be able to speak the language – there is no point getting a sixty-five-year-old to do something for MTV.

(JH: IAPI Representative)

Expressing a similar sentiment, an Irish media director comments:

You know I'm not being ageist here but it's not realistic perhaps to have somebody in their forties do commercials about the latest sexiest Nokia camera phones.

(PM: Media Director)

Research on creative processes in advertising remains sparse. However, some findings suggest that creatives attempt to connect with audiences by, for example, engaging in one-on-one dialogues with an internalised target consumer (Reid et al., 1998) as well as employing methods such as role-play and personification, which appear to better enable the creative to envision the world as consumers experience it (Lannon and Cooper, 1983). Du Gay (1997: 287) develops a notion of ‘hybrid’ work identities to explain the manner in which employees in service work are encouraged to take on the role of both worker and customer in the workplace. Applying this idea to creatives in advertising, I suggest that these practitioners are increasingly encouraged to adopt the position of the consumer, or more specifically, the ‘target audience’. As a creative working in an Irish advertising agency describes:

A creative will always put himself or herself in the mindset of the person they are selling to.

(DOD: Creative)

Nevertheless, practitioners imply that a close proximity between creatives’ ages and those of consumer audiences (who are generally viewed as young) is preferable because creatives will have a ‘natural’ understanding of their intended audience and thus, it is assumed, can develop more ‘authentic’ communication strategies.

Isn't it much easier whereby they're already within that sort of arena and they already have the passion?

(PM: Media Director)

In the above quotation, the Irish media director intimates that a creative’s ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984) is fundamental to his or her ability to produce meaningful and culturally resonant material. Indeed, the tendency for advertising creatives to draw from their private lives marks a significant point of departure between my own research and Lien’s (1997, 2004) investigation of marketing professionals. Lien suggests that ‘in the day-to-day practice of marketing, *competence derived from the domestic sphere largely remains invisible or unarticulated*’ (1997: 264 –emphasis added). In the case of advertising practitioners, the conventional modernist demarcation between public and private life becomes blurred. Indeed, I suggest that the more creatives appear to bring their private selves (taste in music, film, clothes etc.) into the work environment the more ‘genuinely’ creative and by implication, the more capable and ‘connected’, they appear.

You're piecing little bits and pieces together, then you throw in, kind of, little bits of your own life experiences – books you've read, films that you've seen.

(DOD: Creative)

As advertising creatives are typically young, their search for trends, fashions and styles ironically leaves them examining their own social circles. ‘Young brand managers work with young agency creatives and young media buyers to come up with campaigns. Inevitably, they end up positioning brands at the markets they know best: themselves’ (Wilson, 2000: 60). As this implies, the bias of youth is not only promulgated by agencies but also by clients who, in desiring an up-to-date brand and image, also tend to favour younger practitioners working on their accounts. As Keith Gould (1996: 20),

drawing on Richard Kurnit, notes: ‘...there is a premium on youth from the client’s standpoint. Clients want people on their business to be able to interact with consumers who they believe are all young’. As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that creative practitioners are inclined to perpetuate this association and continually construct themselves and their work according to these industry norms and stereotypes. In a sense, creatives are regarded as the connective tissue to the youthful pulse of contemporary life and as such, they are expected to signify, indeed, embody or personify that pulse. Creatives are therefore known for their casual appearance and somewhat lackadaisical attitude towards ‘executive’ attire. They often listen to music while working and are prone to taking ‘inspirational breaks’ by playing pool and foosball¹³. However, with a certain informal flexibility and latitude comes a greater degree of uncertainty and thus, creative careers (that do not evolve into creative-management positions) tend to be short-lived. As an IAPI representative expresses it:

Advertising as an industry is like Quicksilver – I mean people’s reputations tend to be kind of like a wave in the sea if I can draw that analogy...creatives usually have a number of years in the sun and then they move out of focus and it focuses on somebody else.

(JH: IAPI Representative)

It is therefore somewhat prudent that in advertising there is a constant search for ‘new talent’, notably in the numerous award shows aimed at young creatives such as the D&AD Student Awards and Canada’s National Young Advertisers Awards (NYAA). Likewise, the Yahoo! Sharpener Awards target budding creatives (in Ireland and the UK) and the Irish Shark Awards include a ‘Young Creatives’ award. Thus, rather like the talent-spotters and youth training schemes in sport, international advertising attempts to generate and cultivate a constant pool of talent from which to draw expertise. Furthermore, many of the larger agencies in the United States and Britain now operate trainee schemes for young graduates (Tunstall, 1964). While schemes of this kind do not as yet operate in Ireland, the Irish advertising industry has nevertheless developed close ties with certain third level institutions¹⁴ in devising courses with a view to students working in the Irish industry.

A Sociable Occupation

In addition to the above, there is some evidence to suggest that the occupational ‘bias of youth’ in advertising can partly be explained by a widespread belief that advertising is a ‘sociable’ occupation, as the following statement from an Irish account executive reveals:

I was very unmotivated when I came out of college and was trying to get into the real world, I think I wanted something that was as close to college as possible so... informal, fun, creative, dealing with a lot of people and unstructured.

(DT: Account Executive)

Indeed, it can be argued that the ‘creative’ 1980s did much to promote the image of advertising as a fashionable, fast-paced and decadent business. In an article entitled ‘Cocaine in the Agency’ in *Ad Forum* (1984: 26), for example, Dick Stevenson suggested that the use of cocaine by advertising practitioners was partly attributable to ‘the fast-paced, high-pressured environment and the young, well-paid workers’. Such a description might now appear rather dated.

Nevertheless, associations of this kind persist to some degree and advertising people continue to describe their industry (and fellow workers) as fun and sociable:

If you're not having fun in advertising you shouldn't be working in it actually.

(BB: Creative)

Taken together, I suggest that the three factors above – flexibility and flux; creativity and connectivity; and sociability – offer a means of broadly explaining the persistence of an occupational bias of youth in advertising. There are, however, other possible explanations, not least the suggestion that younger workers generally cost agencies less than their more experienced peers (Newland, 1999). Equally, the career mobility which is evident in advertising (Tunstall, 1964) may dissuade older entrants. Kover offers other reasons, which include the somewhat dubious suggestion that advertising practitioners have ‘life expectancies ten years less than most other occupations’ (1977: 36). What is of fundamental importance to advertising agencies, however, is that they are perceived as fashionable and contemporary and their practitioners considered urbane and sophisticated. ‘Young, fresh and zesty is the image to which every advertising agency aspires’ (Powell, 2000: 212). In attempting to develop this association, agencies are typically located ‘at the heart of metropolitan life [thus cultivating]...an association of the agencies with modernity and urban sophistication’ (Nixon 1997: 215). My suggestion is that the construction of advertising as a knowledge-intensive, creative, flexible and sociable industry positioned at the forefront of cultural change not only biases agencies towards hiring younger people but also generates a tendency among practitioners (and creative practitioners in particular) to develop work-based identities and behaviours that conform to these norms. Clearly, this is not to imply that older workers are absent in advertising. ‘Of course, top management is usually forty-five, as are the telephone operators and the people in accounting’ (Kover, 1977: 36). Nevertheless, my argument is that an ‘ideal’ of youth permeates the industry at large, captivating older workers as much as young. Alvesson (1998), for example, notes that middle-aged men in Swedish agencies are referred to as the ‘lads’ or the ‘guys’. In cultivating an image of youthful industry, practitioners are compelled to construct themselves according to this ideal. Indeed, this belief is perpetuated and circulated in other discourses, such as recruitment notices¹⁵. As Cronin (2004: 54) argues: ‘beliefs about advertising “substantialize” it and generate its social form’. In effect, my suggestion is that a belief (by practitioners and the public) that advertising is a young person’s business constitutes it as such. Youth is institutionalised and reified in advertising. What appears a reaction to the market manifests more deeply and is ingrained in the psyche of practitioners, particularly those responsible for ‘creativity’ in this field.

A Note on ‘Expanded Youth’

In advertising, youth is constructed as an infinitely changeable category which corresponds to Lien’s metaphoric structure of the market as a ‘flux of transformation’ (1997: 94). However, paradoxically, youth also provides a source of stability via its constant appeal. It is, to borrow from Gilroy (1997: 335), a kind of ‘changing same’¹⁶. As consumers age, advertisers attempt to develop multiple points of engagement under the general auspices of youth. Hence, although practitioners generally continue to prioritise youth

when identifying a 'bull's-eye' target audience, they increasingly do so in a manner that will not alienate older consumers (Silvers, 1997). Consequently, 'youth' becomes an expanded category in which demographics cede a certain amount to psychographics and youth becomes not merely an indication of age but increasingly also a 'state of mind'¹⁷. In this sense, 'people respond to advertisements and purchase according to the age that they feel and not according to their chronological age' (Turley, 1995: 398).

Although the Irish 'youth population' is contracting (Decode Study, 2002), there is evidence to suggest that people outside of this narrow demographic, such as 'the Pope's Children' (McWilliams, 2005), are increasingly adopting lifestyles and interests traditionally associated with younger people. Indeed, the ageing 'baby boomer'¹⁸ generation appears to be dramatically altering the social character of Western countries. Employing data obtained from the Commission of the European Communities (1999), Carrigan and Szmigin (2003: 198) suggest that 'between 1995 and 2015, the 20–29 age group [across Europe] will decrease by 11 million, while the 50–64 age group will increase by 16.5 million'. Writing about the rise of the 'baby boomer' generation in the UK, Harkin and Huber (2004) suggest that this group is inclined to reject many of the traditional associations of old age and instead, are re-appropriating aspects of youth culture. They point to a rise, for example, in gym membership, alternative mind-body exercises such as yoga and Tai Chi and a steady increase in the consumption of anti-ageing products and cosmetic surgery. Thus, Harkin and Huber conclude that: 'youth culture and popular culture...has expanded its boundaries – and now increasingly extends to encompass people in their forties' (2004: 50). This development has not gone unnoticed by marketers and advertisers. Referring to Ireland, Paul Moran, the Managing Director of Mediaworks (an Irish media advertising company), comments:

The population in Ireland will begin to mirror European age trends in that we will have an older population, probably enjoying a healthier lifestyle. They are also likely to be more affluent than today's 50 year-olds. Therefore, while a significant number of brands and media are today focusing on the under 35 year-olds, within the next three decades I would predict an increase in the number of brands (and subsequently media) chasing the 'grey Euro' (quoted in McWilliams, 2004: 36)

Given that 'modern advertising concentrates at those points where the individual and society meet' (Corrigan, 1997: 67) and taking into account Ireland's ageing (yet cognitively 'young') population, one might hypothesise (in line with Moran above), that Irish advertising will increasingly depict older people engaged in activities, contexts and lifestyles formerly considered the preserve of the biologically young¹⁹. This is not to imply the obsolescence of demographics. Clearly, lifestyle and age, as has long been noted, are as much cultural and social constructions as biological approximations (Szmigin and Carrigan, 2001). Nevertheless, while I might agree with Frankel (1998) that the media is dominated by the young, I suggest that 'youth' demographically constituted does not make adequate allowance for its expansionist tendencies at the cognitive level. As the 'baby boomer' generation ages and given McWilliams's prognosis on the lifestyle habits and self-perceptions of the 'Pope's Children', it is likely that advertising will react accordingly.

Conclusion

This paper began with the suggestion that in constituting the ‘vanguard of a general reformation of consumer tastes...’ (Arvidsson 2003: 117), ‘youth’ has come to represent the symbolic heart of (global) commercial media. In identifying youth as harbinger of ‘consumer society’ (Baudrillard, 1973), advertisers turned their attentions disproportionately towards it. I have argued – drawing much from the work of Marianne Lien (1997, 2004) – that in doing so advertising exhibits a ‘bias of youth’, both textually and occupationally. In regard to the former, I have suggested that global advertising, captivated by the creative and aesthetic potency of youth and the apparent ‘openness’ of youth identities, combined with the dissemination of ideas of ‘flux’ and ‘uncertainty’ selectively appropriated from theories of (post)modernity and globalization, gradually gained currency in advertising and marketing discourses making the appeal to youth paradigmatic. Furthermore, I have argued that the popular appeal of theories of flux (combined with a need for ‘creativity’ and a notion of sociability) not only shaped the productive logic of advertising and inspired ‘flexible’ organisational structures, but gradually infiltrated the ethos and work-based identities of advertising practitioners. In effect, my contention is that professional notions of societal flux help to anchor youth as a central aesthetic, which in turn has profound implications for occupational mythologies. Thus, I have suggested that the semiotics (and fetishisation) of youth in advertising transcends a simple micro-macro distinction; it is evident in both the centrality of youth in global advertising campaigns and in the professional ideologies and routines of individual practitioners. As Cronin (2004: 76) suggests, the ‘flow of beliefs about advertising actively constitutes advertising’. In light of this, I have argued that in advertising ‘youth’ is institutionalised and reified, infusing the various discourses which collectively constitute this industry.

This paper has said little on the implications for the lives of young people and related policy and practice. However, it is unquestionably true that the apparent resilience of the youth fetish within advertising has clear implications for career prospects and personal security. Given that growth projections for the global advertising and media industries remain extremely strong (O’Brien 2005), it is likely that an increasing number of young Irish people will come to work in these industries. Many young people, as suggested above, consider advertising a creative and sociable industry yet such associations may allow work pressures and job insecurities to pass unnoticed. Writing about Irish software companies, for example, Greco (2005: 45) suggests that despite the rhetoric of flexibility, collaboration and autonomy, ‘new and different forms of inequality have come to surface in the industry’. On a broader note, my suggestion that we may require an ‘expanded’ sociological notion of youth to account for more youthful subjectivities among biologically older people has implications in respect of the dominant public values in Ireland’s burgeoning consumer society. A common critique centres on the perceived shift towards consumerist materialism and away from traditional values. For Bogle (1997: 85), ‘the dominance of a worldwide pop culture through which millions of the world’s youth tune into a universal sound, the sense of instantaneous wishes (food, sex, fun, entertainment) instantly gratified’ challenges traditional values and culture. Likewise, technological development is ambiguously regarded and tends to perpetuate a binary opposition between the elderly, who are often portrayed as Luddites, and the young,

who are considered the entrepreneurs of change. In distinguishing a society based on 'transmission' from one preoccupied with 'communication', Michael Cronin (2004) remains somewhat dubious about Ireland's race towards technological modernisation. For Cronin, an 'old grey man' symbolises traditional Irish society and we can reasonably infer that leading the rush towards 'communication' society is the indomitable face of 'youth'.

In the last ten years, there has been a remarkable shift in Ireland from what we might describe as a society primarily concerned with transmission to a society preoccupied by communication... So the last decade has seen Ireland link up with the rest of the world in communicative euphoria and position itself through education, training and investment on a map of global connectedness. Transmission is Myles na gCopaleen's Old Grey Man muttering to himself about a world gone bad and the Irish who no longer have any claim to Save Civilisation (Cronin, 2004: 216).

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, and thank especially Olive Sleil. I would also like to thank the anonymous practitioners whose responses and views have shaped this article.

Notes

- 1 The definitional ambiguity surrounding the term 'youth' is highly problematic. Ford and Philips (2000), for example, define 'youth' as 11–19 year olds while for O'Connor (2006) 'young people' are those aged 14–17 years. Similarly, O'Donohoe (1995) examines interpretations of advertising among 'young adults', whom she defines as 18–24 year-olds while the Irish 'Decode' study (2002) uses the same age range to refer to the 'youth market' in Ireland.
- 2 I have labelled my work 'productivist' to highlight its focus on producers, rather than consumers, of advertising. The research is not entirely unique in this regard and follows a shift towards micro-orientated investigations of internal processes in marketing and advertising institutions (Lien, 1997; Miller, 1997; Nixon, 2003; Kelly et al., 2005). The research follows an interpretivist and constructionist epistemology and uses semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews (see Kvale, 1996) as the primary research method in generating 'grounded theory' (see Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In particular, I locate my work at the nexus of organisational culture and broader discourses of culture. Thus, rather like Negus (2002: 118), I wish 'to emphasise how broader social divisions are inscribed into and become an integral part of business practices'. While I did not set out explicitly to focus on youth, the significance of this factor at both textual and occupational levels gradually emerged. This paper draws upon interviews conducted with Irish advertising practitioners during the period 2004–2006. Interviews were mostly conducted at the work premises of respondents and lasted approximately one hour. While the empirical research presented here is entirely qualitative, I believe there is ample scope for the incorporation of quantitative methods in future studies.
- 3 Here 'practitioner' refers to people working within advertising agencies (though I have also included the views of a representative of IAPI – the governing body of Irish Advertising). As Lien (1997: 51) highlights, an advertising agency is usually organised according to a basic internal division between the creative (copywriters and art directors) and the consultant (account managers, directors and planners) departments. Among Irish practitioners, these are generally referred to as the 'creatives' and the 'suits'. In addition, a 'media' department may also be found in advertising agencies in which case it is generally deemed part of the 'consultant' side of the business.

- 4 I have worked as a media buyer and account executive in several Irish advertising and media companies (with international affiliation), which include Viacom Outdoor and TMP Worldwide.
- 5 'Commercial advertising' can be defined as: 'advertising that involves commercial interests rather than advocating a social or political cause' (Department of Advertising, University of Texas www.utexas.com).
- 6 Bennett (2006) suggests that the Birmingham Centre's weddedness to youth was a product of specific ideological context. 'Grounded in Marxist and neo-Marxist theories of class conflict and hegemonic struggle, "subculture" became a conceptual framework for studying the evolution of such traits in the context of late capitalism. "Youth", as a disempowered yet highly resistant social group, provided the perfect vehicle for subcultural theorists to interpret popular music and its attendant visual styles as politicised resources in the power struggles that characterise late capitalist society' (Bennett, 2006: 222).
- 7 One might draw support for Wernick's (1991) proposition in noting the veritable explosion of 'everyday celebrities' and fame mania linked to the rise of reality TV programmes such as Big Brother (see Lavelle 2006). According to Mathews (2005: 7), 'the 'reality' genre has become the postmodern TV format par excellence with its relentless focus on the 'now' and its endless possibilities for role play and parody'.
- 8 In the 'global youth' advertisement one frequently observes a confluence of youth and other social categories: gender, ethnicity, class etc. It is almost as if youth itself – its idealism, its vitality, its *joie de vivre* – can magically trump social divisions. The black and the white, the ghetto and the suburb, harmoniously coexist within the democratic horizons of transcendent and emancipatory youth. It is perhaps no wonder then that so many 'multicultural' brands (such as Coca-Cola, Tommy Hilfiger and Benetton) bypass the difficulties of universalism/particularism in a simplified and idealistic appeal to youth. Giroux (–2006) describes a 'postmodern generation of (global) youth' targeted by companies such as McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Esprit, and The Gap. 'In this scenario, youth may be experiencing the indeterminacy, senselessness, and multiple conditions of postmodernism, but corporate advertisers are attempting to theorize a pedagogy of consumption as part of a new way of appropriating postmodern differences among youth in different sites and locations' (Giroux, 2006).
- 9 It should be highlighted that Lien's focus is on 'marketing' as opposed to 'advertising' (which constitutes only one part of marketing communications). Thus, while I maintain that much of her analysis holds true for advertising, it should be noted that marketers are 'clients' of advertising agencies and thus are subject to a different (as well as similar) set of institutional and environmental conditions, imperatives and constraints.
- 10 As suggested above, I argue that 'youth' (broadly defined) has long operated as a kind of dominant aesthetic code in advertising. Nevertheless, as Klein (2000) indicates, the youth 'market' greatly increased with the rise of global brands in the early 1990s. Today (in the opinion of advertisers) 'youth' is textually hegemonic, as the following statement from a creative in an Irish advertising agency suggests:

It's become a young person's world – hip hop, MTV, fashion, Hollywood, sex...maybe the world has always been a playground for the young. Everyone wants to be young and people just seem to have more power to be young these days. Sex and the City, Friends...these shows target older audiences but they are 'young old' if you know what I mean?.

(BB: Creative)

In the above statement, the creative implies that the pulse of life has always been in youth, a view that perhaps would be shared by many people. However, she also suggests that youth as a market and, perhaps more importantly, as a concept in everyday life, has expanded. Her suggestion is that the world now seemingly empowers youth but furthermore, that youth exerts an irresistible force that captivates and appeals to all ages. Naturally, this comment (and indeed this paper) derives from a culturally specific conception of youth and we can reasonably infer that the world referred to above is the 'Western' world. Furthermore, the above statement presupposes that all those within the world (Western or otherwise) possess the power to 'be young' in these terms.

- 11 See Kelly et al. (2005) for a comprehensive account of the use of this method in exploring production processes in Irish advertising. Potter and Wetherell (1987: 138) define an interpretative repertoire as: '...a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterise actions or events' (quoted in Kelly et al., 2005: 512).

- 12 'In contrast to bureaucracies, knowledge intensive companies promote time flexibility, collaborative work environments, immediate human relations, autonomy and performance-related career progression' (Greco, 2005: 45). While not all industries can be described as 'knowledge intensive', adaptability, versatility and flexibility are increasingly important across the board. As Keenan (2006: 6) wryly puts it; 'in the workplace, the mantra of today is the need for constant change'. I would suggest that a perception persists that older people are ill-equipped to cater for change, particularly where technical skills are fundamental. Thus, it is perhaps rather obvious why the Industrial Development Authority's 'Young Europeans' campaign 'presented Ireland's young, educated population as its greatest resource' (Kelly-Holmes, 2000: 40). In as much as elderly people may feel alienated from the youthful aesthetics of commercialised media, it is also reasonable to assume that they may feel disempowered in an era of insatiable technological advancement. As Gellner (1983: 34) has expressed it: 'A society has emerged based on a high-powered technology, and the expectancy of sustained growth...The level of literacy and technical competence...required of members of this society, if they are to be properly employable and enjoy full and effective moral citizenship, is so high that it simply cannot be provided by the kin or local units' (quoted in Garnham, 2000: 91).
- 13 Several agencies in Dublin are equipped with inspirational/stress-relief devices such as foosball and snooker tables, though I would suggest that these are mainly symbolic gestures, the inclusion of which is arguably less to distract or amuse practitioners and more to reinforce the 'contemporary' and 'hip' image agencies strive to cultivate.
- 14 The MSc. (Advertising) course in DIT Aungier Street, Dublin, is perhaps the most developed course of this kind in Ireland. 'The M.Sc. in Advertising programme is deeply informed by the Joint Advertising Education Committee which is the key body co-coordinating the educational interests of all the professional associations and stake holders involved in advertising in Ireland' (www.dit.ie).
- 15 On www.jobs4u.com, for example, it is claimed that 'advertising has a reputation for being a young person's profession and candidates who are in their late twenties or older may have difficulty in finding a first job'.
- 16 This idea has been used by Paul Gilroy to express the countervailing forces of continuity and change in respect of 'identity'.
- 17 A considerable number of writers, researchers and journalists have examined this phenomenon in recent years. In her study of MTV, for example, Hujic (1999) indicates that the music channel targets 16–34 year-olds. Thus, 'instead of "young", the MTV viewer is more appropriately described as "youthful"' (Hujic, 1999: 164). Likewise, Flintoff (2006: 10) describes the lifestyles of those he refers to as 'pioneers of prolonged immaturity'. As with 'Generation X' and the 'Baby Boomers', these people have been variously labeled 'grups' (a shortening of 'grown-ups'), 'yindies' (yuppie-indies), 'dadsters' (dad-hipsters), and 'sceniors' (scene-seniors) (*ibid.*: 10). Irrespective of the terms we employ, it is perhaps reasonable to argue that in certain respects, the time-honoured boundary between youth and old age has become somewhat hazy and its signifiers more diffuse. Teenagers increasingly dress, speak and behave like adults and conversely, adults often dress, speak and behave in the manner of teenagers. Perhaps recognising a lucrative niche, a vast 'self help' literature has grown in tandem with the increasing aestheticisation of everyday life and the pressures of perpetual youthfulness. Ray Sondra's (1990) *How to be Chic, Fabulous and Live Forever* and Deepak Chopra's (1993) *Ageless Body Timeless Mind* are two popular examples.
- 18 This 'unusual demographic', Harkin and Huber (2004: 11) indicate, refers to 'babies born in the UK between 1945 and 1965' and who are 'now aged between 39 and 59'.
- 19 Drawing on international research, Turley (1995: 410–11) notes that strategies designed to avoid alienating older consumers can involve 'transgenerational' advertising appeals as well as the use of 'reverse stereotyping' whereby older people are shown engaged in activities commonly associated with considerably younger audiences.

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ASBOs and Behaviour Orders: Institutionalised Intolerance of Youth?

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Abstract

This paper argues that the introduction of Behaviour Orders in Ireland creates a legal mechanism which facilitates the imposition of the majority conception of order within the community on its more marginalised members such as children and young people, much as has happened with ASBOs in the UK. The paper begins by suggesting that order/disorder is defined and imposed in the community by the more powerful elements within it and that what constitutes order/disorder is necessarily variable according to the experiences and perceptions of community members. A close legal analysis of the new Irish legislation governing Behaviour Orders is presented, and parallels with the British legislation are highlighted, with a view to examining the ways in which the law institutionalises the majority conception of order. The social and legal aspects of the paper are drawn together in the argument that the ambiguity surrounding the definition and interpretation of anti-social behaviour renders Behaviour Orders an imprudent response to anti-social behaviour amongst young people in the community.

Keywords

Behaviour Orders; ASBOs; youth; community; conceptions of disorder.

Introduction

With the passage of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 and the introduction into Irish law of the 'Behaviour Order', first cousin to the 'Anti-Social Behaviour Order' (ASBO) introduced in England and Wales under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the well established Irish art of imitating British legislation has continued. To borrow the phrase of the late John Kelly TD, it is one in a long line of legislative ideas 'taken over here and given a green outfit with silver buttons to make it look native'¹, with little thought being given to our less severe crime problem and cultural differences. A Behaviour Order is an order made by a court to protect the public from anti-social behaviour. Although it is designated as civil in nature, breach of a Behaviour Order does not invoke the normal contempt of court procedure for breach of a civil order, but in fact constitutes a criminal offence. In Britain, ASBOs may be made with respect to any person aged 10 or over but they have had particular implications for children and young people as they are the most likely recipients (Burney, 2002). Recent Home Office statistics have revealed that out of a total of 4,649 ASBOs which have been issued since their introduction in 1999, 2,057 have

been applied to children aged 10–17 (Cowan, 2005). This may account in large part for the doubling of the number of children in custody in England in the past decade, when statistically their offending has reduced.

This article provides a socio-legal perspective on the introduction of Behaviour Orders for children aged 12–17 years in this jurisdiction (the legislation makes separate provision for those aged 18 and over). It suggests that the introduction of Behaviour Orders creates a legal mechanism which facilitates the imposition of the majority conception of order within the community on its more marginalised members such as children and young people. The first part of the article argues that order/disorder is defined and imposed in the community by the more powerful elements within it and that what constitutes order/disorder is necessarily variable according to the experiences and perceptions of community members. Having considered the argument that the nature of order in the community is often discriminatory against young people and others who do not readily conform to societal norms, the second part of the article examines the ways in which the law institutionalises the majority conception of order. Overall, it is argued that the ambiguous social interpretation and legal definition of ‘anti-social behaviour’ combined with the low evidential standards required in the application process will result in the door being left open to abuse by the ‘moral majority’ in the community. While not under-playing the impact of anti-social behaviour on the community, the paper argues that Behaviour Orders are unlikely to be the most equitable, effective or just way of responding to anti-social behaviour based on the principles which underpin them and the experience in other jurisdictions. It concludes by proposing that an alternative response that engages with communities in a positive and inclusive manner is a more appropriate way of addressing anti-social behaviour amongst young people.

The Social Construction of Order/Disorder

In examining the social construction of order/disorder, four main areas are discussed below. The first focuses on the notion of ‘community’ by highlighting its non-egalitarian nature and the manner in which individuals, particularly young people, come to be defined and constructed as the ‘disorderly’ or the ‘outside’ other. Secondly, young people’s interaction with their community is examined through the lens of their daily activity in the community, their occupation of public space and its impact on their relationship with other community members. The differing perceptions of young people’s behaviour across communities and community types is discussed in the third section thereby highlighting the arbitrary nature by which some young people come to be labelled and responded to as ‘anti-social’. The final section focuses on the implications of the way in which order/disorder is defined and imposed, examining the balance between responsibility, accountability and support and the role of the community and civil society in managing problematic, disorderly and criminal behaviour.

Defining Order in the Community

Crawford (1998) critically defines ‘community’ as a complex web of relationships, structures and power relations organised not on egalitarian lines but upon the basis of age, sex, gender, ethnicity and class as well as a range of other identities (Campbell, 1993; Crawford 1999b). The conflicting and perhaps more common perception is the

view that community is synonymous with common interest: 'a group of people, sharing a common bond or tradition, who support and challenge each other to act powerfully, both individually and collectively, to affirm, defend and advance their values and self-interest' (Miller, 2002: 32). This notion of community as homogeneous reflects the communitarian view in which consensus is assumed (Worrall, 1997) and moral order is taken for granted 'rather than constructed through nuanced and complex negotiations' (Crawford, 1998a: 244). The communitarian perspective argues that communities have obligations to be responsive to their members but equally demands recognition from those members of their responsibility to the community. It is assumed that homogeneity in the value consensus of the community 'will manifest itself in a sense of mutual responsibility' (Worrall, 1997:46) to community members. It also stresses the 'rights' of the community to require certain standards of behaviour from its members and, ultimately, to exclude members in the interests of the whole community (ibid., 1997: 47). However, as James and James (2001: 215) note, children have few rights and therefore demands to live up to their responsibilities as community members is problematic 'in the absence of any necessary or taken-for-granted commitment by children to the adult value consensus'.

Crawford (1999b:164–165) asks, 'what is it that constitutes disorder ... [and] whose definition of 'order' should be accorded priority?' In other words, in the hierarchy of power relations in the community whose interests are responded to? The way in which responsiveness to one section of the community (the more powerful group) can lead to the repression of another (the less powerful group) is highlighted by a case in Miami involving a challenge to the police attempts to clear homeless individuals off the streets.² Following a complaint which emanated from the local business community, the police responded by arresting the homeless for 'quality of life infractions' (Coombs, 1998: 1373): sleeping, drinking, urinating in public and littering. The impact is best indicated by police practice that deemed the placing of a piece of cardboard on the ground by the homeless person so as to avoid sleeping on the cold concrete as 'an instance of littering worthy of a custodial arrest' (ibid., 1998: 1374). Brown (1995: 47) describes how young people like adults living in economically deprived areas experience 'all the anxieties induced by deepening inequalities' but unlike adults they have no one to exclude as they are the excluded group. Young people therefore often exist at the bottom of the scale of power in the community and as a result are more likely to have norms, rules and definitions of order imposed upon them. Assuming community is homogeneous in the sense that members hold common beliefs leads to the justification of exclusion on the basis of the community good or in the interests of the community (Crawford, 1999a: 515). Community is viewed as something that must be protected from outside 'others' who threaten it i.e. those who deviate from what is defined as normal. In this typology, such individuals are viewed not as community members, as brothers, sons, sisters or spouses, but as outsiders against whom the 'community' needs to defend itself' (Crawford, 1999b:159). This approach silences 'very real intra-community conflicts' which when not tackled allow 'the policing of, and interventions against, certain individuals and groups of people' (Crawford, 1999b: 161) by the more powerful interest groups. It is the type of order maintenance advocated by Wilson and Kelling (1982) whereby individual rights are squandered in lieu of community expectations of order.

Youth, Public Space and Perceptions of Disorder

To compound the existing relative absence of power amongst young people identified above, they also experience a disadvantaged position by nature of their 'public lifestyle'. Youths hanging out on the street infringe community expectations of what constitutes appropriate social behaviour (Kelling, 1987). Burney (2002:73) argues that young people hanging about 'have become the universal symbol of disorder and, increasingly, menace'. Even if not engaged in illegal behaviour their activities may be perceived as disrupting the 'order' of the community. Worrall (1997:138) documents the scenario for young people whereby 'respectable citizens and figures of authority ... are increasingly demanding that they be known about, watched and moved on'. Studies of offending youth in Northern Ireland found that many lived out their daily routine on the public stage of the street corners and public parks of their communities (Ellison, 2001; Seymour, 2003). In one of the studies, over one-third of offending youth who consumed alcohol said they drank in public places such as parks, the streets and street corners in their own community. It was therefore not difficult to conclude that the location of young people's drinking, as much as the consumption of alcohol itself, had the potential to be perceived as problematic and disorderly by the community (Seymour, 2003).

James et al. (1998: 39) argue that 'social space is never a merely neutral location'. This resonates with the argument of Brewer et al. (1997: 136) that young people are associated with most visible crimes and other visible problems in the community, thereby 'raising people's sense that young people are behind most ordinary crime'. Crawford (1999b) suggests that there is an assumption in the community that danger occupies public, not private space. Young people living in poor and sometimes overcrowded housing, expelled from school, youth and community facilities have little choice but to occupy public space. In this sense they are a marginal group and are perceived as dangerous or at least as having the potential to create disorder (Crawford, 1999b). It is not so much that the marginal member of society is seen as intimidating but rather it is 'the visible presence of marginal people within prime space that represents a threat to a sense of public order and orderliness' (Wardhaugh, 2000:113)

Constructions of Order/Disorder: Variance across Communities

Crime and disorder have an impact on individuals in communities to varying degrees and in different ways (Crawford, 1999b; Loader et al., 1998). The level of (in)tolerance is likely to vary depending on a number of factors including one's relationship to the community and one's perception and experience of 'disorder' in the area. Loader et al. (1998) argue that those with a stake in the community, for example a business or family links, are more likely to want to elicit a response to disorder than individuals temporarily living in the area. Similarly, Young (1999:121-2) highlights attempts to evoke a sense of nostalgia for the secure past as a factor in the demand for a quick fix, all-embracing solution to crime and disorder 'in order to conjure back the secure streets and backyards of childhood memories'. Results from the Northern Ireland Community Crime Survey (O'Mahony et al., 2000) illustrate that wide disparities exist between how respondents in working-class urban communities rate crime and disorder problems in their community compared to middle class and rural respondents. However, it is also reported that perceptions of anti-social behaviour vary within

similar community types and differences exist between Catholic and Protestant urban working class areas with the former reporting problems such as underage drinking and public drunkenness at a higher rate than their Protestant counterparts (O'Mahony et al., 2000:22).

Without question the individual and collective previous experience of 'disorder' in the community is likely to impact strongly on the response of a particular community to 'anti-social behaviour'. The concern however is that those young people from socio-economically deprived communities with few resources are more likely to be targeted for interventions like ASBOs or Behaviour Orders, not necessarily because their behaviour is more anti-social than their middle-class counterparts, but simply because the community has insufficient alternatives including youth and family support services to respond to such behaviour. Furthermore, such communities may be more at risk of being identified as anti-social behaviour hot-spots through 'the physical presence of "investigatory" people and technology [who] ensure that it will be found' (Brown 2004: 210; cited in Squires and Stephen, 2005b: 193).

The Community Construction of Order/Disorder: the Implications

Numerous commentators have argued that the problem of disorder has been conceptualised as the problem of disorderly behaviour amongst young people (e.g. Burney, 2002). By adopting this discourse of 'disorder' (namely the behaviour of youth) it individualises the 'problem', limits the scope for effective interventions and places responsibility solely at the level of the individual young person and often the parents and family: '... through the rhetoric of "responsibilisation" (e.g. Flint 2002), society becomes absolved and individuals, already essentialised as 'thugs' ... are held solely culpable' (Squires and Stephen, 2005b: 187).

However, this is inherently problematic and contradictory given that young people are punished 'as a legitimate response to their wrongdoings against the citizenship of others (i.e. adults)' while at the same time the state is 'simultaneously denying or suppressing the reality that young people themselves are barely accorded citizenship rights' (Brown, 1998:82). Furthermore, Muncie and Hughes (2002: 10) argue that the rhetoric underlying the rationale for ASBOs of poor parenting and out-of-control children ignores consistent research suggesting that young people who offend often have 'complex and systematic patterns of disadvantage which lie beyond any incitement to find work, behave properly or take up the 'new opportunities' on offer'. Gray (2005: 947) reiterates this argument suggesting that:

In the new culture of control, there is a presumption that reintegration is an individual moral endeavour which will miraculously occur once young offenders have accepted responsibility for their actions ... without any attempt to either combat structural inequalities (Muncie 2002; Pitts 2003) or, at the very least, provide young people with sufficient social support.

The onus on parents to be accountable during the period of the new Irish Behaviour Order without additional assistance and support faces similar criticisms to the existing parental control mechanisms introduced under the Children Act 2001. Parental control mechanisms have been criticised on the basis of failing to acknowledge the social factors related to a child's offending behaviour such as poverty and disadvantage

(Shannon, 2004), or providing any 'substantial interventions ... to encourage and enable positive parenting' (Quinn, 2002:679). The role and responsibility of the parenting task is central to the process of addressing anti-social behaviour; however, in relation to the execution of ASBOs in England and Wales, Squires and Stephen (2005a) are also critical of the balance between enforcement action for anti-social behaviour and support for the perpetrators and their families.

Criticism of the Behaviour Order as a mechanism of social control for young people does not imply a denial of the seriousness and impact of anti-social behaviour on the community. Indeed, it is well documented (Graham and Bowling, 1995; Brown, 1998) that young people commit much of the disorder in the community and are often responsible for perpetrating 'those quality of life offences which form the proverbial last straw for people who already have nothing' (Brown, 1998: 94). Rather, what is suggested is that the process by which anti-social behaviour is socially defined is often arbitrary and therefore not wholly just. Furthermore, based on what is known about youth offending and related behaviour, Behaviour Orders are unlikely to be the most effective method of either addressing such behaviour or preventing future criminality. They ignore the structural inequalities at the root of much offending as identified above and place young people at greater risk of being drawn into the formal net of social control. Finally, they are more likely to divide rather than empower communities by further disenfranchising young people and their families and deepening rather than repairing existing social and relational divisions.

Maloney and Holcomb (2001) argue that all citizens should be involved in creating the conditions to promote safety and well-being in the community. Responses to anti-social behaviour need to work towards strengthening the community, not diminishing and dividing it. Goldson (2000: 262) warns against the punitive ethos underpinning much of the discourse on youth crime and argues that 'the problem of youth crime ... does not excuse the contemporary tendency towards simplicity and lazy analysis'. Communities may be far better engaged in the role of identifying prevention strategies and working in partnership with statutory and community agencies to address the issues that underlie much nuisance and 'disorderly' behaviour in the community. The recommendations of the National Crime Council (2003) for a proposed crime prevention strategy in Ireland highlights the need for inter-agency work with young children and their families as well as multi-annual funding for the development and continuation of youth work services. However, such a shift in priority requires both a changed conceptualisation of youth in criminal justice discourse from 'criminals deserving of punishment' to 'citizens entitled to justice' (Brown, 1998: 82) and a commitment to evidence based policy making for young people who come into contact with the law.

Legal Dimensions

As noted in the introduction, the aim of this section of the paper is, through close legal analysis of the new legislation on Behaviour Orders, to demonstrate the ease with which they can be mobilised against the more disempowered members of the community such as young people and the implications of this. It is also proposed to discuss briefly the ways in which the legislation gives expression to the principles of communitarianism as discussed above. It is important to note at the outset, however, that the authoritarianism implicit in the English legislation has been moderated somewhat in the Irish case. Under

pressure and in the face of criticism from one of the largest and most broadly based coalitions of protesters ever to respond to a criminal justice issue in Ireland,³ the Minister for Justice was forced to revise his original proposals. The new provisions (the Criminal Justice Act 2006 amends the Children Act 2001 to include a new Part 12A) go some way towards ensuring that Behaviour Orders are a measure of last resort, most notably through the introduction of a scheme whereby a child will usually receive a 'Behaviour Warning' and a family conference will be held to discuss the anti-social behaviour before a Behaviour Order is proceeded with.⁴ It is disappointing, therefore, that some of the worst features of the English legislation have been retained: the civil standard of proof applies, with the concomitant increased likelihood of the admission of hearsay evidence, and the word 'harassment' continues to appear in the definition of anti-social behaviour. All these features contribute to uncertainty and vagueness in the application of the law and ultimately, its misuse.

The Definition of 'Anti-Social Behaviour'

Under s.257A(2) of the new Part 12A of the Children Act 2001 (as inserted by s.159 of the Criminal Justice Act) a child behaves in an anti-social manner if he or she:

causes or, in all the circumstances, is likely to cause to one or more persons who are not of the same household as the child:

- (a) harassment,
- (b) significant or persistent alarm, distress, fear or intimidation, or
- (c) significant or persistent impairment of their use or enjoyment of their property.

A child is defined under the section as a person between the age of 12 and 17 (inclusive) and not above the age of 14 as originally suggested by the Department of Justice. The revised definition may be compared to the English equivalent which refers to behaviour which 'caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as himself' and which has been the subject of much criticism for its potentially unlimited ambit. The annotations to the original Government proposals argued that 'the definition is not as broad as the UK equivalent. In particular, the behaviour must have serious consequences for the person or persons affected or the consequences must be persistent and must affect the person's enjoyment of life or property' (Government of Ireland, 2005). Yet, this is simply not the case in the legislation as enacted. At Committee Stage of the Bill, the Minister acknowledged that the three grounds on which a Behaviour Order can be obtained are to be read disjunctively or in the alternative.⁵ If 'harassment' represents a ground for a Behaviour Order in its own right, it becomes the lowest common denominator. The thresholds of seriousness in the legislation will therefore be bypassed and the range of behaviour giving rise to liability to a Behaviour Order considerably expanded. Harassment connotes behaviour which is context dependent and it is defined by reference to the effect or likely effect of behaviour on others. As one guide has commented upon the English definition: '[harassment] does not proscribe certain forms of conduct as harassment per se but enables the victim to determine the parameters of acceptable interaction on an individualistic basis...primacy is given to the victim's interpretation of events' (Finch, 2002: 706).

It remains the case under the Irish legislation that the conduct described may be criminal but it is not limited to criminal behaviour. Some of the behaviour may therefore constitute a civil wrong (most likely nuisance) while other behaviour may not constitute any wrong at all in law. The definition also allows, like the English legislation, for a hypothetical assessment of the effect of the defendant's conduct. The retention of the words 'is likely to cause' in the above definition means that the court may not always be concerned with a situation where the defendant has actually harassed someone or caused serious fear or persistent danger, but may be asked to engage in a risk assessment exercise where no member of the community has in fact been victimised. This shift from the factual to the hypothetical is all the more a cause of concern if this risk assessment is, as contemplated above, entirely context dependent.

In the first part of this paper attention was drawn to the evidence that it is the most powerful members of society who define disorder; that young people are often compelled to live their lives on the public stage of the community (e.g. drinking in public) and that even communities with a similar socio-economic composition may take different views of such public behaviour by young people. Considered together, these factors urge caution in the adoption of legal measures which have the clear potential to institutionalise intolerance towards young people on the behalf of local communities. The provisions of the new Irish legislation with regard to the definition of anti-social behaviour do not go far enough in safeguarding young people and children from abuses by more powerful community members.

Low Evidential Standards

Difficulties with the protean definition of anti-social behaviour are compounded by the low standards of evidence and proof required under the legislation. The standard of proof required as regards the making of a Behaviour Order is the civil standard of balance of probabilities. Section 257D(1) of the Children Act 2001 (as inserted by s.162 of the Criminal Justice Act) provides that a District Court judge must be 'satisfied' as to the anti-social behaviour and the necessity for an order. Further, s.257D(9) puts the matter beyond doubt: 'the standard of proof in proceedings under this section is that applicable to civil proceedings'. The civil designation of the Behaviour Order scheme was to be expected given that one of the aims of the British ASBO as conceptualised by New Labour was to circumvent the perceived difficulties with a criminal trial. The behaviour in question, even if capable of amounting to a criminal offence, will therefore not have to be proved to a standard of beyond all reasonable doubt and the defendant can be placed under a Behaviour Order even if there is reasonable doubt as to the behaviour in question.

This begs the question whether the proceeding is in reality criminal and whether the civil procedure is being used as a means of subverting the strictures of the criminal law, including fundamental legal values such as the presumption of innocence. In a challenge to the legislation in England in *R v. Crown Court at Manchester, ex parte McCann*⁶ this question has been answered by the House of Lords in the negative, albeit with the important proviso that a heightened (criminal) standard of proof apply. The House held that ASBO proceedings were civil, not criminal, both for the purposes of domestic law and the law under the European Convention on Human Rights. This conclusion was based on various factors: proceedings were not brought by the Crown Prosecution Service; there was no formal accusation of a breach of the criminal law; ASBOs did not appear on criminal

records; and there is no immediate imposition of imprisonment. In this latter regard, the House held that proceedings for breach of an order, though undoubtedly criminal in character, should be considered separately from the initial application. It is questionable, however, whether an Irish court would reach the same conclusion. While a superficial reading of the English legislation supports the Lords' conclusion, it is submitted that many of the above elements, such as the absence of a formal charge and criminal record, focus on form rather than substance and as such should not have influenced the decision of the court. Further, it is at least arguable that the original application for an ASBO cannot be so conveniently separated from its criminal counterpart given that the initial civil procedure defines the outer limits of the behaviour which can constitute a criminal offence. Indeed, it is impossible to defend proceedings for breach without harking back to the terms of the original order. The Lords also appear contradictory in their conclusion that the proceedings are civil in nature and therefore hearsay or second hand evidence can be adduced (presented in court), yet the 'seriousness of the matters involved' mandate that the criminal standard of proof apply. Overall, the effect of the judgment is to give free reign to New Labour's policy of simply reclassifying criminal proceedings as civil in order to avoid the protections attaching to defendants in criminal proceedings.

In relation to the cognate issue of the admissibility of hearsay evidence, the House of Lords held that hearsay evidence could be adduced in ASBO proceedings. The Irish legislation is silent on this issue and, given that the proceedings are civil in nature, it would appear that hearsay evidence may be admitted to the extent that it is permitted in civil proceedings. In practice the hearsay rule is applied with less vigour in civil rather than criminal matters, however, and the dangers of such evidence should be noted. The adduction of hearsay evidence means that the defendant is denied the right to cross examine his or her accusers which makes claims very difficult to refute. When a witness's demeanour is not observable during cross-examination, the court is left at a loss as to whether the witness was joking, lying or simply mistaken. In England, applications based solely on hearsay may, and do, succeed with none of the alleged affected persons present or even named (Pema and Heels, 2004: 41). Should this practice be adopted in Ireland, the potential for rumour, conjecture and suspicion about young people to become fact will be heightened. A classic example is the public drinking engaged in by young people discussed above. When relayed second hand such behaviour could easily metamorphose into threatening behaviour.

In this relation, it is interesting to note that the justification offered by the House of Lords for admitting hearsay evidence can be viewed as a clear endorsement of the communitarian approach discussed in the first part of this article. In examining the issue, Lord Steyn explained 'My starting point is an initial scepticism of an outcome which would deprive communities of their fundamental rights'. He viewed hearsay evidence as critical if magistrates were to be adequately informed of the scale of anti-social behaviour and the measures of control required. The views of Lord Hutton also reflect a preoccupation with the needs of the community:

I consider that the striking of a fair balance between the demands of the general interest of the community (the community in this case being represented by weak and vulnerable people who claim that they are the victims of anti-social behaviour which violates their rights) and the requirements of the protection of the defendant's rights requires the scales to come down in favour of the protection of the community and of permitting the use of hearsay evidence in applications for anti-social orders.⁷

As Ramsey (2004: 924) notes communitarian concepts such as the positive duty of citizens towards the community and the justification of exclusion on the basis of the rights of the community as a whole pervade the Lords' judgments. He argues:

Notwithstanding their lordships' preferred terminology of balancing rights, the logic of their argument is that the right of the community not to be caused a particular feeling, and therefore the individual's duty not to cause that feeling, is prior to any procedural right of the defendant to cross examine her accusers.

Ramsey views this as confirming the underlying conceptual basis of ASBOs, which he contends is largely communitarian and at odds with the traditional criminal law. In support of this argument, he points to what he terms 'the underlying attitudinal component' of the legislative provisions on ASBOs, namely, the context dependent nature of 'harassment, alarm or distress' and also the requirement that the court must decide that an order is necessary. This latter requirement creates an exception where the defendant has demonstrated a change in attitude and therefore allows the court to impose an ASBO on the basis of 'a continuing attitude or disposition of indifference or contempt... for the feelings of others' (Ramsey, 2004: 915). Ramsey's argument runs that, once it is accepted that what the legislation is really concerned with is attitudes rather than simply behaviour, the positive nature of the obligation created by the legislation becomes clear as in order not to offend other people's feelings, one must adopt a caring mental attitude. Ramsay's point is well made, if at times a little stretched (he argues for example, that the defence enshrined in the legislation that the conduct is reasonable enhances rather than curtails judicial discretion), and it would appear that the provisions on ASBOs sit well with the basic tenets of communitarian theory. As discussed above, however, such communitarian views are problematic in relation to children and young people. These members of the community are not accorded the same 'citizenship' rights as adult members of the community nor indeed do they necessarily share in the adult 'value consensus'.

Applicants for Behaviour Orders

The combination of the civil standard of proof and the possible adduction of hearsay evidence means that the court may impose a Behaviour Order on the basis of unproven evidence from a member of the Gardaí (a Superintendent or member of superior ranking) as to what the defendant's neighbours report. This places a great deal of power in the hands of the Gardaí to determine what non-criminal behaviour may form the subject of a Behaviour Order. Further, in relation to behaviour which actually amounts to a crime, a practice may develop whereby the Gardaí use Behaviour Orders as a short cut to a conviction without actually proving the crime. This is the all the more likely to occur if the very high success rate of ASBO applications in England is any indicator of what will happen in this jurisdiction: of the 2,035 ASBO applications notified to the Home Office up to 30th June 2004, only 42 applications were refused, which constitutes a success rate of 98 per cent.⁸

Breadth of the Order: Made to be Breached?

Concern about excessive discretion does not end with the definition of 'anti-social behaviour' and the use of hearsay evidence. The terms of Behaviour Orders which are imposed by the judge at the initial hearing are not limited to the initial acts complained

of. Section 257D(1) of the Children Act 2001 (as inserted by s.162 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006) states that an order may prohibit a child 'from doing anything specified in the order if the court is satisfied that ... the order is necessary to prevent the child from continuing to behave in that manner'. In the UK, the requirement of 'necessity' has not been interpreted strictly with defendants being banned from entering areas where they live, from meeting named individuals anywhere and from entering public places. While the additional requirement in the section that the judge must be satisfied that the order is reasonable and proportionate may be regarded as a check on the judge's discretion, it is significant that this assessment must be made 'having regard to the effect or likely effect of that behaviour on other persons'. Thus, the standard is not objective but heavily influenced by the victim: as discussed above in relation to harassment, primacy is accorded to the victim's interpretation of events. This reading of the legislation has been affirmed by the Minister for Justice himself at Committee Stage of the Criminal Justice Bill when he observed that 'the court must be satisfied that it is reasonable and proportionate *when viewed from the victim's perspective*'.⁹

The open-ended nature of Behaviour Orders marks a clear departure from previous statutory orders to which they may be compared such as the barring order or the safety order under the Domestic Violence Act 1996. Under the 1996 Act, a person subject to a barring order may be required not to use or threaten to use violence against, molest or put in fear the applicant or a dependant. It is clear that this order is targeting specific wrongs against named individuals in a domestic context. Similarly with common law injunctions which seek to restrain the specific wrong contained in the plaintiff's statement of claim¹⁰ (Ireland, 2005). Behaviour Orders, in contrast, are not so limited. In the UK, encouraged by the broad scope under the Act and the emphasis on prevention rather than punishment, magistrates have erred on the side of caution and in so doing have made disproportionate orders with conditions so wide ranging as to set the defendant to fail.¹¹ This is supported by the high rate of breach in the UK which currently stands at 42%, of which just over half received custodial sentences (Cowan, 2005). It is to be hoped that, despite the absence of any effective brake on their power, Irish judges will not follow suit.

Behaviour Orders and Up-Tariffing

The sanction of detention for breach of a Behaviour Order flagrantly breaches the principle of proportionality in sentencing which requires that the penalty be proportionate to the circumstances of the 'offence'. Section 257F(3) of the Children Act 2001 (as inserted by s.164 of the Criminal Justice Act) makes reference to the child having committed a summary offence which is punishable by a maximum fine of 800 or detention for a period of up to 3 months or both. While this period is significantly lower than the English maximum tariff of 5 years, the use of the severest penalty in the land to punish acts of nuisance which are not necessarily criminal in nature nor indeed constitute any wrong in law is disproportionate by any standard. As noted by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles, in his recent scathing attack on the wave of 'ASBO-mania', in England, 'boozing in public or hanging around street corners, is no doubt unpleasant. It is not clear, however, whether it ought to be elevated to a two stop criminal offence' (Gil-Robles, 2005: 37). As mentioned above, this activity is often carried out by young people who have little

choice but to spend time in public. It is clearly an inappropriate response to the behaviour of such young people that instead of improving the local community's resources, they are 'brought to the portal of the criminal justice system' and exposed to a risk of imprisonment (ibid: 39).

The arbitrary nature of ASBOs in England is well demonstrated by the extreme geographical variations in their deployment against 'anti-social' members of the community. In a critique of ASBOs when they were first introduced, Ashworth et al. (1995: 1502) noted 'given such wide powers, each affected locality is likely to go its own way – with some places making little use of the new powers and others occasionally resorting to drastic interventions'. Their remarks have proved prescient. A recent survey by NAPO has revealed marked disparities in their use between different police force areas leading to them to conclude that the ASBO has been abused in some areas (National Association of Probation Officers, 2005). For example, an individual is over five times more likely to be the subject of an ASBO in Manchester than in Merseyside, an area which, as one commentator noted, is 'not renowned for its genteel behaviour' (Mason, 2005: 129). This may reflect the different levels of tolerance experienced within different communities, even those whose members belong to broadly similar socio-economic groups, and the inherently variable concepts of 'order/disorder'.

Conclusion

It has been the concern of this paper to illustrate that the legal framework which surrounds the Behaviour Order facilitates the institutionalisation of intolerance in Ireland, a process well underway in the UK since the introduction of ASBOs. The civil procedure imposes an order on individuals on the basis of a potentially subjective and variable definition of anti-social behaviour which does not have to be formally proved. This order comes with such open ended conditions that it may rightly be said that 'never before has such a wide range of conduct come within the remit of a single statutory order' (Ireland, 2005: 94). Breach of any one of the conditions attached, however, may result in the imposition of imprisonment. The introduction of Behaviour Orders in the Republic of Ireland is another example of reactionary government policy to deal with the 'problem of youth' and constitutes a blunt tool with which to tackle the issues. The National Crime Council (2003) has identified a number of inadequacies in the current service provision for youth including the lack of accessible and affordable facilities in their communities; the need for more intensive outreach work with 'at risk' youth; the lack of State services outside office hours; the need for drug and alcohol treatment and the need for accommodation provision. In light of these shortcomings, a far more effective approach to the problem of anti-social behaviour is likely to be created through a strategic focus on creating better communities by investing in appropriate services and facilities to meet the needs of young people, provide opportunities for positive engagement with them and reduce the risk of further anti-social behaviour.

Notes

- 1 John Kelly TD, speaking during the debates on the Criminal Justice (Community Service) Bill 1983: Second Stage, Dail Debates, Vol. 432, 3rd May 1983.
- 2 *Pottinger v. City of Miami* 810 F. Supp. 1551 (S.D.Fla. 1992).
- 3 The Coalition Against Anti-Social Behaviour Orders was a broad based initiative determined to prevent the introduction behaviour orders as part of the new Criminal Justice Act. From a small core group – which included the Irish Penal Reform Trust, the Children's Rights Alliance, the National Youth Council of Ireland, the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties – the Coalition eventually grew to include over 50 NGOs, community/voluntary youth organisations, barristers, solicitors and academics from towns and cities across Ireland.
- 4 The legislation appears somewhat confused in this regard in that the child shall be sent to a conference where a Superintendent deems it to be beneficial in preventing further anti-social behaviour by the child. At the conference the child will be expected to enter into a 'good behaviour contract' for not longer than six months. However, where this is not deemed appropriate (or where the child will not enter into a good behaviour contract/breaks the contract), the child may be referred to the Garda Diversion Programme where another conference will be held. This is obviously contradictory in that it is difficult to see how a child who is deemed unsuitable for a conference in one context can be deemed suitable for a similar procedure in a different context, and the obvious inference must be that if a child is deemed unsuitable by a Superintendent for a conference, then s/he will apply to the courts for a Behaviour Order in respect of the child.
- 5 Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Michael McDowell, Criminal Justice Bill 2004: Committee Stage, Dail Debates, Vol 81, 30th May 2006.
- 6 [2002] UKHL 39.
- 7 [2002] UKHL 39, para 113.
- 8 House of Commons Written Answers Col 1143W, 4th February 2005.
- 9 Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Michael McDowell, Criminal Justice Bill 2004: Committee Stage, Dail Debates, Vol 81, 30th May 2006. Emphasis added.
- 10 A statement of claim is a document that shows the defendant the case that is being against him or her which s/he must answer in court.
- 11 One example of such an order in Britain is a prostitute in Manchester who was prohibited from carrying condoms in the same area that her drug clinic was based (the clinic provided them to her as part of its harm-reduction strategy).

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Traveller Children and Education: Progress and Problems

Cormac Forkan

Abstract

Figures from the 2002 Census of Ireland reveal that, at best, two thirds of all Travellers who have left school only possess primary level education. Considering the fact that only 2% of the non-Traveller population fit into this category, it is very clear that Travellers have not benefited equitably from the considerable growth in educational participation from the 1960s onwards. This paper draws on existing national data and on a case study of one local area to explore educational disadvantage among young Travellers. The paper falls into three main parts. After a brief introduction setting the context, the first section outlines the factual situation regarding Traveller participation in education, noting significant positive developments – particularly regarding levels of enrolment – but also the persistence of serious problems relating to absenteeism at primary level and poor retention to Senior Cycle at secondary level. The second section presents some perceptions and opinions of Travellers themselves – adults and young people – of participation in education, and also presents the views and experiences of Home School Liaison Officers in the area studied. The third section identifies a range of factors, macro- and micro-sociological, internal and external to the school, which appear to be contributing to the persistence of educational disadvantage among young Travellers.

Keywords

Irish Travellers; Traveller children; young Travellers; Traveller education.

Introduction

From 1990 to 1995, the average annual growth rate in the Irish economy was 4.78%, rising to 9.5% for the five years 1995–2000 (OECD, 2004). One of the main reasons commonly cited for Ireland's striking economic success in recent years has been the growth in all levels of education provision and participation from the 1960s onwards. The OECD points out that participation in and completion of upper secondary-level education has increased dramatically over the last 40 years.

Ireland was one of the first European countries to grasp the economic importance of education and economists suggest that this up-skilling of the labour force accounts for almost 1% per annum of additional national output over the last decade or so (OECD, 2004: 7).

However, despite the significant advances made by the education system in Ireland since the 1960s, a number of core difficulties still undermine it. One of the most pronounced and visibly dysfunctional aspects is that in general those from less advantaged backgrounds have not benefited as much in comparative terms as those from more advantaged backgrounds.

Travellers, an ethnic minority group native to Ireland, are one such educationally disadvantaged group. Figures from the last census reveal that there were 23,681 Travellers in Ireland (11,708 males and 11,973 females), representing approximately 0.6% of the total population. Of the 7,000 Travellers who answered the question indicating the age at which they ceased their fulltime education, 66% left school before the age of 15, as compared to 15% for the general population (CSO, 2002: 2). 'As a consequence two thirds of all school-leavers among the Traveller Community were educated to, at most, primary level, compared to 2 per cent for the overall population' (Department of Education and Science, 2005).

To counteract this (and other aspects of the inequality experienced by Travellers) there has been a considerable growth over the last decade in the number of groups and agencies supporting Travellers and their rights. From a policy perspective, there have also been considerable changes. In relation to education, the traditional view supported by the Government was one that held that Travellers needed to be assimilated into the dominant culture. This stance has changed considerably in the recent past with the Department of Education and Science now stating that '...Traveller culture and traditions must be acknowledged and reflected in the educational system' (Department of Education and Science, 2002a: 10). The *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community* (1995) was one of the key documents associated with this change in mindset. Subsequently, the Education Act of 1998 expressed in law a commitment to adequate education for all citizens. By 2002, the Department of Education and Science had published *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools and Second-Level Schools*. The primary aim of these guidelines is to provide practical guidance to all those involved with Traveller education, namely teachers, schools and parents, on how best to implement the Department's policy on Traveller education.

The policy has as its central aim the meaningful participation and highest attainment of the Traveller child so that, in common with all the children of the nation, he or she may live a full life as a child and realise his or her full potential as a unique individual, proud of and affirmed in his or her identity as a Traveller and a citizen of Ireland

(Department of Education and Science, 2002a: 5).

Young Travellers' Participation in Education: the Factual Situation

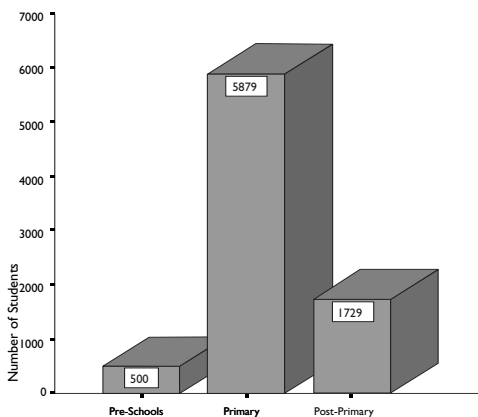
Despite having a history of educational disadvantage, the overall growth in the participation rate of Travellers across the various education sectors in Ireland has been pronounced over the past decade or so. This educational success is, however, accompanied by persisting problems in the form of poor rates of attendance at primary level and a relatively low retention rate to Senior Cycle at second level. This section presents statistical data relating to both of these contrasting aspects of Traveller participation in education, in

the former case drawing on national figures¹ and in the latter on the results of a case study in the greater Blanchardstown area of County Dublin.

Overall Growth in Traveller Enrolment in Education

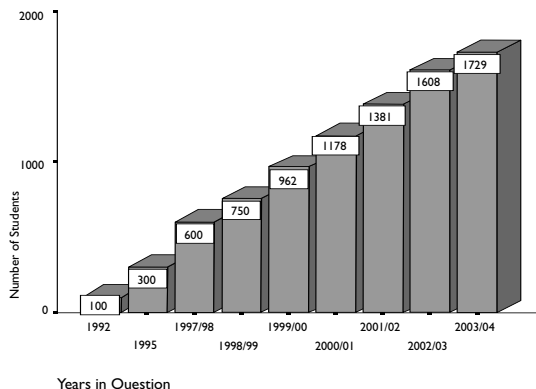
The estimated number of Travellers enrolled in pre-schools, primary and post-primary schools in Ireland during the 2003/04 academic year is shown in Figure 1. A total of 500 Traveller children attended pre-schools across Ireland (6% of the total). The vast majority of Travellers attending full-time education that year – 73% – were in primary school, while the remaining 21% were in the post-primary sector.

Figure 1: *Estimated number of Travellers enrolled in pre-schools, primary and post-primary schools in Ireland, 2003/04*



The number of Traveller children enrolled in mainstream post-primary education has risen dramatically over the last decade or so. The national data can be seen in Figure 2, which shows a selection of years from 1992 to 2003/04². The data reveal that in 1992 only 100 Traveller children enrolled in post-primary education, while by 2003/04 some 1729 children were enrolling, a growth rate of 1600% over 12 years. These figures augur very well for the future educational prospects of Traveller children and young people across Ireland.

Figure 2: *Estimated Number of Travellers Enrolled in Mainstream Post-Primary Schools, 1992–2003/04*



Considering this overall increase in the participation of Traveller children in second-level education, it is interesting to see how they are distributed across the second-level system. Table 1 shows the distribution for the 2003/04 academic year. Some 86% of Traveller children who were attending post-primary school were either in 1st, 2nd or 3rd year, with only 14% studying at Senior Cycle level or PLC (post leaving certificate) level.

Table 1: *Distribution of Traveller Students in Mainstream Post-Primary Schools, 2003/04*

Year	No. of Traveller Children	%
1st year	626	36.2
2nd year	527	30.5
3rd year	341	19.7
4th year/Transition year	44	2.6
5th year	113	6.5
6th year	63	3.6
PLC	15	0.9
Total	1729	100

Problems of Attendance

As noted earlier the increased educational success of Travellers is overshadowed by persistent problems in the form of poor attendance at primary level and the relatively low retention rate to Senior Cycle education at second level. The data presented here relating to the level of attendance of Traveller children in primary education was collected as part of a bigger research project commissioned by the Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group (BTDG) in April 2004. This group has worked with Travellers since 1992 to promote their welfare and human rights and to combat the social exclusion experienced by them. In their three-year plan (2000–2003), the BTDG stated that one of their main aims was ‘to improve Travellers experience of and participation in mainstream education ... and to contribute to the provision of culturally appropriate services for young Travellers in relation to policy development at national level’.

Prior to the initiation of this research, the BTDG, the Visiting Teacher for Travellers and other support agencies in the Greater Blanchardstown area had collected anecdotal evidence regarding the participation of Traveller children at primary school level. It was suggested that, if analysed, the attendance record of Traveller children in the primary school system would prove to be quite low. It was also thought that by and large the attendance of Traveller children is considerably better at primary level and usually drastically declines if and when they progress to second level. Overall, it was thought that more detailed information regarding primary level attendance could be useful in further supporting these Traveller children within the educational system.

For the purposes of this study, statistics relating to the 27 Traveller children who were in 4th, 5th and 6th classes in the primary schools in Blanchardstown for the 2003/04 academic year were collected and collated. The approximate number of days a child should have attended primary school during this academic year was 179. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of actual attendance for the 27 Blanchardstown Traveller children. The most important point to note is that no Traveller child achieved full attendance during this academic year. The analysis revealed that 11% of the children missed up to 20 days that year; 37% missed between 21 and 50 days; and a further 22% missed from 51 to 100 days. Just under 30% of the Traveller children missed more than 100 days from school.

This snapshot of school attendance patterns for Travellers at primary school level in Blanchardstown illustrates without doubt that absenteeism from school is a very real issue in this area. It seems reasonable to suppose that absenteeism on this scale, if replicated elsewhere (and the current study cannot itself establish this) is bound to have severe consequences for the overall success of Traveller children in education, be it at primary level or later at second level.

Table 2: *Number of days absent for Traveller children in Blanchardstown, 2003/04*

Number of Days	Frequency	%
101 or more	8	30
51–100	6	22
21–50	10	37
20 or less	3	11
Total	27	100

Problems of Retention

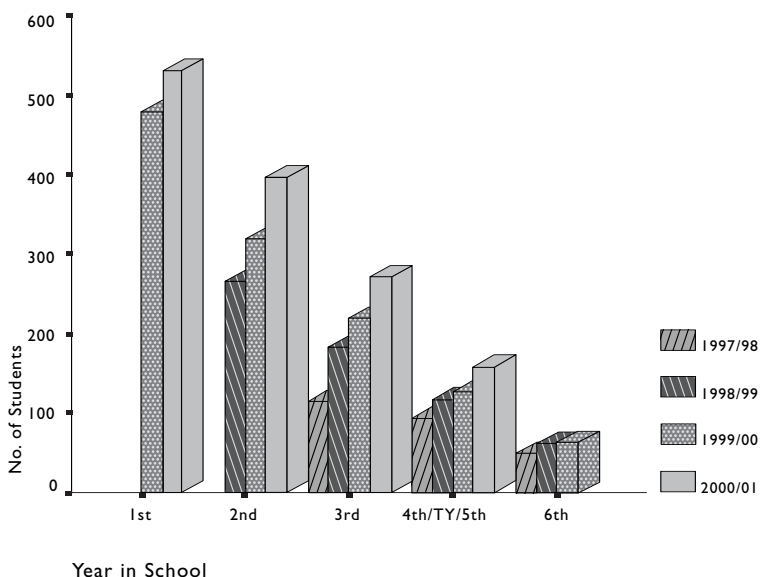
A second major issue evident in Traveller education is the poor rate of retention to Senior Cycle at post-primary. In this case it is possible to present national figures. The data in Table 3 clearly show the trend towards the increased participation of Traveller children across all stages of post-primary education from 1999/00 to 2003/04. These figures can also be used to investigate the retention rates from year to year, as shown in Figure 3. This Figure clearly shows that the retention rates dwindle markedly as the years progress from 1st year to Senior Cycle.

Table 3: *National Distribution of Traveller Students in Mainstream Post-Primary Schools, 1999–2004*

Year in School	1999/00	2000/01	*2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
1st year	478	531	582	650	626
2nd year	266	319	397	482	527
3rd year	116	183	220	272	341
4th year/T. year	31	27	31	26	44
5th year	51	67	86	102	113
6th year	19	38	49	62	63
PLC	1	13	16	14	15
Total	962	1178	1381	1608	1729

* No estimates for Finglas/North Dublin area due to Visiting Teacher vacancy

Figure 3: *Retention Rates for Traveller Children 1997/98 to 2000/01 Academic Years*



Taking the figures relating to those Travellers who started 1st year in 1999/2000 as a case study, and following them to the end of their second-level education, some interesting findings emerge. As shown in Tables 3 & 4, a total of 478 Traveller children started in 1st Year in 1999/00. However, by 6th year, 87% had dropped out, leaving only 13% of the cohort completing the full second-level education. This is a regrettable outcome, particularly when contrasted with the average retention rate to Senior Cycle for all post-primary students in Ireland, which at 78% is six times higher (Forkan, 2005).

Table 4: *Cohort of 1999 entrants to 2nd level: numbers retained/dropping out*

Year in School	Number of students	Number dropping out	% of cohort dropping out
1st year	478	–	–
2nd year	319	159	33
3rd year	220	99	21
4th/TY/5th year	128	92	19
6th year	63	65	14
Total dropping out		415	87

Experiences and Perceptions of Participation in Education

From the last section it is clear that despite there being a significant overall increase in the number of Travellers enrolled in full-time education, a poor retention rate among young people at post-primary level remains a severe problem nationally; and data from a local study draws attention to a serious problem with primary school attendance among Traveller children in that area. (While it must be stressed that this is a case study of one locality, there is no reason to suppose that it is an exceptional locality from the point of view of young Travellers' participation in education.)

In an attempt to come to an understanding as to the reasons behind the existence of these two problems, one of the primary tasks of this research was to identify the various stakeholders who were connected to the education of Traveller children in the Blanchardstown area. The formulation of a list of stakeholders resulted in a total of 16 different groupings being identified. These ranged from Traveller children across primary and post-primary schools, the respective school management teams at each level, adult Travellers including parents, the Home School Community Liaison Officers and the various statutory and community/voluntary groups in the area. Once the list of stakeholders was developed, the next task involved the design of appropriate research tools that would then be used to collect the required data. A triangulated research approach was chosen for the study, including focus groups and a range of types of interview. Table 5 shows the list of stakeholders, the number of respondents in each case and the method of data collection. Of the 60 respondents, 36 were Travellers, in keeping with the fact that a key purpose of the project was to hear the voices of Travellers themselves.

Table 5: *Stakeholders and Research Methods*

Sources	Number of Participants	Research Methods
<i>Group 1 – Adult Travellers/Parents</i>	10	Focus Group
<i>Group 2 – Primary Schools</i>		
Primary School Children	10	Focus Group
Primary School Principals	4	Focus Group
Primary School Resource Teacher	4	Focus Group
Primary School Resource Teachers	1	In-depth interview
<i>Group 3 – Post-Primary Schools</i>		
Second level School – No.1	8	Focus Group
Second-level School – No.2	2	Semi-Structured Interview
Junior Traveller Education Centre	3	Semi-Structured Interview
Home School Liaison Officers	3	Semi-Structured Interview
Other School Staff	2	Semi-Structured Interview
<i>Group 4 – Support Agencies</i>		
Community/		
Voluntary Representatives	3	Focus Group
Statutory Representatives	3	Focus Group
School Completion Programme (Health Board)/	2	Semi-Structured Interview
Health Services Executive	2	Semi-Structured & 'phone interview
Irish Traveller Movement	1	Semi-Structured Interview
Co-ordinators of Women's Group (Travellers)	2	Semi-Structured Interview
Total	60	

For the purposes of this paper, the data gathered from three specific groups will be focused on, namely adult Travellers, including parents; Traveller children; and the Home School Liaison Officers who work closely with Traveller children, their families and the schools in the greater Blanchardstown area.

Adult Travellers' Views

The adult Travellers who participated in the focus group research felt that things had changed considerably for the better in relation to the education of Travellers since the time when they themselves went to school. In those days, special classes for Travellers were in use with Travellers segregated from the settled children. As one participant noted, when they were put into this type of class in primary school, they felt that they did not have to pay attention, the result being that they fell behind and eventually were unable to keep up.

Regarding the current education of Traveller children, they pointed out that they never hear their children complaining about school. It was acknowledged that education is important for young people as it gives them a start in life and provides them with opportunities to '...get on well in life and achieve things'. It provides them

with the opportunity to ‘... learn things that you normally wouldn’t’. In addition, the participants saw it as a priority that their children attend school: ‘Traveller children should learn what they have to in school ... they are no different to any other child’.

It was considered that schools in Blanchardstown are generally welcoming to Traveller adults and to their children. Since the emergence of groups such as the BTDG, Traveller parents have been encouraged to support their children in participating in regular education. This according to the group has had a profound impact on the overall participation of Traveller children in education. This support has given parents the courage not to accept ‘special Traveller classes’ in the primary sector anymore. For them, one of the biggest reasons for the success of Travellers in education today is the fact that they are integrated and able to mix with the settled children in their everyday classes.

It was acknowledged, however, that despite their wish to see their children having at least a Junior Certificate, the children leave formal education at a relatively young age. Most boys leave full-time education around the time they are confirmed and may soon after begin to work with their fathers. On the other hand, girls are more likely to stay on in education, simply because there are fewer options available to them if they do decide to terminate their education.

It was also recognised that none of their children had completed the Leaving Certificate. Nevertheless, the norm was increasingly for their children to stay at school and at least contemplate sitting the Junior Certificate. It is their expectation that in the future, more and more Traveller children will complete both their Junior and Leaving Certificates. In addition it was accepted that, like all children, Traveller children need to be encouraged by their parents to attend school.

Children and Young People’s Views

This section presents the views of young Travellers both in the primary and post-primary system. The researcher visited one national school in the area, under the guidance of the steering group for the research and the Visiting Teacher for Travellers. The school in question was chosen as it was regarded as being one in which the experience of Traveller children in education would be typical. A mixed group of settled Irish children, Traveller children and a group of non-Irish children were chosen and asked to participate in the focus group. The reason for this was to avoid any further segregation and labelling of Traveller children.

The ages of the children interviewed (n=10) ranged from 9–14 with an equal number of boys and girls. When asked if they liked going to school, the overwhelming response was positive. They liked the teachers. They liked P.E., Art, English and the big yard to play in. When asked to comment on how often they came to school, all of the children except the Traveller children said that they had a good attendance record.

In terms of progressing to post-primary school, they were all aware of and able to name the schools to which they could go in the future. Many of them perceived secondary school to be difficult, but also a place where there was a bit more freedom and ‘there are different teachers for each class’. Transferring to post-primary school would also give them the chance to make new friends. Without exception, the settled and the non-Irish children were aware of the Junior and Leaving Certificates and were looking forward to working towards them. For some of the Traveller children,

however, it seemed unlikely at this stage that they would complete their Junior Certificate, despite the fact that it would help them get a better job.

As was shown in Table 5, a total of 13 post-primary Traveller young people participated in the research, with their ages ranging from 12–16. Eight participated in a focus group discussion and five took part in semi-structured interviews which allowed them more scope to expand on some of the issues personal to them regarding education. In both the focus group and the interviews, discussion initially focussed on their experience of the primary school system. All of the participants said that they had a positive experience while attending primary school and enjoyed the subjects on offer. They did point out, however, that sometimes in primary school, Travellers were ‘taken out for some classes’, for example, maths and English. It was thought that Traveller children were taken out of the integrated classes for these special classes just because they were Travellers, and in spite of the fact that ‘they knew those things already’. Many Travellers were kept back in the primary system just because they were Travellers and not because they needed to academically, in the view of these young people.

The discussion then progressed to examine their experience of transferring to post-primary school. There was broad agreement with the view that ‘secondary school keeps you out of trouble...and you learn how to read and write better’. The majority of the group stated that they intended staying on up to third year in school, but were unsure if they were going to sit the Junior Certificate. When asked why they would leave without doing this exam, one participant said it was ‘because that is the way Travellers are...’. The view was expressed that ‘sometimes it doesn’t matter if you go on or not...you are still looked down on’. In addition to experiencing this attitude in society, the girls alluded to the fact that another common reason associated with Traveller girls only staying until Junior Certificate is that they often get married at sixteen or seventeen. Therefore, if there is a choice between staying in school or getting married, ‘...Travellers [girls] will pick marriage’.

The focus group discussion also explored the young people’s views about possibly completing the Leaving Certificate. For the majority of girls, this issue was bound up with their fear of being left behind by their friends. It was suggested that due to many Travellers being kept back in the primary school system, they may often be thirteen or fourteen when entering the post-primary system. Therefore, if they were to stay on and complete the Junior Certificate and then progress to the Leaving Certificate, they might be twenty years old in their final year, when the settled young people would be only seventeen or eighteen. They were not prepared to, as one young woman put it, ‘go this journey without my friends’, despite being encouraged by the school, the Home School Community Liaison Officer and their parents. It was also pointed out that ‘no Traveller ever done their leaving in this school’, and there seemed to be agreement that it would probably only take one Traveller to do their Leaving Certificate and then ‘they will all do it’. The boys present were more open to the possibility of completing the Leaving Certificate. This may be possibly due to the fact that they did not see themselves getting married until their mid-twenties.

When asked about their attendance records, there was a mixed response. Some of them had relatively good records while others had missed anything from thirty to fifty days in that academic year. One participant pointed out that ‘I don’t miss days from

school, but when I go home for a break, I don't come back very often'. Among the reasons given for missing days or time in school were:

- family weddings or other family occasions
- not being 'in the humour'
- not being interested in school
- long hours at school
- getting up early in the mornings.

When the discussion turned to career ambitions, each one of the girls expressed the hope that they would be able to get the job they wanted in the future, even if they were married. They also knew of a sister of one of the participants who had gone on to do a child care qualification after finishing in school and hoped that they might be able to access similar courses in the future. The boys were less descriptive of the kind of jobs they would see themselves in. When they were asked if they would encourage their future children to stay on in post-primary in the future, all of the group answered positively, despite acknowledging the fact that they themselves would probably not complete their Leaving Certificate.

Home School Community Liaison Officers

The Home School Community Liaison Officers described their job as one that involved working with and supporting Traveller parents in the education of their children. This is achieved primarily through home visits and parental training courses. The general view that emerged in the discussion was that the experience of primary school for Travellers was significantly better than in the past. Also a significant number of Traveller children now transfer from primary to post-primary for a number of reasons. There is now an *expectation* held by Traveller families and schools that Traveller children should transfer, which in turn affects the children concerned.

The work of the Visiting Teacher for Travellers had also greatly aided the transfer process. One interviewee noted that many girls make the move to post-primary as it 'gets them out of doing domestic work and looking after young ones at home'. To a certain extent, attending second level also '... gets them out of arranged marriages, for a while anyway'. Nevertheless, a large amount of the children they worked with never made the transfer at all. When they do come to post-primary, one of the interviewees noted that the Traveller children experience positive discrimination as they get help with the purchase of books and uniforms. While on the one hand this is a positive thing, for many this experience leads them to be further labelled by their settled peers as disadvantaged.

According to the Home School Liaison Officers, many Travellers find it initially difficult to settle into second-level school, but usually they become integrated after a period of time. However, a distinction was made between in-class integration and out-of-class integration. As regards the former, the Officers were agreed that Traveller integration was very good as 'Travellers like to see themselves as fitting in with everyone in the class'. Despite this, in out-of-class time, integration was relatively poor, with Travellers usually gathering together to play and chat. The lack of out-of-class integration is not helped by the fact that few Traveller children engage in extra-curricular activities run by the school.

In relation to staying on in second level, the experience was generally that the boys left the education system after their confirmation, with few progressing beyond that. As one officer stated:

...male Travellers don't go through adolescence – once they go into second year, they become a man. They think that they can speak with the teachers from this perspective. They want to show their identity and they don't have that much interest in exams as such.

More of the girls progress but few stay to sit their Junior Certificate. For either boys or girls, a number of reasons were cited for this non-completion, such as 'it's [the formal education system] still a bit alien to them', 'the curriculum may not appeal to them', 'the day and week are long enough – they can't wait to get out'. Overall, it was thought that the norms held by Travellers in relation to school are very different to those among the settled population: 'having a Junior Cert is a prized possession for them and they are seen to have done very well if they have it.'

Poor attendance was also raised as a difficulty, with many children missing forty or more days in the academic year. As a result of missing days, a lot of them fall behind and then 'act up when they *are* in school', which may lead them to begin to see school in a negative light. The point was made that the young people cannot receive help if they are not in school.

The role of the parents is an important factor in the children's experience of education. One interviewee stated that despite offering support for the young people to continue in education, 'parents have no real idea of what doing well means or takes' and suggested that the parents also needed to be educated to realise what is expected and required. There is also a need to further develop and build the trust with parents as this is a key factor to successful transfer and completion at second level. One officer outlined a scheme in which parents were trained specifically to be part of a programme that aids the transfer process. A group of parents are selected and trained as facilitators and then parents with children transferring are invited into the school, where the trained parents answer any questions they may have regarding the transfer process.

In terms of trying to further strengthen the transfer for Travellers from primary to post-primary, the Home School Liaison Officers noted that they visit the primary schools in their areas throughout the year and invite the Traveller children to sit in on classes at second level in an attempt to create a positive view of education. However, one officer stated 'you can only bring them so far and then they have to make the choice themselves'. Another officer suggested that 'Traveller people themselves are afraid that their own culture will be eroded by their children's participation in the settled world'. This is passed onto the children too: 'Therefore, it will happen naturally – we as settled shouldn't be trying to impose our view of education on them'.

Traveller Young People and Education: Explanatory Factors

Since the introduction of the concept of mass education in the western world in the years after the second world war, it has been the norm for considerable differences in educational attainment to persist between various social groups in society, based on such variables as class, gender and/or membership of an ethnic group, such as the Traveller community in this case. It is clear from the data presented above that despite the considerable growth in the number of Traveller young people attending school in

Ireland, at second level in particular, Traveller education is still experiencing a number of persistent stumbling blocks. As noted already, the most severe of these problems are those of *attendance* at primary level and, subsequently, *retention rates* at second level. From a sociological point of view it is widely accepted that explanations of differences in educational attainment must take into account both intra-school factors (e.g. curriculum, school organisation, relationships with teachers and other pupils) and extra-school ones (factors external to the school, such as family, neighbourhood, community and broader socio-economic processes). Based on the empirical data presented in this article, a number of factors can be seen to be at play in the case of young Travellers' experiences of education.

Traveller Culture

The data suggest that aspects of Traveller culture both support and hinder the participation and progression of Traveller children within the education system. It may be true that 'there is a major challenge in reconciling a nomadic and culturally distinct lifestyle with an increasingly credentialised society' (Tovey and Share, 2003: 223) but the challenge is as much for educational providers and institutions as for Travellers, whose attitudes to education as expressed in this study are very positive. The Traveller parents interviewed were extremely supportive of their children in school and wished for them to do well. This parental good-will has helped to create an expectation that young Travellers in the area studied will transfer from primary to second level; and it is also expected by the parents that more and more Traveller young people will stay on to Leaving Certificate level, a development they welcome. They describe their children as enjoying the experience of school – you 'never hear them complaining' – and the schools themselves as generally welcoming.

Despite these very positive attitudes, poor attendance at school remains the single biggest factor holding young Travellers back in this area. Family occasions like weddings, funerals and baptisms by and large take precedence over attendance at school. Coupled with this, despite a changing trend, the majority of Traveller boys still opt out of school after confirmation due to the appeal of the 'working life' and its association with being a man. For Traveller girls, many are still diverted away from contemplating participation in Senior Cycle because of the expectation that they will get married. However, there are increasingly exceptions to this pattern, and the young women in this study also had hopes of gaining access to courses in the future that would enhance their job prospects, even if married. Furthermore, all the young people agreed that they would encourage their own children to stay on in post-primary education.

Educational Institutions

A second factor having an impact on young Travellers' experiences of education is that of the educational institutions themselves. The data revealed many positive institutional practices at work in schools across the Greater Blanchardstown Area. Practical supports provided by schools such as books and uniforms were seen to be invaluable in the increased success of Travellers in education. Furthermore, the constructive work of the Visiting Teacher for Travellers was highly regarded by parents, as was the work of the Home School Community Liaison service. In relation

to the positive institutional influences outside school, the work of the Blanchardstown Travellers' Development Group and the various pre-school, after-school and homework clubs were all cited as being vitally important to the furthering of Traveller education.

There were also some negative perceptions. Some of the post-primary young people described having been removed from integrated classes in primary school (for maths and English for instance) 'just because they were Travellers', and they also complained about some young people being kept back in the primary system for no other reason than that they were Travellers, as they saw it. This has an important knock-on effect, since being older than one's peers was also given as one of the reasons why young Travellers would be discouraged from staying on to Junior and Leaving Certificate level. The low level of participation by young Travellers in extra-curricular activities also suggests that there is room for the schools to take a more pro-active approach to this issue. Respondents also cited a lack of understanding of Traveller culture on the part of many teachers and the need for this to be redressed through training.

Societal Attitudes and Inequalities

Apart from individual educational institutions, there are broader macro-sociological factors, including societal attitudes and expectations, which continue to impinge on the success of Travellers in education. This emerged strikingly and poignantly in the interviews with the Traveller children in this study. Many of the young people believe that there is no point in furthering their education, as they will be looked down on by society even if they do. There was a sense that if society expects them to fail and not to progress within the education system, they will act accordingly. Traveller young people's perceptions of themselves, their present circumstances and their future options and opportunities also need to be understood within a context of persistent inequalities experienced by Travellers of all ages in relation to poverty, accommodation and health (see e.g. Quirke 2006). Research shows that material inequalities have an impact on participation in and attitudes towards education, and are associated with an increased sense of alienation from school (Drudy and Lynch 1993: 162).

Conclusion

This article has given an account of considerable progress in relation to young Travellers' participation in education over the last decade, particularly as reflected in post-primary school enrolment. Despite this positive development, huge disparities remain between the educational attainment of Travellers and the settled population, most vividly reflected in the statistic showing that two-thirds of all school leavers who are Travellers will at best possess a primary-level education. National figures have been provided for Traveller students enrolling at second-level in 1999, showing that retention rates dwindle markedly as the years progress from 1st year to Senior Cycle. The results of a local case study suggest that poor school attendance at primary level is paving the way for later difficulties.

The interview data and analysis provided above, however, clearly suggest that the 'problem' of Traveller education is not one that can be parked with ease at the door of Traveller culture alone; other micro- and macro-sociological factors are at play and

what are often regarded as ‘innate cultural practices’ are often actually the outcomes of ‘structural exclusion and inequalities’ (Kenny, 1997a: 59). Prevailing social attitudes and perceptions concerning the place of Travellers in Irish society and their involvement in education are a crucially important factor. If the Department of Education policy aim alluded to earlier – ‘the meaningful participation and highest attainment of the Traveller child’ – is to be achieved, then Travellers themselves will have to be willing and committed. But as Kenny (1997b: 66) suggests, further action will also be required at a number of levels:

Cultural affirmation is essential to the liberation of the educational potential of children in [marginalised] groups. Success in this area is often also dependent on levels of anti-racist practice in our schools. If education provision, from the central policy-makers through to local classrooms, were informed by principles of anti-racism and interculturalism, the need for special support for Travellers with learning difficulties would be pared back to its true extent, because at least an alien school programme would not be compounding the difficulties confronting Traveller Children.

Notes

- 1 The author would like to thank the National Education Officer for Travellers for providing this data.
- 2 Data are unavailable for some of the years within the range listed.

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Biographical Note

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Review Article

Significant Steps Forward in Irish Social Care Scholarship



Share, P. and McElwee, N. (eds.)

Applied Social Care: An Introduction for Irish Students.

Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2005. 374 pp. €35.99.

O'Connor, T. and Murphy, M. (eds.)

Social Care in Ireland: Theory, Policy and Practice.

Cork: CIT Press, 2006. 368 pp. €36.00.

Nóirín Hayes

Although social care work – originally characterised as childcare – has been a recognised employment option in Ireland since the 1970s and practitioners have had an impact across a vast array of service types and client groups, the field of social care continues to present as an emerging professional area in search of a clear identity. The explanation for this lies bedded within complex understandings of status in relation to other professionals and is, paradoxically, compounded by the diverse nature and ‘multiple meanings’ (Gallagher & O’Toole, 1999) of social care work itself. While definitions vary, a profession collectively possesses a common body of knowledge contributing to a repertoire of behaviour and skills in practice that set it apart from other professions and from non-professionals. Generally there are agreed standards of practice, common pre-service training and education programmes, a clear code of ethics and a system for regulating entry. Measured against such criteria social care work is clearly a profession in practice but it is evident from many of the chapters in the two books under review that the felt experience by many in the field is one of a profession yet to be given full recognition. To some extent it could be argued that so much attention to the topic of the professionalisation of social care by those within it may be a contributing factor to the perceived problem of professional recognition and status, as the energy given to such discussion and debate takes away from the contribution that social care practitioners and researchers might make to research, policy and practice in the wider arena and to the quality of the life experiences of separate client groups.

The two books under review are presented as the first two Irish textbooks addressing this important field. In fact, *Applied Social Care: An Introduction for Irish Students* is more clearly a textbook, whilst *Social Care in Ireland: Theory, Policy and Practice* reads rather as a series of essays. In collections as extensive as these – twenty-three and twenty-four chapters respectively – it is both important and helpful for the reader, particularly the student reader, to hear a clear editorial voice. Such a voice is evident and pervasive in *Applied Social Care*. Perry Share and Niall McElwee identify their readers as those ‘thinking about becoming, or planning to be, or already ... a social care practitioner’ and state unambiguously that their text ‘represents the first

integrated attempt by the educators and practitioners in the social care field in Ireland to define and describe the practice of social care'. The result is a book that shows common purpose across the chapters, each one presented with an overview and each clearly addressing the reader from the social care perspective. The editorial voice is much less evident in *Social Care in Ireland* where Tom O'Connor and Mike Murphy state that the purpose of the book is to assess 'the different cross-disciplinary feeds into social care' and express the hope that the book will 'raise the awareness and consciousness of all who read it to the point where they might feel energised to address many of the problems that are highlighted in the caring professions and in society as a whole'. Unlike *Applied Social Care* the editors of *Social Care in Ireland* appear to have given limited direction to the contributors and the result is that a number of the papers are stand-alone contributions with no direct link to social care practice or policy. Nonetheless they make interesting and challenging reading.

Both books are divided into sections, with relevant chapters grouped together. However, at times the grouping leads to a situation where linked chapters are separated and this limits rather than facilitates the integrated approach sought by the editors of both texts. For this reader this was particularly evident with respect to the chapters relating to health practice and policy in *Social Care in Ireland* and those relating to professionalisation and professionalism in *Applied Social Care* where a more integrated presentation on these topics would have brought the reader through theoretical, practice and policy issues in a connected way, fulfilling the ambition of both texts to assist an integrated approach.

The topics covered in both books are similar, but care has been taken by the editors of *Social Care in Ireland* to present a somewhat different focus building on, rather than replicating, the earlier text *Applied Social Care*. This has led, in some cases, to the beginnings of a text-based discussion and debate which should generate more critical reflection within the field of social care in Ireland. In fact a challenge has already been presented to those developing and designing education programmes for students by Tom O'Connor in his own chapter on 'Social-Care Practice: Bringing Structure and Ideology in from the Cold' where he criticises, among others, Kevin Lalor and Judy Doyle for neglecting consideration of policy structures in their chapter in *Applied Social Care* on 'The Social Care Practice Placement – a College Perspective'. Such disputes are to be welcomed as they are the food and drink of a vibrant academic discipline and it is to be hoped that responses to this, and other challenges posed will be forthcoming through journal articles, conference presentations and further academic publications.

In any book covering such an extensive array of topics it is bound to be the case that chapters will vary in quality, challenge and depth. Some are explicitly introductory in their style, presenting concepts with clear definitions and locating issues in a practical context whilst others cut straight to the complexity of an issue, are challenging and provocative. The danger with this approach is that it may leave some less informed, less experienced readers behind. Within many chapters aspects of research, policy and practice are all addressed to some degree but the overall contents of both books can be considered from a number of different thematic perspectives. To begin with there is extensive focus on the issue of what exactly social care is. This reflects, at least in part, the interests of the editors, explicitly identified in *Applied Social Care* where the editors Share and McElwee also co-author chapters on the topics 'What

is Social Care?’ and ‘The Professionalisation of Social Care in Ireland’. Colm O’Doherty, one of the two authors common to both books, provides two valuable chapters reflecting on the relationship between social work, social care and social capital. Within these chapters he moves beyond questioning the professional nature of social care to accepting it and makes visible some of the points of tension that exist between social work and social care in Ireland. Possibly due to his experiences outside the state he brings an objectivity to the topic which allows it to be progressed to a point of valuable academic discussion. In his chapter ‘Integrating Social Care and Social Work: Towards a Model of Best Practice’ in *Applied Social Care*, he presents a challenge when he notes that ‘social care practice ... is now a fulcrum for social action/social education, whereas social work as practiced in the Health Boards is more closely identified with case management.... As this emerging practice is formalised and institutionalised, the way is open for Health Boards to integrate creatively social care and social work’.

The difficulties in achieving integration across social care and social work are not to be underestimated and some of them are outlined by O’Doherty and also by Share and McElwee in their chapter on professionalisation, which provides more questions than answers. They are also evident, to a degree, in the chapter on the role of the community childcare worker as described by Susan McKenna-McElwee and Teresa Brown in *Applied Social Care*. The international dimension introduced in that volume gives a valuable context within which to consider some of the questions raised and illustrates the important power and influence of the socio-political context on the realisation of professional identity. Ann McWilliams, in her chapter ‘The Challenges of Working Together in Child Protection’ in *Social Care in Ireland*, confronts the thorny issue of inter-professional and inter-agency cooperation and highlights the role of training to facilitate the critical attitude shifts that will be necessary among practitioners and policy makers to move from the aspiration to the reality. It is notable that when reading chapters by authors other than those in social care, particularly in the thought provoking chapter by Peadar Kirby, ‘The Changing Role of the Irish State: From Welfare to Competition State’ (in *Social Care in Ireland*), the issue of whether or not social care is a profession simply does not arise – it is accepted as such and then challenged to act accordingly.

Bridging the issue of professionalisation, professional identity and the actual practice and professionalism of social care work is the theme of a number of chapters. In the chapter on ‘Self in Social Care’ by Grant Charles and Niall McElwee in *Applied Social Care* the idea that ‘self and relationship are inseparable in effective social care practice’ is presented and discussed. The chapter makes clear that it is an introduction to a complex topic and urges readers to look further into some of the issues raised. It then goes on to reflect on the tensions of the reality of that self/other dynamic. Such tensions can be eased by careful training and supervision, topics covered by several chapters in both books. In *Applied Social Care* these include the joint contribution of Lalor and Doyle (already mentioned) and separate chapters by Eileen O’Neill, Patrick McGarty and Danny Meenan. *Social Care in Ireland* has chapters on related topics by Patricia Kennefick (‘Aspects of Personal Development’), Ann McWilliams (‘The Challenges of Working Together in Child Protection’) and Niall Hanlon, Ann McWilliams and Siobhán Quinlan-Cooke (who jointly contribute a chapter on practice

teaching and learning). Kennefick's chapter connects directly with Eileen O'Neill's chapter in *Applied Social Care* in addressing aspects of the Professional Supervision Model as useful in effective social care training and ongoing professional development. This model emphasises the actual work being done and the person doing the work and the critical link between the two. But attention to this link in training is insufficient if not made explicit within a wider socio-political and policy context – a case strongly argued by Tom O'Connor in his chapter in *Social Care in Ireland*. Sinéad Conneely's chapter on the legal system in *Applied Social Care* gives the reader an introduction to child and family law which is a critical context within which to consider social care practice. However, the real impact of the external world on the day-to-day reality is starkly illustrated in the chapters by Peadar Kirby (on the role of the state), Elizabeth Cullen (on the benefits or otherwise of the Celtic tiger economy) and Maev-Ann Wren (on health) in *Social Care in Ireland*. As an illustration of health inequalities Bridgit Quirke's chapter in the same volume on the 'reality of Travellers' health' is very powerful. Read in conjunction these various chapters present the reader with a glimpse of the complexities involved in the provision of high quality and effective social care work and challenge educators to consider carefully the balance in programmes between the theoretical, the political and the practical.

Theoretical issues addressed in these texts cross a number of disciplines. Áine de Róiste, the second author to be represented in both books, offers a rich and clear introduction to attachment theory in *Applied Social Care* and to a systems perspective on working with families in *Social Care in Ireland*. Both are written with the student of social care in mind and offer sufficient detail to allow the reader evaluate the usefulness of the theoretical perspectives to direct practice in context. This link is explicitly made within the attachment chapter where a case study is presented to allow the reader apply the information. Both attachment and working with families form a central element of Gay Graham's chapter in *Social Care in Ireland* on 'Social-care Work with Families in Crisis: Attachment Strategies and Effective Care-giving through Life-space Opportunities'. Jacqueline O'Toole's chapter on 'Gender, Sexuality and Social Care' in *Applied Social Care* is clearly located within the explicit context of a feminist sociological framework and raises issues of power and gender balance within social care practice and policy. These issues are also addressed by Orla O'Connor and Claire Dunne in their chapter 'Valuing Unpaid Care Work' in *Social Care in Ireland*. To some extent the impact of each of these chapters is enhanced by the presence of both (and this is true of other chapters across the two books) and those considering these texts for use with students would do well to consider using them as a pair.

Tom Dennehy's chapter on Winnicott in *Social Care in Ireland* provides an unconventional look at the work of the paediatrician and psychoanalyst, located within a contemporary frame by reference to the current popular novel *We Need to Talk about Kevin*; and Damien Cussen's chapter on ethics and social care in *Applied Social Care* takes a wide ranging look at applying principles from a complex issue to everyday practice. It was in reading this chapter in particular that the absence of chapter-specific referencing in the *Applied Social Care* textbook began to become an issue. While a large reference section is provided at the end of the book it does not facilitate the kind of links between individual themed chapters and the additional reading opportunities that one expects in a textbook. By contrast Kennefick's chapter 'Phenomenology: A

Short Note on a Fundamental Concept' in *Social Care in Ireland* guides the reader to readings that expand on the chapter as well as providing specific references. For a student this approach will be more helpful.

To make social care work real to the reader it is important for students to have access to topics about the day to day reality of practice with different client groups. Working in residential childcare is explored by John Byrne and John McHugh in *Applied Social Care*. The authors provide a historical context for the development of residential childcare and introduce aspects of the day to day work. Also in that volume, a chapter on aftercare by Rose Doolan illustrates the fine balance between supporting those leaving residential childcare and facilitating independence. She interrogates the concept of aftercare and offers some interesting alternatives. Two relatively new areas for social care work are explored in the chapter by Mike Murphy, Lena O'Rourke and Eleanor O'Leary on 'Alzheimer's Disease: Sufferers, Care-givers and Resources' in *Social Care in Ireland* and that by Celesta McCann James on 'Ethnicity and Social Care: An Irish Dilemma' in *Applied Social Care*. Both these chapters open areas of debate that need a great deal more attention. The contribution of physical exercise as an intervention to improve overall health and well-being is described by Elaine Dennehy in a chapter in *Social Care in Ireland* while, in the same book, the use of drama with people with disability is explored in Evelyn Grant's 'Behind the Scenes at *Beam Me Up!*'. This chapter reports on a project developed as part of Cork's year as Cultural Capital of Europe and is a positive example of the issues discussed by Eithne Fitzgerald in a later chapter in *Social Care in Ireland* which sets out to answer the question 'How Far have People with Disabilities Achieved Equality?'. Both books provide chapters on working in different situations and it is evident that there are a number of common issues across all settings and contexts. For instance, the importance of respectful practice with all client groups is, as one might expect, a common theme. It is addressed not as an aspiration but supported with examples of how to achieve this kind of best practice, with illustrations from practice and supported by well-argued cases.

Phil Mortell, in his chapter 'Charged and Convicted: The Problem of Elder Abuse in Ireland' in *Social Care in Ireland* exposes this largely hidden form of abuse, identifying the dearth of hard information and suggesting a way to address the issue across the differing settings of home, institution and society in general. Abuse of a different sort is addressed by Grant Charles, Niall McElwee and Susan McKenna-McElwee in their chapter on 'Working with Victims of Violence and Abuse' in *Applied Social Care* and by Georgina Burke in 'Violence against Social-Care Staff', a case study of the HSE mid-west area in *Social Care in Ireland*. Both these chapters offer practical suggestions for training and policy. Carmel Gallagher in her chapter 'Social Care Work and the Older Person' in *Applied Social Care* challenges us to consider our imaging of older people and considers how perception can influence practice. This issue of perception is addressed by two other contributions to *Applied Social Care* – Karen Finnerty's 'Social Care and Disability' and Ashling Jackson's 'Ask the Experts: Travellers in Ireland and Issues for Social Care'. Engaging directly with client groups is similarly the theme of Cormac Forkan's chapter in the same volume on 'Enabling Young People through Consultation', which reports on the results of a youth project set in Dublin. The importance of the voice of children and young people is also considered by Ann McWilliams in *Social Care in Ireland* in a chapter entitled 'Seen But

Not Heard', which discusses how children are represented in Irish courts. This chapter picks up on another common thread throughout these chapters – that of rhetoric and reality. McWilliams outlines the many written commitments to giving children a voice, both in the courts and elsewhere, but cautions that this is of limited value when not supported by resources and a well planned framework of implementation and evaluation. Significantly, despite a number of references to the importance of the voice of children and young people in matters impacting on them directly, neither book offers a critical evaluation of the wider issue of children's rights and the implications for practice and policy.

Rhetoric and reality form the context for Ciaran McCullagh's excellent review of juvenile justice and the apparent shift from detention to restorative justice; a challenging look at a concept that has gained a great deal of general support. Also in *Social Care in Ireland*, the stark reality of homelessness in a land of plenty is well drawn by Peter McVerry in a chapter on the failure of housing policy which acts as a harsh case study to accompany the Kirby chapter on the changing role of the state. Kirby outlines a number of contradictions in contemporary Irish society similar to that highlighted by McVerry and provides a wealth of evidence to support the contention that the Irish state 'cloaks its lack of commitment to adequate social provision and a more equitable society behind a fog of benign rhetoric while pursuing actions that fail to address glaring social problems and may even contribute to making them worse'. This disheartening view is one that can be picked up across many of the chapters in both these texts and the challenge issued by Kirby to civil society, and social care practitioners in particular, that we take a more active role in contesting and exposing the state's actions is one that should be heeded.

Together, these books mark an important development in social care practice, policy and research. As the first textbooks in the field they contain, necessarily, a wide variety of material which is somewhat unwieldy for the reader; yet despite some referencing errors, the editors are to be congratulated in bringing an element of cohesion to the topics. As the basis for guiding students through the complexity of social care they offer a valuable resource. In themselves significant contributions to scholarship in this field, they also suggest a multitude of opportunities for future research, explorations and academic publications.

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Biographical Note

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Review



Youth Work Liaison Forum, *Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work in Northern Ireland (2005–2008)*.

Department of Education for Northern Ireland, 2005, 27 pp.

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The aim of this publication is to lay out the first clear and co-ordinated strategy for youth work in Northern Ireland. The content of the document has evolved through some historical landmarks in youth work development in Northern Ireland, from the establishing of the statutory provisions for the youth service in the Youth Service (NI) Order 1989 and the Education and Libraries Order (NI) 1986, through the Youth Policy Review (1997–99) and *Youth Work: A Model of Effective Practice* (1997, revised 2003) and on to the Policy Review Implementation, which included the emergence of JEDI (Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence, a youth sector partnership 'to promote change and development'). Each of these points in the recent history of youth work in Northern Ireland has been marked by a period of consultation with key players in youth work that has informed the final product, policy or initiative. The creation of this Strategy is no different from what has gone before whereby a core and representative group, in this case the Youth Service Liaison Forum (YSLF), put the document together following periods of consultation and deliberation. What is different, and hence the claim in the document that it is the *first Northern Ireland-wide youth work strategy*, is the membership of the Youth Service Liaison Forum (YSLF), which represents a partnership and alliance of all the key players in youth work: the Department of Education, the Education and Training Inspectorate, the Youth Council for Northern Ireland, the Education and Library Boards, YouthNet and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum. The YSLF was established in 2003 by the Department of Education (NI) to assist them in formulating and implementing youth service policy proposals and to strengthen the effectiveness of the provision of services to young people through improved coherence between major stakeholders.

The Strategy opens with affirming and encouraging words from Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education. In the introduction he declares the Department's commitment to act as a 'champion' for the vision and mission set out in the Strategy.

The *Vision* statement is clear and broadly representative of what has been said before in similar reports. The *Mission* has a conservative feel to it and, potentially controversially, does not refer to young people actually being at the heart of delivering youth work. It talks of young people being at the heart of 'designing, managing and evaluating youth work policy and practice' but not the *delivery* of same.

In the section on values the style overtakes the substance, as the authors seem to feel it is important to strive for alliteration rather than content. There is no reference to such values as empowerment, working collectively, social justice or social change. The values listed include *participation, personal and social development and peace building*.

Four key themes provide the framework for the aims and priorities for the service over the three years of the Strategy. These are *delivering effective and inclusive youth work; participation; resources and funding; and implementation*. Each of these is broken down with detailed and specific priorities. A few examples will illustrate the systematic and detailed approach taken in the report. It highlights the importance of youth work being more aware of community issues and of seeking to promote the development of the work more widely than within its own traditional domain. For example, under *Delivering Effective and Inclusive Youth Work* it refers to

- *collaborative working within geographic communities and*
- *promotion of outward looking youth work.*

The priorities under the *Participation* theme illustrate how the Youth Service Liaison Forum sees this happening in a number of ways (e.g. promoting volunteering opportunities for young people; ensuring that voluntary and statutory youth organisations involve young people in their governance) whilst the *Resources and Funding* theme acknowledges the current difficulties in appointing suitably qualified youth workers and retaining volunteers. It is stressed within the report that these issues need to be resolved.

At the back end of the report is an excellent Glossary of Terms that helps us get a clear picture of how some terms that are now a daily part of youth work vocabulary are used in this document: e.g. ‘non-formal education’, ‘citizenship’, ‘equity, diversity and interdependence’, ‘communities of interest’. To illustrate the usefulness of this section, a clear demarcation between *informal education and non-formal education* is made:

Non-formal education refers to learning and development that takes place outside of the formal educational field, but which is structured and based on learning objectives. This is differentiated from informal learning, which is not structured, and takes place in daily life activities within peer/family groups etc. Youth Work interventions typically result in both non-formal and informal learning.

There are four very useful appendices to the report. In many reports these sections can often be overlooked by a reader and seen as ‘extras’. This is not the case with this document and readers are encouraged to explore these. The first appendix provides an overview of rights and needs of young people in Northern Ireland which is essential reading and has particular references to poverty, social exclusion and ‘changing lifestyles’ and a comment on the implications of these issues for youth work

Appendix 2 traces the recent development of youth work policy in Northern Ireland. It might have been useful to set some of this against similar recent developments in the Republic of Ireland and the rest of UK for comparison, but on its own it is an important addition to this report. Appendix 3 comments on the external environment and takes us through the government departments, highlighting key objectives within each. These are followed by reference to other policy documents and

developments in areas related to youth work. Again very useful information. The information in Appendix 4 should perhaps have appeared earlier: here there is a statement of the aim and objectives of the Youth Service Liaison Forum and an indication of its membership.

The *Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work in Northern Ireland 2005–08* is available from the Youth Council for Northern Ireland and from other youth work agencies. It can be downloaded at www.ycni.org

