

Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

Stanton, Naomi, ed. (2015) Innovation in youth work: thinking in practice. YMCA George Williams College, London, UK. ISBN 9780950954776. [Book]

Published version (with publisher's formatting)

This version is available at: <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/16649/>

Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

eprints@mdx.ac.uk

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy>

**INNOVATION IN
YOUTH WORK:
THINKING
IN PRACTICE**

**EDITED BY NAOMI STANTON
YMCA GEORGE WILLIAMS COLLEGE**

Published by YMCA George Williams College
©YMCA George Williams College



YMCA George Williams College
199 Freemasons Road
Canning Town
London
E16 3PY

www.ymca.ac.uk
www.yresearch.org

Design Curious12, www.curious12.com



LOTTERY FUNDED

CONTENTS

6 **About the Contributors**

8 **Introduction**

Setting the scene

11 **What Sort of Future?** Tony Jeffs

Thinking innovatively about youth work

18 **Philosophy and Youth Work** Simon Frost and Mike Seal

22 **Creating Spaces for Radical Youth Work?** Malcolm Ball, Tania de St Croix and Louise Doherty

26 **Empowerment, Power and Powerlessness** Emma Wilkinson and Paul Leonard

30 **Spiritual Development and Youth Work** Maxine Green

34 **Anti-oppressive Youth Work with Young People with Disabilities** Liz Woolley

Thinking innovatively about youth work measurement

38 **Innovations in the Measurement of Youth Work: measuring success in terms of young people's wellbeing**
Ian McGimpsey

44 **Innovations in the Measurement of Youth Work: the contribution of qualitative longitudinal methods**
Aniela Wenham

50 **Using Participatory Research: potential and pitfalls** Adefemi Adekunle

Doing innovative practice

54 **Empowering Young People through Social Action** Katharine O'Brien

58 **Working with Conflict and Aggression** Naomi Stanton

64 **Supporting Volunteers in Youth Work** Wendy Wiggins

70 **The Place and Use of Mentoring with Young People** Tina Salter

Applying for funding in challenging times

76 **Supporting Local Youth Work: A United States perspective on developing proposals for funding**
Elaine Johannes with Kali Summers

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS...

Naomi Stanton is Lecturer in Youth Work at YMCA George Williams College.

Tony Jeffs teaches at Durham University and is a Fellow of YMCA George Williams College.

Simon Frost is Senior Lecturer in Youth Work at YMCA George Williams College.

Mike Seal is Principal Lecturer and Programme Leader for Youth and Community Work at Newman University, Birmingham.

Malcolm Ball is a youth worker in London and part of In Defence of Youth Work.

Tania de St Croix is a youth worker and lecturer in London, and part of In Defence of Youth Work.

Louise Doherty is a youth worker and lecturer in London, and part of In Defence of Youth Work.

Emma Wilkinson is a counsellor at The Warren Young People's Resource Centre in Hull.

Paul Leonard is a youth worker at The Warren Young People's Resource Centre in Hull.

Maxine Green is Principal at YMCA George Williams College.

Liz Woolley is a youth worker in the West Midlands.

Ian McGimpsey is Lecturer in Education at Birmingham University.

Aniela Wenham is Lecturer in Social Policy and Director of the Children and Young People's Pathway at the University of York.

Adefemi Adekunle is a Lecturer with the 'Working with Children, Young People and Families' team at Newman University, Birmingham.

Katharine O'Brien is Catechetical and Youth Coordinator for a church in Wanstead and is completing her MA in Pastoral Ministry.

Wendy Wiggins is a qualified youth worker and Volunteer Coordinator for Parents 1st (a charity that specialises in peer support for women during pregnancy and early parenthood).

Tina Salter is Senior Lecturer in Youth Work at YMCA George Williams College.

Elaine Johannes is Associate Professor with the School of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University, USA.

Kali Summers is a Graduate Teaching Assistant with the School of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University, USA

INTRODUCTION



This book aims to offer reflections for youth workers to stimulate their thinking, dialogue and practice. Some of the sections include suggested activities that can be used with young people directly; others are for use with staff and volunteers to prompt discussion about youth work in the current context that practitioners find themselves in. Our aim for the resource is that it will encourage innovative thinking and practice through ideas and activities that youth workers find useful and that will help them to consider their work together with other youth workers and young people. A range of issues and topics are covered within the book including, among others; volunteering, evaluation, conflict, mentoring and social action.

It is not a resource compiled for practitioners by academics. A large proportion of its contributors are practising youth workers. It is a practical toolkit drawn from practice itself. Therefore the topics covered are current issues for current practitioners. In particular, it considers how we might explore the values and

practices of youth work at a time when youth work feels under threat. We hope that it encourages optimism and innovation despite current challenges to the field.

The book has been created through a wider project taking place at YMCA George Williams College that has been concerned with encouraging 'Innovation and Skills for Youth Work'. This project has been supported by funding from The Big Lottery Fund's 'Awards for All: England' programme and has involved two national youth work conferences and ten regional training days as well as the development of this resource for practitioners. The project aimed to provide space and opportunities for youth workers (particularly volunteers and new practitioners) to reflect on, develop and upskill their practice. We hope that this resource plays a small part in continuing to sustain and encourage youth workers because we firmly believe that youth work is valuable and the role that youth workers play is highly significant to the young people they engage with.



WHAT SORT OF FUTURE? TONY JEFFS

Setting the scene

Innovation is woven into the very fabric of youth work. From its outset, youth work was obliged to remake itself each time the social context and young people's needs changed. Inflexibility was, therefore, never a viable option as youth work always risked being overtaken by technological and social change. During a two hundred year history, this occurred infrequently. Club leaders and youth workers, as a consequence of their recurring contact with young people and communities, most being part-time workers or volunteers functioning in their own neighbourhoods, have rarely been caught unawares by these transformations. They may, at times, have been one step behind. However, rarely has it been more than one step. The dialogical basis of their practice ensured club leaders and youth workers were incessantly engaged in conversation with young people. Therefore, those practitioners who listened and were embedded within the local community acquired a distinctive insight into the lived experiences of young people and the places wherein they grew up. Rightly, such practitioners were listened to by local and national politicians, many of whom in the past emerged from the ranks of youth work. It needs to be recalled that, until relatively recently, youth work was a 'mass movement'. Made up of thousands of clubs and units; hundreds of thousands of leaders freely giving of their time and energy; and a million-plus voluntary members. From this potpourri of talents, youthful zest and commitment to public service emerged a constant flow of innovation. Nearly always these innovations came from the grass roots, in response to pressure from an active membership of young people and workers. National youth organisations were themselves products of this dynamic; which meant initially they were controlled from below by local branches. Innovation therefore tended to occur as part of the natural order of things, driven by the desire of practitioners to better serve the changing needs of members. Almost without exception, every innovation in relation to practice - be it the concept of the club itself; the idea of a youth centre; detached and outreach work; youth cafes; residential centres; outdoor and adventure provision; specialist work - with girls and young women, the disabled, ethnic

minorities and gay, lesbian and transgender young people; or mobile provision - originally surfaced at the local level.

Years of retrenchment mean the once vibrant grass roots have withered away. Youth work is no longer a mass movement but a remnant - sustained, where it survives, by a rapidly decreasing number of paid full and part-time workers. There are exceptions. Notably some uniformed youth organisations, which have enjoyed a revival, and the faith-based sector which thrives thanks to a pool of voluntary leaders and an increasing number of often poorly remunerated staff. Therefore, whenever discussion of 'a youth work crisis' occurs, it is important to recall that the 'crisis' relates almost exclusively to secular units and typically those either fully or partially funded by local authorities.

Hard times

By April 2015, 40 per cent of the government's proposed cuts to public expenditure will have been implemented. The remaining 60 per cent will be imposed during the following three years. Given that expenditure on the National Health Service, schools, pensions and overseas aid is ring-fenced, the cutbacks imposed on the youth service will certainly exceed the levels experienced during the period 2010 -2014¹. The current national rate of depletion is around 12 per cent per annum (DES, 2014). Therefore, by the time the process of rolling back public expenditure is completed in 2017², little is likely to remain of the once thriving statutory youth sector. A rump will possibly linger in some localities but overwhelmingly the statutory youth service, like the once flourishing adult education service before it, will become a fast-fading memory. Twice before, in the early 1920s and 1950s, local and central government, as a consequence of financial difficulties, withdrew funding leaving a then buoyant voluntary youth work sector to carry on alone and unaided. The Board of Education in the 1920s and the Ministry of Education in the 1950s did so apologetically. Not least because the decades prior to the decision being taken to step aside were ones when significant growth in terms of provision and membership had occurred. The ship was buoyant and

the expectation was always that, once the economic crisis was vanquished, the government would once again climb on board and lend a hand. Certainly ministers, civil servants and educationalists were in no doubt when they made those cuts that clubs and youth organisations were making a valuable contribution towards the betterment of young people and national wellbeing.

This time things are radically different. Curtailment in state expenditure follows decades of a waning in the number of statutory funded youth centres and clubs, a consistent falling away in their membership and an accelerating decline in the numbers of voluntary and paid workers. These trends persisted despite attempts by the last government to reverse them via injections of cash, albeit short term, dispensed through schemes such as *Transforming Youth Work*, *Resourcing Excellent Youth Services*, the *Youth Service Development Fund* and the *Myspace* initiative. Each failed to bequeath a legacy or reverse the historic decline. Even allowing for the fact that these interventions were short-sighted and incompetently managed at every level, they nevertheless confirmed that spending more money would not solve the underlying structural problems besetting the Youth Service. *Myspace* in particular demonstrated that even modern, well-equipped, costly, purpose-built, 'state-of-the-art' centres were incapable of attracting sufficient numbers to justify the investment (Spence et al, 2011). This confirmed that youth centres as a mode of intervention had no realistic future - that they were incapable of attracting the great grandchildren of those who flocked to them in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Ominously, youth service managers and workers seemed unable to propose alternative ways of spending the money; no other *modus operandi* apart from traditional youth centres was put on the table. Therefore, the abject failure of the *Myspace* programme effectively sounded the death knell of the statutory sector in its existing form. The flurry of initiatives ended with the arrival of the present government. Michael Gove, the incoming minister, adopted a policy of benign neglect - during his first three years in office, he did not visit a single youth centre, headquarters or project. Eventually, in 2013, Gove decided the Department for Education was no longer interested in paying the stable fees for a perennially losing horse and off-loaded responsibility for the Youth Service onto the Cabinet Office. After 95 years, during which time youth work was viewed as an educational service - a fourth arm alongside schools, FE and the universities - it was unceremoniously transferred to a dustbin department which, apart from co-ordinating the work of inter-

departmental committees, undertakes tasks major spending departments have lost interest in.

Philosophically and administratively, this relocation signified an extraordinary rupture with the past. Administratively, it reflected a prevailing belief amongst ministers and senior civil servants that, when over 80 per cent of seventeen year olds were in full or part-time education and in excess of 50 per cent still there at age 20, it should be schools, colleges and universities who, besides providing education, must be the prime dispensers of support and leisure services for young people. Given the miniscule proportion of 15 to 20 year olds who now opt to engage on a sustained basis with statutory youth workers, the logic underpinning this analysis is difficult to fault. Half a century ago, when approaching 90 per cent of young people were in full-time employment by age 16, youth centres and organisations provided a tangible service meeting real needs. Here were the places where once up to half our young workers made and sustained friendships; secured an entrée to leisure opportunities; accessed cultural activities and educational programmes; and sought the advice and support of responsive adults. This is no longer the case. Now it is within the educational setting that the vast majority of young people's friendships are initiated and sustained. Moreover, schools and colleges can also offer leisure facilities unmatched by any youth centre and, increasingly, professional guidance and support services. Couple this with the emergence of mass home entertainment, growing access to electronic means of communication and the appearance of more sophisticated commercial leisure provision - and it is not difficult to explain why the dramatic decline in the numbers using youth centres or hanging around street corners or outside shops has occurred.

Philosophically, the damage wrought by the uncoupling of youth work from the Department for Education is difficult to exaggerate. This is no minor administrative realignment for it speaks of a judgement made by civil servants and senior politicians that youth work has ceased to be an educational service. Youth organisations and leaders once saw themselves as simultaneous providers of welfare, educational and leisure provision. Come 1939, the last vestiges of a welfare role had disappeared. Henceforth their prime *raison d'être* became informal education and social education; hence the justifiable belief amongst youth workers that they were, first and foremost, educators. An analysis reflected in legislation that made the Ministry of Education and LEAs youth work's point of political reference. Understandably,

therefore, youth leaders aspired to be designated as 'educators' fully equal to school-teachers and FE lecturers; and most certainly not mere overseers of unruly youth and leisure centre managers. Such claims were not illusory. A cursory examination of the programmes and activities of clubs and centres from their origins in the late nineteenth century until around the onset of the 1980s is enough to convince fair-minded readers that most workers set out to provide members with a rich diet of educational experiences. Like the settlements and adult education centres, which many clubs were linked to, they strove to offer working-class young people a *liberalia studia*. Significant segments of the workforce at all levels reflected this commitment. Many were working-class autodidacts who aspired to communicate their love of learning to a new generation as did others who recognised the benefits of the cultural capital a grammar school, public school or university education had bestowed upon them. Together they were drawn to youth work so that they might, via the medium of informal education and cultural activities, at least partially set aside the legacy of the impoverished and impoverishing education their members had received from their elementary and secondary modern schools. Youth work for these men and women was their way of widening horizons, expanding perceptions, encouraging empathy and instilling a respect for democracy. Hence the emphasis within club life not only upon democratic structures and equality but also those elements of a liberal education best able to instil intellectual discernment, wisdom and a capacity to separate sense from nonsense. Youth clubs were, therefore, justifiably viewed by many as places where, in comparison to the authoritarian classroom and hierarchical school, it was possible to teach those 'habits of the heart' essential for democracy to flourish. Libraries and reading rooms were to be encountered in most clubs; art and craft classes routine; dramatic performances, choirs and music-making commonplace; discussion groups and visiting speakers a fixture within most programmes; and outings to the countryside, theatre, ballet and concerts as much a feature of club life as sport and dancing. Conversation, discussion and dialogue were the 'blood stream' of youth work just as they were of liberal adult education and university seminars. Fostering these may often have been an up-hill struggle for leaders catering for young people working long hours in arduous occupations but the clubs' gifted leaders offered a matchless opportunity to engage in dialogue with young people, to raise their sights and help them build the world anew. It was because they appreciated the educational value and potential of these small

battalions that thousands of secular adults voluntarily sacrificed a portion of their spare time to club work. Much as others might be stirred by their religious faith to do so.

Little of this tradition endures within the statutory and state funded youth work sector. Pedagogic input is now increasingly dictated by funders - be they governmental departments, welfare agencies, local authorities or commercial concerns. Consequently, interventions are predominately concerned with behaviour modification rather than cultural enrichment. The first three are willing to pay in the hope of reducing future calls upon their budgets. They want, for example, young people to not smoke, eat more healthily, steer clear of unprotected sex, do better at school, offend less, spend their money more wisely thereby avoiding unmanageable debt, not do drugs, be sufficiently resilient to not need mental health services and become responsible consumers of alcohol - so they hire youth workers to 'deliver' packaged or approved programmes to the more 'difficult to reach'. Commercial funders merely exploit youth work as a means by which they can improve sales, raise product profile and create even more gullible consumers. The absurdity is that whereas one group of paymasters seek to foster a heightened sense of responsibility and critical judgement, another seeks to generate irresponsibility and an unquestioning acceptance of consumerism. Unfortunately, and it says a great deal about the readiness of youth work agencies and staff to accept cash from any source in order to pay their wages, no meaningful debate at any level has taken place regarding the morality of taking money from commercial firms and some state funded agencies. Irrespective of the morality of employing youth workers for the purposes of selling products and behaviour modification, what is clear is that this is not an especially cost-effective means of securing the funders' desired outcomes. For example, targeted policing, incarceration, electronic surveillance, psychological profiling and intensive casework all offer far more effective means of reducing youth offending than detached youth work or diversionary programmes delivered to those who happen perchance to be attending a centre or project at a given time. Moreover, the evidence generally shows that if you wish to modify behaviour, it is best to start early. Therefore, the best approach for governments is usually to tinker with the school curriculum. First, because this allows you to reach the full cohort. Second, because, via the medium of inspection and testing, it becomes possible to guarantee what you want 'delivered' is 'delivered'. Commercial firms, similarly, see youth organisations as

a less attractive option and seek by every means possible to get advertising materials into schools via, for example, free 'teaching' materials, sponsorship and 'mentoring'. The omens are not healthy. Salvation will not come from begging for work; or delivering the syllabi and 'teaching materials' of external agencies. No White Knight is on the horizon. 'Something will turn up' is not a helpful motto to adopt at this point in time. Therefore, if secular non-uniformed youth work has a future, which is far from certain, it will be only as a consequence of it finding new roles and innovative ways of intervening in the lives of young people. When it does so, innovatory forms of practice will once more emerge, but until then the rummaging around for 'best practice' and 'innovation' will be a fruitless waste of time.

Beginning afresh

Youth work in the past was a cornerstone of civil society along with organisations such as the churches, friendly societies, trade unions, cultural clubs, welfare associations and social clubs. As such, like those other bodies, it was justifiably viewed by correct-thinking people as something to be treasured and nurtured – a small but vital fragment of the wedge keeping the democratic system secure from disproportionate incursions by big government and big business. Provision linked to faith, cultural and sporting organisations remains rooted in civil society as do uniformed youth organisations such as the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts. Unlike the bulk of what remains after they have been subtracted from the equation, it is these that have flourished during the last two decades. Freedom from state and commercial funding has enabled them to more be creative, imaginative and responsive to a changing environment. Because these organisations are not funding led, what they offer is less likely to be 'weary, stale, flat and unprofitable' (to borrow words from Shakespeare's Hamlet) for it is more likely to emerge from dialogue and group based negotiation. Their disproportionate reliance on voluntary and unpaid workers also means that paying staff wages and meeting overheads is never their first priority. Above all, these agencies usually possess a clear sense of purpose, one that permits them to be honest with those young people who affiliate; theirs is a transparent contract into which their members enter. However, despite their current success it is important to note that past experience indicates the majority of young people are unlikely to affiliate to either faith-based or uniformed organisations.

Secular and statutory youth work clearly has much to learn from both the faith-based and uniformed sectors.

However, the former would be seriously mistaken if it assumes all that is needed to revive its fortunes is to cherry-pick the best elements of their methodology. Appropriating some of their innovatory practices will not reverse what may well be a terminal decline. This is for the simple reason that the current crisis does not pre-eminently stem from poor practice or incompetent management, although both have played their part; rather it flows from an absence of clarity regarding role and purpose. Faith-based youth work is doing so much better, by comparison, primarily because it operates according to a set of shared internal beliefs – educational and spiritual. Beliefs that mean it has ambitions both for itself and those it seeks to serve. By way of comparison, one encounters only a void at the heart of secular and statutory funded youth work. Frankly the latter now needs a reason to exist; a justification over and above a self-serving wish to pay their wage-bills. Until better reasons to flourish are articulated, the national organisations will continue to 'hollow-out' and clubs and units carry on vanishing. Not least because individuals will not freely give of their time to 'dance to the tune of others' nor will young people in any number seek to affiliate to organisations that ultimately only need them to meet targets and secure funding.

So, is it a pointless lament to bewail the passing of the secular and statutory youth services and clubs? Or might it be worth trying to invest them with a purpose that might enable them to once more flourish? Possibly the answer is a hesitant yes to both questions. As it currently exists there is little worth saving – so yes it would be a pointless lament. However, there may be a role and purpose for a revived and reconstructed secular and independent youth orientated service located within the realm of civil society. Briefly, three such roles are examined below. Doubtless, readers will have alternatives to add to the list, but for the moment these might suffice.

First, faith-based youth work acknowledges that schools and further education colleges with their rigid hierarchies, narrow focus on test scores and outcomes, and their persistent refusal to allow dialogue and debate to flourish, are not the sort of places adept at fostering a meaningful spirituality or an empathy towards others. Similarly, secular youth workers must accept that these institutions remain incapable of teaching both a love of democracy and the skills required to keep it alive. Therefore, within any democratic society there exists a need for places and settings where young people, and others, can practice and learn the arts of democracy. Somewhere

individuals can work together to build consensus and manage conflict, in which it becomes possible to acquire the aptitude to live as free, autonomous citizens – rather than as docile consumers, compliant workers and submissive subjects. A setting in which it becomes possible to learn alternatives to the narrow market logic of possessive individualism; to encounter what Marquand (2004) calls the 'public logic' that enables citizens to engage in the rich life of a deliberative democracy. As Arendt (1958) reminds us, who was herself once a youth worker, being able to 'act' is the defining feature of freedom and therefore freedom only exists in the context of 'action'. To give this meaning we must look to a form of youth work that marries philosophical reflection to political and social action. Such a mode of intervention is not unknown. Indeed, it was pioneered here by the National Organisation of Girls' Clubs prior to 1914 and the Woodcraft Folk in the 1920s. However, it has not thrived for many years. Primarily because LEAs, the government or commercial interests have predictably refused to underwrite it; indeed, why should they? Yet, like faith-based practice, it is desperately needed as a means of ensuring the vitality of our democracy and healthy public discourse. If this form of 'civic youth work' is to acquire a presence then, like faith-based youth work and the Guides, it will have to become predominately self-funding not least in order to protect its integrity.

Second, as formal education has expanded so its focus has narrowed. The curriculum has been tapered to embrace what is testable and can be shown to increase employability. A majority of those emerging from state schools have therefore been denied access to knowledge not deemed 'economically productive'. Predominately, they receive what Plutarch dismissed as 'bucket education' which serves up knowledge without judgement. State schools which once sponsored a host of after-hours clubs and societies now rarely do so. In part their demise is another indicator of a weakening of civil society and erosion of the 'gift relationship' and altruism. Now over-worked teachers, who rarely opt to live in the catchment area of their school and therefore commute to work, refuse to give up their spare time to run clubs and teams. The result is that, within the realms of sport and culture, it is primarily those young people who are fortunate enough to attend a Public School, where the staff reside on campus or close-by and who are employed with the expectation that they will contribute to extra-curricular programmes, who enjoy the benefits of a liberal education and an extensive range of leisure and sporting activities. To counter this growing form of inequality we need to

construct new forms of youth and community work and informal education. Just as liberal adult education has begun to create new formats offering low cost routes to learning such as the University of the Third Age, study circles and reading groups – so youth workers might begin to look for new ways to meet the wider educational needs of young people. In part, this may involve building alliances with existing cultural and sporting organisations to create routes of entry for young people. Equally, it might be based on the American 4-H model that encourages adults to freely share their talents with young people within their community. The unequal distribution of cultural capital is as damaging to the wellbeing of society and individuals as the lopsided distribution of financial resources. It ensures the exclusion of many from public discourse as well as denying them access to the upper echelons of the job market. Formal education has not only failed to address the issue but almost certainly made the situation worse.

Finally, we need to recognise that what has long served as a central justification for youth work no longer has any realistic purchase. Traditionally it was argued that youth clubs and groups were essential in order that young people might have access to their own space. That youth workers and organisations must provide their clientele with a haven and sanctuary in which they might be themselves. When all but a tiny minority of young people were in employment spending their working days in workshops and offices, surrounded by adults, this made apparent sense. No longer is this the case. The problem now is that young people spend virtually all their time either at school, college or university almost exclusively in the company of other young people. And, when alone, they are likely to be in their room communicating by either phone or computer with other young people. The result is the emergence of a dangerous form of epistemic closure. The challenge now is not to create new sanctuaries and bolt-holes for young people but to break down these growing generational barriers. To find ways of fostering inter-action and association between adults and young people; to encourage mature behaviour and discourage childishness amongst the young and to combat self-imposed isolation amongst the older generations is a challenge that needs to be faced.

Each of these examples implies that secular youth work may have a future if it adopts new paradigms. Survival depends, in particular, on it first reclaiming its lost autonomy. An autonomy that will allow practice to be based upon a civic not a commercial logic; and

which will enable secular youth work to intervene in the lives of young people in ways that unambiguously prioritise their interests and those of their fellow citizens. Second, secular civic youth work must stop trying to justify its existence by employing the language of others (Lakoff, 2006). Until it does so, it will continue to lose every debate regarding core priorities and the slide into oblivion will not be arrested let alone reversed. Given the dire position it is currently in, secular youth work might as well strike out and begin seeking out a new language of practice and new paths to follow. After all it has nothing to lose. Both these options require it to face up to the

intellectual challenge of unearthing a new role and purpose for youth work; if it does so then innovations relating to practice will inevitably follow in its wake. Form as always should follow function and, in this instance, the imperative is to uncover via collective debate a new function for youth work. My own suspicion is that secular youth work will not be able to secure an independent future and that practitioners must be prepared to become members of a broader pedagogic collective that will include all those other educators operating outside the formal sector (Jeffs, 2015).

Questions for discussion:

- Do you agree with the analysis presented of the differences between faith-based/uniformed youth work and the secular/statutory sector?
- What do you think secular youth work's 'new function' could be?
- Do you think the options presented for innovation are realistic for youth work as you know it, locally and nationally? (These options are: a re-commitment to political and social action; provision of leisure and cultural activities; and the development of inter-generational work.)
- Do you agree with the conclusion that youth workers need to form collective alliances with other practitioners with similar pedagogic aims? If so, how might you go about forming these alliances?

¹ Although not officially 'ring-fenced' the Better Care Fund effectively ensures that home care and related services for the elderly cannot be cut by a local authority. In order to secure substantive cash transfers from the Better Care Fund a local authority must sign a legally binding document guaranteeing that they will continue current levels of expenditure. Obviously it is in their interests to therefore reduce expenditure in other 'optional' areas such as youth provision, as is occurring.

² Clearly the election taking place in 2015 may alter this date – however, it is unlikely to alter the outcome. The Conservative Party has announced its intention to eliminate the 'deficit' by 2017, the Liberals by 2019 and Labour by 2020. Both Labour and the Liberals suggest that by extending the timescale they will free up funds to spend on infrastructure projects. Given no infrastructure projects relating to youth work have been mooted this means the erosion in provision will almost certainly continue unabated whatever the outcome of the up-coming election.

References

- Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Arendt, H. (1977) *Between Past and Future*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Department for Education (2014) *Expenditure by Local Authorities and Schools on Education, Children and Young People's Services 2013-2014*, London: DfE.
- Jeffs, T. (2015) 'Finding Common Ground' *Youth and Policy* (forthcoming).
- Lakoff, G. (2006) *Whose Freedom? The battle over America's most important idea*, New York: Picador.
- Marquand, D. (2004) *Decline of the Public: the hollowing out of citizenship*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Spence, J. and Smith, M. K with Frost, S. and Hodgson T. (2011) *myplace evaluation – final report*. London: Department for Education. [<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/myplace%20Evaluation%20-%20Final%20report.pdf>].

PHILOSOPHY AND YOUTH WORK SIMON FROST AND MIKE SEAL

Thinking innovatively
about youth work



There are many ways in which the subject of youth work is talked about. For example, we might discuss the impact of youth work on the lives of young people or, perhaps, take a historical view of what youth work used to be and how it has changed. Much current discussion of youth work is related to how it retains its values when faced with the threat of cuts to funding. At the same time, youth work has a history of being anti-academic and anti-theoretical (Smith, 1988 cited in Seal and Frost, 2014: 8); with youth workers happy to take a more pragmatic, common-sense approach to discussion about youth work and what it 'ought' to be. We want to challenge you to fight such notions of anti-theory and to take a more philosophical approach which we believe will help you to be more considered in your thinking; helping you to argue clearly and precisely about the importance of youth work and the way you work with young people. In turn, we want to argue that thinking and working philosophically can also provide an opportunity for young people to think critically about their ideas and experiences; there is a need to move beyond discussions based on sentiment, common-sense ways of thinking and the passive acceptance of social norms.

In encouraging groups of youth workers to think more philosophically, our starting point is to ask them to focus on a couple of the values that we might associate

with working with young people. These could be any commonly accepted values but we have, in the past, used 'respect' and 'tolerance'. We then ask the individuals within the group to think about what they understand these terms to mean. Quite quickly it becomes apparent that people's ideas about meaning are not necessarily fixed. Many of the responses we have had are in sound bites, making claims like 'respect is earned' or 'we should accept young people for who they are' or 'tolerance doesn't come in to it'.

From here, we are able to add to the discussion from a more conceptual perspective by introducing some of the conditions that need to be met in order to demonstrate how tolerance and respect play a part in the work we do. Taking the idea that tolerance allows us to both accept and reject at the same time has led to interesting discussions around how, when working with young people, we don't have to accept everything they do. At the same time, it is possible to value a young person even to the extent that we might respect them whilst not accepting, for example, deviant behaviour. Similarly, we discuss a number of issues associated with respect. For example, we pose questions such as: when should we respect others; are all humans deserving of respect; what does it mean to actually show respect; is there a link between tolerance and respect? In asking such questions, we are asking

THINKING PHILOSOPHICALLY ABOUT YOUTH WORK

The aim of philosophical enquiry is to gain insight into questions about knowledge, truth, reason, reality, meaning, mind and value.

(Grayling, cited in Seal and Frost, 2014: 1)

the group to think carefully by deconstructing the values that underpin their work with young people.

By the end of the exercise, there should be an air of caution about using phrases and concepts without full consideration of their meaning. Philosophy has a lot to say about the values that inform our work with young people; things like fairness, equality, respect, tolerance, democracy, trust, and virtues all play an important part in the values which underpin youth work. Rather than working with simplified definitions which are conveyed in the principles and practices of youth work we would like you to take time to consider what is really meant by these ideas and how a more enlightened perspective might add to the value of your work with young people.

Working philosophically

What follows are a couple statements you are likely to be familiar with if you are working with young people. Following each statement are a series of discussion points which are designed to help you think about the meaning and the reasons for making these statements. We challenge you to consider what is really meant by the terms you are using and to think about how a more considered use of these terms might impact on your practice.

You can't tell me what to do!

- It is important to be one's own person, to live one's life based on one's own motivation and reasons rather than being answerable to the expectations of others.
- To coerce someone into acting in a particular way is to deny them their freedom.
- To be autonomous requires freedom of choice.

What is meant by the term autonomy and under what conditions can it exist?

It's not fair!

- Young people are more likely to think they have been treated fairly if they think they are getting the level of respect they deserve.
- Young people are more likely to think they have been treated fairly if what they have is what they deserve.
- Young people are more likely to feel they have been treated fairly if their beliefs and values are given the respect they deserve.

What conditions need to be met for 'fairness' to exist and what conditions need to be met to ensure people 'get what they deserve'?

Reference

Seal, M. and Frost, S. (2014) *Philosophical Perspectives in Youth Work*, Lyme Regis: Russell House.

CREATING SPACES FOR RADICAL YOUTH WORK? MALCOLM BALL, TANIA DE ST CROIX AND LOUISE DOHERTY

Thinking innovatively
about youth work



The authors of this piece are part of In Defence of Youth Work, a campaign that seeks to defend and extend youth work as a distinctive educational practice founded on a voluntary relationship with young people and shaped by their agendas.

Market values and authoritarianism have become the norm for many working in community and youth roles. This piece encourages you to explore what counts as 'radical youth work' in this context.

In Defence of Youth Work (IDYW) is a campaigning organisation that came together in 2009 to defend grassroots traditions of youth work against imposed relationships, targeted outcomes, and the closure of and cuts to open-access and anti-oppressive youth projects. As a group of practitioners, we call for the defence of democratic and emancipatory youth work, based on the following cornerstones:

- voluntary relationships between young people and youth workers;
- a commitment to critical dialogue;
- a focus on anti-oppressive practice;
- the valuing of young people's 'here and now' as well as their futures; and
- tipping the balance of power in favour of young people.

Reflecting on these cornerstones in the context of radical youth work throws up certain questions, such as:

- Do these cornerstones describe youth work today, or would this form of practice be seen as radical in today's policy climate?
- If these cornerstones portray an 'ideal-type' of youth work, is this an ideal that is inspiring, affirming, or alienating?
- Is it possible to be a youth worker who isn't doing youth work - or a radical youth worker who isn't able to practice radically?

Perspectives from the field

In a workshop involving over thirty people from a range of settings (voluntary sector, local authority, social enterprise, faith-based, higher education, research) practitioners discussed their varied

perspectives on radical youth work. Many expressed the view that the relentless dismantling of youth services has almost become an accepted norm, and that in this context any discourse around protecting and preserving young people's rights to 'basic' youth service provision is now deemed as 'radical'.

There is an element of fear and caution amongst many youth workers in relation to the actual and perceived consequences of challenging what they view as negative changes to the youth work role. This was expressed at the workshop by workers in many different roles and organisations. For many, the main task was resisting abysmal cuts to services and jobs. Local authority workers in particular, shared that they felt constrained from making challenges to policy – although some felt they were 'radicals within'.

Some workers running small voluntary sector organisations felt they had been able to retain young person centred practices, but experienced challenges in finding funding for work that has unpredictable outcomes. Other voluntary sector workers felt that their organisations behaved like businesses; within this context, some felt they were seen as (or saw themselves as) 'troublemakers' if they attempted to find the space to do things differently. Some workers wondered whether there is more scope for radical action in the voluntary or local authority sectors, and others questioned whether these sectors can be so neatly divided, especially as both types of organisation increasingly mimic private sector practices. A church-based youth worker pointed out that there is not necessarily more freedom or opportunity for being radical in faith-based work, where leaders can often be cautious and traditional.

Workers agreed that what counts as 'radical' is highly contextual. If radical means challenging the status quo then, as the status quo moves to the right, radicalism

begins to encompass practices and approaches that were previously seen as mainstream. Workers gave examples of things that were once 'normal' or accepted youth work practice that might now be seen as radical in a context where profit is what counts. These examples included prioritising relationships with young people, being participatory and child-centred, spending time listening to young people, and seeing problems as social rather than individual.

Some found the word 'radical' helpful, alongside other words (e.g. resistance, struggle, political action) that allow, enable or encourage workers and young people to be involved in change. Some workers wanted to think with their colleagues about how to become more radical in their everyday practices, and work with young people to think about what they want to change in their lives. Others felt that if 'radical' is seen as a dirty or dangerous word, it will not take us very far and may be best avoided.

A related discussion revolved around whether to reject systems that seem to go against person-centred youth

work, or whether to engage with these systems in order to improve them. For example, is it better to make 'tick-box exercises' (such as monitoring systems) that are more relevant to youth work, or is it better to speak out against them altogether? Some workers spoke of the importance of being brave, some of fighting, and others of being positive.

Practitioners agreed that creativity was important when living and working in current conditions. One worker suggested thinking with young people and with fellow workers about what they want to change, and how they can change it. Another talked about thinking about the language we use, making use of the moments when the funders and/or managers are not there, and challenging the 'right to manage'.

All agreed that it is valuable to come together with others to debate and discuss our situations – through events and workshops like the one discussed here, using online resources, organising in local areas, and building alliances with other practitioners who might share our values.

Questions to reflect on and discuss with colleagues, study groups and workers from other setting:

- What spaces do we have in our everyday practice that we can reclaim or recover for radical forms of practice that challenge the status quo?
- How might we create new spaces, new kinds of organisations and new forms of challenge?
- What opportunities are there for critical subversion, dissent and resistance?
- What alliances can we build that might support this?

Suggested activity for individuals and/or groups:

Look at the In Defence of Youth Work website and read the 2014 purpose statement³, and/or any of the recent blog posts. Can you contribute by doing one or more of the following – or come up with your own idea?

- Join the debate – write a comment under one of the blog posts. How does the post relate to your own experience?
- Get together with colleagues / students for an informal chat about the state of youth work. What are the challenges in youth work today? What can youth workers do to reclaim a practice that centres on young people? How can we support each other?
- Come along to an In Defence of Youth Work event, workshop or story telling workshop (see the events page on the website). If there is nothing coming up in your area, can you host an event? Get in touch with In Defence of Youth Work and we will do our best to work with you.

³ indefenceofyouthwork.com/idyw-statement-2014/

Final thought

Whether it is called being radical, being positive about youth work, being creative or being a 'troublemaker', in the words of one of the workshop participants:

NOW IS THE MOMENT TO BE BRAVE AS YOUTH WORKERS!

EMPOWERMENT, POWER AND POWERLESSNESS

EMMA WILKINSON AND PAUL LEONARD

Thinking innovatively
about youth work



Empowerment is a social-action process that promotes participation of people, organizations, and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life, and social justice.

(Wallerstein, 1992: 1)

At The Warren, a young people's resource centre based in Hull, empowerment is about facilitating each young person to have control over their own lives. We recognise the inequalities of power and resources in our society and actively support those young people who wish to join together to address such matters.

We understand that our attempt to develop empowerment is an ongoing, often contradictory and, at times, conflictual process. This emphasises the importance of creating opportunities for youth workers to share, discuss and debate the place of empowerment in current youth work provision. When young people are finding themselves in situations where they have less and less control over their own lives and are less hopeful about their futures, is empowerment a futile philosophy?

Recent public spending cuts have had a huge impact on youth work provision, with services closing all over the country. The impact here is two-fold; young people do not get the support they need and those services that are left are overwhelmed and understaffed. How is empowerment working here? The simple answer is that it is not. Staff morale across the youth work sector is low due to the uncertainty of their futures, and many workers are having to concentrate more and more on finding funding rather than on doing the job they love. Youth work has become an exercise in managing uncertainty and chaos.

This raises the question as to whether it is possible for youth workers to empower others, when they feel disempowered themselves. Furthermore, the impact this is having on a generation of young people needs to be questioned and explored.

We believe that discussion and debate is needed about the relevance of empowerment in youth work today. Youth workers operating in the current climate need to reflect on the following questions:

- Is empowerment possible for young people today?
- Are youth workers facing disempowerment?
- Where does empowerment fit into the current climate of austerity?

A group exercise for youth workers considering the role of empowerment in their work

We recently facilitated a workshop with youth workers exploring the role of, and limitations to, empowerment in their work. We asked participants to 'tour' the room and consider five statements that we had placed around the walls. These statements were:

- Youth work organisations should create empowering environments
- Empowerment is an idealistic approach
- Empowerment is always a political process because it creates social change
- The development of critical consciousness (an understanding of how social and cultural factors impact our lives and what capacity we have to effect change) is, without doubt, the most significant personal experience in the empowerment process
- At times, so many limitations are placed upon a person's ability to exert power that s/he is unable to act at all.

Once the group had spent some time digesting the statements, they were asked to identify which one they were most drawn to. From this, we facilitated a discussion that explored why people affiliated with certain statements about empowerment as well as allowing the discussion to develop and explore wider issues and experiences around empowerment. Participants expressed feelings of disappointment, anger and helplessness with regard to their work in the current context and sadness that young people were losing out. Many felt completely disempowered and therefore unable to empower others. Participants from some areas talked about skilled and experienced workers losing their jobs and being replaced by volunteers and how they felt this both undervalued their role as a professional worker and was detrimental to youth work. They felt that professional youth work has become so restricted that there is little room to work with young people in creative ways. While this discussion was cathartic and helpful in terms of expressing feelings and experiences, to finish here would have cemented the atmosphere of disempowerment and an inability to change things.

To finish, we spent some time thinking about the future and where we go from here. It was felt that our passion and commitment to young people was the thing we needed to hold firmly, and challenge what was happening around us. Sharing experiences and observing what we as a group had in common enabled us to feel collectively empowered rather than isolated and disempowered.

In conclusion...

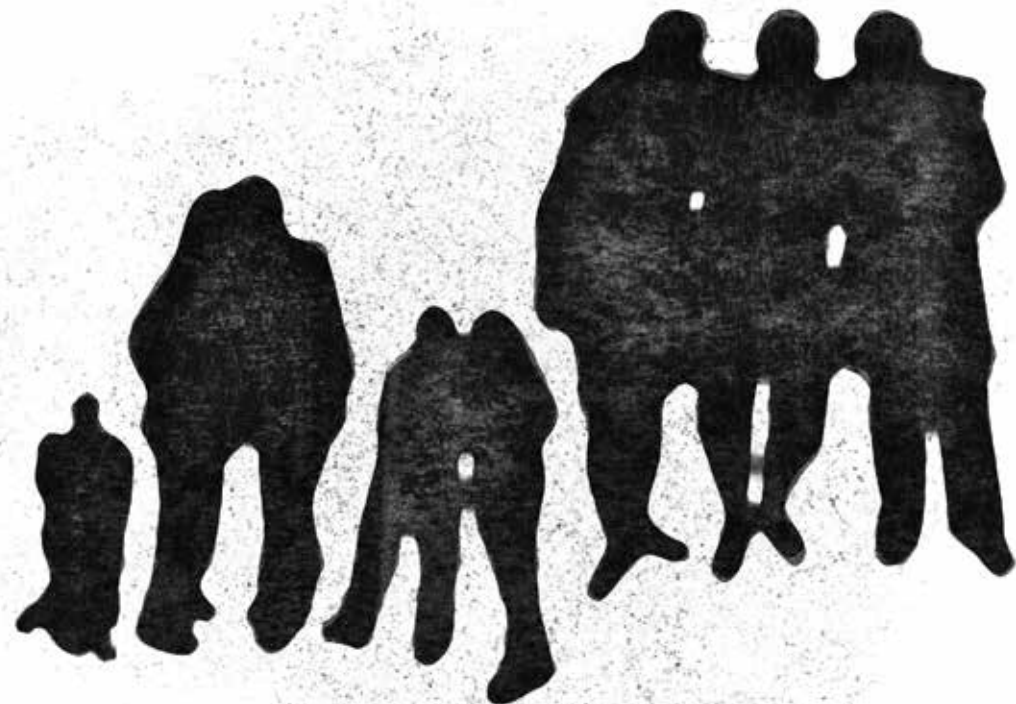
Sadan (2004: 151) outlines Kieffer's (1984) notion that the process of empowerment is usually borne out of a sense of disempowerment: 'The empowerment process in most cases begins from a sense of frustration: people's sense that there exists an unbridgeable gap between their aspirations and their possibilities of realizing them'.

If this is to be believed then it is arguable that austerity measures are circumstances in which empowerment among youth workers can be stimulated. However, this can only be achieved if youth workers are given the opportunity to collectively discuss and express their disempowerment and then, importantly, to move on to explore how to bridge the 'gap between their aspirations and their possibilities' through collective action. Finally, discussion needs to be followed by such action and the belief that change can be effected. We hope that the discussion activity outlined in this piece offers the opportunity to spur such belief and action among youth workers today who are operating in challenging times.

References

Sadan, E. (2004) *Empowerment and Community Practice* (ebook). Available from: <http://www.mpow.org/>.

Wallerstein, N. (1992) 'Powerlessness, empowerment and health. Implications for health promotion programs', *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 6(3), pp. 197-205.



SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH WORK MAXINE GREEN

Thinking innovatively
about youth work



The earliest ventures into youth work were often initiated by people of faith and the spiritual dimension of young people was a central component of the work. There is still an enormous amount of youth work undertaken by faith organisations where the 'spiritual' is still central. A question arises about the spiritual development of young people when they are involved in youth work in secular settings.

In 1951, Lord Redcliffe-Maude defined the aim of youth services as:

to offer individual young people in their leisure time, opportunities of various kinds, complementary to those of home, formal education and work, to discover and develop their personal resources in body mind and spirit and thus better equip themselves to live the life of mature creative and responsible members of the Free Society.

(Cited in Church of England, 1996: 149)

Organisations such as the YMCA talk about the development and integration of body, mind and spirit. Therefore, there is arguably a historical and theoretical legitimacy to addressing spiritual development in youth work. If one accepts this, a number of questions arise, such as; where does spiritual development feature in secular youth work, and; if youth workers want to help the spiritual development of young people in their work, how do they do so?

This article explores the second question and seeks to share some thoughts and experience into ways that youth workers can support young people as they develop spiritually.

The spiritual dimension in youth work

When excellent youth work takes place, it is easy to reflect on the skills of the youth worker, the content of any programme and the opportunities provided by the different experiences that are offered. However, there is often another dimension to the work which involves contact between the youth worker and the young person at a deeper, more meaningful level. I believe this is when people relate to each other at a spiritual level.

When we seek to define the 'spiritual' dimension of ourselves and of our work, it is really difficult to pin down what is happening and to find vocabulary and concepts to describe the experience. Therefore, we have a tendency to see any spiritual outcomes as serendipitous, a bonus to the other aspects of the work. When the encounter happens between the youth worker and the young person at a deeper level, it is often seen as luck, and we may even feel reluctant to try and recreate the experience as the encounter is so special.

My reading and work over the last few years really challenges this perception. Not only is it okay to create opportunities for these deeper and more meaningful encounters, it is the stuff of excellent youth work. Therefore, if this is not only a relevant way of working with young people but one of the best ways of working with them, how do we as youth workers learn to do it better?

The core of youth work, social pedagogy and informal learning is the development of oneself as a reflective practitioner. Using the learning cycle, articulated by Kolb (1986), we can start with experience, reflect on this, evaluate outcomes and use these to plan future work. I see no reason why we can't use the same approach to develop ourselves as spiritually reflective practitioners. When we reflect on an encounter with young people, as well as evaluating changes and achievements in their circumstances or in their emotions, we could reflect on any change or growth at a spiritual level. Similarly, we can interrogate our own actions from a spiritual point of view through asking questions such as: 'was I connecting at a deeper, more meaningful level, or was I superficial and going through the motions?' This is a new area of reflection so, initially, we may find it difficult to find language and concepts that competently explain this. However, this could be the stimulus to work as a community to develop these ideas, and the appropriate language to articulate them, rather than move the whole experience to an unscrutinizable mystery. There is a task, individually, to develop words and concepts to help articulate the spiritual dimension - and also a

task, collectively, to build a community of practice around this way of working.

The importance of the spirituality of the youth worker

The internal and deep equilibrium of the youth worker has a profound effect on the encounter they have with young people. If a youth worker is anxious or agitated, young people will pick up that there is no room for them to explore the deeper spiritual questions they may have. However good a youth worker's technique may be, the level of distraction that they bring to an encounter will dictate how deeply young people will be able to relate and share with them. Over time, I have developed a list of potential helpful steps a youth worker can take to help them to centre themselves, develop a deeper understanding of their own spirituality and thus provide the 'space' and the openness that enables a young person to open their own spirit in the encounter. These are listed below (summarised from another chapter of mine; Green, 2015).

My hope is that youth workers can reflect on these and begin to share their own experiences of what helps develop the spiritual aspect of our work. As such, we can move towards building a community of spiritually reflective practitioners.

Developing yourself as an effective spiritual practitioner

- Clear out the baggage in your life that is burdening the way that you see and operate in the world;
- Learn to 'still your soul' so that you have ready access to inner peace and security;
- Learn to distract your ego by concentrating on the task or the person you are 'leading';
- Take time to reflect, withdraw and study spiritually;
- Work with other people who may be unconsciously unskilled spiritually to develop their knowledge so that they can support your approach;
- Be aware that your own life, values and approach may be used as a model by those you work with;
- Be part of a community which is consciously and unconsciously skilled about spiritual work and learn and share within this community;
- Be as reflective a practitioner in your spiritual work as you are in other aspects of your work.

Look at this list and reflect on these points in relation to yourself and your work. Are there any other ways you can build your own spirituality which may help how you engage with young people?

References

Church of England (1996) *Youth A Part: Young People and the Church*, London: Church House Publishing.

Kolb D.A. (1984) *Experiential Learning experience as a source of learning and development*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Green, M. (2015) 'Using your spiritual self as a youth work tool' in Smith, M., Stanton, N. and Wylie, T. (Eds.) *Youth Work and Faith: debates, delights and dilemmas*, Lyme Regis: Russell House.



ANTI-OPPRESSIVE YOUTH WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES LIZ WOOLLEY

Thinking innovatively
about youth work



In 1990, Don Blackburn argued that the only acceptable debate regarding disability in youth work was that which examined the ideologies and practice towards those with disabilities (Blackburn, 1990: 152). He said we should question the stereotyping, stigmatization and power factors which inform the construction of the category.

I thoroughly agree with him but, in the quarter of a century since Blackburn raised the issue, youth work has shied away from making any real connection to his statements. We claim that youth work is inherently anti-oppressive. However, an anti-oppressive approach cannot transcend a minimal literature base and lack of critical reflection on youth work's relationship with a large cohort of young people.

In this piece, I will use the largely under researched relationship between the disciplines of Youth Work and Critical Disability Studies in order to examine this oppression.

The relationship between the disciplines can be expressed through;

- Their grounding in critical theory with a focus upon emancipation;
- Their focus on exploring and questioning the status quo of discriminated against people and their situation;
- Their struggle for social justice;
- Their focus upon the qualitative over the quantitative;
- Their recognition that legislation and policy will not change discrimination;
- Their role in understanding one form of oppression alongside other discourses such as class, gender and sexuality;
- That both share Freirean and Foucauldian understandings (to recognise and struggle against oppression).

The shared focus between Critical Disability Studies and Youth Work is further reinforced by the fact that both centralise the importance of having a complex conceptual understanding of oppression (Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2009: 50). Their purpose is to not only understand but to struggle against oppression. The relationship between youth work practice and working with disabled young people is a complicated picture but I believe that a stronger linking of the two theoretical disciplines may contribute to a possible mechanism for further understanding.

To begin to turn a critical gaze upon our practice, we will need to reflect upon some core characteristics of youth work. To this end, we will use the five characteristics, as set out by Smith (2001), which youth work consists of:

1. Focusing upon young people;
2. Emphasizing voluntary participation and relationship;
3. Committing to association;
4. Being friendly and informal, and acting with integrity;
5. Being concerned with the education and, more broadly, the welfare of young people.

Importantly, I focus not on young disabled people and their relationship with youth work but the reverse. This is a major undertaking and one that cannot be done justice within this limited piece. Therefore, for each characteristic only a short example will be used and as a reflective participant, you are asked to consider the questions that are raised, preferably with others. Thus the practical element of this piece is entwined with its theoretical offerings.

Focusing upon young people

To say we work with disabled young people, we must be sure that we see disability as only one signifier of the young person and not one that is given precedence over other identities as to 'institute, to give a social definition, an identity, is also to impose boundaries' (Bourdieu, 1991: 120). Indeed, Ofsted tell us that 'Young disabled people told inspectors that expectations of what they could achieve in their day to day lives were often too low' (Ofsted, 2013:9).

- Why do you think young people have these experiences?
- How is your organisation assuring that all young people are being treated as young people, first and foremost?

Emphasizing voluntary participation and relationship

According to Ofsted (2013: 7), 'Providers of youth work often asserted that they met the needs of disabled young people as part of their open access or integrated work, but in reality few did so'. The report found that only 4-6% disabled young people access local authority youth work provision in the settings observed.

- Is youth work inadvertently adhering to an oppressive social construct and, as such, making participation harder for those with disabilities?
- Do these statistics ring true in your experience of youth work?

Being concerned with the education and, more broadly, the welfare of young people

A leading Critical Disability Studies academic states that 'The social disadvantage experienced by disabled people is the result of the failure of the social environment to respond adequately to the diversity presented by disability.' (Hosking, 2008: web). Ofsted found that youth workers were struggling to overcome the barriers and complexities faced by young disabled people in open access provision.

- How is your youth work organisation ensuring it can respond with confidence and adequacy to the diversity presented by disability?

Committing to association

Conversation 'requires participants to possess skills that are improved with practice. Those who lack these can find themselves socially, even physically isolated... as a result, informal educators, must be prepared to teach some of the protocols that underpin the art of conversations' (Jeffs and Smith, 2005: 31). Autism, for example, can manifest itself in differing social interaction/conversational methods. So, if we are to teach young autistic people to undertake conversations in the form that is deemed normative, are we not cohering with the current bio-power stratification of norm and undertaking banking education 'in which the scope of action allowed to students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits' (Freire, 1996: 58)?

- Is this a commitment to association?

Being friendly and informal, and acting with integrity

Dan Goodley argues that 'Disability is a label, a signifier that inaugurates consignment to an identity category, which signifies disadvantage and oppression' (Goodley, 2011: 9).

- How, then, are we working with integrity with this largely oppressed group?

Conclusion

Critical Disability Studies starts with disability but never ends with it, it is inherently multi-disciplinary. There is potential for youth work to identify itself within these disciplines. There is so much shared focus between the disciplines of Youth Work and Critical Disability Studies that to be understood together could open up new understandings of a praxis that could aid both fields, practically and theoretically.

References

- Blackburn, D. (1990) 'Young People, Youth Work and Disability' in Jeffs, T. and Smith, M. (Eds.) *Young People, Inequality and Youth Work* Hampshire: Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and symbolic power*, (J. Thompson, ed.; transl. by G. Raymond and M. Adamson) Cambridge: Polity.
- Freire, P. (1996) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, St Ives: Penguin Books.
- Goodley, D. (2011) *Disability studies*. Los Angeles, California: SAGE.
- Hosking, D. (2008) 'Critical Disability Theory', Paper given at the Fourth International Disability Studies Conference, Lancaster University, 2-4 September, 2008. Available from: http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/events/disabilityconference_archive/2008/abstracts/hosking.htm.
- Jeffs, T. and Smith, M. K. (2005) *Informal education: Conversation, Democracy and Learning*, Nottingham: English Heretics Press.
- Meekosha, H. and Shuttleworth, R. (2009) 'What's so critical about critical disability studies?' in *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 15(1), pp.47-75.
- Ofsted (2013) 'Critical issues in the provision of youth work for young disabled people'. Available from: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/critical-issues-provision-of-youth-work-for-young-disabled-people>.
- Smith, M. K. (2001) 'Young people, informal education and association', *the informal education homepage*, www.infed.org/youthwork/ypandassoc.htm.
- Tremain, S. (2005) *Foucault and the government of disability*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

INNOVATIONS IN THE MEASUREMENT OF YOUTH WORK: MEASURING SUCCESS IN TERMS OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING

IAN MCGIMPSEY

Thinking innovatively about youth work measurement



Shortly after coming to power in 2010, David Cameron made a speech announcing that 'wellbeing' would be introduced as a new annual measure of UK development (Cameron, 2010). Like the established measure of gross domestic product (GDP), the new official measure would be developed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). At the time, Cameron said that the purpose was to allow for a 'rational debate' about what made for greater happiness.

As the profile of wellbeing has risen within public policy generally, the idea has been worked into the policy discussion about young people in at least two different ways. First, we have seen the emergence of measurements of the wellbeing of the young population of the UK as a whole. For successive governments the wellbeing of young people has been a cause of concern, or perhaps embarrassment, after a series of international comparisons ranked the UK youth population as, at best, average and more often as some of the least happy among developed nations (for example, see Adamson, 2007). It is perhaps unsurprising, then, to find that the ONS have, as part of their overall measure of population wellbeing, also developed dedicated measures of young people's wellbeing (Potter-Collins and Beaumont, 2012). Such a dedicated measure allows for a correlation of wellbeing to policy interventions, as well as to wider changing social and economic conditions. In other words, again like economic growth, the emergence of an official national measure has made the wellbeing of the youth population into an object of government by the State.

The second way that youth policy discusses wellbeing follows on in some ways from the first. If wellbeing is becoming something in which the State now seeks to intervene, a new policy demand is created for a means of intervention in people's wellbeing and for the local measurement of the effectiveness of those interventions. In 2011, the Department for Education published Positive for Youth. One of the most important statements about youth services in that document was the assertion that 'A long-standing weakness of out-of-school and college services for

young people has been their limited ability to measure and demonstrate their impact' (HM Government, 2011: 83). The document goes on to say that it is therefore a priority for government that there be an 'industry standard' set of measures of effectiveness of youth services, and that this standard is to be based on: *the evidence that links a number of key personal capabilities (such as confidence and agency, or resilience and determination) to key longer-term outcomes such as those relating to educational attainment and employment.* (HM Government, 2011: 83-84)

Terms such as confidence, agency, resilience and so on reference the idea of wellbeing as it has been developed for policy makers by several thinktanks and independent research bodies (including The Young Foundation, New Economics Foundation, and New Philanthropy Capital), who in turn have drawn on academic fields of positive psychology and economics. Part of their work has been to develop tools for the measurement of wellbeing at various levels, from local authority areas down to small groups of young people.

Indeed, there are now several toolkits and guides available for youth services to demonstrate in terms of wellbeing the impact they make on the young people they work with (Mguni and Bacon, 2010; Michaelson et al, 2012; New Philanthropy Capital, 2012). During a recent research project, I observed the application of one such wellbeing measurement tool - New Philanthropy Capital's Well-being Measure - in a project with young people who were struggling with participation and attendance in school. This tool involves the use of surveys of the participating young people conducted at the beginning, middle and end of the project. The results of these surveys are collated to give a group-level set of results. The results take the form of statistics on aspects of the young people's wellbeing, which are compared to a national average set of results. This shows where this group of young people are, for example, more or less satisfied with their lives overall than is normal for young people their age in the UK (and so on for other aspects of wellbeing). The second and third surveys mean the

tool can show how the group's wellbeing in these different aspects changes over time. By controlling for the changes in wellbeing that would be expected as young people get older, the Well-being Measure attempts to identify any statistically significant impact attributable to the youth work intervention itself, and to quantify the size of that effect. In the example I observed, the project in question used the results produced through the measure to justify their work both internally to senior managers in their organisation and, externally, in funding reports. Both managers and funders were accepting of the results as a measure of the impact of the project. Indeed, it seemed clear that the graphs and numbers produced had a particular rhetorical power, offering a convincing statistical representation of the difference the project had made, using a methodology developed by an organisation with a well-known and respected brand. Further, the difference that was shown – an enhancement of the young people's wellbeing – was clearly thought to be of value, both in terms of how young people think and feel in the present but also, as the policy logic goes, improving the likelihood of positive adult outcomes for those young people.

Looking at policy and examples of practice like the one I have described, we might say that 'wellbeing' is a recently developed means of producing knowledge of the psychologies and emotional states of young people that is being deployed at a population scale right down to small groups in local community services. The question is what to think about the production of such knowledge? Youth workers will rightly welcome ways to know more about the difference they make to the young people they work with, and to justify their activity to managers and funders, particularly in such a harsh economic climate. On the face of it, if the research tools are well designed and conscientiously applied, should we not welcome this development? I want to suggest that the idea of creating such knowledge about young people is something we should think critically about. I think there are at least two kinds of question that might be asked.

The first set of questions are about how the data is produced, and what it can credibly be used to say. In the example of the Wellbeing Measure and the application of it that I observed, there are a number of things that might cause some concern. This youth project consisted of around 80 young people, following a fairly structured programme of sessions that took place in and out of school. The surveying was done at the end of in-school sessions. The survey size was therefore relatively small, and the young people doing

the surveys had just had a relatively common experience. This meant that, while the Well-being Measure controls for important issues like the age of the young people, it could not control for a number of potentially important, and unpredictable, local factors, such as the nature and quality of the session that had just taken place, the effects of the school context, and that it is administered with the youth workers and volunteers in the room. So, while the toolkit produces a group-level wellbeing statistical result that claims to show the difference that is the direct result the youth work intervention, this might not be a claim we can be very confident about. For example, when the survey tool asks the young people how satisfied they feel about their lives, what is really being measured? Is it, in that moment, the effect of the project overall, or the good or bad session they just collectively had, or the terrible lesson a number of them had earlier in the day or...or...? This is not to say that the information that is produced by the toolkit has no meaning or validity. However, it is to say that making claims about the overall impact of the project through statistics and graphs often seems to inspire a level of confidence with funders and managers which might not be wholly justified. We should think carefully about how this knowledge is produced and what it is used to say.

A second set of questions I suggest we ask are about why we seek to know about young people in this particular way at this particular time? After all, there are many kinds of knowing that are possible. Youth workers often make a particular claim to 'know' young people in a relational sense of knowing who they are, their situation, their friendship group, caring about how they are going and what happens to them. However, the dominant sense of producing knowledge about young people's wellbeing is not in this relational sense. It is rather a knowledge of some quality of the young person that we think would exist outside the worker / young person relationship. And, crucially, it is also in some sense 'evaluative', which is to say that it is a knowledge that judges that young person. To be a knowledge that judges, it must be a knowledge that establishes criteria to assess good and bad, and can locate that young person in relation to other young people with respect to these criteria – that is to say, it establishes a norm and locates that young person in relation to that norm. In this case, for example, how is their level of optimism in relation to the national average? Particular defined characteristics, practices or behaviours are assessed and measured in order that they can be encouraged and refined or discouraged and supplanted. And this evaluative knowledge of the young person is typically also a means of judging the

worker (via their manager), and the organisation (via their funder, or perhaps government, or some other quality inspectorate such as Ofsted).

So, why do we want to judge young people in this way at this time? In one sense, when a youth project measures and judges the wellbeing of participating young people, 'wellbeing' might be seen as just a recent manifestation of classic pedagogic knowledge (Ball, 2013). From the early days of schooling, the knowledge of young people has been of this sort – i) classifying certain behaviours, attitudes, or curriculum knowledges; ii) finding means of both measuring the quality of those behaviours, the expressions of those attitudes, or the recall of those curriculum knowledges, and; iii) having measured then setting the students in a ranked distribution in relation to the others' achievements. This is, after all, what is typically called 'ability'. The classic technique used to produce a knowledge of student ability is, of course, the examination (Foucault, 1977). Of course, there is no 'happiness exam'. However, we might regard wellbeing as part of an 'emotional turn' (Tamboukou, 2003) in education more generally, which has opened up the psychologies and emotional lives of young people to greater scrutiny, regulation and ultimately intervention by adults. Thus, while there are not exams as such, as these projects and toolkits emerge we see different techniques that do a similar job: they measure the distance of the young person's happiness from the norm, and intervene to ensure they feel better, are more optimistic and persist longer in the face of difficulty. Like 'ability', wellbeing becomes a facet of the young person we accept exists and seek to cultivate.

At the local level, then, youth workers might be concerned that the production of a knowledge of young people in terms of wellbeing might open up their lives to new forms of adult intervention and regulation. However, we might also have a similar concern at a higher level. The knowledge of wellbeing also relates to the ways in which the State seeks to govern the youth population. At this higher level, we might think not so much about the effects on the lives of individuals or relatively small groups of young people, but more about the ways that resources are distributed to public services. At this population level, wellbeing has arguably become associated with an austerity politics that would justify the reduced size and cost of public services through a notion of 'smart investment' (Allen, 2011). The notion of 'smart investment' in public services, in short, means to provide a service that will produce results that are correlated with reduced state expenditure overall.

Wellbeing has become associated with this logic of funding public services through the work of economists that correlates measurably improved wellbeing in young people with better 'adult outcomes' (such as employment and mental health). Those better adult outcomes are in turn projected to reduce the cost of those individuals to the State in the future. In this policy logic, wellbeing is a measure of impact that can justify spending on services as a smart 'social investment' that will provide a return for the State. Indeed, the fact that, in the government's view, youth services have historically been poor in justifying spending on them in this way explains why, at least in part, they have suffered so badly as spending on public services has been cut back.

I worry that this article could be a frustrating read for youth work practitioners whose reality is that arguing for funding means demonstrating impact, and wellbeing is an opportunity to do just that. Foucault once said that people often interpreted him as saying that everything is bad, when in fact he was seeking to argue that 'everything is dangerous' (Foucault cited in Ball, 2013: loc. 168). I do not wish to close down opportunities to argue for youth work, but to suggest we think about them carefully – I have put some suggested questions for youth workers to reflect on at the end of this piece to try to help with that. Wellbeing is not 'bad', but we should seek to understand the effects on young people of measuring it and justifying youth services in terms of youth work's impact on it. We should know the dangers of the knowledge we produce.

Some questions for further reflection:

While I have raised several questions here, there has not been room to examine many of their implications. The following questions are suggested to the reader as one means of giving such consideration:

- If 'wellbeing' is used as an impact measure, what happens when the impact has been made? Do the relationships stop, or do they carry on?
- Do relationships between young people and youth workers serve the production of the impact measure, or does the impact measure sustain the relationship?
- What are the ethical implications of producing a knowledge of young people in terms of 'wellbeing' and seeking to 'improve' these aspects of their lives?
- Learning, developing, confronting personal or social issues – sometimes these don't work to make us happier, more optimistic, or to feel more satisfied. Sometimes they do the opposite. What happens if a young person is not interested in improving their wellbeing at this point?

References

- Adamson, P. (2007) *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries*. Florence: UNICEF.
- Allen, G. (2011) *Early Intervention: Smart Investment, Massive Savings*. London: HM Government.
- Ball, S. J. (2013) *Foucault, Power, and Education* (Kindle ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Cameron, D. (25 November 2010). PM Speech on Wellbeing. Retrieved 18 February 2013 from <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pm-speech-on-well-being/>.
- Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). London: Penguin Books.
- HM Government. (2011) *Positive for Youth: A new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19*. London: HM Government Retrieved from www.education.gov.uk/positiveforyouth.
- Mguni, N. and Bacon, N. (2010) *Taking the temperature of local communities: The Wellbeing and Resilience Measure (WARM)*. London: The Young Foundation.
- Michaelson, J., Mahony, S. and Schifferes, J. (2012) *Measuring Well-being: A guide for practitioners*. London: New Economics Foundation.
- New Philanthropy Capital (2012) *Well-being Measure*. Retrieved 12 September 2012 from <http://www.well-beingmeasure.com/>.
- Potter-Collins, A. and Beaumont, J. (2012). *Measuring National Well-being - Measuring Young People's Well-being, 2012*. London: Office for National Statistics.
- Tamboukou, M. (2003). Interrogating the 'emotional turn': making connections with Foucault and Deleuze. *European Journal of Psychotherapy and Counselling*, 6(3), 209-223.



INNOVATIONS IN THE MEASUREMENT OF YOUTH WORK: THE CONTRIBUTION OF QUALITATIVE LONGITUDINAL METHODS ANIELA WENHAM

Thinking innovatively about
youth work measurement



This discussion piece is concerned with the following question:

How can we measure the value and impact of youth work in a way that preserves its complexity and adheres to the founding ethical principles that make this type of work so distinctive?

The current policy context requires a return on 'investments' of public money (in the form of hard outcomes that can be easily measured). The intensity of this has been exacerbated by the increasing use of 'social impact bonds' and payment by results mechanisms to secure funding (See Silver and Clarke, 2014, for a critique). In the context of austerity and public cuts, many Local Authorities, and other youth work providers attempting to sustain their provision, have found themselves dependent upon adhering to these mechanisms in order to secure vital resources. Youth work in the 'here and now' finds itself in an extremely difficult position. As Youth Services and other youth work provision has reduced substantially, the need to demonstrate the benefits of youth work to society has become even more critical and timely.

But the nature of youth work in itself makes this an extremely difficult task to accomplish. Measuring 'success' is extremely contentious and value laden. For youth work in particular, notions of success are inherently aligned to the perceptions of young people themselves rather than that imposed by wider society. This has created real tensions for youth workers who find themselves working within increasingly restricted policy frameworks that are not only target driven but, at their core, focus upon young people as a form of investment via their future economic participation. For the youth work profession, articulating its worth has also proved to be a challenge due to the less tangible, 'softer' outcomes that are at the heart of youth work, but then, notoriously difficult to measure. This is then further complicated by the difficulties deciphering the relationship between cause and effect (how exactly do 'soft outcomes', such as increasing levels of self-efficacy, relate to increasing levels of school attendance, for instance?). These are important factors that have

resulted in fundamental barriers for the youth work profession in articulating its worth to policy makers. While the current context indicates there is no getting away from the relentless drive to demonstrate 'hard outcomes', there are other reliable and valid methods more suited to capturing the impact of youth work. These methods should be exploited to build a stronger evidence base for youth work. The following discussion focuses upon the distinctive features and potential of Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR) in particular.

What is QLR?

Qualitative research methods are characterised by fluidity and flexibility which make them particularly adept at exploring the interpretations, meanings and subjective experiences of research participants (Mason, 2002). Furthermore, whilst quantitative methods can address answers to 'what' questions (for example, what are the quantifiable differences in the behaviour and attitudes amongst young people?), qualitative methods are best suited to exploring the 'how' and 'why' (illuminating the meanings and interpretations attached to such differences) (Holland, 2007). Taking a qualitative longitudinal approach further enhances our understanding of the dynamics of young people's lives, and crucially, the processes attached to social inclusion or marginalisation. For example, over time group biographies tell us about transitions through and within a range of key domains in young people's lives, both reflectively (looking back in time) and prospectively (looking into the future). An important feature of this approach would be to provide better support to young people, not only from the vantage point of their own needs, but how, over time, the jigsaw puzzle may come together and highlight pertinent issues formerly overlooked through a snapshot picture. Judgements or interventions based on a snapshot picture may be limited, misguided or even entirely wrong. For example, my own research using QLR has focused on the experiences of young parents (Wenham, forthcoming). A young woman who has just found out she is pregnant may feel very differently to a young woman who has come to terms with, and learnt to skilfully and confidently respond to, being a

parent. A snap shot picture from a moment of potential crisis or anxiety may lead to a very different judgement of a young person's capacity, resilience and potential than an understanding of them over time.

A growing literature has developed that focuses upon the emerging theory, principles and practices of QLR. When discussing the rationale for Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR), Neale and Flowerdew highlight that QLR as a theoretical orientation offers a distinctive way of knowing and understanding the social world. They believe there are a number of benefits and advantages of QLR. For instance, they state that:

...it is through time that we can begin to grasp the nature of social change in their personal lives, and the ways in which structural change impacts on the lives of individuals. Indeed, it is only through time that we can gain a better appreciation of how the personal and the social, agency and structure, the micro and macro are interconnected and how they come to be transformed.
(Neale and Flowerdew, 2003: 190)

What I am keen to emphasise from this is that a holistic picture of young people's lives, needs and issues can only be developed by research that occurs through time.

What can QLR bring to youth work in particular?

Because youth work is concerned with the personal and social development of young people, the outcomes are not immediately apparent. Furthermore, the wider philosophy of youth work focuses upon process rather than outcomes, which make the employment of QLR ideal for contributing towards the measurement and impact of youth work more widely. The work of the In Defence of Youth Work campaign (IDYW) in gathering narratives of youth work for their 'Stories from practice' book is a step towards this. Reading the text, I was struck by the 'stories' presented, and more specifically, the potential that QLR could offer to explore these stories in more depth and detail. Key synergies run throughout the core principles of both QLR and youth work. Consequently, both QLR and youth work can draw attention to:

- The importance of the 'relationships' young people form with significant others (formal/informal);
- The significance of timing and resourcefulness;
- The significance of events and the causes and processes which lead to change and/or particular outcomes.

While policy makers might learn more about the benefits of youth work via a QLR approach, there are also practice implications for youth work. Focusing upon processes (rather than simply outcomes) is key to the identification of 'critical moments' within young people's lives when interventions may have positive or negative effects. For youth work in particular, QLR can draw attention to the 'softer' critical moments in young people's lives, and how these moments have important consequences for the young person's life and identity. The true magnitude of these events can sometimes only be seen over extended periods of time as the underlying impact on an individual becomes more apparent. For example, encounters with significant others, such as youth workers, have the potential to instil in a young person a sense of empowerment, or alternatively reinsert a sense of failure, that can have huge consequences for the future development of the self-identity. These encounters, whilst deemed 'inconsequential' in the moment, have the potential, over time, to have repercussions on an individual's life course. Again, the IDYW's 'Stories from practice' might be used to demonstrate that youth workers can be both facilitators of critical moments for young people or of the response to a critical moment. The narrative within the IDYW book of a young person's 'coffee bar' conversation with a youth worker and the subsequent impact of this on his future education and career perhaps demonstrates this most keenly (IDYW, 2011). In my research with young parents, the significance of seemingly mundane events was also drawn out. For example, in the narrative of a pregnant young woman whose mother bought her some baby clothes late in her pregnancy and the consequent impact this moment had on her own acceptance and feelings towards her pregnancy and impending motherhood. In relation to the women's adjustment and preparation for the transition to motherhood, the critical moment in which the women's families (especially their own mothers) came round to the idea of the pregnancy was highly significant. This was a key turning point for the women; they often spoke about this as a time when they felt their families had finally accepted their decision to keep the baby. Consequently, they felt greater self-confidence in their forthcoming identities as mothers.

Following people through time also draws attention to the multi-faceted nature of people's lives and the transformative possibilities that can surround the encounters and experiences associated with key areas of their lives. This entails adopting a holistic approach to the life course and appreciating to what extent such

experiences and encounters can impact on people's wellbeing and life chances.

While ethical issues do need careful consideration when employing QLR, the methodological approach sits comfortably with the founding principles of youth work. For example, QLR can be an effective tool in ensuring that young people have a voice through the formation of detailed case studies. Multiple interviewing over time also has the benefit of increasing rapport between the researcher and participant, which in turn leads to rich and detailed data. Importantly, QLR has the potential to impact on operational and strategic policy making (Corden and Millar, 2007; Neale, 2011). QLR can draw attention to the multiplicity of factors that impact on people's lives, the particular contexts in which these emerge, and the changes which occur over time. Witnessing such processes unfold through time with the added benefit of participant reflections (re-assessing and re-interpreting events at different points in time) helps to understand the impacts of policy intervention, and how they are responded to by those to whom they are directed. One avenue through which longitudinal research, both quantitative and qualitative, holds great potential is thus in its capacity to provide an evidence-base for policy-focused evaluations.

Secondary data analysis of QLR

Secondary data analysis of QLR can also be conducted in ways that align to types of evidence that policy makers are more receptive to. For example, a report for the Audit Commission employed a cost analysis methodology, utilizing data from QLR, to estimate the overall lifetime costs of different groups of young people who are NEET (Coles et al, 2010). While drawing upon qualitative longitudinal data, this report re-analysed the data utilising a quantitative approach. The benefits of adopting this methodological approach were that it was able to focus upon the impacts of service provision over a substantial period of time and highlight the savings to the public purse if we invest in targeted and universal provision for vulnerable groups of young people during childhood and adolescence. Such findings were developed through constructing case studies with 'type A' and 'type B' scenarios. Scenario A is based on the construction of an individual biography through a sequence of events and circumstances described to a researcher, and scenario B is based on how these biographies are likely to have developed if an alternative set of sequences of events occurred or a policy intervention had not taken place. Drawing upon QLR from my own study with teenage parents (Wenham, forthcoming), the Audit

Commission report highlighted how a young mother who received modest amounts of policy intervention, costing in total only £4,000, eventually accumulated life time welfare costs of £97,135. Under 'scenario B', a young mother receiving no public investment through intervention programmes was calculated to have life time welfare costs of £858,362, substantially more than in the case of 'scenario A'. While these costs might seem crude, they can sit alongside the primary analysis of QLR data to strengthen the case being made, in a language that policy makers speak and understand.

Conclusion

To conclude, QLR has a potentially valuable role to play in measuring the impact of youth work. Key features of this methodological approach strike a chord with the complexity of how young lives unfold over time and how, for some young people, youth work can have transformative possibilities. However, within the immediate future, it is unlikely that this method will stand alone in making the case for investing in youth work. However, as demonstrated through the Audit Commission work, QLR can provide policy makers with the 'hard evidence' they so often require. For the youth work profession in the 'here and now', I suspect that a degree of pragmatism is therefore needed if we are to respond to the environment in which youth work finds itself extremely vulnerable. Whilst contentious, this ultimately entails demonstrating how youth work is part of the solution to current policy concerns. Ensuring youth work receives the recognition it deserves requires a commitment to build a strong evidence base surrounding its potential impact. QLR can be a means through which to reflect the value of youth work in ways that connect with various audiences.

Questions for discussion:

- Is youth work more effectively analysed through QLR than through current methods of evaluation?
- How might youth workers employ aspects of QLR in their own evaluation of their work?
- How does QLR link with the notions of reflective practice and experiential learning that underpin youth work theory and practice?
- How might QLR build a stronger evidence base for youth work that is meaningful and yet speaks to policy makers?
- What distinct ethical dilemmas might arise through qualitative longitudinal methods and are these similar to those that need to be considered in relation to youth work?

References

Coles, B., Keung, A., Godfrey, C., Parrott, S. and Bradshaw, J. (2010) *Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training*. York: University of York.

Corden, A. and Millar, J. (2007) 'Qualitative longitudinal research for social policy - Introduction to themed section', *Social Policy and Society*, 6 (4), pp. 529-532.

Holland, J. (2007) 'Emotions and research', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 10 (3), pp.195-209.

In Defence of Youth Work (2011) *This is Youth Work: Stories from Practice*, IDYW (Book and DVD).

Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*, London: Sage.

Neale, B. (2011) 'Qualitative Longitudinal Research', in Becker, S., Bryman, A. and Ferguson, H. (Eds.) *Understanding Research for Social Policy and Social Work: Themes, methods and approaches (2nd Edn.)*, Bristol: Policy Press.

Neale, B. and Flowerdew, J. (2003) 'Time Texture and Childhood: the contours of qualitative longitudinal research', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology: Theory and Practice*. 6(3), pp.189-199.

Silver, D and Clarke, B. (2014) 'Social Impact Bonds: how the powerful stand to profit from the poor'. Available from: <http://www.childrenengland.org.uk/social-impact-bonds-how-the-powerful-stand-to-profit-from-the-poor/>.

Wenham, A. (forthcoming) "I know I'm a good mum – no one can tell me different" – Young mothers negotiating a stigmatised identity through time' in *Families, Relationships and Societies* (due 2015).

USING PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: POTENTIAL AND PITFALLS

ADEFEMI ADEKUNLE

Thinking innovatively about youth work measurement



This discussion piece aims to build some understanding of the potential and pitfalls of participatory techniques in research. Participatory techniques themselves need little introduction: most youth workers will have seen and subscribed to Roger Hart's famous 'ladder of participation' (see Hart, 1992) and will be aware of the promise of participation as a tool for informal education. What I am advocating here is the use of participation as a conduit for research. Asking young people to pose the questions they think are important in their respective communities can have a powerful mobilizing effect. In addition to this, it can be resource for teachers, youth workers and community workers as well as those interested in policy research, who want to get credible data in partnership with children and young people. I would hope, for example, that Youth Parliaments, youth groups and other community organisations would find it useful. It begins from a starting point that young people should be at the forefront of any policy or community debate that directly concerns them. It remains important for the simple reason that if they are not given answers to what they perceive as problems, they will seek their own solutions.

This contribution will detail some issues I encountered, working with a number of schools in the West Midlands, on a project that looked at the effects of the 2011 riots on perceptions of young people. I will consider what worked, what could have worked better and offer an example from the research before I reach a (tentative) conclusion.

Social researchers have long advocated for studies involving children and young people to allow them a voice and a stake in the process. For policy researchers and research groups, there are also potentially very powerful rewards. Enabling young people to speak collectively without an adult present (or, at least, not prominent) is not merely an ideal to be realised, but it may also lead to a richer and a more varied dataset. At its best, it might very well bypass the way that a professional researcher can inadvertently influence research participants towards the answers they seek (Morgan and Krueger, 1993). Potentially, it could be the source of profound new insights.

What worked

It should be said that working with children and young people in this capacity is far from an easy option and, if anything, is more labour and resource intensive than more traditional research methods, despite the rewards mentioned above. Therefore, before embarking on such a project, I would suggest considering a range of questions:

- Why do you want young people involved?
- To what extent? And what degree of involvement?
- What are the benefits to be gained by young people?
- What are the barriers to involvement?
- Why hasn't this project been done before?
- What issues do you want to look at? How?
- How will you collect and analyse data?
- How and where will you take your findings?

All the schools we worked with came up with different answers to these questions meaning that the project became locally relevant and useful. There were three forms of participation activity: projects based around consulting young people; projects based around participation, and; self-advocacy projects.

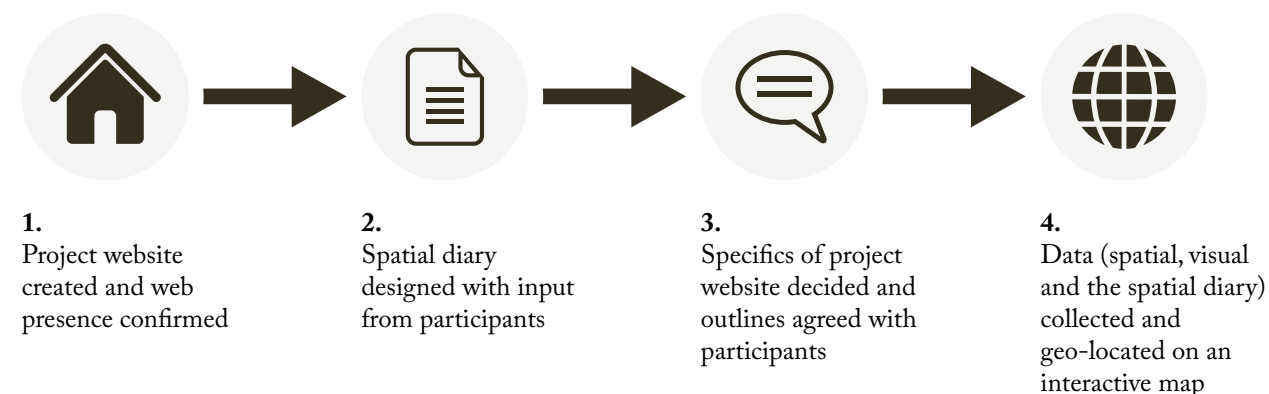
Another difference between the schools was in how the co-researchers were chosen. Some chose to train up a small cohort of young researchers to a very high standard and give them near-total control over the project, another chose to create a community of researchers that covered a whole class or year group,

whilst another school chose a mixture of the two. This last school trained up a small number of pupils and made them the 'experts': the younger or less experienced researchers went to them for answers rather than teachers. This demonstrates that there were a range of responses to the question of how best to use the resources available for gathering research data; ultimately, it is up to the youth worker to consider what to choose and why. At its most effective, this model created a model of peer-to-peer mentoring that supported and encouraged co-researchers to manage their own learning, maximise their potential and develop the skills they wanted.

An example of participatory research: smartphones and EpiCollect

An important point in using participatory research successfully is building on what is already there. This aspect of managing people, processes and resources needs an already existing and strong level of familiarity. One approach I used to research what people knew

and thought about community safety was through mobile telephones. Since the young people I dealt with were already fascinated by ICT and mobile phones in particular, it was an obvious place to start. There was also an element of poetic justice in using mobile phones since they were often the cause for some disruption in a session. Placing them right at the heart of the research project therefore seemed to make sense. To this end, using young people's own mobile phones and a free cutting edge data collection 'app' called EpiCollect allowed me considerable scope to sculpt a focused, participatory research project. The 'app' allows anyone with a smartphone to take and submit photos and surveys onto a central website. You can take photos, design and fill in a survey or questionnaires and see what these look like on a map. To look at issues around safety, for instance, I found the geographical element very useful and, since it is online, it remains an easy way to spark discussion - either in a youth work setting or in cyberspace.



A cautionary note

Despite the usefulness of participatory research, and the fact that its only limits are those of imagination and effective engagement, there does remain one question to ask: what happens at the end of a project? If a group has been successfully engaged, a research

project designed, conducted and data collected, what then? My experience suggests that maintaining momentum from projects like this is almost as difficult as creating it and needs just as much imagination, risk taking and creativity. In this vein, it remains much like any other youth work intervention.

References

Hart, R. (1992) 'Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship', *Innocenti Essays*, No. 4. Florence: UNICEF.

Morgan, D. and Krueger, R. (1993) 'When to use focus groups and why'. In Morgan, D. (Ed.) *Successful Focus Groups*. London: SAGE.

For further reading...

Aanensen, D., Huntley, D., Powell, C. and Spratt, B. (2009) 'EpiCollect-A Mobile Phone/Web Application Framework for Epidemiological Data Collection and Visualisation'. In *Ecohealth*, vol. 7, pp. S48-S49.

Hart, R. (2008) 'Stepping back from "the ladder": Reflections on a model of participatory work with children'. In Reid, A., Jensen, B., Nikel, J. and Simovska, V. (Eds.) *Participation and Learning*. Netherlands: Springer.

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH SOCIAL ACTION KATHARINE O'BRIEN

Doing innovative practice



Social justice is a means of creating both a more joyful and better functioning society (HM Government, 2012: 4). The term was first coined by diAzeaglio in 1840 (Novak, 2000) and refers to the need to be involved in our communities and instigate positive changes. However, Brown reminds us that social justice issues, and difficulties and inequalities within communities, are hardly a new phenomenon (1998: 25). As stated in my recent article 'Young people, social justice and DISCC', I do not believe we should be disheartened by this, but instead take this as an opportunity to 'stand up and be counted', to add our voices to the many campaigning for equity and change (O'Brien, 2014).

Social justice is a passion of mine because I feel it is important for us as individuals and practitioners to look 'outside the box'. Whether that 'box' is our neighbourhood, school or church community, enabling an awareness of global issues and empowering young people to take action is, in my opinion, a significant part of youth work. If we want to achieve our key purpose and provide individuals with opportunities to gain voice and influence in society (NYA, 2012), we need to engage with current issues. As advocates of young people, we should be inspiring them to be active citizens (in the full and true meaning of the term not merely its political use which is, arguably, interchangeable with economic conformity). We can do this by working with them to develop projects which draw on their interests, develop skills and open their eyes to situations which may be beyond their comprehension.

I have developed what I term the 'DISCC framework' for engaging young people with relevant issues (O'Brien, 2014). DISCC stands for: discovery; inform; solutions; campaigning; conclude. The inspiration for this framework came about after working with young people at the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service retreat centre, Walsingham House. As an advocate for social justice within the team, I engaged young people with current social justice campaigns (such as those led by CAFOD, a Catholic aid agency). By empowering young people to build on their understanding of world

issues and informing them of both relevant statistics and real life case studies, we were able to engage with young people on their level and prepare them for 'active participation' as 'global citizens' (White and Talbert, 2005). My testing of the model with other youth workers has confirmed that the early stages of 'discover' and 'inform' are a two way process – youth workers may need to provide resources to kick start discussions, or the young people may be able to work from their current knowledge and interests, depending on the group.

After this time of discovery and informing, the young people I worked with were given the chance to take action by identifying 'solutions' and developing the required 'campaigning' skills to achieve these solutions. This involved both thinking about how they could personally be involved in the solution and leading the way on collective campaigns. It is important to remember that this can be either a short process (within a session) or completed over a longer timeframe (for example, planning a community event).

However the solution and campaigning stages are approached, it is important to 'conclude' the process. Why is this so important? As youth workers, we aim to engage young people in activities which both engage and develop them as individuals. As such, the activity is not the end in itself - it is important to appreciate how the process has led (or not) to the young people's development. At the end of any social action project with young people, the 'concluding' stage should take place within which questions need to be asked such as:

- Were there enough opportunities for everyone to feel part of the team?
- Did the young person who has been desperate to share their opinion do so?
- Did the quiet, creative member of the team have chance to shine?
- Did the project encourage the young people to appreciate the 'joy of serving others' and 'transforming the smallest places' (Greene, 1998)?

An exercise to prompt discussion among practitioners or young people

As an introduction to the DISCC framework in a workshop for practitioners, I used an inflatable globe to encourage each participant to highlight a country and social justice issue they are aware of. Interestingly, the first person in the group highlighted youth unemployment in the UK. This proves not only that this particular issue is ongoing, but also challenges the general misconception I have been confronted with during my work with young people (and sometimes other practitioners) that social justice issues are purely concerned with the wider world rather than problems closer to home.

Implementing the DISCC framework

The box below suggests some activities which could be used with young people to cover all elements of the DISCC framework. Sharing these activities with a group of practitioners led naturally into a discussion of

successful campaigns and it is heartening to hear of so many young people taking action and responding to the needs of their community (Zajda, 2006). Feedback from practitioners engaging in the discussion exercise was generally positive, with them appreciating the opportunity to share ideas with one another. Many felt encouraged to go back to their communities and develop further opportunities for social action in light of the conversations, emphasising that conversation is not only a vehicle for enquiry (Batsleer, 2008) but also a catalyst for action.

Practical activities to introduce the DISCC framework to young people (adapted from O'Brien, 2014).

Discovery – inflatable globe activity (as discussed above); mood board (articles and headlines from papers and online on an issue of their choice, displayed as a collage); campaigner pictures (a few pictures of well-known or recent social justice activists, such as Nelson Mandela, to get young people thinking and talking).

Inform – talking through recent newspaper articles; quiz to find out statistics (e.g. CAFOD Food Quiz, available from <http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Get-clued-up/Food>).

Solutions – engaging young people in an Apprentice or Dragon's Den style task to create a campaign idea.

Campaigning – presenting their campaign back and, if time, running the campaign and blogging about successes.

Conclude – discuss the pros and cons of the process and what did you achieve? If money was raised, donate this to the charity or project concerned.

References

Batsleer, J. (2008) *Informal Learning in Youth Work*. London: Sage.

Brown, R. (1998) *The Message of Nehemiah*. Nottingham: Inter Varsity Press.

Greene, M (1998) 'Introduction: teaching for Social Justice' in Zajda, J. (Ed.) (2006) *Education and Social Justice*. Dordrecht: Springer.

HM Government (2012) *Social Justice: Transforming Lives* (online). Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49515/social-justicetransforming-lives.pdf (Accessed 14th August 2014).

Novak, M. (2000) *Defining Social Justice* (online). Available from <http://www.calculemus.org/lect/FilozGosp04-05/novak.html> (Accessed 14th August 2014).

NYA (2012) *Youth Work National Occupational Standards Introduction* (online). Available from http://nya.org.uk/dynamic_files/National%20Occupation%20Standards%20for%20Youth%20Work.pdf (Accessed 14th August 2014).

O'Brien, K. (2014) *Young people, social justice and DISCC* (Online). Institute for Youth Work (IYW). Available to IYW members at <http://www.iyw.org.uk/cpd/cpd-documents/young-people-social-justice-and-dissc/>.

White, C. and Talbert, T. (2005) 'Comfortably Numb? Re-thinking Social Studies for Social Justice' in Zajda, J. (Ed.) (2006) *Education and Social Justice*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Zajda, J. (Ed.) (2006) *Education and Social Justice*. Dordrecht: Springer.

WORKING WITH CONFLICT AND AGGRESSION NAOMI STANTON

Doing innovative practice

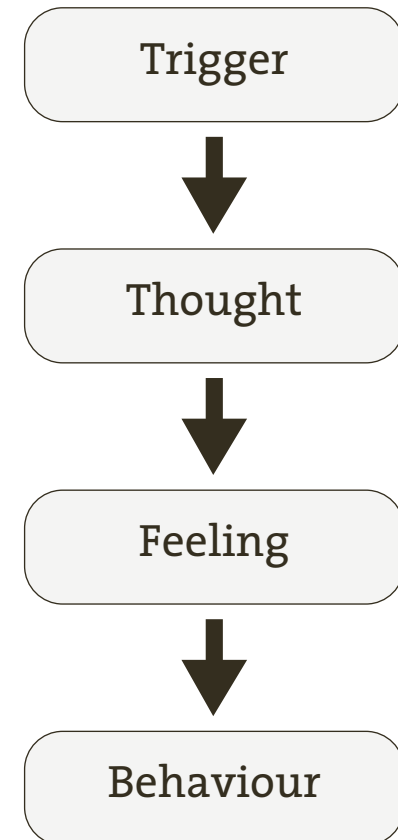


Whether working in groups or one-to-one with young people, youth workers will have to respond to conflict and aggression at times within their work. Dealing with conflict, and learning to handle aggression, are arguably important elements of young people's learning. In fact, Crawley (1992) argues that conflict is important for all people and groups to experience, even to engage in, and can lead to positive outcomes if handled well. This involves the space to 'step back', understand and control our behaviours and feelings and to consider the options and consequences before responding. However, in the moment, the youth worker may be tempted to simply shut down the conflict or act of aggression by removing the young people involved from the situation without resolving the underlying issues. Indeed, this may well be the most sensible and safe thing to do at the time.

This discussion piece explores how youth workers might work with young people to understand conflict and aggression and their role within it. I am not suggesting that the youth worker can do this 'in the moment' as an act of aggression or conflict is taking place. I provide a tool that might be used with the group or individual that recognises a need to understand the reason for and consequences of their own and others' involvement in conflict situations. The tool is something that could be used as part of the worker's ongoing relationship with the individual or group in response to a need to reflect on aggression and/or conflict.

There are some useful tools already out there for thinking about conflict and I consider a couple of these below before presenting a new tool that is based on the notions of reflective practice and experiential learning that underpin youth work.

Flemming (2011: 37) provides a useful model for exploring how thinking and action are linked:



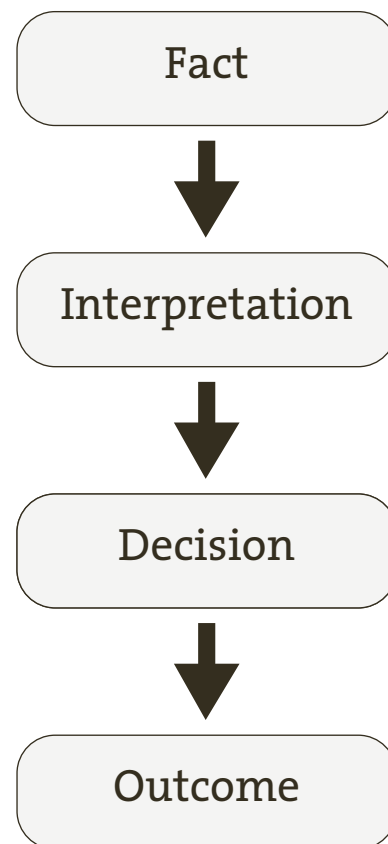
Flemming's model is premised on the idea that our actions are triggered by our thinking. It can be used to help young people reflect on how their thoughts and feelings in response to an event led to their behaviour, as opposed to the behaviour being directly linked to the event or trigger.

Flemming states that:

Positive thinking = positive behaviour
Negative thinking = negative behaviour
(Flemming 2011: 37)

This enables young people to think about the thoughts they had in response to the trigger and how this thinking defined their action. However, the weakness of this 'trigger-response' model is that it implies that if the young person's thinking is negative, they will have no choice but to act negatively. It relies on them being able to control or change their thought process before they have had chance to step back and reflect on why they feel the way they do.

Feinstein and Kuumba (2006: 38) develop a similar model in a resource produced for Leap (a conflict resolution agency). Their model may be more helpful in that it emphasises that a decision occurs before action takes place:



Using Feinstein and Kuumba's model, a young person can be encouraged to reflect on what choice they made in response to their interpretation of events and what outcome this decision has led to. The implication is that our interpretation of the event is likely to inform our decision and that we can work on controlling, revisiting and changing our interpretations of events that trigger conflict or aggression. However, the emphasis on the third stage as a decision allows for the fact that a choice can be made to act in a way that is not controlled by our interpretation.

Whilst this model is useful, its limitation is that is focused on isolated events in which conflict has occurred rather than viewing a cyclical process of events, responses and consequences. Life is not a series of isolated events but a cycle of linked processes. Where someone is struggling with conflict or aggression, it is perhaps more useful to seek an overview of how events link together than to focus solely on single events and triggers. This led me to consider how we can interpret conflict through the use of reflective practice with young people – drawing on cycles of experiential learning.

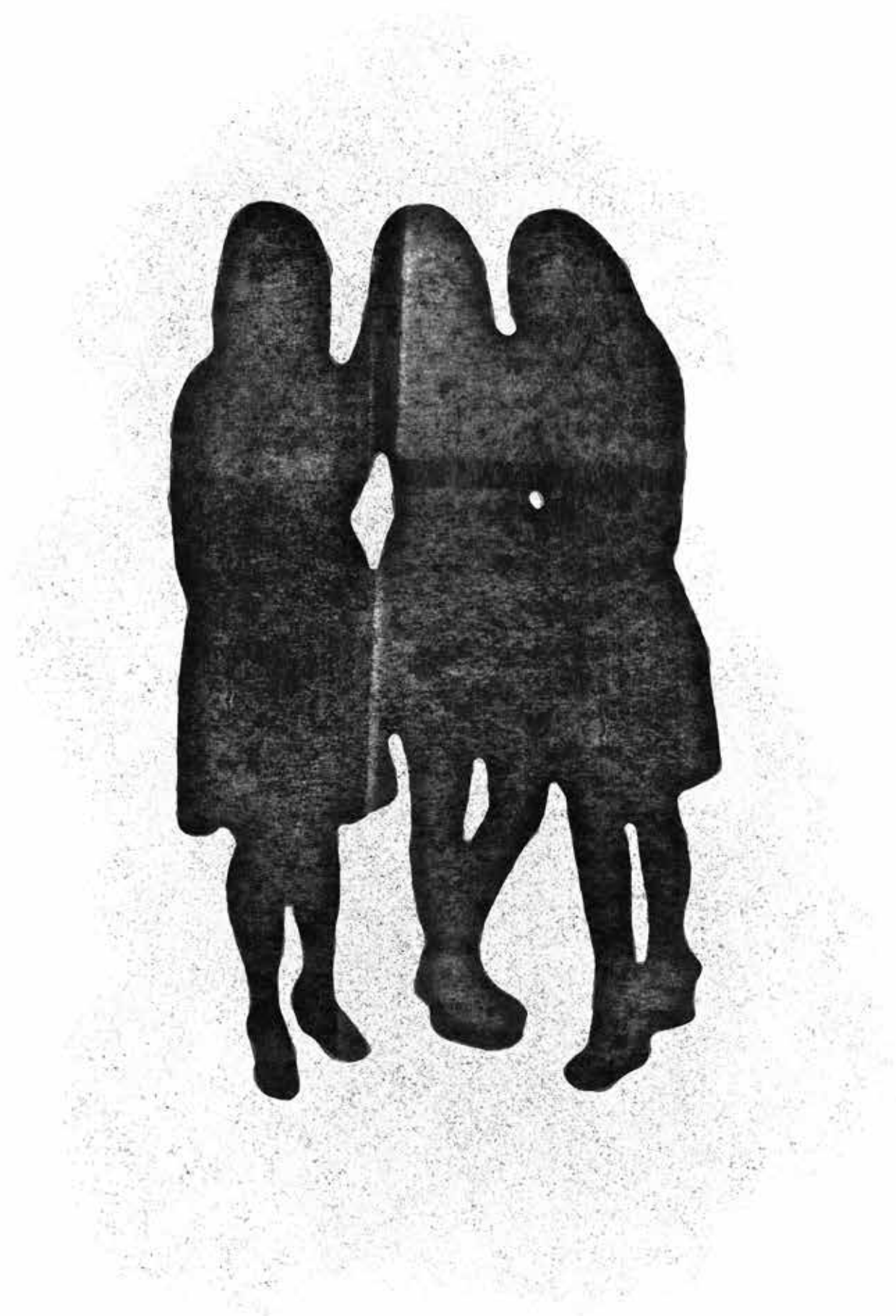
One of the most widely drawn on cycles of experiential learning is the four stage model based on Kolb's ideas (cited by Jeffs and Smith, 1999). Its stages are:

- Experiencing
- Reflecting
- Generalising
- Applying

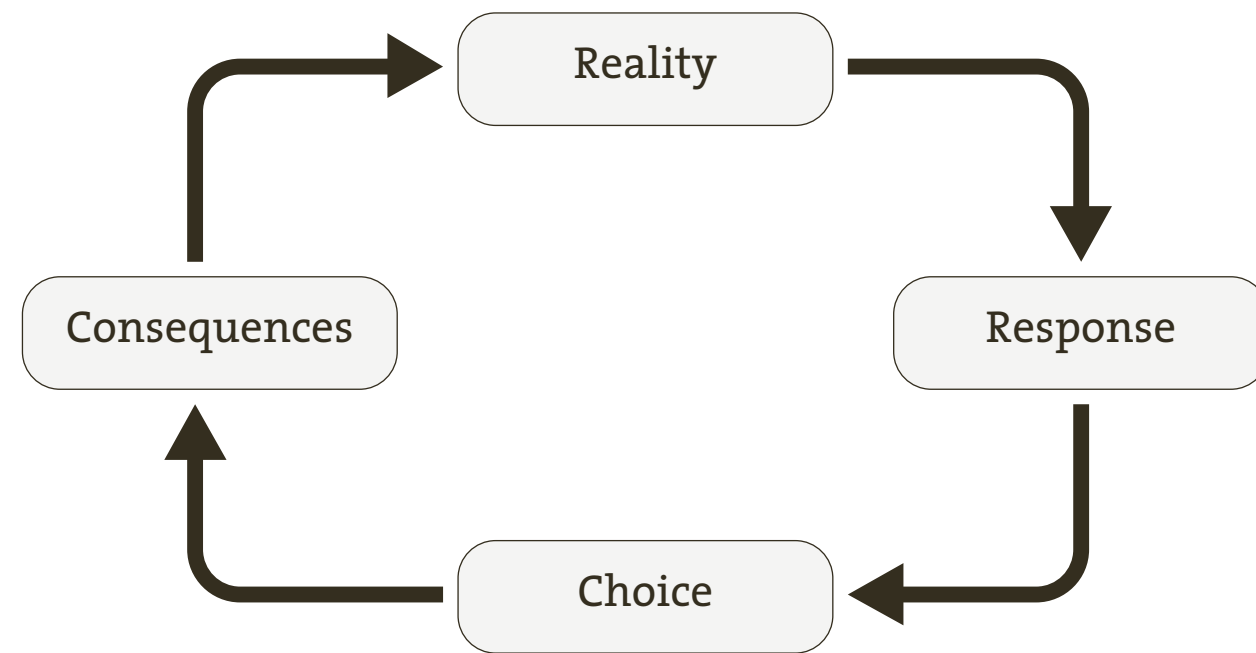
In the cycle I present below, the stages of experiential learning can be observed, in that:

- *Experience* is the *reality* we are faced with
- *Response* is the *reflection* on and management of our feelings
- *Choice* is the *generalising* about what to do next
- *Consequences* occur through *applying* that choice

Then those consequences inform a new reality in which we respond, choose and act all over again.



The cycle of reality and responsibility



By using this model to reflect on conflict, young people can be encouraged to reflect on how their responses and choices inform the reality they are faced with. This should be done bearing in mind that there are, and will remain to be, aspects of reality that they are unable to control. However, a new level of reflection and awareness should enable them to know how they can control their own choices and actions.

Using the cycle with young people

Perhaps the most useful way to implement the cycle is to support young people to reflect on their role in conflict situations after the event. You might want to encourage them to consider how different choices might have led to different consequences or, if the opportunity arises, to consider how choices they are about to make are likely to lead to particular consequences, positive and negative.

Below, I have suggested some examples for how the model might be used in a one-to-one or group work situation as a way of exploring the role of choice and responsibility in conflict:

One-to-one: To reflect on a situation of conflict/anger the young person has recently experienced using the model and the 'Questions to explore' listed below.

In groups: To explore a situation in a film as a whole group in which a character faces conflict and its consequences. Alternatively, the group could work in pairs or small groups to reflect on case study situations (you could collect newspaper articles about individuals who have engaged in conflicts that have led to a range of consequences – including positive examples such as someone challenging unfairness and finding a resolution).

Questions to explore:

Reality: What situation are you/the character faced with?

Response: What are your thoughts and feelings about this (or what do you think the character's feelings might be)? Which of these feelings are negative and need to be dealt with? Which feelings can be used in a helpful way?

Choice: What possible actions are there from here (or what choice have you/they already made)? What are you/they unable to control?

Consequences: What are the potential consequences of different choices? How do the consequences of your choice feed into a new reality? If a negative choice was made, could a more positive one be made in response to the new reality?

References

Crawley, J. (1992) *Constructive Conflict Management*, London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Feinstein, J. and Kuumba, N.I. (2006) *Working with Gangs and Young People: A toolkit for resolving group conflict*, London: Jessica Kingsley.

Flemming, A. (2011) *Preventing Weapon Crime and Gang Membership*, Milton Keynes: Authorhouse.

Jeffs and Smith (1999) 'Learning from experience', available at <http://infed.org/foundations/f-explrn.htm>.

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS IN YOUTH WORK WENDY WIGGINS



Statutory youth services, nationwide, are suffering as a result of massive budget cuts. This has had a big impact on how youth services will be delivered. Local authorities are now, more than ever, looking for voluntary groups and volunteers to deliver youth work with young people in place of youth worker led delivery.

This is an issue many youth workers are struggling with. Volunteers are greatly appreciated and, with the right support, provide valuable experience and skills for work with young people. Yet, some concerns are being raised about the current move towards volunteer led delivery. For professional youth workers, questions arise such as:

- Should we be expecting volunteers to deliver informal education in a role that was once held by qualified staff?
- What criteria do volunteers have to agree to in terms of providing evidence of their engagement with young people?
- Is it right to expect volunteers to take on responsibility for issues such as safeguarding?
- Who will support the volunteers and how?
- Are these decisions being based on what is right for young people and what is right for the volunteers or are decisions being based more on a need to deliver services for less money?
- How sustainable is this model?

These are all questions that need to be unpicked to ensure that volunteers have a positive experience of providing face-to-face youth work and to ensure that young people have access to projects that support their development.

I recently conducted a small research study with volunteers in youth work. As a result of this, I developed a seven stage model for supporting volunteers. The ethos of the model is based on working with volunteers at their pace and respecting what is right for them. Volunteers do not have to start at stage one as it depends on the knowledge and experience they bring with them to their volunteering role. Their starting point will depend on the following factors:

- Do they have any previous experience?
- What are their motivations for volunteering?
- Do they have aspirations for becoming a youth worker?
- Are they interested in engaging in formal training or are they more suited to informal learning?

The seven stage model for supporting and sustaining volunteers

Each stage of the model requires consideration of key factors to ensure the volunteer is appropriately supported. There is no set timescale for movement through the stages as this depends on the individual volunteer and their needs.

Stage 1: New volunteers to youth work

At this first stage of the process, the organisation needs to consider the following with the volunteer:

- What has motivated them to volunteer?
- Does the volunteer have any experience of working with young people?
- Who will be supporting the volunteer?
- How will the volunteer be supported to lead and develop ongoing and new activities for young people?
- How will the volunteer be supported to find out what young people want?

Stage 2: Volunteers begin working with young people

As the volunteers begin to work with young people, the following supports should be in place:

- Volunteers should have weekly support within sessions until they are ready to be self-sustainable.
- Each volunteer should have a dedicated supervisor.
- The organisation should have realistic expectations of each individual volunteer, depending on their knowledge, skills, time and experience.
- There should be consideration and recognition of the individual skills of the different volunteers and these should be utilised and developed.
- There needs to be organisational oversight and awareness of the group dynamics among the volunteers and between volunteers and young people.

Stage 3: Informal training can take place

Through supervision meetings and in-session support, the following should be implemented:

- Volunteers should be encouraged to engage in reflective practice and to use reflection as a deliberate tool for their informal training.
- More experienced volunteers should be role models to newer volunteers.
- Safeguarding and health and safety policies should be learned and implemented by new volunteers.
- Building from stage two, the different ways that volunteers learn, and the different processes they go through in doing so, should be recognised and drawn on in their informal learning.

Stage 4: Distinguishing between positive activities and youth work

At this stage, the volunteer and their supervisor should consider:

- Do they understand the difference between positive activities and youth work?
- Should the volunteer be supported to move from delivering positive activities to engaging in youth work?
- Is this the right thing for the individual volunteer based on their motivations, skills and desires for their role?
- How will the volunteer be supported to either make this transition or to feel confident in what they are delivering to young people?
- How will they be supported to recognise changes in their role and delivery and to enable this to happen when it is right for the group?

- How will they ensure that young people's views are taken into account throughout any process of change?

Stage 5: Formal training

At this stage, it should be considered what formal training might support the volunteer to do the following:

- Become confident about policies and procedures such as safeguarding and health and safety.
- Feel confident in delivering positive activities and develop their skills further.
- Understand what youth work is in terms of values, processes and practice.

Stage 6: Volunteers are ready to develop their practice

At this stage volunteers can be supported to do one or more of the following:

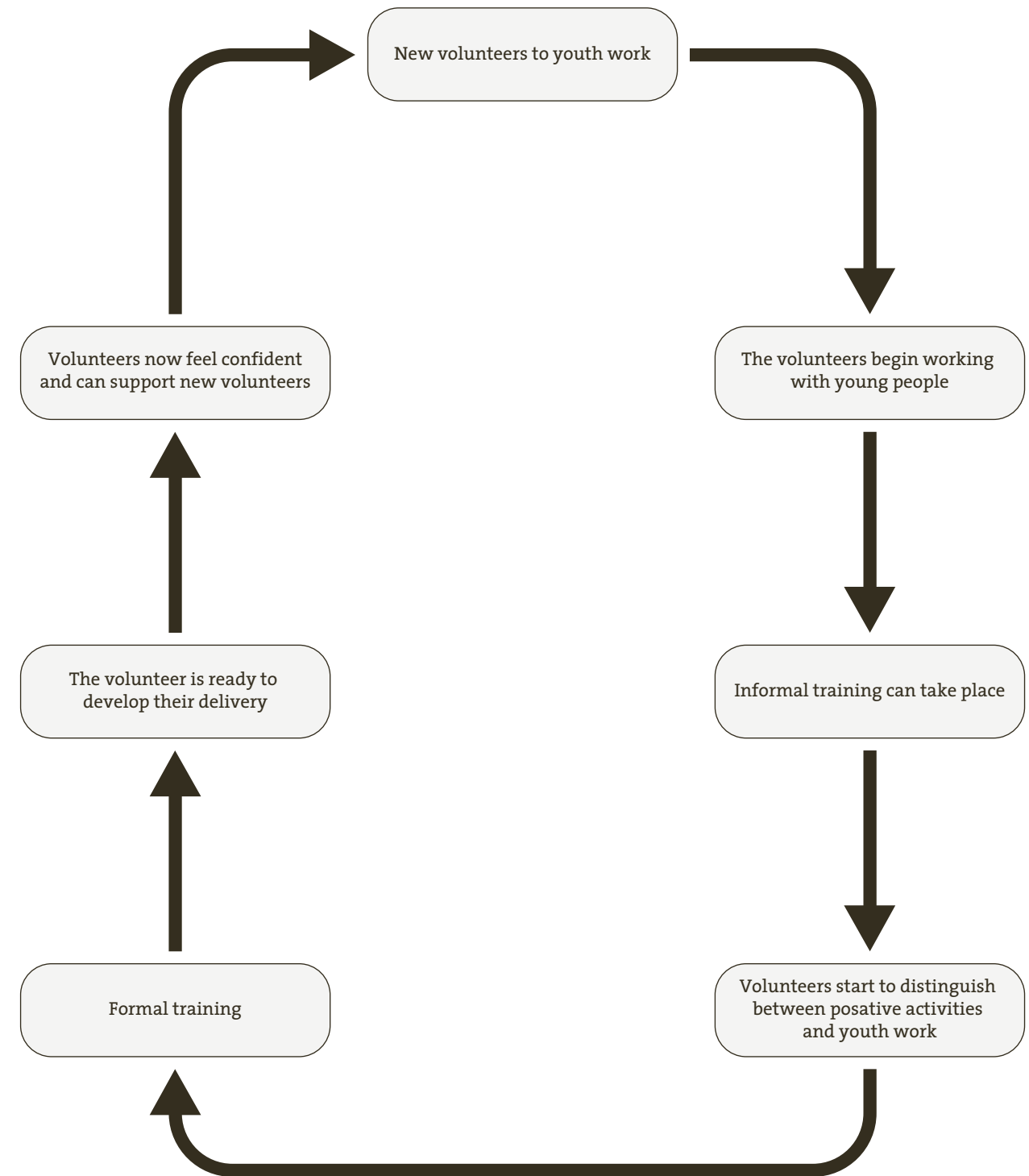
- Encompass youth work into weekly delivery.
- Improve the quality and range of positive activities that are offered.
- Develop positive activities into youth work.

Stage 7: Volunteers are confident and able to support new volunteers

At this stage, volunteers should be confident to support new volunteers and take on the supervisory and supporting role required to see them through the model – in doing this, they should:

- Be clear of the aims and expectations for new volunteers.
- Move at the volunteers' pace – this should be central to how new volunteers are supported.
- Still have some support from trained youth workers – this should not cease completely as all volunteers, even those that are experienced, need to feel supported and valued in the work they are doing.

The model as a cyclical and sustainable process



Activity for further discussion

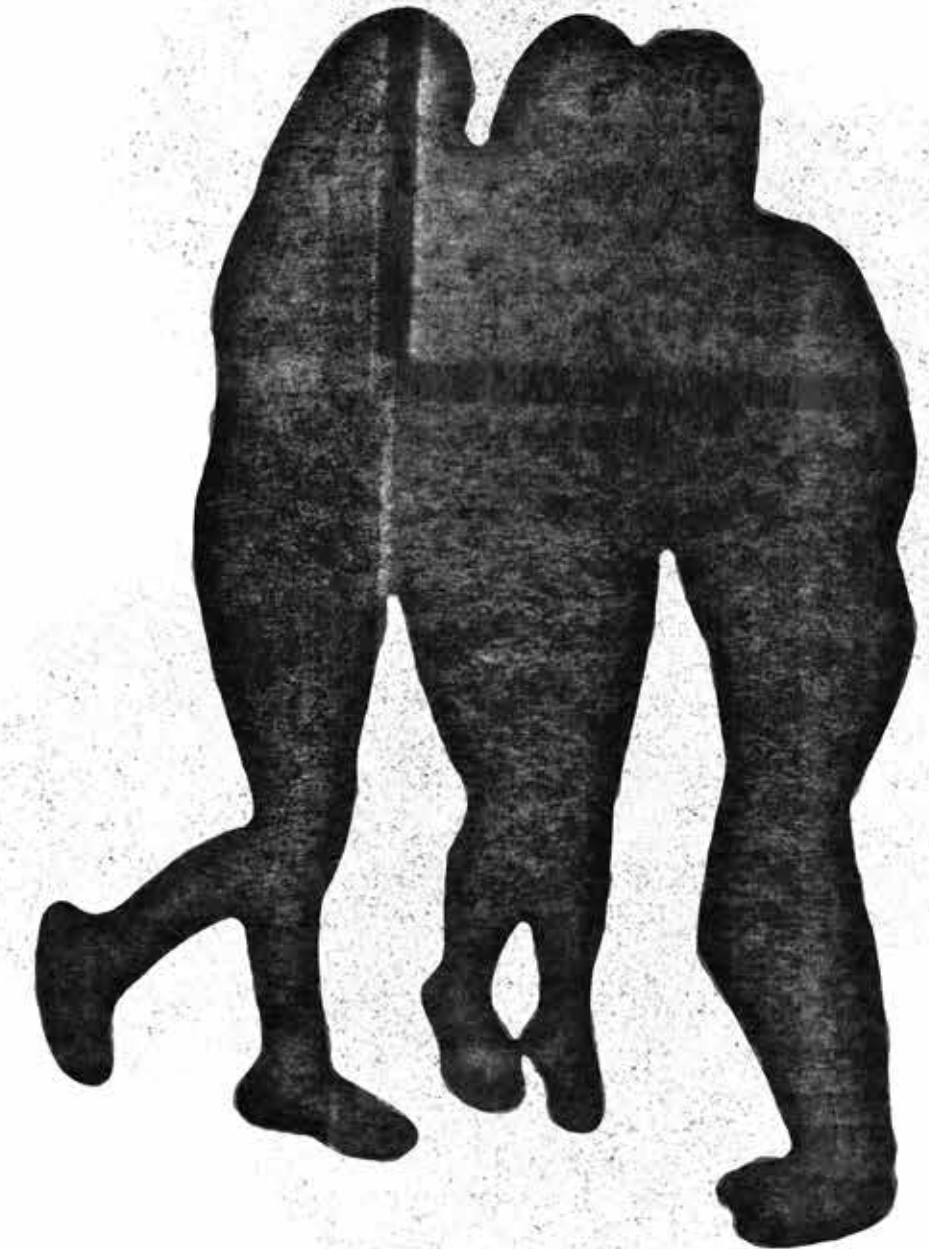
The seven stage model, and the key factors that support each stage, can be used as a stimulus for discussion with staff and volunteers. As organisations consider how to sustain their youth work projects through volunteers, the following questions can be posed to encourage group discussion and debate.

Questions for staff:

- Do you feel the model is useful or unhelpful and why?
- Are there any other factors you think need to be considered within the organisation you work for?
- Are there other factors you feel need to be considered that relate specifically to the volunteers you work with?
- What are the key values and principles of the organisation you work for and how does the model support this?

Questions for volunteers:

- Where do you see yourself in the model?
- Are there any factors you feel are important that have not been included?
- What do you think are realistic or unrealistic expectations for organisations to have for volunteers in youth work?
- What do you want to achieve in your role as a volunteer and how can you be supported to achieve this?



THE PLACE AND USE OF MENTORING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

TINA SALTER



Mentoring is often defined as the passing on of skills to the mentee or protégé to support them to realise their potential (Delaney, 2012; Roberts, 2000) while some authors emphasise supporting the mentee through a significant transitional period (Garvey, 2004). Mentoring as a tool for supporting young people is steeped in history, with programmes such as 'Big Brothers Big Sisters' founded in America in 1904 and still going strong (Frecknall and Luks, 1992). This discussion piece explores the nature and purpose of mentoring for young people by analysing interviews carried out with three experienced practitioners. Each participant was interviewed separately and then interview transcripts were analysed and compared to help identify the key elements when supporting young people through the process of mentoring.

The main elements which were highlighted by these case studies included: the importance of key qualities and attributes found in the mentor; using a relational approach; and possessing specialist knowledge regarding child protection, safeguarding and confidentiality.

The character and attributes of the mentor

Several characteristics were identified as important for a mentor when working with young people. As one mentor discussed:

The qualities of the mentor are sort of warmth, spontaneity, improvisations, empathy, ability to listen, you know creativity – coming up with ideas of what you could do together, reliability, consistency in terms of values, boundaries... they are more qualities of a human being.

The participants were aware that often the young people they were supporting had other people involved in their life, such as social workers, parents and welfare officers. Mentoring can sometimes be used as an antidote to other more formal relationships:

I just don't think the young people we work with need another person telling them what they should be doing.

In some cases, due to generational differences between the mentor and mentee, knowledge about a young

person's world might be limited, as one mentor pointed out:

There is no way a retired person would be expected to know all about the latest apps or music... It's the difference that makes the relationship work. It is like two pebbles on the beach, gently smoothing each other off.

On the other hand, another mentor recognised the value of having some common ground with the mentee in terms of helping the relationship to get off to a good start:

I look at things like location and availability, but also try and sort of pick out a hobby that they have got in common.

Sometimes mentoring schemes for young people have a specialist aim which requires the mentor to possess specific knowledge (Jamieson, 2008; Stead, 1997). In this instance, a shared common interest is more important. As the mentor's role is often carried out by a volunteer (Philip, 2008; Sandford et al, 2010), this makes it less likely that the match will be based on common interests, although mentoring coordinators do factor this in. The overwhelming consensus from the participants in my research was that the way in which a mentor engages with a young person goes much further than any one particular skill-set. Beattie and Holden (1994), King (2012), the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (2010) and Philip (2008) agree that the mentor's primary concern should be on building the relationship.

Adopting a relational approach

The relationship itself was very much seen as the focal point by the mentors. Therefore, it was important to participants to make sure that trust and rapport are established, so that the young person has the confidence to open up and talk about what they might like to explore with their mentor:

The objective is the relationship and the product of the relationship is growth, maturity hopefully, greater ability to contain emotions, greater ability to empathise with people.

Listening was seen as a key element to building the relationship, particularly as vulnerable young people can, at times, feel as if their voice is not heard:

Lots of the kids we work with are just never heard by their parents, carers, teachers that they work with, or social workers.

All mentors identified spontaneity and flexibility as crucial when working with young people:

I have got a mentor who goes for a walk with her mentee, she's really shy and doesn't like sitting there having to make eye contact and things. We've got another guy, they go and play pool together and I think that just breaks the ice and makes them feel comfortable.

This reflects existing research which has already highlighted the need for mentors to use their skills to develop the relationship, so that the mentoring process leads to change in the mentee. Listening has been identified as an important skill needed to help establish trust and rapport (King, 2012), which in turn increases the likelihood of the mentee opening up (Philip, 2008). This requires the mentor to be reflective – often in the moment – and respond in a flexible and spontaneous manner (Beattie and Holden, 1994; Berkeley, 1994).

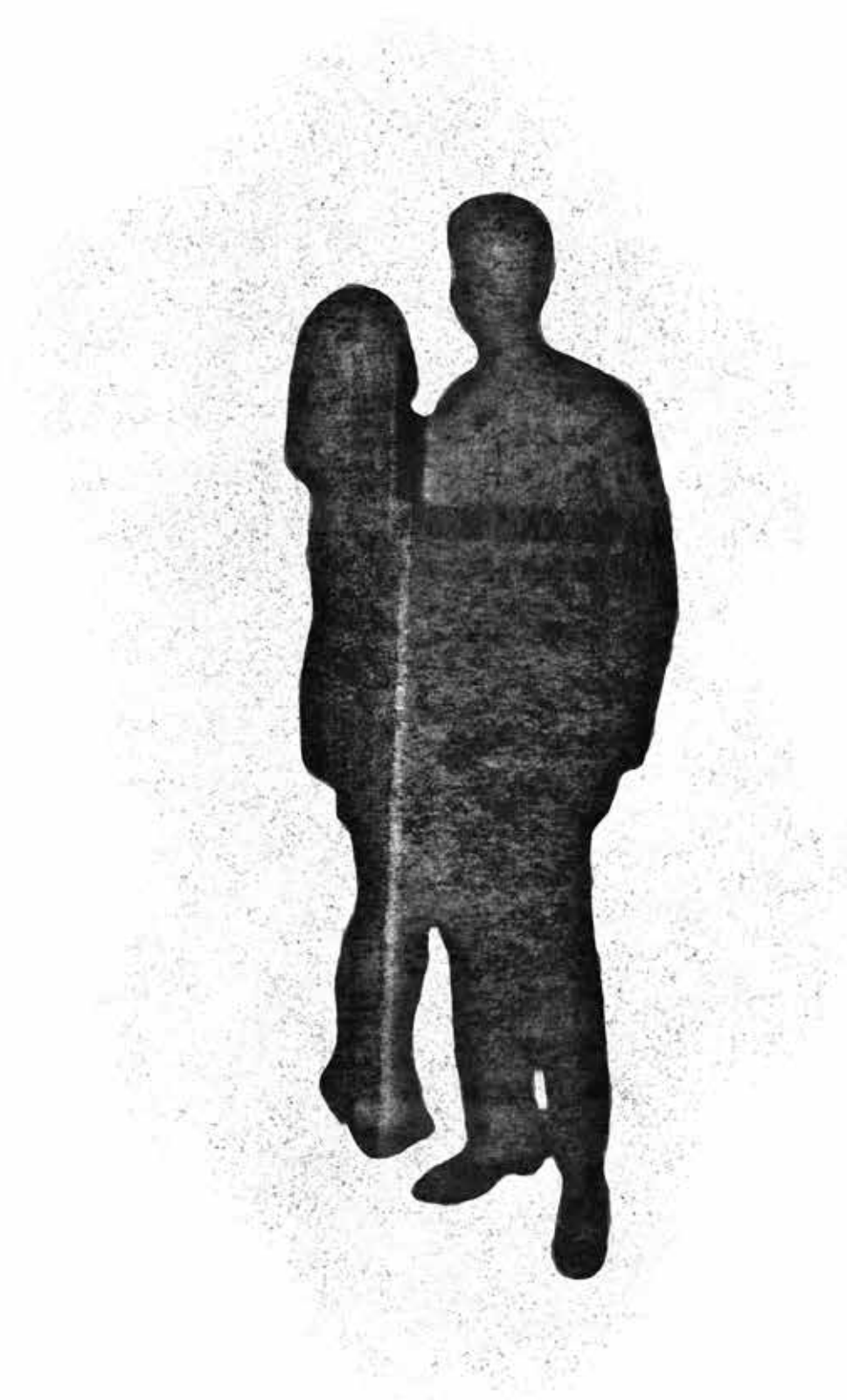
Understanding child protection and safeguarding
Establishing appropriate boundaries and understanding child protection procedures featured strongly amongst the mentors of young people:

At the start they agree the confidentiality and the boundaries of the role.

For the two participants who coordinate mentoring projects, this was also considered an important part of the training they delivered for volunteer mentors, ensuring that they all were able to set the parameters of the relationship from the outset, and then work within safeguarding guidelines consistently throughout. Alexander (2000) has also discussed the need for mentors to know child protection procedures whilst Jamieson (2008) and Megginson et al (2006) reiterate the need for boundaries to be made clear and maintained by the mentor so that they do not become blurred. This was also supported by the mentors in my research:

With child protection and safeguarding there are limits to what can be kept back.

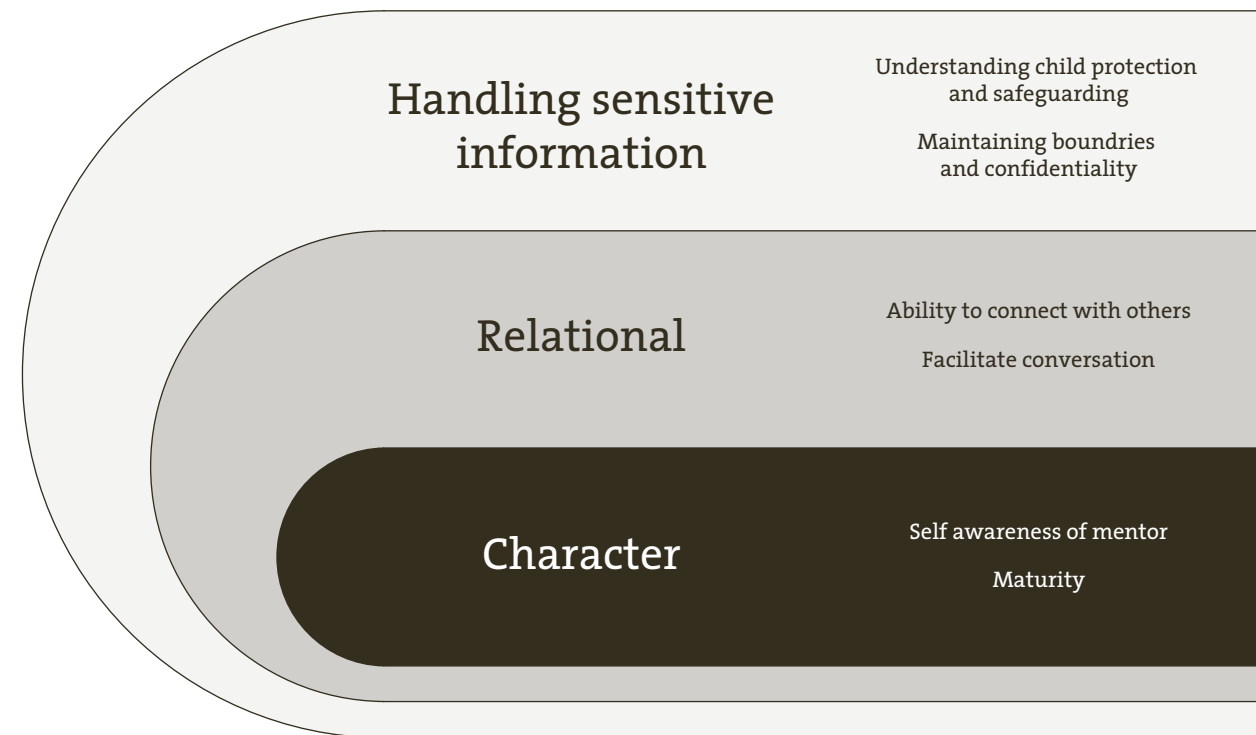
It is therefore imperative that anyone involved in mentoring young people, whether that be in a full-time, part-time or voluntary capacity, must feel confident knowing how to respond to a young person if they choose to make a disclosure in a mentoring session.



Conclusion

Anyone has the potential to become a good mentor – but potential candidates need to have, firstly, some self-awareness about how they connect with others and come across when engaging with young people. Secondly, it is important that the emphasis is placed on the relationship itself and any outcomes or aims of the project are given the time and space to form and shape, as and when the young person is ready. Finally, any professional or volunteer needs to know exactly what to do and say when a disclosure is made; and follow clearly set-out protocols and procedures laid out by the governing organisation.

The illustration below sums up the way in which these key elements are interconnected. Fine-balancing these elements will help to enable a mentoring relationship to be a fruitful and rewarding experience for both parties. The illustration could be used as a stimulus for discussion among new mentors or for other volunteers or professionals for whom mentoring is an element of their role.



Questions for discussion might include:

- Why do you think the figure is laid out in this way with 'character' at the centre, surrounded by 'relationality', and with 'handling sensitive information' on the outside?
- Do you agree with the illustration or would you place the elements differently?
- Can mentoring be successful without one of these elements in place?
- Are there any other elements of the mentoring relationship that you think should be included?

References

- Alexander, A. (2000) *Mentoring Schemes for Young People – Handbook*, London: National Children's Bureau.
- Beattie, A. and Holden, R. (1994) 'Young Person Mentoring in Schools: The Doncaster experience'. *Education and Training*, Vol.36, No. 5, pp. 8-15.
- Berkeley, J. (1994) 'Young People Mentoring: An employment perspective', *Education and Training*, Vol.36, No. 5, pp. 27-31.
- Delaney, Y. (2012) 'Research on Mentoring Language Teachers: Its role in language education', *Foreign Language Annals*, Vol.45, No. S1, pp. 184-202.
- Frecknall, P. and Luks, A. (1992) 'An Evaluation of Parental Assessment of the Big Brother/Big Sister Program in New York City', *Adolescence*, Vol.27, No. 107, pp. 715-719.
- Garvey, B. (2004) 'The Mentoring/Counselling/Coaching Debate', *Development and Learning in Organizations*, Vol.18, No. 2, pp. 6-8.
- Jamieson, L. (2008) 'Obligatory Friends, Surrogate Kin: Some questions for mentoring', *Youth and Policy*, No. 99, pp. 55-66.
- King, D. (2012) 'Formal Teacher-Pupil Mentoring in Irish Second-Level Education: The Blackwater experience', *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 89-108.
- Megginson, D., Clutterbuck, D., Garvey, B., Stokes, P. and Garrett-Harris, R. (2006) *Mentoring in Action: A practical guide* (2nd Ed.), London: Kogan Page.
- Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (2010), 'What is Mentoring and Befriending?' available at: <http://www.mandbf.org/mbf-membership/what-is-mentoring-and-befriending>.
- Philip, K. (2008) 'Youth Mentoring – A Case for Treatment?', *Youth and Policy*, No. 99, pp.17-31.
- Roberts, A. (2000) 'Mentoring Revisited: A phenomenological reading of the literature', *Mentoring and Tutoring*, Vol.8, No. 2, pp. 145-170.
- Sandford, R., Armour, K. and Stanton, D. (2010) 'Volunteer Mentors as Informal Educators in a Physical Activity Program', *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp.135-153.
- Stead, R. (1997) 'Mentoring Young Learners: Does everyone really need a mentor?', *Education and Training*, Vol. 39, No. 6, pp. 219-224.

SUPPORTING LOCAL YOUTH WORK: A UNITED STATES PERSPECTIVE ON DEVELOPING PROPOSALS FOR FUNDING

ELAINE JOHANNES
WITH INTERVIEW ACCOUNTS
PROVIDED BY KALI SUMMERS

Applying for funding in
challenging times



Due to a number of economic and social factors, youth workers in England are increasingly expected to not only conduct positive developmental activities with young people, but also often to write proposals for state and private funding in order to keep these activities in existence and viable. A youth worker who is engaging young people in meaningful activities, and who is also busy documenting that work, may feel as though developing funding proposals robs valuable time from their core mission of working with young people. When writing a proposal for funding, youth workers may be uncomfortable with a process that some view as the 'packaging and selling' of projects that are inspired by and implemented with young people. This discomfort with the funding proposal process is shared with many of the youth development professionals in the United States who are also responsible for work with young people, reporting youth participation and evaluating programme outcomes.

However, if youth workers in either country are not seeking funds through grants or contracts then they risk not having the resources to keep their organizations functioning. The closure of human and social services is well documented. According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics and the Urban Institute in the United States, 4.3% of non-profit organizations with annual budgets of \$50,000 or less closed between 2004-2008. A further 5% closed between 2008-2012, which is statistically significant and follows the peak of the recession (Dietz, McKeever, Brown, Koulish and Pollak, 2014). Usually, there are not enough funds donated or given as gifts to support local youth programmes, so preparing written proposals to compete for funding becomes necessary. As a consequence, much of the youth work conducted in the United States is done with financial support from grants or contracts that a youth development professional has earned by preparing and submitting a well-written proposal.

In the United States, organisations that award funds include government (i.e. local, state, regional, national) agencies and private or public foundations that have been established to provide financial support for services and innovations. Though the great recession of 2008 has slowed economic growth in many sectors, foundation grants and contracts to support youth, family and community programmes in the United States have grown. The Foundation Center in the United States, which is a national private organization that tracks grant funding and that provides training and technical assistance to grant seekers, reported that in 2012 there were 86,192 foundations (i.e. those funding organisations that receive no public tax revenue) in the United States. These foundations had \$715 billion (US dollars) in financial assets and awarded \$52 billion in grants and contracts to organisations that submitted well-written proposals for funding. The majority of these foundations were comprised of community-based organizations that worked together to raise and pool funds in order to support local human services. Sixteen percent of the \$52 billion awarded was used to support 42,037 grants being given to human services and programmes related to youth, family and community work. Even though the United States economy continues to struggle, giving by the nation's private and community foundations reached \$54.7 billion overall in 2013, surpassing previous levels even after adjusting for inflation. According to the Foundation Center's annual 'Foundation Giving Forecast Survey', overall foundation giving is expected to have grown a few points ahead of inflation in 2014.

With this amount of private funding available, United States youth workers are motivated to learn how to write competitive funding proposals. Though many youth workers do not readily volunteer to add 'grant developer' to their list of responsibilities, it is a role that they can master and be quite successful at if they acquire the skills to prepare a successful proposal. Before writing such a proposal, youth workers first should know what most funders expect from them. It is a given that funders expect well-written, grammatically correct proposals, but they also expect that the youth worker has done some preparation and planning before they begin to write. That preparation improves the quality of the proposal and the likelihood that it will be selected for funding.

Funders expect proposal writers to know that:

- Funders do not have enough money to fund every request. Thus, individuals writing proposals need to be realistic, and not be greedy.
- Proposals should align with the funders' interests and eligibility requirements. Simply put, 'If you don't qualify, don't apply'. Do not waste your time or theirs.
- Applicants should first understand the funding organisation instead of just seeing it as a funding opportunity. Funders often want to establish a relationship with a group they are considering supporting. Funders want to trust the group or individual they might invest in. They are interested in who you are and what you are doing with young people (Switzer, 2011).

After preparing, proposal writers then need to know how to write a strong proposal. Proposals should be written with the funder in mind. Meaning, they should be written in language, terms and concepts that are persuasive, convey excitement, and are brief and easily understood. In short, a proposal for funding is not to be written in the same style as a scholarly paper or research report.

When writing a proposal, the author should follow a systematic process which includes:

- Understanding the funders' proposal requirements.
- Drafting an outline which will help put random thoughts into a logical order.
- Drafting the text.
- Having it critiqued by people who will give you honest feedback.
- Revising the text after their input.
- Submitting the proposal on time to the funder in the manner they stipulate (e.g. online, by post, in person).

These steps may seem like common sense, but they represent some of the most important writing techniques used by successful proposal writers. When a youth worker writes their first proposal, the anxiety that is associated with developing a proposal may interfere with their ability to do the basics. Novice proposal writers not only need to master proposal writing skills, they also need to stay motivated to continue to submit proposals until they are selected for funding. Writing proposals is an activity that rewards persistence. As stated by one student studying proposal/grant development at Kansas State University:

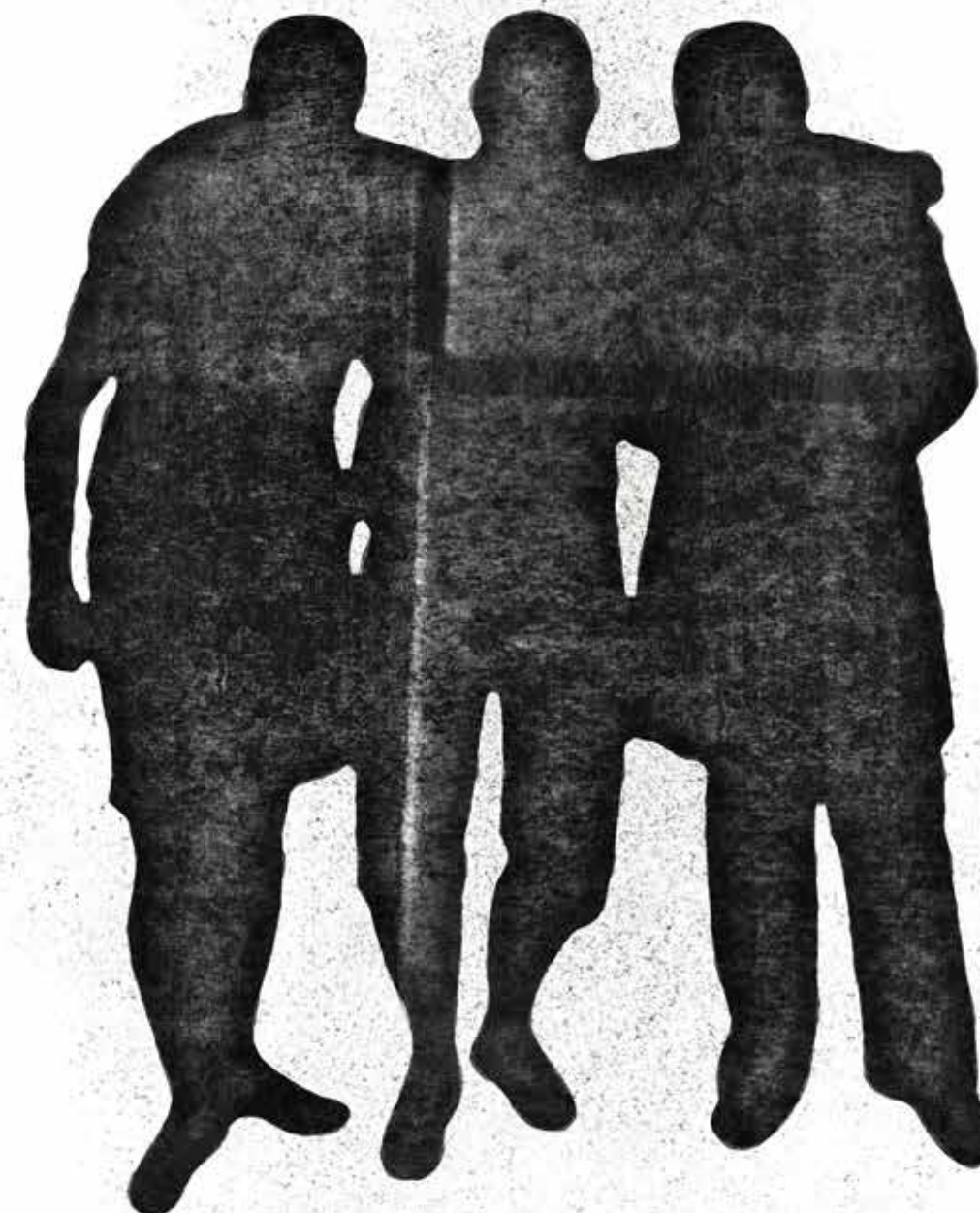
There is a notion that only business people know how to deal with money, but this is very much not the case. The sheer fact is that our work cannot be done without managing finances. If we can face the fear of finances, budgeting and grant [proposal] writing, we can become an extremely marketable employee when entering the workforce.

(K. Summers, personal communication, 2014)

Another new proposal writer stated that his feelings changed from being intimidated about proposal/grant writing to having confidence after he had a solid grasp of the fundamentals which he gained by writing his first proposal (A. Quinley, personal communication, 2014). Another novice writer recommended that writers make sure that the proposal concept fits with the funder's mission, required format and funding goals (C. Tolles, personal communication, 2014). Another student recommended asking questions. She stated: 'Don't make assumptions about the details. Contact the funder and ask for guidance. You can get off track quickly if you don't have a firm understanding at each step along the way' (D. Mosier, personal communication, 2014). There was also an awareness that successful proposal writing requires practice: 'From personal experience, grant writing takes practice. The more grants you submit and receive feedback from, the better grant writer you will become' (K. Summers, personal communication, 2014).

For the busy youth worker it is important that they weigh whether or not to write a proposal given the time it takes to prepare a well-written proposal. When deciding whether to prepare and submit a proposal the youth worker/writer needs to consider:

- Whether the goals of the funder are consistent with the worker/writer's goals and the goals of the group that is seeking funding. There is no point applying if you are working to different aims.
- What the costs are to applying for the funding and



what are the benefits. This cost-benefit assessment is especially important when the potential funds are rather small and the proposal requirements are lengthy and complex. Sometimes it is easier to ask for financial gifts and donations instead of writing a complete proposal that takes time away from other tasks.

- What 'strings' are associated with a potential funding award. For example, you need to know what the funder will require when it comes to documenting the use of their funds, reporting participant involvement, and the dissemination of information about the project when the funding period is over. Determining who has authority over the results and information associated with the funded projects needs to be clear before the funding is awarded.
- Whether the group will be able to perform the tasks included in the proposal. Promising too much without realistically assessing the organisation's capacity may harm the long-term financial health of the organisation. If the outcomes outlined in the proposal are not achieved because they were too grand when they were proposed then it is unlikely that the funder will support the same organisation in the future.
- How the youth activities and projects will be sustained. Often, a local group or community will grow accustomed to the funding awarded by a successful proposal. However, once that funding has been exhausted, there will be expectations that activities will continue, and that it is the responsibility of the youth worker/writer to prepare another proposal. Consequently, it is advisable that the youth worker/writer convene an advisory group to begin planning for sustainment of activities immediately after receiving an award of funding.

Proposal development is time consuming, competitive, and can provoke anxiety. However, it is necessary and valuable given the economic environment. It is a responsibility of most professional youth organisations to ensure that their young people have access to activities and opportunities that will help them develop into thriving and contributing adults.

Consequently, committing to seeking funding in order to keep those activities and opportunities going is increasingly the responsibility of youth workers. No one else will be taking up that responsibility on behalf of young people, so it is necessary that youth workers learn about and practice high quality proposal development.

References

Dietz, N., McKeever, B., Brown, M., Koulish, J., & Pollak, T. (2014). 'The impact of the great recession on the number of charities by subsector and revenue range'. National Center for Charitable Statistics and the Urban Institute. Available from: <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/413166-report-the-impact-of-the-great-recession.pdf>.

Kiritz, C., (2014) 'Getting the grant: 101 essentials'. The Grantsmanship Center. Available from: <http://www.tgci.com/>.

Porter, R., (2006). 'Why academics have a hard time writing good grant proposals'. Best Paper of the Year Award, Society of Research Administrators International, Quebec City. Available from: https://www.wpi.edu/Images/CMS/OSP/Article_on_Proposal_Writing.pdf.

Switzer, C., (2011). 'Common mistakes by grant applicants: Remarks by Council on Foundations members', Philadelphia, PA. The Chronicle of Philanthropy. Available from: <http://philanthropy.com/blogs/the-giveaway/common-mistakes-made-by-grant-applicants/170>.

The Foundation Center (2014). 'Key facts on U.S. foundations: Annual report'. Available from: <http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/nationaltrends.html>.

ISBN 9780950954776



9 780950 954776