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A Journal of Youth Work Issue 6: Research and Positive Practices in Work with Young People

The Journal of Youth Work: research and positive practices in work with young people
The Journal of Youth Work provides a forum for critical reflection on practice and for the dissemination of research that contributes to the development of youth work and to understanding the conditions in which young people live, rest, work and play. The Journal is concerned with the transfer of knowledge about issues that affect young people and about analysis of the circumstances that enable them to flourish. The Journal provides a forum for academics and practitioners to pose problems, consider policy and practice, and create hopeful multidisciplinary conversations. At its core, the Journal seeks to reverse age-based discrimination, to ensure that young people thrive and are regarded in a positive light by each other and by the rest of society. The Journal is therefore concerned with, for example, education, health, housing and policy fields, including interests in social and cultural capital, social psychology and a variety of other contemporary research and practice matters. Drawing often, but not exclusively from Scottish experience, the Journal is published on-line three times a year and contains refereed articles, research papers, policy analysis and book reviews. It is addressed to academic specialists, researchers, practitioners in a range of disciplines and to those involved in making policies affecting young people.

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the winter 2010 edition of the Journal of Youth Work. This edition draws mainly from authors who presented papers at the international conference held at the University of Strathclyde in September 2010. The conference entitled, "Mind the Gap" explored a whole a range of issues relevant to the circumstances of young people today. The contributions for this edition have at least three main identifiable themes running through the contributions. The first concerns the role, function and status of youth work practice. The second deals with an articulation of developing youth work practice in the developing inter-professional context. The third searches for alternative, expansive ways of thinking and acting to enhance youth work practice.

The first article in this edition has been written by Dana Fusco, from the City University of New York, York College. Interestingly, her research emanates from the USA and articulates an assessment of the conditions for youth work, which will enable our international readers to draw comparisons with the youth work practice in their part of the globe. Dana's work is thoroughly engaging with universal resonance in the quest for continuous improvement. She offers insight into workforce development initiatives underway in the United States and focuses on youth worker characteristics and organizational supports related to staff retention. These are all issues, which exercise the minds of academics, managers and front line workers in the youth work field.

In a congruent vein, Tony Morgan from the University of Ulster seeks to substantiate a developing youth work practice by presenting an investigation into Youth Work in Schools in Northern Ireland. He is specifically interested in giving recognition to the benefits of informal learning in the school setting. In particular, he identifies the ways in which youth work approaches can re-engage those who are dislocated from the learning process by developing a more holistic practice based on their needs. He further recognises the difficulties associated with inter-professional working but emphasises that this can be largely overcome by developing appropriate relationships with all stakeholders.

In the third contribution Karen Stuart offers us a paper on the use of narratives and stories as a pedagogical tool for action research in work with young people and inter-professional environments to improve practice. This suggested research approach is reflective of the author's personal journey, which is developmental, imaginative and alternative. Perhaps it will provide impetus to start a conversation around different ways of developing youth work by combining appropriate research and practice methods. Potentially, it could be useful for youth workers as they continue to hone and develop youth work practice to meet the needs of young people and provide a further opportunity for participatory research, joint reflection and systematic recording of youth work practice.

Also in this edition, Annette Coburn provides the Book Review, which continues the theme of drawing on different disciplines and sources to enhance youth work practice. She writes enthusiastically about the potential contribution of understanding the life course to our work with young people. She articulates the importance of grounding practice on key theoretical positions based on sociological and psychological ideas, understandings and tenets.

I recommend these articles and the book review to you to stimulate thought and action with young people. I also hope that these writings will capture your imagination and encourage the continuous reflection, and recording of practice, that will lead to more youth workers and young people writing up their insights for publication in 2011 and beyond.

Best wishes to all our readers for 2011 and my sincere thanks to the authors who have taken the time to share their thoughts and reflections with us in this edition.

IN SUPPORT OF QUALITY YOUTH WORK PRACTICE IN THE UNITED STATES

Dr. Dana Fusco, City University of New York, York College

Abstract

This paper provides a brief overview of workforce development initiatives underway in the United States in support of quality youth work practice. The focus is on workforce studies. Reviewed will be the findings on youth worker characteristics and organizational supports related to staff retention. Gaps in understanding are identified and recommendations for a second wave of workforce studies are suggested.

Context

Beginning in the 1990's, there was a surge in research in the United States that queried the impact of non-school based settings for promoting positive development for youth. Government monies dedicated to community learning centers spurred some of this new, and renewed, interest in the afterschool hours as extended spaces for learning and development. Concurrently, there has been increased recognition that learning occurs around the clock, throughout the year, in school and out. Issues of how youth spend their free time, with whom, and for what purpose became a rising part of the American public conscious. With the growing understanding that community-based programs and activities can make positive contributions towards the development of children and youth, and with new emphasis on funding evidence-based practice, research began to focus on uncovering the factors most closely tied to program quality.

Repeatedly found, and to little surprise, was the finding that program quality was most closely and consistently related to staff efficacy and effectiveness (Mahoney et al., 2009; Phelan, 2005; Smith, Peck, Denault, Blazevski, & Akiva, 2010). Unfortunately, this finding is juxtaposed to the reality that staff retention is a major challenge for many community agencies serving young people. Most jobs are part time and pay minimum wage, requiring workers to seek out additional employment opportunities elsewhere. Such low wages and less than optimal work conditions result in high staff turnover and disruptive services to children and youth. The resources needed to ensure staff are working at their optimal relational capacity with young people sits in tension to the fact that just as a youth worker develops his/her craft, s/he is likely to move on to a full-time and better paying position. As a result, attention has shifted to the development of the workforce, specifically to figuring out how to improve staff retention, quality, and impact. Recent workforce development models have been delineated that pave theoretical pathways for consideration. One model hypothesizes that improving the competencies of youth workers in the short-term will lead to improved program quality and ultimately better outcomes for children and youth in the long term (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007). This is the context in which workforce development for youth workers is occurring in the United States.

It is also important to understand the context of youth work practice. Four issues are considered; all of them have helped re-define the boundaries of youth work in the past decade. First, the rhetoric of "time" has shaped the discussions about youth work, with the majority of attention paid to workers in the field of Out-of-School Time (or, OST), or those that work before or after school, and during the summer, in community agencies or schools. There is less inclusion of those who work in residential, foster care, juvenile centers, street work, ministry, or other forms of youth work. Second, youth work is defined in relation to what it is "not" – e.g., non-school, non-formal, rather than by what it is. Third, the focus is on 'all' young people, not only those considered 'disadvantaged,' or 'at-risk.' The change in nomenclature from youth development to positive youth development (PYD) was heavily influenced by the research in the field of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In short, this body of work focuses on the development of positive emotions, experiences, and relationships as pathways to positive futures. One interpretation was that youth workers should change their perspective from filling gaps or deficits in the lives of young people who are disadvantaged (a remedial focus) to building assets and creating positive experiences that serve as a protective factor against risk for all young people (a preventive focus). The PYD mantra became "problem free is not fully prepared" (Pittman, 2000). This does not mean that efforts do not continue to target at-risk, delinquent, and disadvantaged youth; however,

the recent push around workforce development has mostly occurred within the domain of OST and afterschool education, and to some extent child and youth care (CYC).

Finally, there is a distinct focus on defining youth work by what it aims to achieve. The underlying theory of change posits that youth work enhances the acquisition of personal and social assets, which leads to positive development, wellbeing and future success. Thus, *“A youth worker is an individual who works with or on behalf of youth to facilitate their personal, social, and educational development and enable them to gain a voice, influence, and place in society as they make the transition from dependence to independence”* (Stone, Garza & Borden, 2006). What is missing is how we achieve these aims. For instance, in New Zealand, a youth worker is a person who fosters well-being by providing a service to build relationships (Barwick, 2006). Batsleer (2008) describes youth work in the United Kingdom as a practice that “is about making and developing a sense of meaning with young people, based on increasing commitment to searching out truthful information and understandings” (p.7). In the U.S. we have not agreed upon the central tenets of youth work or how we are to engage in the work (yet, we have taken the easier task of defining the when and the where). To some, this is cause for confusion; for others, youth work should remain many things. There is agreement that youth workers are key to ensuring positive outcomes for children and youth, and so it is in the development of the workforce where some convergence is found.

Building the Workforce

There are two facets to workforce development for youth workers in the U.S. The first facet can be described as Workforce Studies; the second, of which, there are three types, can be described as Workforce Initiatives. Workforce Initiatives include Competencies (developing competency frameworks as benchmarks to guide professional development activities), Credentials (designing assessments for competencies to be evidenced through a credentialing process), and Curricula (training and education of youth workers that occurs both within and outside of institutions of higher education). Here I focus on Workforce Studies and examine how knowing about the workforce helps us design a multi-prong strategy for improving retention, quality and impact {see Fusco, forthcoming, for further discussion on workforce trends and initiatives}.

Some view workforce studies as the first step in building the profession or in professionalizing the field of youth work. The goal is to create a stable and prepared workforce through understanding who youth workers are and what they aim to do (Yohalem & Pittman, 2006). “Because many staff are transitional employees, understanding the characteristics of those who stay may be important for preserving continuity within a program and for seeking employees committed and skilled in youth development practices” (Fusco, 2003, p.12). To date there are about eight workforce studies (see Yohalem & Pittman, 2006 for a review through 2006; Hartje, et al. 2008). Thus far, the findings point to two levels of information: Worker Characteristics (demographics, aspirations, education, competencies) and Organizational Support (professional development, mentoring, promotion opportunities, career ladders).

Due to the inconsistency in job titles, conducting research on the workforce requires going beyond job titles to understanding job responsibilities (Kane & Peter, 2004). For instance, Fusco (2003) found 75 different job titles being used to describe frontline staff; “youth worker” was the least employed. However, when staff is asked to identify primary responsibilities there is more consistency across organizations. The focus here then is on those who work directly with children/youth during nonschool hours, design activities and curricula, and may have supervisory capacity for volunteer staff.

Findings

Regarding the Worker Characteristics of frontline staff, the results across studies are strikingly similar. In the Cornerstone for Kids report (2006) findings were presented from a survey of 1,053 youth workers from eight mostly urban communities serving low-income communities. Consistent with other workforce studies (Fusco, 2003; Hartje, Evans, Killian, & Brown, 2008), they found that youth workers are predominantly:

- Female – seven out of ten;
- Bimodal in Age – half are under age 30, and half are above age 30; 13 percent are 21 or younger. There is also a bimodal pattern of entry: those who enter young and leave and those who enter in their 40s and 50s and stay.
- Ethnically Diverse – African American (59 percent); 27 percent of workers are white, and seven percent are Hispanic/Latino;
- Educated – 60-75% have a two-year college degree or higher; 52-55% have a four-year degree or higher;
- Satisfied – 80-85% report high levels of job satisfaction; and
- Committed – Up to 75% intend on remaining in the field.

This data provides a snapshot of the workforce. However, it does not help us to identify which groups are more likely to stay or leave the field. The typical timeframe for remaining in a youth work organization is under three years, unless one moves into a supervisory role such as that of program coordinator, specialist, or director (Fusco, 2003). Given the dearth of such positions, many (about 2/3) will move on. We do not know who stays or why. We know from workforce studies in other human service areas that married workers are more likely to stay in an organization longer than single workers (Conner et al, 2003) A study in the field of early childhood found that health insurance, disability insurance, and a pension plan, but not salary, were all associated with staff's intent on remaining in the field; yet, education was inversely related. Those with associate's degree or less reported wanting to stay in the field longer than those with college credits in early childhood (Holochwost, DeMott, Buell, Yannetta, & Amsden, 2009). Obviously, the goal is not to wed workers or keep them away from institutions of higher education. Rather, it is to understand through more sophisticated models how marital or educational status intersects with other internal and external factors to predict attrition and then to put into place an infrastructure that provides a talented and diverse workforce with the organizational resources that support and complement their life goals and enables to them to remain in the field able to eke out a respectable living.

Looking at the interrelation among some of these demographic variables reveals richer findings. For instance, there is a relationship between years of education, race and gender. Youth workers who hold two or more years of post-secondary education are more likely to be white and female than those who do not hold degrees (Cornerstone for Kids, 2006). What we don't know is the attrition/retention rates across various demographic and worker characteristics. If the pattern in the early childhood field holds for youth work, we might expect that those with more education are more likely to leave for higher paying positions. In this case, that means it would largely be the white-female worker who leaves for alternative employment opportunities. Though these patterns have not been tested directly, one wonders about the impact on youth and programs of the in-and-out of the white-female worker. What were the intentions upon entering the field? Is youth work a stop along the way? What is occurring for the non-white/non-female worker? How do we improve access to higher education for diverse populations of youth workers? In urban communities, it is to be seen as mixed fortune that staff most similar in demographic to the youth with whom they work will not find their way to college but may stay in their positions. Retention of whom and at what cost is a valid question to pursue at this point.

Understanding worker characteristics is one dimension of the staff retention problem. Characteristics of the person are contextualized by characteristics of the environment in which they work. Some workforce studies help us examine retention in relation to organizational factors. The Annie E. Casey Foundation commissioned the report, *The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform: The Condition of the Frontline Human Services Workforce (2003)*. The report documented heavy workloads, long hours, low pay, and high burnout and turnover. The average salary for youth workers is \$25,000 per year or \$9.00 – \$11.00 per hour, leaving 53% of part time and 27% of full time employees holding second jobs (Cornerstone for Kids, 2006). An increase in wages then would seem to provide the simplest fix for attrition. In the field of early childhood, salary increases is most strongly correlated with decreased staff turnover among frontline staff (Connor et al., 2003). However, it would seem that youth workers do not go into the work for the money. This

might mean that at least for some, they do not leave because of lack of money. In fact, pay rates and “making a difference” are almost equal motivators to remain in the field. What becomes critical to embrace organizationally, in addition to fair wages, is helping ensure that youth workers are making the difference they came to make. The Casey report documents that “very satisfied workers are much more likely to get the feedback they need and less likely to say that improved management would most help the profession” (p.31).

Feedback might serve as one indicator of Organizational Support. Hartje et al. (2008) showed that feedback is among a cluster of variables that accounts for intent to remain in the field. Among the cluster was: job-related training, self-competency, opportunities to participate in work-related decision-making, help from co-workers in learning job-related skills, and the belief they can relate to the life experiences of the youth with whom they work. Retention then can be impacted by staff development, mentoring, peer support, performance reviews and other modes of feedback. However, again it is also important to deepen our models of understanding. It might be a mistake to assume that this level of organizational support alone will increase retention for all staff. A recently married youth worker with a newborn child might be motivated to make a difference in his community but familial responsibilities might lead him to pursuing full-time work with health benefits and daycare. The variables that go into vocational decisions are complex, dynamic and personal.

Next Steps

Workforce studies are important because they raise our awareness of who goes into youth work, who finds full-time employment and can eke out a career (and who does not), and what incentives might help to retain staff, both extrinsic as well as intrinsic. The findings to date are revealing. However, gaps are also noticed. First, as a field moves closer to professionalization, workforce studies often draw upon a supply-and-demand framework to look at the sheer number of youth workers in relation to the number of children/youth needing services, the demographic similarity or disparity to the client population, and the preparedness of the workforce. This has not been attempted but may prove useful in advocating for advancing youth work in the future.

Second, while workforce studies are informative, we have not developed sophisticated models of understanding patterns of attrition and retention. Reasons for staying and leaving are not necessarily one in the same. The next wave of Workforce Studies might aim to understand how intrinsic factors such as intent, aspirations, and job satisfaction are weighed in relation to salary and benefits, family context and responsibilities, organizational factors, and capacity to make a difference. We might look to existing models that predict career decisions and mobility based on human agency and self-efficacy (e.g., Solberg, Brown, Good, Fischer, & Nord, 1995). In addition to quantitative analyses, future studies might help us to capture the rich narratives of youth workers who move in and out of the field. A recent evaluation of a group of youth workers who entered a college Certificate Program for Child and Youth Workers revealed some fascinating narratives and shows how in this case, Kevin, locates his vocational identity from his own early experiences volunteering (Fusco, 2009).

As we sit down to talk Kevin describes that he has worked for over ten years in the field of youth development, a fact that seems almost impossible, as I would have placed him in his early teens ten years ago. When I ask him for more details of his early work, he identifies that his community service in the field started when he was twelve when he began working as a volunteer to help organize programs at a local New York City Parks and Recreation playground. One eccentricity of the NYC Park and Rec is that the Parks Commissioner issues nicknames to all employees, nicknames that are intended to be used in all parks communication, over walkie-talkies and the like. At the age of twelve, Kevin was recognized with his own a Park and Rec nickname “Hoopster”, a point of pride as he still likes to use the nickname to this day. As we continue to talk, Kevin describes over ten years of service, working in the field of youth development and community activism, including his first paid position in the Youth Employment Department at the Police Athletic League at age fourteen.

Fieldnotes, 02/25/09

We also need to consider retention in relation to larger systemic supports and challenges, not just the environment in which practitioners work but the world(s) in which they (and the young people) live. Research in residential treatment centers shows that organizational and public valuing of the employee is a strong predictor of retention. One consistent finding of the existing workforce studies is that youth workers feel invisible and want recognition for the work they do. Further, burnout in many human services fields comes not only from the invisibility of the work but from feeling one cannot impact the larger system in which children and youth are served. Colton and Roberts (2007) ask how scant therapeutic help impacts on staff who are aiming to make a difference with the adolescents in their care. By extension one can ask, what are the broader systemic factors that stand as continued obstacles to effective youth work and that create a sense of helplessness against an ineffective and uncaring system? One issue voiced by many youth workers is how some schools and teachers negate the work done outside of school through an uncaring narrative. As a recent youth worker articulated,

One of the reasons I decided to pursue a career in the non-profit youth development field as opposed to the traditional educational route of becoming a teacher is so that I could use [a variety of] methods to best help my students. With all of the strict guidelines and standards teachers must follow, education has lost its ability to see students as individuals.
Class paper, Fall 2008

How do youth workers navigate the tensions in institutions and systems that counter their own understanding of effective youth work practice? Such queries would provide some new insights and help shape policies in support of retention, quality and impact that might mean looking at inter-institutional collaborations. Important not to be missed are the youth workers who persist with their calling against all odds. There is a comparable body of work in education that studies “star” teachers, or those who are successful with students regardless of the system in which they work (Haberman, 2004). Haberman’s work shows that it is the capacity to build relationships with students that is the best predictor of teacher retention. All else equal, this pattern is likely to extend to youth work. I would argue that it is within relationship that one can measure their success; it is in relationship that one will stay to make the difference they came to make. Retention then may be a complex interweave of worker characteristics and more intentional organizational supports that aim to improve the relational capacity of youth workers.

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YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS: AN INVESTIGATION OF YOUTH WORK, AS A PROCESS OF INFORMAL LEARNING, IN FORMAL SETTINGS

Dr. Tony Morgan, Community youth work, University of Ulster

Abstract

This paper is based on the findings of research carried out for the Department of Education for Northern Ireland by Morgan et al (2007) into the role of youth work in schools. Expectations are changing about the nature of learning for those young people perceived as either marginalised or disengaged within the formal educational sector. For many years youth workers have been involved directly or indirectly with schools in terms of delivering programmes that complement and supplement the curriculum. As young people become disengaged the 'added-value' of this type of work needs to be given increased recognition.

Some schools view inputs from youth workers as complementing the curriculum leading to increased participation and educational attainment. Other schools view the input as supplementing aspects of the curriculum, which they feel can be delivered more effectively by 'experts' from the community, for example, alcohol or substance misuse.

For those interested in informal youth work approaches to learning, this paper offers a valuable insight into two disparate but related worlds. Young people who are disengaged from learning can be re-engaged through more subtle and youth work orientated approaches using group work and relationship building as fundamental 'corner-stone' principles. Youth workers and teachers, together, can increase the learning potential of the disengaged by developing partnerships outside the school, with family, the community and other providers. Youth workers can make demands on the school as a conduit between the family and community on behalf of young people and by increasing their understanding of 'expected outcomes' from their interventions.

While the research findings are positive in terms of the relationship between the two worlds engaged in the development of marginalised youth there are unintended consequences for the youth work profession when youth workers enter the domain of the formal school system. For example, the nature of 'relationships' with young people; issues associated with measuring outcomes; the changing role of the youth worker; the power relationship between young people and adults in the context of the school; short-term interventions; issues associated with 'time' and 'timetabling' and the nature of personal and social development in a school setting. However, there is no doubt, as evidenced by Morgan et al (2007) that new practice involving informal approaches to learning, through youth work in schools, has something to offer young people in terms of maximising their learning potential.

Background

The fundamental focus of this research was on the interface between informal learning and formal settings. Recent 'experiments' involving youth workers working with those young people who are having difficulty 'fitting' into the education system, suggests that this 'informal' approach to learning has a role in 'education'. Research by Harland, Morgan and Muldoon (2005), recommended that there should be further research and discussion about the role, value, purpose and intended outcomes of youth work in schools. The research further suggested that there was tension between informal and formal approaches to learning, assessment and personal development and that this factor should be taken into consideration when planning and delivering youth work in the school environment. Early discussion was deemed important to determine the precise role and function of the youth worker and subsequent programming in the context of a formal educational establishment. Harland et al (2005), go on to say that the unique role of the youth worker and the voluntary nature of a young person's participation should not be compromised when working in co-operation with other professions.

Additionally the concept of 'measurement' within youth work, while problematic in itself, is equally difficult to assess within a formal context as it is assumed that learning outcomes for youth work is the same as the prescribed school outcomes. The concept of 'soft outcomes', often linked to

informal education, are an important aspect of the learning process for many 'marginalised' young people but are deemed to have little or no currency in the formal credential school system. The concept of assessment, while crucial in itself, may need to be complementary with examinations or awards as espoused by the educational system in order for informal learning processes to have currency in the formal sector. A process that indeed raises concerns for informal youth work processes, as youth workers' become part of mainstream educational assessment outputs.

Certain schools, in the research, are now considered to be domains that facilitate not only the 'academic' development of young people but, other less obvious aspects of their lives, for example, social and personal development. This paper investigates how youth work and youth workers navigate a way through the schools system and end with an emerging model of practice developed by youth workers in the NEELB.

The paper raises further issue about whether there is a strategic movement or a 'drift' within youth work towards working with young people in places not normally accessed, i.e. the school. The research findings generated many pertinent questions but none more interesting than; What aspects of youth work should take place in schools and what are the 'unintended consequences' for professional youth work principles and practices when youth workers enter the domain of the school?

One question asked by youth workers (Harland et al 2005) is whether it is necessary to measure the outcomes from youth work per se, or indeed, can they be measured in a meaningful way that calibrates with those of the formal education system? While there may be new forms of practice emerging in youth work that 'give some ground for optimism', to this question, Smith (2005:4) states that,

"The Service of youth, however much politicians have asserted to the contrary, has never been an integral part of the publicly provided system of education, and never can be as long as its operation is limited to the leisure hours of youth."

A comment that youth workers should work with youth only in their leisure time, i.e. outside school. Smith (2005:4) states that due to the more powerful demands from schools, at a time of financial cutbacks, it may leave those youth workers, involved in schools, on the margins leading to it drifting apart from schools.

While there is recognition of 'some fascinating developments' of school based-work, that were not documented, the general conclusion was that there was a movement away from school-based youth work to youth workers working with schools. Current thinking may suggest that there needs to be a reassessment of the role of youth work in schools more so for the youth work profession than for the teaching profession. The latter appears to be the recipient of most of the benefits rather than the former, although it could be argued that the beneficiaries of close collaboration between these professions should be young people.

Understanding the nature of relationships

Irrespective of the theoretical and ideological discussion about informal, non-formal and formal learning contexts it is important to have some form of underpinning youth work model from which to measure or gauge the impact of youth work in schools. The research was interesting because it forced the researchers to understand various models of youth work that could be assessed in the context of a school leading to the question, 'Youth workers into schools to do what'? Brendtro et al (1983) offer a useful model. They present a template for understanding practice through the development of six tenets for working with youth at risk.

1. The relationship is primary;
2. Assessment is ecological;
3. Behaviour is holistic;
4. Teaching is humanistic;
5. Crisis is opportunity;
6. Practice is pragmatic.

The researchers decided to explore and analyse the significance of the first tenet, i.e. relationship is primary, and in order to understand how and in what way it was strengthened or weakened in a school setting. The other tenets, while theoretically interesting and insightful, in terms of offering an analytical framework, could be considered at a later date. For the purpose of this article the first tenet is sufficient to suggest that there are tensions between the two professions. Most youth workers agree that they need to build a relationship with young people before they can carry out any effective interventions. Brendtro et al (1983) state,

“The quality of human relationships is the most powerful determination of successful programmes for the education and treatment of troubled children; methodology is less important than relationships.”

If we agree that relationship building is important for work with vulnerable at risk young people we have to agree on the nature of this relationship. One question that might be asked is whether youth workers build a different relationship with young people than teachers? If the answer is yes then youth work in schools may be assumed to be different from teaching in terms of the nature of ‘the’ relationship between youth workers and young people, and teachers and young people. If we accept that there may be different relationships at play in the context of school then the practice of youth work may be compromised in a school setting.

Rogers (2003:37) suggests that it is ‘hopelessly unrealistic’ to believe that teachers can relate as persons to their students. He says,

“...I have heard scientists at leading schools of science and scholars in leading Universities arguing that it is absurd to try to encourage all students to be creative, we need hosts of mediocre technicians and workers, and if a few creative scientists and artists and leaders emerge, that will be enough.”

Is this perspective of Rogers an attempt to view schooling more realistically than idealistically? Rogers (2003:37) further refers to the use of interpersonal relationships as a means of releasing potential, a principle that is central to youth work practice. He says,

“...unless we give strong positive attention to the human interpersonal side of our educational dilemma, our civilisation is on its way down the drain.”

While we might think that Rogers is being too sceptical about educational potential he has a simple message, there has to be a move from away ‘teaching’ to ‘learning’ and the conditions that facilitate learning. He suggests (2003:38) that one of the most important ingredients (in the learning process) is,

“...the attitudinal quality of the interpersonal relationship between facilitator and learner.”

Rogers is alluding to the ‘teacher’ as a facilitator of learning. He is reiterating what was previously stated, that there needs to be a move away from teaching a ‘subject-led’ curriculum to a ‘student-centred’ learning curriculum.

It should be noted that while Rogers (2003) takes most of his conceptual thinking from the ‘counselling world’ it resonates with youth work practice and training. For example, Rogers (2003:38) describes appropriate conditions for effective ‘teaching’ as a transparent realness in the

facilitator (teacher/youth worker... author's italics); a willingness to be a person and to be and live the feelings and thoughts of the moment. He says emphatically,

“When the realness includes a prizing, caring, a trust and respect for the learner, the climate for learning is enhanced.”

These views are central to the principles of youth work, raising a question about whether they are evidenced in the school setting or does the need for a certain ‘type’ of relationship, prized by youth workers, become somewhat diminished in the context of a school? Suffice to say that the need to build a relationship between the adult (youth worker/teacher) and the young person is not optional.

Measuring outcomes

Nowadays, especially in youth work, the notion of educational objectives seems to have been replaced by the concept of ‘outcomes’ suggesting that if youth workers enter the school system they will not only have to achieve certain outcomes but that those outcomes need to be understood in terms familiar with the formal education system. Offering ‘soft’ or ‘fuzzy’ outcomes appears to cause difficulty for youth work practice in schools. There seems to be a significant level of discussion centring on the extent to which outcomes, especially those associated with informal youth work can actually be measured or observed.

For Field (2003:209) educational establishments have started to use the language of markets and competition. He says that this has created negative unintended consequences,

“Thus output-related funding, rather than improving performances of service-delivery agencies such as colleges (youth service... the author's italics), has often distorted their behaviour.”

Could youth work in schools be following a funding agenda representative of a dominant language relating to markets and competition, such as outputs, outcomes, value for money, competition etc? Field believes so, and offers a word of warning,

“Rather than pursuing the aims originally envisaged by those who drew up the approved list of eligible outputs, organisational managers often seek to improve their share of resources by focussing on reported achievement against the key indicators, or reclassifying existing activities in order to meet new funding criteria and downplaying other (unmeasured or less generously rewarded) core activities.”

Field (2003:210) suggests that the ‘fuzzy’ nature of soft outcomes creates problems if they are used by Government to achieve certain political objectives. This is important to youth work in that many of the outcomes, such as, raising self-esteem, increasing young people’s confidence, building relationships, challenging values and beliefs etc., are all soft outcomes. Field continues by saying that it is unlikely to be one that Ministers or civil servants feel confident in their capacity to develop clear criteria for judging success (or failure). Field’s work, while focussing on lifelong learning, has some resonance with youth work, particularly in schools. Youth work is based on outcomes that are often termed ‘soft’ and difficult to measure. Governments will fund programmes that can offer transparency, measurable outcomes and quantifiable outputs. Field states that governments will only offer small amounts of finance partly because of the difficulties they face in establishing whether the results offer value for money. One might ask if youth work in schools is a more tangible way for youth workers to measure their outcomes and outputs, i.e. in terms of those young people gaining qualifications and/or awards? For Field (2003:211) intangible factors invariably present policy makers with measurement problems. He says that pursuing soft objectives through partnerships with non-governmental actors also lays government open to the charge of throwing money away (2003:211). Youth workers in schools are therefore, de facto, sucked into the perceived outcomes that are recognised in formal education for a variety of reasons. First, they are understood as measurements of outputs, e.g. examination results. Secondly the difficulty with the concept of measurement that is characteristic of informal education creates difficulty for youth work practice and practitioners, at least at a level

commensurate or at least equal to formal qualifications. Youth work is perceived to be about 'soft' outcomes while schools offer 'hard' outcomes. When these two worlds come together the dominant paradigm is the schools system based on formal qualification-led outcomes.

For Lloyd and O'Sullivan (2003) hard outcomes then are the clearly definable and quantifiable results that show the progress an individual has made. In contrast, soft outcomes are those that represent intermediary stages on the way to achieving a hard outcome. This is not dissimilar to the concept of 'outcome indicator', a term which is normally attributed to non-measurable behaviours that can, however, be observed and which can 'indicate' that change is taking place. Critical to both types of 'outcome', however, is the need to monitor and track key aspects of the work being undertaken in order to lay claim to the actual and attributable outcomes of it. To make such a claim, the same information must be collected at least twice over a period of time and the results compared (Carrington, 2002:26).

Youth workers therefore going into the school system and buying into the perceived measurable outcome of qualifications, either directly related to their intervention [teaching accredited personal and social development programmes] or indirectly [working with disengaged young people to enhanced qualifications gained] is an enticing carrot for youth workers. The work in schools was legitimising their role and enhancing their standing while at the same time complementing the formal curriculum through achieving measurable outcomes, albeit within the domain of the formal education sector.

Challenging to the voluntary principle

For some practitioners in the research the question they were asking was, *"Is what we are doing in schools... youth work?"*

One area of concern was the 'watering down' of the voluntary principle attached to youth work. Some youth workers (see discussion in Young People Now (YPN) 23/07/03 by Crossley) have asked, *"Is there too much emphasis on 'voluntariness' in youth work?"* Some believe that they compromise this principle when working in schools. Crossley (YPN 2003) asks, *... 'ultimately does anyone have a choice that isn't limited by the environment in which they find themselves'?* Others felt more strongly with one commentator saying that she would make it compulsory for some young people to come into contact with youth workers for their own development. She states (YPN. 2003),

"I'd go even further, and say that I believe strongly we should become a statutory organisation, with more regulation and training for new youth workers."

Is she alluding to possibility of 'forcing' some young people into youth work!!

This may mean a differentiation of the concept of the voluntary principle between and within the context of the school and youth sector. The need to differentiate between settings suggests that there may be concerns about the power relationship between young people, teachers and youth workers. Voluntariness and effective partnerships, at least with most disadvantaged young people, are not mutually exclusive and the 'compulsion' to attend some programmes does not, it could be argued, prevent them (young people) from deriving considerable satisfaction from the learning experiences and activities on offer. If young people are not given the opportunity to avail of youth work in schools, irrespective of the imposition of this activity or not, they are in fact not being allowed to exercise 'any' choice. Youth workers may need to be trusted with the interpretation of the principle of voluntariness while working in contexts not totally conducive to youth work practice.

Summary of findings

The findings suggest that for youth workers and young people the need to build relationships are primary. This means that without building a meaningful relationship the full learning potential cannot be achieved or that the potential is somehow minimised. The findings clearly show that youth workers see the development of this relationship as paramount and the findings indicate that young people place a strong value on the need to build a working relationship. Some schools were

aware of this concept by organising a residential to help build and develop the relationship between students and teaching staff before the school year began. This was a clear indicator that these schools understand the importance of building relationships between pupils and teachers before meaningful dialogue and learning can take place.

Some young people knew the youth workers before they came into the school due to their affiliation with the local youth club. This meant that a relationship was already established with some of the young people. A few youth workers felt that this gave them some form of 'street-cred' over teachers. Other workers felt that as they knew the young people beforehand it created a sort of continuity between what was going on in the youth club and what was happening in the school. Some youth workers acted as advocates on behalf of young people because of their more personalised knowledge; one worker stating that they had a more holistic understanding of the strengths of young people not always obvious in a school setting.

There is no doubt that youth work in schools is based on a more informal approach to learning and that, in most instances, that process is educational. Whether we see education in terms of measurable outcomes such as examinations or in terms of personal and social development is debatable. The point is that youth workers see their role, through the manufacture of situations that challenge behaviour and offer contexts for growth, as educational. The mechanisms used to achieve these goals are often group work or issue based. Some of the schools in the research project used issue based work to complement the curriculum while others used individual work to supplement the needs of the school, for example, when behaviour was an issue. However all the youth workers or informal educators used learning processes that were not directly subject-led and therefore, de facto, informal or non-formal.

The research findings indicate that school Principals and youth workers saw a value in using youth workers in the school setting. Youth workers like the idea of a captive audience and easy access to young people who may never attend a youth club or other statutory provision. They also like the prescribed use of a curriculum (as long as it is not too inflexible) and they like the timing of the youth work intervention, i.e. during the day. The schools use the youth workers to supplement or complement what it is they do especially in areas where they feel they lack expertise, for example, drugs awareness, bullying or suicide prevention. However there appears to be little, if any, strategic thinking about the nature of this work and how it is prioritised other than what is local, for example, the use of a local joy/death riding groups that go into schools to discuss the implications of stealing cars in one area of Belfast.

Some schools use outdoor pursuits to engage with disengaged young people. This form of group development, while initially aimed at the physical development, can evolve into group sessions about self-awareness and peer support. It is an example of youth work in school being more than a counselling service for young people and is in keeping with the philosophy of 'creating opportunities' for youth development often found outside in youth centres. However, the research indicates that normally the youth worker in the school is classroom based dealing with personal and social issues and does not have many opportunities to create outside activities. Some schools have included youth workers on residential so that this method of engagement, through relationship building, can be enhanced. This is an area worth further exploration if the two professions are to work more closely.

One very strong point emerging from the research was the need, mainly from a youth worker's perspective, of building credibility, not only with young people but with the teachers and senior staff in some schools. This meant that youth workers had to be proactive in terms of preplanning the management of a project before beginning their work in schools. For example, they met with senior management discussing at length the needs of the young people, the youth workers and the school. As timetabling is important in the school this pre-planned stage was vital for the smooth running of projects. Additionally it was clear that 'early' timetabling was necessary for most schools as they work on a yearly cycle and need advance warning if time slots are needed. When an early working relationship and trust was achieved, entrance into the school and an understanding of what was going to take place, was unambiguous.

In terms of the power relationship between youth work and teaching the research findings appear to suggest, although more research may be needed, that youth workers 'go-into-the formal' system. This means that the dominant paradigm is the formal school system with the Principal having the final say about what happens in the school. The credibility of the youth worker appears to revolve around them being able to 'sell' their product to the school in terms that both fit the 'school system' and that complements the ethos of the school. Understanding 'time' and 'timetabling' and how this is managed in a school setting is an important factor in building credibility between the two professions and one area that is worth considering if youth work is to become a more equitable partner.

The findings indicate that when accreditation is associated with youth work interventions the schools find them more valuable, for example, courses that have GCSE equivalences. This makes it easier to sell to young people, parents and employers because they offer accredited outcomes. However the research points to problems associated with those young people who are experiencing literacy difficulties as they struggle to perform academically in some of the personal and social development programmes. Other schools are not particularly interested in accredited programmes and in fact some programmes, such as, Lads and Dads may indeed be difficult to accredit.

The findings highlight the difficulty faced by youth work in an audit culture when outcomes need to be stated and measured. Youth work needs to decide on what it can and cannot measure and if these courses/programmes/interventions are best suited to the school setting.

Being able to offer courses that have accreditation says Field (2003) allows governments and departments to spend money knowing that there is an element of accountability through understandable outcomes, such as qualifications that are equivalent to GCSEs. The findings indicate that prescribed accredited courses are clearly useful in the school setting as they offer comparable outcomes to that of the school system. Other interventions like personal development, counselling or helping projects, drugs awareness, anti-bullying, sex education, anti-joy/death riding etc etc... while necessary and interesting are nevertheless more non-formal in nature. Youth workers may need to engage in a debate around what aspects of youth work they feel do not need to be accredited.

Youth workers view their work in schools as primarily about personal development linked to young peoples' needs. The youth work 'curriculum' tends to be learning-led and encourages young people to start from 'where they are at' in order to understand the issues that have an effect on their education and future, often around issues that can in some cases be created by the school, their peers, family, community and, of course, the self. The learning is personal and challenging and engages young people in reflective exploration of issues that are real to them. This is juxtaposed to the subject-led curriculum that appears at times to be unrelated to their present situation. Youth workers understand the need to deal with impediments to development before the learning process can begin. A principle in the learning process that one might say is often missing from traditional teaching. For example, feedback during the focus groups highlighted the importance that young people put on being listened to and positively rewarded for their contributions. There appears to be a lack of coherent thinking about the link between the 'learning' curriculum, in terms of how it is delivered by youth workers, and the 'subject-based' curriculum taught by teachers. The overwhelming evidence in this research is that while young people valued education some aspects did not endear them to learning.

Youth workers appear to have the opportunity to be flexible in their approach to learning, as they have no subject-based curriculum to deliver thus having more time with relationship building and guidance. The research shows that this flexibility is central to youth work but a difficult concept for schools to embrace. The fact that some youth workers can design and deliver their own curriculum suggests a degree of flexibility that teachers do not have. Not only do youth workers have time to develop innovative approaches to learning but they can take more time in the classroom, for example, if a young person needs to off-load some information before moving-on in terms of

personal growth. This flexibility is not on offer to many teachers although it is available to those schools that employ a student support worker. This worker is able to meet young people outside the class for discussion and guidance. Some schools employed individuals to sit alongside young people who were experiencing difficulties so that they could deal with problems as they arose.

The findings further suggest that as youth work becomes more embedded into the life of the school, their work becomes part of the 'timetabled-curriculum'. This means that while the youth workers may have flexibility in their delivery method; the basis of the curriculum, the time for delivery and the number of young people will be dictated by the school.

Flexibility is a central core of youth work practice 'outside' schools as youth workers take their time building relationships, seek support from other agencies, discuss and evaluate young peoples' issues and generally work without the constraints of measurable outcomes. How long this will last if they continue to insert their profession into the school system is difficult to assess. The research findings indicate that the flexibility experienced by youth workers may be eroded as they form closer alliances with schools.

One of the reasons for bringing youth workers into schools is to modify the behaviour of young people. Personal development programmes allow young people to explore their understanding of 'self' and reinterpret their life in the school. Outcomes mentioned by the young people include being able to ask for clarification from teachers, being more confident in the school; feeling they are represented and have a voice; planning action (use of a solution focussed approach) and having realistic goals. Teachers and Principals are under no illusion that some young people have difficulty fitting into the education system and end up leaving school with few if any qualifications. The need to engage this group through programmes that broaden their learning is often driven, though not exclusively, by the need for teachers and schools to have a 'quiet life'. Behavioural issues are sometimes contextually bound resulting in youth workers coming into conflict with some school procedures as they try to redesign the learning environment that impinges on disengaged young people. Behavioural change requires more than youth work interventions and needs a holistic school approach that is inclusive. However, it was heartening to note that in some schools most, if not all, young people wanted to learn and that disruptive behaviour appeared to be a symptom of something else. Youth workers attempt to understand what this 'something else' is and deal with it often, but not exclusively, before the learning process appears to begin.

Evidence also points emphatically to the fact that there was no strategic planning for youth work in schools. The findings show clearly an ad hoc process that relies on the professionalism of youth workers and teachers. It also relies on funding and the goodwill of Principals and senior managers to embrace what is on offer from the Youth Service. Some Principals brought youth workers into schools to expand the learning potential and for a variety of other reasons, e.g. due to falling numbers; behavioural issues; because they were experiencing difficulty with achieving unrealistic goals (league tables based on qualifications) or because of the belief that other aspects of learning could be dealt with via an alternative more informal process. One might ask the question that if a school had a full quota of students and good academic results, would there be the role for youth work? A subsidiary question may be, 'Is youth work in schools primarily for secondary rather than grammar or public schools and are youth workers mainly working with 'difficult' young people?'

One of the interesting aspects to emerge was the diligence with which youth workers evaluated the impact of their projects. While one would not equate these practices with examination outputs they were nevertheless adequate for capturing the essence of what young people experience at the end of each session. For some Principals this indicated both transparency and measurement. For youth workers it was more about genuine evaluation so that they could say with certainty that they achieved their goals. These goals were often set by the young people and revisited regularly. One telling comment from the young people was the importance they attached to a worker 'listening to them'. Evaluation in most instances for youth workers was more non-formal than formal. Tangible outcomes, in terms of awards, were achieved by giving the young people a certificate of attendance.

Conclusions

One of the most insightful aspects of the research was that it is imperative for youth workers to be creative within the school system. Not only do they need to deliver personal and social development programmes they also need to create intervention strategies that calibrate with the ethos of the school thus allowing them to maximise their potential impact on young people in a constrained and constraining environment. For young people this 'different' experience appears to have worked. They appreciated simple procedures such as the youth worker noting their points of view or putting them on the flipchart; acknowledging their input; taking them serious and giving them positive feedback.

The input from youth workers is normally short-term, dealing with 'real' issues that stimulate debate in a setting that is conducive to participation. Youth workers encourage all to participate and will endeavour to 'deliver' the intervention in a certain way, that relates to professional practice and suggests an underpinning value-base around treating all young people equally. Interestingly the absence of the prescribed school curriculum allows the youth worker to be creative and flexible if the group is unsettled. The findings from the young people suggest that they like this approach and identify with many of the processes used thus enhancing not only the learning process but the potential for lifelong learning.

Youth workers 'create' the environment in which they can achieve maximum impact in a school. When this is 'watered down' due to lack of facilities, large groups, prescribed programmes, and other unfavourable variables then the impact of the work may be diminished. It appears that youth workers have basic demands for interventions in schools indicating that there is the potential to develop universal principles for this type of work.

The findings raise other pertinent issues that relate to the process of learning per se. Learning does not only take place in schools. It is obvious from official statistics that the school system, for some young people, is problematic while at the same time we know that if blockages to learning are dealt with individuals have the propensity to achieve. Youth work in schools is a direct challenge to the process of learning for many disengaged young people within the context of the school. The nature of the relationship is paramount but still not accepted by most teachers who are restricted by their need to deliver the curriculum irrespective of the outcomes for disengaged young people. Measuring outcomes, in terms understandable to the formal sector, makes sense for those who apply themselves, while for those who remain disengaged, they are a barrier to learning. For example, some young people may need to be taught using strategies similar to the Steiner model of education. Some interesting concepts in the Steiner model are worth considering, for example the creation of 'unhurried' and 'creative' learning environments and a curriculum that is 'flexible' taking account of the 'whole' child. Marginalised young people need additional support to achieve their full potential. Using standard programmes based on the 'subject-led' curriculum will continue to deliver unqualified and under-educated young people if nothing changes. Youth workers are holding a mirror up to the school system in regards to learning experiences and potential. With the two professions coming together there is a need to look at the dominant paradigm, subject-led education, to see if it can be reshaped, for some young people, into a more learner-led curriculum.

Revisiting the power relationship within education between young people and adults is another prerequisite for learning. Young peoples' rights appear to be an illusion in the education system if we take on board what is expected of them recently, i.e. more A stars, more GCSEs, the additional cost of going to University, if that is even an option for many marginalised youth. This education-driven approach is detrimental to the real learning needs of many marginalised youth. Short-term interventions that mirror changing British Government party policies and politics have resulted in many innovative programmes not having enough time to embed themselves into the lives of young people never mind the school system before they are dropped by subsequent regimes.

Schools are passionate or maybe pragmatic about timetabling everything and youth workers in schools are shoe-horned into this 'structured' approach to learning. Flexibility is central to youth work practice but not normal practice within the school system for reasons controlled by teachers evidenced by the rigid organisation of a school.

Covering the curriculum and getting measurable outcomes in the form of increasing GCSEs and A levels is the definition of success in educational terms. Small bite-size 'expected' outcomes are important for many young people on their learning pathway and although difficult to measure cannot be underestimated in terms of helping many young people stay on a 'learning-trajectory'. It is vital that marginalised young people are not switched off learning in the future.

Youth work is mainly about personal and social development and it can, we would argue, offer the missing ingredient in the school system. Intervention strategies that work for youth workers will also work for teachers. The challenge is to see learning as central to the young person's life and not a subject-led curriculum that feeds the needs of the education system, including Universities, rather than young people. The question is not what youth work can do for schools but what can schools do for young people through their exposure to youth work practice.

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NARRATIVES AND STORIES: AN ACTION RESEARCH TOOL FOR INTER-PROFESSIONAL WORK AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WORK?

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Abstract

This paper explores the use of narratives and stories as multifaceted research and development tools. Through cycles of action research, the author has learned the use of narratives and stories in a range of settings including; inter-professional working and youth development. The paper will outline some of the theoretical roots of narratives, describe the practice that evolved and present the findings of the action research. The paper will conclude with key findings and recommendations for practitioners.

Introduction

The context in which we work with children and young people is ever changing and evolving. The pace and scale of change can be dizzying and disillusioning for youth work practitioners and other professionals. Over the past decade I have worked in various school and youth work settings, as an organisational consultant in a Higher Educational establishment, and now as the leader of research placed in a youth organisation. Across these roles I have experienced the challenge of constant change alongside colleagues, and tried to make sense of these ever changing circumstances. During these times, one tool has stood out as a consistent and amicable companion on this journey: narratives and stories. I have repeatedly adapted and evolved my use and understanding of narratives and stories across a range of roles and contexts. In this paper I will present the theoretical roots of narratives, describe the model I have adopted and then discuss the findings of the action research in two of these distinct contexts.

The two contexts

In the first setting, one of the main obligations laid down in the Children Act (2004), in England, was a clear requirement for all services to work together. This duty contributed to the establishment of Children's Trusts, which provided the focus for the integration of services with professionals from different backgrounds working collaboratively. Professionals were restructured into inter-professional agencies and configured into multi agency teams, which meant they had to simultaneously learn how to work together whilst continuing to deliver services for children and young people. This was problematic for some, as backgrounds, assumptions, working practices and terms and conditions varied. As an educational consultant, I was asked to help new inter-professional teams align so that they could quickly tackle the agenda facing them. McKimm's (2009) model of professional identity was a useful framework for conceptualising what was happening. As these individual professional identities came together there was sometimes dissonance, which may have been due to the 'enculturation' that they had experienced in joining their profession. I searched for a tool to recognise professional differences, to allow these individual boundaries to be transcended. The approach needed to value individuals and their professions and assist them to move to engage in a way that would help create a new enhanced 'multi-professional' identity. Wenger (2006) described the value of single profession communities of practice but in this circumstance the need was for the creation of a new 'multi-professional' community of practice, where they could navigate new forms of practice themselves through action research in situated contexts. This is in keeping with the focus of Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska's (1999) rich text on reflective writing to promote professional development.

In the second operational context, young people in transition from childhood to adulthood face more difficulties than ever before (Margo and Sodha 2007). The family unit is ever changing, they are bombarded with commercial pressures like never before, they face economic difficulties and a

vastly changed labour market, all compounded by a variety of social factors. The transition from living at home to independence may take longer than in the previous generation, yet young people are paradoxically expected to behave in an adult way earlier than ever (Balzagatte 2010). These tensions are difficult to navigate for some. As a 'youth development trainer' I worked with young people in difficulty. I needed a tool to work with them that would work at their level, allow them to process what was going on for them, allow them to share, in a safe way, what was going on and offer them opportunities for positive future actions.

As pressure for resources grows, and as the social world is aligning with business models of targets and performance indicators, there is increasing demand for impact evaluation in all the contexts— adult and youth. As an educational consultant and as a youth development trainer I wanted to develop a way of working that would lend itself to the development process and that would find rich or 'thick' descriptive data rather than the usual 'bolt on' quantitative score sheets. If I was going to evaluate, I wanted to do it in a way that was meaningful for the participants, that would be beneficial for my practice development, and that would give meaningful data on learning and behavioural change (Kirkpatrick 1975).

The key question is could narratives and storytelling provide the mechanism to enhance practice in each of these very different contexts? There were several commonalities across the contexts to which narratives were well suited. First, the professional and youth contexts both involve the mediation of identity from mono to multi professional and from youth to adult. Secondly, the professional and youth contexts were both engaging in situated learning in social contexts (one as a community of practitioners, the other as young people in families and peer groups). Finally, in the professional and youth context, the process of learning was experiential, it was action research itself, empowering the participants to realise and plan for their own development.

Narrative and Story Theory

In this short section I presents a brief overview of the theory of narratives (spoken accounts of a personal experience) and stories (experiences encoded in symbolism, myth, metaphor and magic) as identity forming, as socially constructed and situated learning tools, as forms of experiential learning, and finally as having many other additional benefits.

Throughout the paper I will refer interchangeably to narratives and stories but I recognise that there is less fictional intentionality in a narrative, and ask the reader to be aware of this. I have adopted Gabriel's (2000:239) description of a story as having the following features; "[they have] plots and characters, generating emotions in narrator and audience through a poetic elaboration of symbolic material. This material may be a product of fantasy or experience, including an experience of earlier narratives. Story plots entail conflicts, predicaments, trials, coincidences and crisis that call for choices, decisions, actions and interactions and purposes".

Stories for identity formation

Humans have told stories for centuries, and indeed used them to pass on and reinforce aspects of culture. As individuals we experience stories from childhood. Even if we are not told stories at home, we are exposed to them in school, among peers and colleagues, and from popular culture (i.e. TV and radio). We use stories as 'sense making' tools. Boje (in Simpson 2008:106) describes storytelling as 'the preferred sense making currency of human relationships'. I attribute this to our cultural experiences of stories, as they are 'intrinsic parts of being human' (Macguire 1998:xiv). Individuals use stories to represent and to make sense of who they are. As we read stories we relate to different characters and situations, exploring how they represent who we were, who we are, and who we might be. The stories that we choose to read tell us something about who we are. As McAdams (1993:11) beautifully puts it: "If you want to know me, then you must know my story, for my story defines who I am".

Gabriel (2000:120) highlighted that cultural stories can be purposive; "Individual stories may be attempts to proselytise, neutralise and bolster organisational control". This conception of stories as

political tools is supported by the early work of Vladimir Propp (1984:14) who thought folklore was the genre of the oppressed classes, and could be a tool to understand oppression and suffering. This highlights the use of stories to describe organisational cultures and norms, and to expose tacit rules. As such, narratives are growing in credence in leadership literature, as Denning (2007: xv) writes, “storytelling already plays a huge role in the world of organisations and business and politics today” and there are a growing number of workshops, tools, and books on the use of narratives, stories and metaphors available today.

The stories we listen to, create and tell can generate change. “People live stories, and in their telling of them, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Constructions of experience are always on the move. Stories, when well crafted, are spurs to the imagination, and through our imaginative participation in the created worlds, empathetic forms of understanding are advanced” (Koch 1998:1183). Stories are not fixed; they are developmental and can be changed. Changing the events or ending in a story can metaphorically open new ways of thinking and new possibilities to individuals and groups, helping to create personal and professional development by further understanding of self and circumstances.

Bettelheim (1976) first wrote of the developmental scope of enchanted stories for children; “the fairy tale speaks softly and subtly to the child, promoting psychological growth and adaptation, the fairy tale encourages the child to face the world with confidence and hope.” Stories thus legitimise early childhood emotions and experiences (understanding feelings of hatred towards our own mother as hatred and fear of the evil stepmother for example). This links to early work by Freud on the metaphors that the unconscious mind uses to represent unresolved issues – a starting point for psychoanalysis. Transactional analysis (TA) holds that at an early age we develop a life story or ‘script’ (Steiner 1974) that we then endeavour to live out – this may explain some of our repetitive life patterns. Life scripts are used by, therapeutic, developmental and organisational TA to surface the unconscious ‘script’ that is being lived out to enable awareness and autonomy (Berne 1976). On the basis of this individuals or organizations might choose to ‘re-parent’ themselves, re-writing a new ending to the story. Youth workers and young people can share these life scripts to build dialogical relationships, which create organic learning, which can alter the pre-determined path. This is the power of the methodology that is described here. The opportunity to rewrite endings is supported from a TA perspective by Illsley Clarke & Dawson (1989) and from a narrative inquiry perspective by Clandinin and Connelly (1994:60). This reveals that stories are deeply personal, and; “Just as the tiniest sample from your living body can reveal the DNA of your whole biological person, so a brief, well chosen story can shed light on your entire life history. When you tell a story about an apparently trivial incident, it exposes the entire fabric of your character” (Denning 2007:82). Whilst I do not work ‘therapeutically’ with stories, I am aware and acknowledge that there is therapeutic benefit in working with them alongside the developmental gains – the implications of this is the need for a safe learning environment and careful facilitation of story work.

Stories as socially constructed situated learning

Denning (2005:178) argues that stories are a concrete form of knowledge (contrasted to abstract and tacit understanding) and as such are repositories of situational experience; he claims that cognitive scientists have proved that this is how we encode and make sense of experience. Polkinghorne (in Clandinin and Connelly 1994:15) noticed that stories are the way in which practitioners (in medical settings) make sense of work by sharing both clients' narratives and practice narratives. Story in these contexts do not supplant the analysis of practice but enables new ways of thinking which support ways of articulating change and encouraging innovation (Denning 2005). As a professional tool, stories then yield powerful, shared understandings in the workplace, and for young people, allow problems and dilemmas to be shared in peer groups and families.

Situated learning occurs when the work setting provides an opportunity for co-workers to acquire knowledge through the dynamics of everyday learning and interaction (Lave and Wenger 1991). It is congruent with a socially constructed learning perspective, which is congruent with the informal education approach adopted by many youth workers. An important part of situated learning is the

construction of knowledge within the social and cultural circumstances in which the learning occurs. Wenger (2006) noted that in some situated learning, the learning was explicit and steered by a common interest or passion in developing practice. This (still informal and situated) group of people were termed a community of practice (Boud and Middleton 2003). Narratives are the quicksilver of these communities of practice; both the historical stories and the day to day stories create norms of 'how things are done here', and help practitioners make shared sense of dilemmas and problems in the work context. This socially constructed learning can be, the root for the development of, inter professional education as professionals from different backgrounds come together to create new ways of working.

Stories as experiential learning and action research

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle offers a pedagogical structure that draws from past experiences to inform future situations. As such it is appropriate to enable multi professionals to draw from their past 'mono professional' experiences when moving into their new integrated settings, and appropriate for young people making sense of who they are and who they want to be. The experiential learning cycle is also an important development tool in that it places importance on reflective practice (Moon 1999, Yorke Barr, Sommers, Ghery, and Montie 2006), this reflection in action and on action (Schon 1983 & 1991) is an approach to professional development adopted across the children's and young people's workforce in the UK, and an appropriate approach to lifelong learning for both young people and youth workers. The ability to reflect on past actions and to decide on future actions may provide a more resilient approach to managing risk for children and young people.

Kolb's experiential learning cycle has been contested on a number of levels. Some critics argue that learning is not a linear clear-cut process, and that the cycle is too simplistic and based in western culture (Forrest 2004). Others argue that it is located too strongly in cognitive psychology and that all four stages of the cycle do not have to occur for learning to take place (Webb 1997). Yet again, some question its epistemological base (Miettinen, 2000) and others state that de-contextualising the learning process is to undermine the social constructivist nature of learning (Holman, Parlika and Thorpe 1997). However, in spite of these criticisms, it could be argued that Kolb's model has credence in its enduring use in learning over the past 25 years and has acted as a template on which other models and ideas have developed. For example, the action research cycle (McNiff 1998) bears a resemblance to the learning cycle in its cyclical phases of planning, researching, analyzing and doing something different as a result. As such, engaging professionals or young people in an experiential, or action research process would allow them to identify the current situation, the desired changes that they wanted to make, and the ability to carry out those changes.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a research technique in its own right and Broussine (2008:19) identifies a range of assumptions that underpin the use of all creative research methods (including stories):

- "They provide an appreciation of the rich and multifaceted dimensions of human experience can make an important contribution to our understanding of the social system;
- The creative arts can enhance our capacity to find different expressive forms to inquire into human experience;
- The data that are generated by creative methods often take on metaphorical forms, and metaphor offers insights into organisational experience;
- Collaborative approaches to inquiry are appropriate for the exploration of human experience".

Although, these are compelling advantages for the social researcher; the use of story is not without its critics (see Gabriel 2000). However, when accepted as an auto ethnographic account (Anderson 2006) of an individual's journey, stories can provide genuine insights into personal and collective experiences and understandings.

The purpose and creation of stories are not designed to exactly replicate the nature of reality. Instead, certain parts of the story may be exaggerated or embellished which is a valued part of the research. Denning (2005:181) names this process 'levelling' and 'sharpening'. Broussine (2008:169) holds that the validity of using stories stems from recognising different forms of knowledge from multiple participants which "offers a variety of different methods for accessing dimensions of experiential knowing that are not represented in predominant presentational forms, and they offer processes of sense making for generating new propositional and practical knowing" which is vital for our type of generative practice.

Methodology

Aside from this personal preference, action research has a congruence with the experiential learning process that I used as a framework for the story telling sessions, this meant that I could action research alongside the learners, their experiential learning was a form of action research for them, and I was action researching the meta-process. This link to learning through action research is achieved by integrating 'learning by doing' with deep reflection as action research has always held the promise of an embedded learning process that can simultaneously inform and create change" (Burns 2007:11).

Action research according to O'Leary (2009:139) is "a research strategy that pursues action and knowledge in an integrated fashion through a cyclical and participatory process. In action research process, outcome and application are inextricably linked." She goes (ibid 139) on to state that it is; "grounded in real life problems and situations, generates knowledge in action, enacts change, is participatory – researcher not the expert, works with the researched and is a cyclical process". Burns (2007:12) extends its characteristics stating that: "It treats the diversity of experience and capacities within the local group as an opportunity for the enrichment of the research-action process and the meaning in the inquiry process leads to social action or the construction of new meanings". These key points align with Broussine's (2008:19) claims of narrative inquiry. Action research is valuable in its own right for individual, group and organisational development. In each context I am working with real life problems, seeking to generate knowledge in action and enact change in a participatory manner. The diversity in the groups is a strength, and adds to the socially constructed learning that is possible. In both the youth and inter-professional contexts my intention is for the members to be empowered through personal growth and learning based on the fundamental participative characteristic of action research (Reason and Bradbury (2001:2).

Within this study there were two cycles of action research, each in a different context. In each context I would plan what I would do with the narratives, engage and involve the participants, facilitate their learning with the narratives, and use those narratives as the impact evaluations and as the data to shape the workshop in the next context. This led to 'nested' layers of action learning.

So what did I actually do?

The following model is the final iteration of my use of narratives. It is one that I have found to be transferrable across ages, contexts and purposes. The pedagogical model uses the experiential learning cycle as a structure. The use of story and metaphor allow confidential personal and professional reflection and cognitive and affective processing. Individual reflection on a personal narrative is prompted by, the process of encoding it into a story. This is then given shared meaning through social construction in paired or group work, and the cycle of development scaffolds solution focused thinking.

The sequence is described briefly below;

1. Participants arrive into a magical storytelling room (props/prompts/book covers).
2. Build rapport and establish a safe emotional environment.
3. Introductions and ice breakers.
4. Model story telling as a personal introduction (I tell them a favorite story)

5. Invite them to decode the story – elicit the variety of perceptions.
6. Ask the participants to think (silently) of an example of their current situation (refer to the course aims/ context)
7. Ask them to reflect (silently) which story (broad range) it would be and why. I ask them to reflect on which character they are in the story and who the other characters are and why. I ask them to think through the main events of the story and to consider why they have relevance and meaning for them, and how they feel about those events.
8. At this point they share the story with a peer or small group of colleagues, but do not necessarily expose its link or relevance to real life.
9. Call them back into a plenary session and literally 'walk' through a developmental model (Levin's 1992 Cycle of Development is ideal).
10. Back in pairs or small groups, they reflect on what might be the needs of the central character of the story.
11. After this discussion, they break into individual (silent) reflection again and consider the ending that they would like to happen in the story. They can add anything they like to achieve that – a new character, tool, setting, prop, whatever they like.
12. In pairs they share their new amended stories.
13. They individually reflect on the learning that this may have for them in real life personally and professionally, and they write action points to take back and apply into their context.
14. In a group review they share experiences and realisations to establish common meanings (without going back into the stories).
15. Closing ceremony and departures.

Findings

As an inter-professional tool, I had used the model at the International Consortium of Experiential Learning (ICEL) with professionals from a diverse range of backgrounds, and once in a UK based IPE session with professionals from across the children's and young people's workforce. As I value the narratives, I have reported, with permission, the findings with excerpts of the delegates' stories from the inter-professional session.

The use of the model for IPE had more potential for challenge or resistance as the IPE group of professionals I worked with had more set ideas of 'learning'. Despite my misgivings, the use of the approach showed that the metaphorical level again provided the necessary confidentiality to safely discuss hot topics, *"it was great to be able to talk about what was going on without feeling too exposed"*, and that there was benefit from the insights offered by others, from the socially constructed aspects of learning; *"it was great getting ideas from others as to what to do about the situation, event though they had no idea who the wolf was really!"*. Additionally, in this context there was insight into unconsciously held beliefs and unarticulated understandings about themselves as leaders in integrated services;

"I was surprised that I saw myself as the Pied Piper – all those rats to enchant with my pipe music, maybe I do have the resources to get everyone on board – I don't think that they are all rats by the way!"

"I really feel like cinders – I'm doing all the hard work and having no fun – the ugly sisters are always on my case. When will my fairy godmother arrive...maybe I've got to sort it out for myself...?"

"We were really unsure about this session – storytelling – it nearly had us all booking other meetings as an excuse not to go! I'm so glad I did though. I feel that I understand everyone else so much better now; I have really come to see other people's perspectives and understand some of the dynamics in the team better. We feel much closer and all have actions to take away to move the team forwards. Time well spent!"

In the youth development context, I have found that narratives are great evening activities. They bring down the groups energy from the day's activities and allow experiences to be processed. The sharing of stories is powerful for young people, many of whom, may have missed out on this experience in their childhoods. My first use of story with young people was when a free book, Roald Dahl's 'The Twitts' fell out of a box of cereal in a mountain hut! The young people shared the story telling by torchlight, voluntarily, it was a magical and powerful moment with some disaffected youths. Since then, I have gained the courage to use stories developmentally. I ask for and tell stories in informal opportunities with groups – walking too and from the accommodation blocks for example. Mask making is an activity that also often prompts personal storytelling and that is fondly remembered by the young people; *"I really loved the mask making, we learned so much about each other what we never knew before 'cos we said what the masks meant about us"*. I often help groups to 'story' their development over the duration of a programme. We jointly make a pictorial representation of the journey that they have been on with its ups and downs, and then the young people add a commentary, this gives them the opportunity to doubly reflect on the experience. As one young person said; *"I didn't think that I had done so much, it's just been an awesome week, I've moved on so much, I'm really proud of my journey"*. I ask young people to interpret stories that I tell, developing their sense of multiple perspectives; I ask them what 'story' ending the narrative of their life might have, and I share personal and metaphorical stories with them to deliver key messages in an informal way. I also run the storytelling session outlined and it leads to some profound realisations and changes for the young people, *"I really want to make some changes now that I've realised where I am and what I need! Thanks so much"*, as well as building a sense of bonding. The process and the outcome of storytelling with young people is really powerful.

The experiences of using stories with young people that I relate here are, supported by a delegate from ICEL, who went on to use stories in his youth work. He states that; *"we started to discuss the mouse from my story as a group. This was unexpected, as I had not planned it. This led to some discussion and personal reflection about how each of us could be more like the mouse and what we would need to do to be 'more like the mouse'. It was cool as people started to recognise stuff they needed to work on within themselves. Then the group went as far as recognising how each other were like the mouse and talking about strengths they saw in each other. We played around in positive self-talk and feedback and it was a very positive experience. I recognised that this reflective process was quite experiential as often we become involved particularly during PD in illustrative experiences – using experience to illustrate theory or inform theory. So for me this process actually gives me permission to deal with something like a groups storming process after the dust has settled and help them find some positive meaning. I now see potential for this process to help people tackle a sensitive issue from their past and potentially help them resolve it reprogramming there thinking – you referred to this as rewriting the script."*

The narratives that were told by people across both contexts showed real personal insight, a journey, and a change in personal identity. As such they were themselves the evidence of impact. I use narratives as wholes to demonstrate impact, as they create powerful case studies rather than dissecting them through discourse or content analysis. I have also collated whole groups of stories from cohorts of professionals or young people, and open coded them to show the key characteristics of the groups and of the changes that have occurred for them. In this way, the rich qualitative data can also be used quantitatively, should anyone wish to! Thus, by using a narrative inquiry approach we can use the process of our work as the evidence of the distance travelled by individuals and teams too.

Four themes have emerged out of my use of narratives that I had not conceptualised at the start of the work, disclosure, self-realisation, psychological depth and solution focus. The use of metaphor often gave the individuals (whether professionals or young people) the opportunity to deal with difficult situations confidentially. This opened up subjects that they might not otherwise have discussed – it facilitated disclosure. This in turn then allowed greater learning as more was 'up for grabs'. Self-realisation preceded change. This was of crucial importance, and individuals and groups needed the time to make the self-realisation... 'oh that's what I've been doing!' before they could move on to make any lasting change. The individual realisations led to group realisation. The

more individuals disclosed, the more others did, and the more learning occurred as a result. A positive learning environment and strong enough group rules or group trust was therefore vital, even when working metaphorically.

I found that work at the narrative level can surface unconscious thoughts into consciousness. One professional spontaneously 'encoded' their organisational experience into the story of Cinderella. This surfaced the realisation that unconsciously he felt put upon by the rest of the staff and was treated as a dog's body. This in turn explained his external resentful behaviour, and offered new possibilities in changing his behaviour or tackling the issue. This facilitation experience substantiates Gabriel's (2000:91) view that; "a story can at the same time express the individuals deeply private and personal desires (e.g. for revenge, justice or recognition), a group's shared fantasy (e.g. of salvation or domination of another group), and deeper structural and political realities (e.g. a group's experience of long term exploitation, insecurity, or privilege). Stories carry personal meanings, cultural meaning as well as personal meanings". So there was the voluntary disclosure possible through the protection of metaphor, and also the disclosure of deep psychological thoughts into the conscious mind.

Use of an experiential or action research process alongside the stories allowed change. The uniqueness of stories in facilitating this change is that everyone believes that they can write a new ending to a story. Re-authoring their personal stories gave them the open mindedness and the permission to identify the steps or resources that they might need for a successful ending. This is not always our cultural norm, Gabriel noticed that there were few stories that accentuate the positive in organizations (2000:118), and the power of Appreciative Inquiry as a research approach lies in its deliberate generation of positive organisational stories (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005:57). Boje found stories to be reflexive "in the sense of continuously recreating the past according to the present, interpretations becoming stories in their own right" (Gabriel 2000:19). This supports the claim of Appreciative Inquiry that positive stories are needed to create positive futures, and lends further power to the use of narratives as individual, group and organisational development tools – the more we tell positive stories about ourselves, the more positive a future we will create for ourselves. The experiential use of stories also offers individuals a sustainable approach to lifelong learning and provides a 'narrative map' (White 1987).

How does it create development and change? There are at least four ways in which change occurs that arose from studying the feedback from participants:

- Validation
- Reframing
- Unconscious connect
- 'New'

By validation, I reflect that telling a story and being listened to can be a validating experience, especially in the busy lives of professionals. Having someone listen to, and play back a story ('I heard that...') can validate the listeners' experience. This alone can create therapeutic change. This validation can be transformational, and "Through transforming our negative, painful or chaotic experiences into stories, we take responsibility for them, and we bring ten to bear more constructively on our lives" (Maguire 1998:17).

A story can often reframe the experience that an individual or group has had. It may be reframed by the 'moral' or the story, by the events of the story, or through listening and comparing to others stories. A huge obstacle may seem less significant in the light of others stories or other perspectives. Once reframed, a change can then occur. Narratives allow us to conceptualise something in a new way, adding shades of meaning – a well told metaphorical story about teamwork can help a corporate team identify with how they function, leading to development, and a story with subtle meaning is more palatable than being told you are 'dysfunctional'. Metaphor may reframe experience, and by using metaphor to encode our stories, we can be offered the safety

and distance to share events that would otherwise remain private. This has been my experience of using stories in multi professional settings – it is easier to talk about the difficulties of the prince trying to get to snow white than of the endless hurdles of collaboration. As Broussine (2008:26) states, “metaphor provides a description of something by reference to another object that is different to, but analogous to, the ‘something’ originally described”. This is particularly useful when researching personal and practice experiences as metaphors can operate as an emotional receptor for unconscious feelings.

So, “an appropriately told story had the power to do what rigorous analysis could not, that is to communicate a strange new idea in a meaningful way and to motivate people quickly into enthusiastic action” (Denning 2005:xii).

Conclusions

This paper has reviewed narrative and story theory and presented a pedagogical tool that has been shown to be effective through ongoing action research. The narrative approach outlined was found to be useful in inter-professional settings, in youth development and as an impact evaluation as they offered ‘narrative maps’ (White 1987) showing where people have been and where their next steps are. Narratives are also a form of enquiry themselves. I encourage other practitioners to take up the lead and develop new forms of professional practice and youth development through the combination of narratives and storytelling, exploring the potential and interplay of individual, organisational and societal themes. For my part, I shall next develop a clear epistemological framework to enable me to use narratives and stories as a data collection tool in my PhD on collaborative practice.

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BOOK REVIEW

Title: Understanding the Life Course: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives
Author: *Lorraine Green*
Publisher: Polity Press, Cambridge
Reviewer: *Annette Coburn*

In the introduction to this new and comprehensive text, Green suggests that it is the first of its kind in the UK. Such claims often lead to disappointment but not in this case. In fact I was pleasantly surprised to find that in a single and accessible volume, Green has managed to effectively combine analysis of the essential ideas on life course from sociological and psychological perspectives. As any community youth worker will testify, our work is grounded in understanding how society influences and reinforces discourse, which at the present time takes a largely negative and oppressive view of young people and often brings a detrimental effect on their capacity to participate equally in society. Yet, community youth work is also grounded in understanding of what is happening in the hearts and minds of young people and in how they are able to grow their capacities for human flourishing. Youth work already crosses disciplinary and practice boundaries to engage in critical dialogue with young people. Thus, a single book that explains and examines these different perspectives makes a useful contribution in helping us all to improve our understandings of young people's lives which in turn illuminates the nature of youth work practice and its purpose in challenging contemporary discourses on young people.

I am pleased to say that this book does what it says on the tin. It examines the life course, from cradle to grave, in a way that is both accessible and engaging and so is of interest to community youth workers but also to anyone involved in working with people. It does this in three key areas.

First, chapter's one and three offers introductory insights into how society has changed in recent times and provides a potted history of sociological and psychological thinking. Chapter one provides a useful grounding to discussion in later chapters for anyone who is unfamiliar with these ideas, or who studied them so long ago they have forgotten what they used to know! This chapter covers ideas such as socialisation, globalisation and the social conditions that shape our world. Then, despite its focus on new social studies in 'childhood', chapter three offers a critique of biological, ideological and cultural responses to childhood development which impact on their futures. The chapter unmask historical divisions of power and in particular, calls into question an adultcentric view of society, which views children (and young people) through adult eyes.

Second, the main course for us as youth workers, are the three chapters on young people. These chapters examine concepts such as adolescence, youth and young adulthood as interconnected perspectives on physical, physiological, moral and psycho-social development. The chapters incorporate big ideas of identity formation, powerful hegemonic discourse, youth transitions, family, lifestyle, politics and cultural relationships. Yes, they are all in there! These chapters are a remarkable feat of narrative engineering that brings together a powerful set of ideas that would hold the reader in good stead, not only in helping to understand young people or in constructing arguments for particular practice or policy development but also, in holding one's own in the company of colleagues from different disciplines or ideological perspectives.

Third, the remaining chapters on middle adulthood and old age are also useful in helping us to understand how, for example intergenerational work might be purposeful for both young people and older adults. While the chapter on death, dying, grief and loss, is useful in helping us to understand these aspects of life for all ages. Discussion is not limited to death and dying in later life, and so the chapter offers understandings that will also help us in working with young people who experience death or loss.

Taken together, this leads me to suggest that *Understanding the Life Course* is a new book that would not be out of place on any community youth workers bookshelf. It is a very readable and thought provoking text that does a very comprehensive job in offering important insights into the changing complexities of the life course. Thus, it makes a valuable contribution to informing youth work practice and offers insights on potential areas for future policy development and research. I am sure *Journal of Youth Work* readers will see this as a relevant and enjoyable read.

Notes on Contributors

Dana Fusco, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Teacher Education and Acting Associate Dean of the School of Health and Behavioral Sciences at York College of the City University of New York. As Dean she oversees most of the college's professional education programs including teacher education, community health education, nursing and social work. Throughout her career, she has worked as a practitioner, researcher and evaluator of youth development programs.

Dr. Fusco has published extensively on youth and after school programs both as a practitioner and researcher, examining developmental opportunities and quality program features. She wrote and produced an internationally acclaimed documentary, *When School Is Not Enough*, exploring the role of afterschool programs in the lives of urban youth. Her most recent publications have centered on youth work education such as, *Shared Research Dialogue: One College's Model for the Professional Development of Youth Practitioners*. She holds a doctoral degree in Educational Psychology from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

Dr. Tony Morgan is a lecturer in community youth work at the University of Ulster with responsibility for the postgraduate diploma and Masters in community youth work. He also teaches on the undergraduate programme, which like the postgraduate diploma, is professionally endorsed by the NSETS [North South, of Ireland, Education and Training Standards committee].

He is interested in the role of youth work within divided societies and was instrumental in running a project funded by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in Northern Ireland. The project involved running a series of conferences that included practitioners and academics from Palestine, Israel, South Africa, The Balkans, N. Ireland and USA. The project was a major success culminating with the launch of a book on *Work with Youth in Divided and Contested Societies*, edited by Doug Magnuson and Mike Baizerman [Sense Publications. Rotterdam/Taipei. 2007]. He has also published material on youth resilience, measuring outcomes in youth work, youth work in schools, marginalisation and youth and is currently working on a biographical study with a colleague from South Africa that is investigating violence and youth. His background is primarily in adult education and lifelong learning which calibrates with many youth work concepts and practices. He is also the external examiner for youth work programmes in the South of Ireland, England and Wales. Other interests include quality assurance in youth work and the role of music in youth participation.

Karen Stuart has worked in a variety of educational settings including primary and secondary schools and headship of a private school for Emotionally and Behaviourally Difficult young people. She has significant experience as an outdoor instructor for children, young people and adults, and has experience of youth work as a front line worker, consultant and senior manager.

She has a particular expertise in experiential learning, and is co-chair of the International Consortium of Experiential Learning. Kaz, as she is widely known, currently works for the University of Cumbria, based at Brathay Trust as the Research Leader via a Knowledge Transfer Partnership, where she is helping to embed evaluation into the organisation and carries out a range of bespoke research projects.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The Journal

- Provides a forum for the critical debate of youth issues.
- Seeks to ensure a variety of opinions and perspectives to express the range of policy and research contexts within which youth issues emerge.
- Recognises the centrality of theory and reflective practice to the development of academic and professional understanding.
- Encourages innovative work, which extends beyond conventional approaches to academic writing and presentation.

The Journal seeks papers for publication which:

- Focus on analysis rather than description.
- Consider themes of relevance to youth issues in Scotland, though they may draw upon experiences from elsewhere.
- Are written in a non-discriminatory style.
- concentrate on clarity, avoid unnecessary and unexplained jargon, and use a writing style accessible to an international audience.
- Offer a clear theoretical rationale for the topic.
- Ensure that the work discussed is understandable to a range of academic researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

Contributions are welcome from outside, as well as within, Scotland.

Contributors

The board welcomes contributions in the following items:

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Format

- Articles should be submitted on disk written in Word for Windows (IBM or Apple compatible) together with a hard copy.
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- Figures, tables and acknowledgments should be on separate sheets, with their approximate position indicated in the text margin. Illustrations and graphs should be to 'camera ready' copy standard. Drawings should be in sharp black on white paper.

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Please indent all quotations of fifty words or more and in these cases eliminate quotation marks. In general, use single quotes ('...') with double quotes ("...") for quotations within quotations.

Italic

Please use italic type for the titles of books and periodicals.

Notes and References

Notes and references should normally be given, in alphabetical order by author, at the end of the article. In citing references please use the American Psychological Association (APA) system for books and articles. Bibliographical references in the text should quote the author's name and date of publication as follows (Johnstone, 1999). Articles not submitted in the appropriate format will be returned to the author before being sent to referees.

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Manuscripts for publication may be submitted to any member of the Editorial Board, or directly to the Editors, Annette Coburn or Brian McGinley, Division of Community Education, University of Strathclyde, 76 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow G13 1PP.

All other reviews, articles, policy briefings, think pieces and conversations should be sent to: Brian McGinley, Division of Community Education, University of Strathclyde, 76 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow G13 1PP.