



# 'CADJAN – KIDUHU'

Global Perspectives on Youth Work



Edited by  
**Brian Belton**

*SensePublishers*



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## FOREWORD

When Brian first asked me to write a foreword to this book, I was slightly apprehensive – had I become so removed from youth work practice to be able to do the book justice? It didn't take long to connect back into the breadth of issues and challenges that I have faced and experienced over the years as a volunteer, part-time youth worker, full-time youth worker; youth work trainer, youth officer and service director.

I worked with Brian many years ago in Islington and had the professional privilege to be his youth officer. My overriding memory of Brian was a worker who thought deeply about his work and 'challenged' those around him in relation to what they were looking for and how he could facilitate it. It was a period where 'personal empowerment' of young people was being strongly espoused, but only the most skilled staff could make real. Brian challenged the young people in his project and his approach and thoughts about the work challenged me also and made me a better officer, thinking through far more about what we were trying to achieve and why.

And so to this book; Brian has brought together a set of writings which maintain this approach, connecting with the reader and provoking thought, reflection and challenge, whilst celebrating the contribution of great youth work and youth workers.

The book draws experiences from across the world and is a book for our times. These experiences will resonate with readers describing not just the 'youth work journey' but, critically, the cultural context of the work in different areas. Understanding better the position of young people in different cultural contexts and traditions is essential to delivering services today – the world is a much smaller place with mobility rarely experienced before. Services across the UK are working with a great diversity of cultures, languages and traditions and how we develop services that are young people-focused, understanding both history and current context, is at the heart of what our youth services should be about.

Nearly 30 years ago, I was a specialist youth officer for recruitment and training of black and ethnic minority workers for the ILEA and I can recall my initial well-meaning, but somewhat naïve, approaches to engaging different communities about their perceptions of youth work and how we could encourage young people to consider this as a legitimate career and achieve a 'more representative workforce'. I soon realised both the importance and limitations of working through 'community leaders' and recognised how direct engagement with young people was key to supporting their aspirations. Although good progress was made, the approach would founder today. This book illustrates a variety of political and historical contexts and experiences faced by youth workers and young people and helps to challenge thinking and assumptions, requiring more inclusive approaches and challenging the mainstream to change and adapt. Therefore, the concept of a 'representative workforce' needs refining. Yes, we need a more diverse workforce but the idea that the workforce can accurately reflect the experiences of its

population is not sustainable as a fixed goal. The diversity and mobility of the population requires a diverse workforce able to work effectively and empathetically with any young people that ‘walk through or are outside the door’. Our workers need to represent a diversity of learning and experience rather than a formulaic representation as in previous times – this is now the day job.

The book explores and describes the heart of youth work practice – the nature of relationships and engagement between youth worker and young people and how these develop in the wider social and political context. Youth workers have high community profile but little status in our education hierarchies – all status is hard earned, based on the quality of their relationships and evidence of the difference they make.

So to the evidence, this is described in relation to demonstrating the need for funding but it is not just about that. Our most skilled youth workers have a strong instinct and insight on what makes a difference but they can no longer afford to assert this without evidence – we are in an acutely difficult time financially and need to get wise to the most efficient ways of recording impact. Reference is made to statistics and ‘the numbers game’. Statistics don’t provide answers but they do help to ask questions. We need to combine the qualitative with the quantitative and use this to help make balanced judgements about our work and decisions about priorities and resources. It is just as much about how youth workers decide to use their time as how decisions are made by funders. It is neither a science nor an art but a combination of the two.

This book describes and emphasises the importance of work being directly led by young people. Successfully engaging young people in co-production – planning and delivering services – should be our first reference point when funding youth work, thus breaking traditional funding arrangements, where adult-led organisations that had funding for many years have ‘hung on for dear life’ and are now seeing the world pass them by.

Helping young people to find a voice and engage in the democratic decision-making processes is explored here and these are essential challenges to youth workers and decision makers. Even the most effective of engagement systems has to reflect on whether young people are being ‘incorporated’ in adult decision-making. Providing the ‘facts and figures’; the evidence which points in a clear direction – the ‘Wednesbury Reasonable’ principle that local authorities have to demonstrate when decisions are challenged – can be constructed in ways which make it difficult for young people to disagree with the adult conclusions. Although consensus is no bad thing, sometimes some ‘less logical’ youthful rebellion is needed – it may be less comfortable but provides an edge to decision making – *‘We don’t care about the logic, your statutory duties; the financial implications; the conflicting priorities – we just want good youth provision’*.

This book explores the role of youth worker in ‘supporting learning’ and the attempts to support its legitimacy by describing it as ‘informal education’. But what is the link between what youth workers do and ‘formal education’? Youth workers aren’t on the same ‘firm ground’ as teachers who have the school or classroom with clear institutional structures and norms; a hierarchy of support; a

national curriculum; subject expertise etc. But that firm ground can also limit and stifle so the great teachers work within those structures and bring to the classroom those key characteristics inherent in the best youth work: reflection; discernment; trust; and relationships that enthuse and challenge young people to think laterally, grow intellectually and emotionally. To do this, they need to take risks – things that youth workers have to do to survive any day. So it is as much understanding how ‘formal educators’ can learn from the so-called ‘informal educators’ and how young people have learning opportunities from both. Reference is made to youth workers leaving the profession and moving on to becoming teachers or social workers. Whilst regrettable in some ways, it’s a reflection of the economic realities of pursuing a full-time career in a profession under severe pressure financially. But whichever course youth workers take, the qualities they take with them can only enhance their chosen direction.

This book describes the changing demands on youth workers in times of austerity – are they becoming more ‘agents of the state’ or, indeed, have they always been? This is tricky ground – youth workers do not have the luxury of statutory structures and funding. They have to show resilience and flexibility to move with the ‘prevailing political priorities’ with the knowledge that these change and shift, whilst holding onto the underlying nature of their relationships with young people. This is particularly important as youth work resources are steered more towards targeted youth work. As eloquently described in a number of contexts in the book, we need to shift our thinking about youth workers from working with young people who are ‘the problem’ with deficits, to working with young people who are ‘the future’ with potential – that is the investment required.

So, what is this skill that youth workers bring – is it just a survival tactic or more a ‘*conscious pragmatism*’ that combines their analysis of the social and political context, their core values and making a practical difference in real life situations? The book sets out a huge diversity of work described as youth work but, critically, the underlying characteristics of ‘what holds it together’. Brian provides some very practical definitions and describes those core values in the context of political and economic reality.

This is what Brian brought to his youth work practice – not just ‘academic navel gazing’ ending up in corners of contradiction and unable to move; rather a ‘heads-up, eyes open’ reflective, cerebral and practical understanding of the work, thus enabling young people and those around him to think and choose different paths with confidence.

I recommend this book to challenge you to do the same.

*Thanos Morphitis O.B.E.*

*Director of Strategy and Commissioning for Islington Children’s Services*



BRIAN BELTON

## INTRODUCTION

‘Cadjan’ is a Sinhala word, which refers to palm leaves matted or plaited together to form a thatch or roof of many small dwellings and other buildings in Sri Lanka. This is where ‘Nest’, the charity that will benefit from the royalties of this book, is located (please see details below). ‘Kiduhu’ is the Tamil equivalent. This title for our book was chosen because it exemplifies the nature of the pages that follow. Writers, practitioners and scholars from all over the planet, have put together their ideas, perspectives and hopes for and about work with young people, either in their context or from their context. From this weaving together of relatively heterogeneous elements, the hope is that you, the reader, will get the impression of something of the homogenous whole that youth work might be understood to be. We, like youth work, are no one thing, but collectively, perhaps like youth work internationally, we have a common purpose that connects and joins us. We hope you will identify and perhaps become part of this on or after reading what we have offered.

### CORE RELATION

The point of this book is not to show or say what youth work is. Given the range of voices, approaches, views and functions of the contributors how could we claim that youth work might be one, or any single, consistent or constant something over or between contexts, throughout time? In places we do try to give a general idea of the mutable shape and motivation of practice. For instance, in the first chapter I do offer a ‘place to stand’ (for now, for a moment), but the hope is that this will be developed and altered rather than adhered to in any regimented way; such ossification of youth work would be a contradiction in terms and practice – ours is an evolutionary project – if youth work is anything, unfailingly it is a ‘growth business’. Although it is understandable, if one is confined to any one context, to believe it is or has definitively been this or that fundamentally or primarily. Part of the rationale that has bloomed out of the joint creation of this book is to present different practice and theoretical milieus. This might go some way to promoting the understanding that to lock down youth work in notional stasis, or bolt it into a ‘carceral archipelago’ of a conventional or acceptable trajectory would be the antithesis of practice, which would effectively destroy it as youth work. For all this, not a few writers have effectively touted to achieve just this, or perhaps identified (put a flag in) what they see (or want to be) the ‘core’ of youth work practice.

But youth work isn't an apple. A global and historical perspective of youth work clearly shows it to be a relentlessly developing range of responses to a persistently moving, growing and shifting range of phenomena, issues and directions presented by and to societies and the young people of and in those societies. Here we present a set of responses in the face of and from within that shifting field that can generically be called 'youth work; we do this in this time, from many places and a diversity of identity, but we all identify what we have presented and ourselves professionally and/or academically with what we agree to be youth work.

This said, looking for or trying to cobble together a central theory or fulcrum of practice is a draw; there is security in being able to say 'that is this' – but security is not the goal – curiosity, discovery and learning are chancy pursuits, that's what makes them exciting. The hope for security is an anathema in this adventure. However, there is the illusion of status in being 'at the core'; one can identify oneself as an 'expert', part of an elite or priesthood of sorts, inhabiting the 'inner sanctum' of professional knowledge. One can see this as being attractive to the insecure; the first task of any group that craves protection is to set up a cabal, cult or clique; a freemasonry of 'fellows'. But the cult or closed shop the expert inhabits is a contradiction in terms of intellectual activity and logically also with regard to inclusionary practice.

Some years ago I was speaking at a YMCA conference, part of which was devoted to 'identifying the core' of the movement. I think I upset a few colleagues by pointing out that the identification of an 'included' group (those who are at or in tune with the core) excludes others (if everyone is at the core there is no core of course). I'm not sure how a Christian or an 'association', or any supposedly open or inclusionary faith, discipline or organisation can rationally go about erecting barriers that effectively create a peripheral population or marginal groups (the 'excluded'). One popular response was variations on 'We'll lose all the Christian's'. Well, God moves in mysterious (unexpected) ways (which doesn't feel very secure does it; what'll she do next? God knows!)

When I was a boy my grandmother told me that when she was a girl, as a Gypsy, she and her family were not allowed in the Church when it was full; they were the ones that had to stand outside to listen to the sermons etc. One day, it was pouring with rain and she was soaking. She told me she asked God, 'Why don't they let us in the Church?' She said God replied to her, saying, 'Don't worry about it; they won't let me in either'.

The search for central principles, set in stone, to create a 'community of practice' is redolent of the above. The moment one sets the parameters of a community a distinct group of the included are recognised, but at the same time this identifies those excluded from (not of) that community. The higher the walls, the less permeable the boundaries of any given community, the more difficult it is for people or knowledge of others or the world to get in or out. This is why the more impermeable a community is (the more 'specialist' it becomes) the more it turns into the locale of prejudice and discrimination ('we' are like this, so we are 'in', they are like 'that' so they are 'out'). I would hope we might think of youth work, its development and practice, more in the vein of an idealised incarnation of

the Islamic concept of ‘Ummah’; encompassing the potential of the inclusion of all.

#### ACCIDENTAL INTERNATIONAL PRACTITIONER

What I have found, as an accidental international practitioner, is what makes youth work exciting and dynamic is that belongs to nobody because it belongs to everybody. Youth work is not what one person says it is, youth work is what all youth workers do. I love this about youth work; it is defiant in the face of categorisation – it makes fools of the academically pompous and those who believe in their own power over the shape and direction of general practice. You might not agree with this, this time next year I might not agree with it, but in the words of Eldridge Cleaver, former Head of the International Section of the Black Panther Party, ‘Too much agreement kills the chat’.

It is in the spirit of the above ideas that this book is presented. It was thought important that the editorial hand should pass lightly over the contributions. This allows free play to individual styles in order that particular ideas and descriptions of situations are put over as much as possible (given that most of the material has been written in a second language). We have attempted to bring together a mix of responses from academic enquiry, to musing on the nature of practice and overviews of the development and delivery of youth work; theory, rhetoric, explanation and polemic (amongst other considerations) inhabit the streets and alleyways of this work, as does joy, scepticism and curiosity. Think Brueghel’s ‘Children’s Games’ and/or the ‘Conviviality’ of Illich; his ‘eutrapelia’ (‘graceful playfulness’).

While there has been a subtle attempt to suggest order, the reader looking for continuity of structure might be forearmed in the knowledge that there has been an attempt not to impose a particular regime of presentation. However, while this might, reading individual chapters, appear to be much the same in terms of content, taking the book as a whole one might come to a quite different conclusion. One of the things youth workers find out pretty swiftly at the start of their careers is that people are inherently pattern makers; be there no form, we find an order. This might be understood as the ‘ground floor’ of ‘world making’.

#### CHAPTERS

The book has been divided into three sections; Theory, Organisation and Practice. This division is not definitive, as many of chapters overlap in terms of focus and ideas. However, we have chosen to gather the chapters under these headings for the casual use and convenience of the reader.

The section on ‘Theory’ tends to be made up of material expressing (in the main) outlooks and ideas about practice, consideration of current understanding and delivery but also the potential for development and adaptation of the same.

The material clustered under the heading ‘Organisation’ concentrates on how work is organised in various national and regional environments, its contextual character and direction. However, as you will see from the opening chapter of this

part of the book, to write about context can and does evoke aspects of response similar to those made in the first part of the book.

The final part of the book, 'Practice' leans toward a focus to the experience of face-to-face work. This provides something of a collective voice from the point of delivery of practice, although once more, the reader will gather this is not a total or ridged demarcation. Many, perhaps all of us, would agree that such an ambition, to divorce practice from the development of theory and the context of delivery, is not possible in an intellectual sense or perhaps desirable from any perspective; implementation of practice in the development of theory.

## THEORY

In *Professionalising Youth Work: A Global Perspective – Criteria for Professional Youth Work; Its Principles and Values* Brian Belton provides an overview and development of more than five years work in conjunction of the Commonwealth Youth Programme in the South East Asian context. The task was to define youth work as a professional practice.

The chapter is the product and advancement of debate, deliberation and research in Malaysia, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Most of the conclusions presented by Brian were also informed by responses from the Maldives, India and Pakistan, incorporating views from across youth work and related sectors, calling on hundreds of professionals, volunteers, academics, NGO representatives, state officials and other stake holders. The collaboration resulted in policy developments across the region, and the start of a professional association in Sri Lanka.

Professionalism here is not characterised by salary, personal status or employment. The aim of this collaborative enterprise was to raise the consciousness of the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed to provide best practice, in order to establish youth work standards requisite to particular contexts and to some extent across contexts. Professionalism, in terms of this chapter might be thought of as an ethical and moral imperative, protective of young people, but also a means to raise, maintain and continually improve delivery of services.

The original findings, first framed in 2012, have been reviewed and built on via subsequent experience, new information and the continued sharing of perspectives. Language has thus been adapted; trajectory modified and content reviewed and elaborated on to provide a starting place for thinking about the nature and purpose of youth work over a global horizon. The ambition is not to say 'this is all things to all people' but to offer something to all people, to use, adapt, build on, deploy or reject. It is our starting place, a base camp from which a journey might start.

*Hip Hop is Dead! Youth work in a state of decline?* This is the question Curtis Worrell addresses, highlighting the comparisons between the development and direction of youth work and hip-hop culture. Deploying revealing metaphor, phraseology and descriptive simile, Curtis sets out a position that helps expand on and illuminate the character of a unique youth movement/culture. However, in the process of making his analysis he provides a critical perspective of the past, future

and current youth work, all the time allowing his own practice and client experience to guide and temper his position.

The chapter exposes how the history of youth work is often viewed through a ‘rose-tinted magnifying glass’, that sometimes feels like a sort of reverse crystal ball, looking back to a days when the state was (supposedly) some sort of benign supplier of ‘good things’ for young people for the sake of it (ostensibly being concerned with embedding a largely unelaborated social, group and individual morality). It goes on to provide a reorientation of this illusion, facilitating the reader’s understanding that youth work is not, and has hardly been, since its inception as a national, non-secular service, with codified practice and qualification, undertaken for its own sake or for detached ethical reasons, allied to a cross societal and cultural shared idea of the ‘common good’.

Implicating an aspect of popular culture, which is also for Curtis an abiding interest and a passion (as it is for many youth workers and young people) the work offers both a personal and a social interpretation, so heightening potential and actual insight.

Dana Fusco looks at *The Social Architecture of Youth Work Practice*, articulating the relational space for transformative work with young people, a space that good practitioners seem to know well, more by intuitive action than word. The model builds from the everyday lived experiences of youth workers, and others who work with young people, as well as from intellectual discourses in youth work and youth studies, and its cousin fields around the world. In this chapter, the author asks: *What is the space that youth work practice occupies? How is it created and why? Finally, what are the challenges to creating this social architecture today and what can be done so that transformative spaces with and by young people remain possible?*

Hans Skott-Myhre, *Building a New Common: Youth Work and the Question of Transitional Institutions of Care*, argues that the youth work is a field of endeavour founded on care. The question of how to care, who receives care, how to deliver care, and what is care, however, is neither simple nor uncontested. For many, if not most of us, caring and care are synonymous. However, caring about someone and caring for him or her are not necessarily directly related. Both the affective relation of caring for someone and the practices associated with that sense of caring are both quite complicated.

In youth work, both the feeling of caring and the practices associated with and generated by such feelings are often conceived of as acts and affects centered within and between individuals. That is to say that I, as an individual feel a sense of caring within myself for another individual and, on the basis of those feelings, interact with the other in a caring manner.

Brian Belton in *Compassion and the ‘Colonial Mentality’* states that:

The worst thing about youth facilities is that they are ‘youth’ facilities. As a youth, the last place I or anyone I knew wanted to go was a place designed for ‘youth’.

He goes on to ask how much room there is to make what there is for youth what youth want, arguing that it is not surprising that as a society, with the colonisation era being historically a comparatively recent period, wherein most of our institutions (education, health, law etc) were formed, the echo of the culture of colonisation and its controlling ethos continues to resonate; we are quite used to other people setting our social agenda. Within this atmosphere over recent years there has been an on-going discussion across what are broadly referred to as the 'caring professions' about the place of compassion in practice, but at what point does compassion become a form of patronisation; is there something colonial about the ambition to 'share suffering' (the meaning of the word 'compassion')?

In this chapter Brian echoes the position of Richard Sennett (2003) questioning what he sees as degrading forms of compassion that effectively undermine respect for those in need. He argues that mutual respect can create connections across the potential segregations of inequality that are made more profound by effectively seeing some people as relatively pitiful, reliant on the bountiful compassion of those of us who imagine ourselves to be deep wells of this unconditional sentiment.

#### ORGANISATION

*Leadership Training for Youth: A Response to Youth Rebellion?* by Harini Amarasuriya examines youth involvement and state responses to three armed insurrections and looks at the way in which the involvement of youth in these uprisings shaped state-led youth development and youth work initiatives.

Hanrini argues that the conceptualisation of 'youth problems' has facilitated an approach to working with young people that locates the source of these 'difficulties' in the personalities and characters of young people, while dismissing and ignoring many of the structural problems of contemporary Sri Lankan society.

For Hanrini this approach glosses over the many structural inequalities in Sri Lankan society, which have affected the life chances and aspirations of youth, while emphasising individual vulnerabilities (it is a perspective that blindly assumes deficit). The reader might question how much the 'rehabilitation' of troublesome youth in Sri Lanka mirrors western responses to young people in terms of ambitions to train, initiate change and educate (for instance, how much might the ethos and purpose of the three week long 'Leadership Attitude and Positive Thinking Development Training' in Sri Lanka resemble the likes of the National Citizenship Service (NCS) in the English context?).

This chapter exemplifies how youth work and forms of so called 'non-formal' education can be made to serve the purposes of indoctrination and control. It demonstrates how youth work can be used in attempts to pacify and disempower young people by way of deficit models, responding to understandable reactions and behaviour as if it were unreasoned. In the process this deflects attention away from social issues, defining social unrest as the consequence of a psychological malaise, so effectively justifying programmes of 'treatment' for youth, rather than addressing the social causes of rebellion and collective anguish in the face of state injustice.

In *Current Issues in Youth Work Training in the Major English-Speaking Countries*, Jennifer Brooker puts forward the idea that in essence contemporary youth work today is the same the world over; we work with young people, sometimes during very difficult times in their lives, helping them to become the best versions of who they are. Providing guidance and support in the form of activities, challenges and/or opportunities, in both formal and informal settings, youth workers work within the space where young people find themselves, whether through design or circumstance.

Historically social intervention with young people outside the school context was either educationally or fitness focused. It was provided by well-meaning, untrained individuals or Christian-based organisations such as the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Brigades from the first half of the Nineteenth Century onwards. Formal pre-service training for youth workers began during the Second World War in the United Kingdom and Australia in response to world events. However it was initiated by two very different sectors of the community, education in the United Kingdom and sport and recreation in Australia. In Canada and the United States youth work began within the social welfare system after World War Two, based on a Therapeutic Care model, similar, yet different, to that of Europe at the time.

Today youth work has morphed considerably from the work with young people of almost two hundred years ago. The targeted approach is built around two predominant frameworks in operation globally: positive youth development and therapeutic care. The only consistency to be found in training is its primary focus – training workers to work with young people.

Training and current global frameworks for youth work are not universal and as a result youth workers, who perhaps ought to be able to travel the world to work in their chosen field wherever they find themselves, are usually not recognised as such unless they are in their homeland of training.

This chapter will compare pre-service training for youth workers in various national contexts, looking at the similarities and differences. Jen also considers the impact of this situation on practitioners.

In *Youth Policies in the Nordic Countries*, Helena Helve presents the ‘Nordic model’, comparing and contrasting the youth policies of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and three areas with home rule; the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands.

Although there are differences in culture, politics and language, the Nordic countries have many ties based on common history. Close to a quarter of a century after the fall of the Soviet Union (1991) the Nordic countries have also built up close connections to Baltic countries Latvia, Lithuania and especially Estonia.

Nordic Youth cooperation is discussed, including Nordic youth policy and youth research organisations. Helena argues that the Nordic youth policy cooperation in future should create the conditions that are able to reflect the differences and similarities in the development of Nordic countries and strengthen and connect youth across the Nordic borders, promoting cross-national cooperation in education, employment, social entrepreneurship and political participation.

*The Development and Implementation of Youth Policy in Malta*, by Miriam Teuma tells how up until the 1990s, there was no youth policy in Malta although there were education policies, health policies and other related policies that impacted on and influenced the lives of young people.

Prior to the development of distinct youth policy in the 1990s youth work in Malta was almost exclusively the province of the Catholic Church and its voluntary organisations, such as the Society of Christian Doctrine, Catholic Action and the Salesians, together with the British presence, which included organisations such as the Malta Scout Association. However, this tended to be at once paternalistic and directional. It was to a large extent premised on what was deemed ‘character forming’ in light of Christian morals and mores.

In this chapter Miriam provides an insight into the development of a youth service, the will and organisation that has provided a service contextualised by a modern state in the context of the European Union.

Emina Bužinkić’s *Brief on Youth in Contemporary Croatian Society* makes the point that sociologically and politically speaking, Croatian youth have a history of being caught up in political, social and economic crisis, conflict and transitions that need to be understood and considered in terms of the supply and delivery of youth work. The legacy of this experience is deep social trauma and insecurity. This presents challenges to young people and has a range of effects on the quality of everyday life. Croatian society since its independence has been obliged to deal with huge social differences, economic instability and lack of opportunities and prospects for young people. Emina looks at the development and potential future of youth work from this background.

#### PRACTICE

Indra Kerha, referring directly to her practice experience, presents a critical deconstruction of some of the assumptions, practice ethics and aims that hold back our work in terms its professional profile and purpose. In *Demanding Lives, Difficult Paths* she confronts the clumsy dichotomies inherent in the contradictory tasks practice at times presents us with. Subtly questioning deficit/colonial models of practice, Indra challenges the over-reliance of reflection as the ‘royal road’ to developing our response to the challenges and joys of our work. This will of course not win everybody over, particularly those stuck in the groove of the reflection mantras that ring around our work. However her enquiry and spirit of disputation stays true to the best traditions of the best of youth work as well as the professional commitment to scrutinise practice.

Turning the tables in the ‘change’ debate, Indra looks at our own need to change (respond) to the various and changing needs of your clients. She leads the reader to question, whether in the last analysis it is a moot point how much anyone can change the position or predisposition of another person; sometimes professionals succeed in getting people to look as if they have changed, but as Indra indicates, there is no way of knowing if what we perceived to be change is in fact an

alteration in personal trajectory, an act, or a figment of our own imagination secured by our need to see what we wish to see.

Indra helps the reader to understand that it is likely that the only change we can be close to being sure of, or might be in control of, are the changes we make in our own approach, attitudes and responses. This is probably as true for our clients as it is for ourselves. But perhaps it is only our egos that allow us to believe that the root of change in others lies in our activity.

*Pilgrim. Barnaul, Russia* is a short reflection on the nature and impact of practice on both youth workers and young people. Sofya Gileva reflects on how informal learning, through creative activity, small group work, and the provision of testing situations can ignite debate and discussion, that can amount to life enhancing/changing experiences. She relates to how the sharing feelings and the values of things of importance can be a means to understanding of the self and others.

*The German YMCA in Tension between Institutionalisation and Movement*, written by Günter Lücking reflects on how the traditions of a particular realm of youth work can underpin but also retard development of practice and delivery. He ponders how we can draw on past practice and meld the best of this with the wants and needs of contemporary youth to provide appropriate and fulfilling services.

Anna Mirga writes about *Youth Engagement in the Gitano Associative movement in Catalonia and Emerging "Youthscapes"*. According to Anna, ethnic mobilisation is a process in which groups organise around aspects of ethnic identity for collective reasons. This differs from political mobilisation in that it invokes elements of ethnic identity, but shares much the same processes which become vehicles conveying representation and collective action.

For Anna, the organisations of civil society (especially as NGOs) have taken much of the initiative for the ethnic mobilisation of Roma/Gitano communities. This means of effecting Roma rights can be seen as failure of political integration of Roma/Gitano representatives in formal politics but can also be understood through the deliberative democracy discourse and the means for strengthening of democratic functioning of the State.

The political representation through NGOs rather than through mainstream politics, as a form of civic participation, has become common not only among the Gitano population but the wider Spanish society. The role of young people has been significant and as such they have been recognised as a major force in social movements.

Following these considerations this chapter looks at how these developments might translate into the reality of the Gitano ethnic mobilisation, and more specifically questions the role of Gitano young people in the ethnic mobilisation.

#### NEST SRI LANKA

As stated above, any proceeds from this book will be donated to Nest, Sri Lanka. In 1984 Sally Hulugalle started Nest with a friend, Kamini de Soysa.

Nest works to strengthen families and individuals to cope when a crisis occurs so that their kith and kin may remain in their home and not be abandoned to institutionalisation. The organisation also trains Health Workers to live and work within the community. This work started after Sally and Kamini visited the long stay unit of the mental hospital Mulleriyawa where they found over a thousand women virtually incarcerated for life, and subject to enormous suffering.

### *The Aims and Objectives of Nest*

- To promote happiness (in families, individuals and the environment).
- To lift the yoke of labelling, institutionalisation and stigmatisation.
- To promote understanding in the areas of mental health and wellbeing.
- To promote justice and freedom.
- To help women, children, families and individuals to cope within their communities.
- To encourage development in public services and the environment.

Nest relies on public, individual and programme funding/donations to do the work of the organisation. It is non-profit making and does not charge for its services.

Nest promotes the wellbeing of those who are marginalised for reasons such as being considered mentally ill or infected with the HIV virus. Nest uncompromisingly supports and champions the rights of those who are victimised, including women and children and others vulnerable to abuse or exploitation.

### *Training*

Community Health Workers take part in an on-going training programme at the Gladys School of Community Health Work and Development, which is situated adjacent to Kåre House (Gampaha District). All trainees receive free accommodation, transport and food on duty. Trainees are posted to different parts of Sri Lanka where Nest works.

### *The Nest Community Health Centre*

The Ududumbara (Kandy district) and Kåre House Centres are run in such a way that families and individuals can stay overnight for specialist clinics and appointments. Community members can drop in at any time. Education for Health is promoted through information and discussions; Workshops on Mental Health and HIV and AIDS issues; Awareness Programmes; Library; classes on basic livelihood skills and Computers; Home and Organic Gardening; First Aid; Language and Cookery classes are available. Nest Centres are like any other house on the road and Community Health Workers live and work from them. They travel by foot, motorcycle, trishaw and public Bus. A playgroup for children under five years of age is provided.

*Promotion of Well Being*

Nest gives priority to the promotion of mental wellbeing and one of the principal means of achieving it is by its facilitation of the return of those institutionalised to their homes and communities, and working to minimise the stigma attached to such illnesses.

Another feature special to Nest is that it does not go to a community with a plan already drawn up. Nest approaches the community with an open mind and has a framework inspired by its mission statement within which it will operate;

- To enable individuals to establish necessary community links in order to access services and support.
- To strengthen local services in order to strengthen communities' coping systems.
- To influence national and local policy in order to ensure that communities are provided with effective and respectful services.

The Gladys School of Community Health Work and Development was born of a desire to extend the frontiers of community work and development, including the much neglected aspect of improving mental wellbeing.

You can find out more about (and make a further donation to) Nest on <http://www.nestsrilanka.org/>



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Harini Amarasuriya** is currently a senior lecturer at the Department of Social Studies, Open University of Sri Lanka. She completed her PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Edinburgh. Her dissertation work explored the nexus between the state, development policy and practice within the bureaucracy in Sri Lanka. She is active in the development sector as a researcher and practitioner and worked for several years as a child protection and psychosocial practitioner prior to joining the Open University, Sri Lanka.

Harini's research interests include children and youth issues, globalisation and development, micro-politics and the state. Her recent publications include: *NGOs, The State and 'Cultural Values: Imagining the Global in Sri Lanka*, (2012) with Jonathan Spencer, *Early Marriage and Statutory Rape in Selected Districts in Sri Lanka*, (2012) with Savitri Goonesekere, *Discrimination and Social Exclusion of Youth in Sri Lanka*, 2010 and *Why Aren't We Empowered Yet? Assumptions and Silences Surrounding Women, Gender and Development in Sri Lanka* (2010) with Asha Abeyssekera.

**Brian Belton** PhD comes from an East London Gypsy family and entered youth work in the early 1970s docklands area where he was born and brought up. While working in youth work related situations around the world, including Israel, the Falkland Islands, Germany, the USA, Thailand, Hong Kong, Zambia, South Africa, China and Canada, Brian's interest in identity and ethnicity flourished and today he is an activist and researcher of Roma issues in Europe and an internationally recognised authority on Gypsy Ethnicity, having written widely on that subject, delivering papers most recently in the USA, Austria, Greece, Sweden and Slovenia as well as around the UK. In 2013 he started a three-year research programme focusing on the social exclusion of Roma with partners in Spain, Germany and Turkey.

Currently, a Senior Lecture at the YMCA George Williams College, traditionally one of the biggest trainers of youth and community workers in the UK, Brian has just completed involvement with developing professional practice in youth work across South Asia (working in situ in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Malaysia). He recently organised and delivered youth work training in Iceland, which drew participants from 15 European countries (speaking 13 different languages). At the time of writing he is involved in developing partnerships developing detached and outreach youth work with practitioners in Holland, Romania, England and Malta.

Having written close to 80 books and numerous articles and learned papers, spoken regularly at conferences, on radio and TV, throughout the UK and beyond, Brian is a recognised and respected academic and writer in the field of professional youth and community work and informal education.

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**Jennifer Brooker** (MYHEM, MEd, ND) has been an educator for almost 30 years, working in various communities throughout Australia and around the world, at all levels of education. Currently the Youth Work Coordinator at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, Melbourne, she is the time of writing undertaking research focused around improving youth work training in Australia, the focus of her PhD study, which is a comparative and historic study of youth work in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. This will be extended to mapping youth work training offered around the world and the creation of an international youth work passport.

Jen coordinates various youth work qualifications for both student and industry groups. She has also been involved in various youth projects around the world with numerous partners.

**Emina Bužinskić.** Emina lives and works in Zagreb, Croatia and occasionally in Morocco. She is employed at ‘Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past’ as a Programme Coordinator. She is also coordinator of activities related to the advocacy of reparations of civilian war victims and monitoring of war crime trials.

Since 2002 Emina has been involved in the work of the Croatian Youth Network, formally as President and Secretary General. She is Project Co-ordinator at the Centre for Peace Studies. For the last eight years she has been participating in the work of the Governmental Council for the Civil Society Development and the Governmental Youth Council. She is a member of the National Committee for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education. Over the last three years Emina has been a member of the Council of the President of the Republic of Croatia for Social Justice.

Active in the field of human rights, Emina has been engaged in advocating civic education and also implementing training for young people in peace building and dealing with the past and human rights issues and is Director of the Educational Programme Youth Studies in Croatia. Her many publications include *Dealing with the Past – Handbook for Civil Society Organisations* and *Civilian War Victims in Croatia*.

Emina has MA in Political Science (public policy, management and development) from the University of Zagreb and has completed a number of non-formal educational programmes such as Peace Studies and the Academy for Political Development as well as vocational education in the study of Arabic language and political culture of North African countries.

**Dana Fusco** is a professor at the City University of New York, York College (Jamaica, NY, USA). She has over 20 years of experience in the fields of youth work and education. For the past several years, her focus has been on professional education and building the discipline of youth work.

In 2012–2013, Dana served as the Howland Endowed Chair at the University of Minnesota where she studied youth work education. She has authored dozens of articles on youth work and the recent volume, *Advancing Youth Work: Current Trends, Critical Question*. Dana has worked with young people in a variety of

school and community settings, and continues to practice youth work in the contexts in which she lives, works, and plays. You can follow Dana on Twitter (@YouthWorkAdv) or on Facebook (AdvancingYouthWork).

**Sofya Gileva:** YMCA. The ‘alma mater’. An autobiographical essay would be simply boring, so I decided to tell you about the highlight of my life. The YMCA. I got acquainted with YMCA five years ago, when I got to work in the YMCA camp, which is situated in my native city. Everything was different to what I was used to before – people were different, the way they talked, argued, explained, lived, even smiled. It was strangely attractive, because the atmosphere they built around them was inviting and worth living in. The main thing what appealed to me was that they cared. By then I have seen a lot of indifference in my life.

Then I got to know what YMCA was. It is the ‘Young Man’s Christian Association’, which started in 1844. Christian might have sounded weird to my atheistic ear, but I did not care. At the beginning it was hard to understand what the YMCA does and how it functions, because I was overloaded with history. The first summer with YMCA brought me to a very important meeting held in Barnaul. There I was told one defining phrase, which I have been using for five years to tell what YMCA is about:

YMCA is aimed at making the world a better place. Locally it does what the community needs, doing camps or planting corn, either one is necessary and helps people to improve their life.

No more is needed to tell about the activity of the YMCA.

My first travelling experience started in 2010. I went to Germany for Youth Workers Teen Camp. The tears come to my eyes when I am thinking about it. To my mind, no one outside the YMCA could ever experience atmosphere like this. That is when I understood the value of the ‘C word’ (‘Christian’) in YMCA. It is when you understand that means we are all brothers and sisters, it is when you see people say the Lord’s Prayer simultaneously in more than 10 different languages and you are thrilled, it is when people you have never known before are happy to see you, it is when you get to know people from different countries and when you see them again in two, three, four years – it feels like family. And most importantly it is when you understand you can change the world.

After that, I took a leave from the Y and went to live in Germany for a year. It was an unforgettable experience, but let us come back to my YMCA story. Later on, I started travelling even more; I have been to three events in half a year – I have been to Germany, Czech Republic, Iceland and Poland, and I can say that what I am involved in is a huge diverse movement, one which aims for the empowerment of young people, who can make the world a better place. For the first time in my life I felt empowered, I felt like I can make a difference, I felt like I can do something significant.

The YMCA is my “alma mater”, my university gave me academic knowledge, but the YMCA gave me experience, cleared out my vision, taught me values, and filled me with ambitions, because it has been giving me opportunities and space to

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grow. Looking back I am proud to say I learned loads; I am a changed person; I am, every day, a better person than I was yesterday. I am self-developing every hour of my life; I am the change YMCA wants to see in people. And after all, it is essential that I continue this change. My train has gained speed and it ain't halting, I am on top of my life, making a change every day and every hour. I am 22. Can you imagine what's coming in the future?

**Helena Helve** PhD is Professor Emerita from the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Tampere University and Adjunct Professor of Sociology and Comparative Religion at Helsinki University, Finland. She has been professor for the M.A. European Youth Studies Curriculum Development Project (2009–2011) and the Nordic Youth Research Coordinator (1998–2003), Vice president of EASR (2000–2007), President of the ISA RC 34 Youth Sociology (2002–2006) and President of the Finnish Youth Research Society (1992–2005).

Helena has directed several international and national research projects. Her publications include: *Social Inclusion of Youth on the Margins of Society: Policy Review of Research Results* (with D. Kutsar, 2012); and coedited books *Youth and Work Transitions in Changing Landscapes* (with K. Evans, 2013); *Youth and Social Capital* (with J. Bynner, 2007) and *Contemporary Youth Research: Local Expressions and Global Connections* (with G. Holm, 2005).

**Indra Khara** was born in 1984 in West London to a Panjabi human rights activist and an Australian hippy. She began her career in youth work in 2005 as a volunteer with New Horizon Youth Centre in Kings Cross, London and went on to work as a Housing Support Officer with young mothers. Additionally, she facilitated music production and DJ workshops at numerous youth clubs and later secured a job with Raw Sounds where she worked with young people and adults experiencing mental health problems.

Indra conducted music sessions within in-patient settings, including acute, intensive care, early intervention and medium secure forensic units, as well as various recording studios throughout London. In 2012, she graduated with first-class honours in BA Youth & Community Development at Canterbury (YMCA George Williams College). It was here that she was inspired by key thinkers such as Fanon, Foucault and R.D. Laing who furthered her understanding of the oppressive dynamics prevalent in the psychiatric field.

She is currently manager at Raw Sounds, mother to a young son, and is completing her MSc in Mental Health Research and Population Studies at the Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College. Whilst she is critical of research methods that are reductionist and disempowering to survivors of psychiatry, she hopes to conduct effective, collaborative and meaningful user-led research with young people experiencing psychosis.

**Günter Lücking** was born in 1955. He is married to Monika, they have three grown up children. Günter studied Youth and Community Work at the YMCA College Kassel. He completed a study with Gep Frankfurt in public relations and

communication management/consultancy. He has worked with local YMCA executive staff at Portsmouth, Waiblingen and Bünde and was the TEN SING professional in the CVJM-Westbund region from 1994 to 2004.

Since 2005 Günter is CVJM-Bundessekretär/YMCA-secretary for the regions of Ostwestfalen-Lippe, Bentheim and Münsterland. He has been active in the programme of the European YMCA and TEN SING Festivals over the last 20 years. Among others he has launched the European YMCA Youth worker camps.

**Anna Mirga** is PhD candidate in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB, Spain). She holds an MA in European Integration from UAB and an MA in Comparative Studies of Civilizations from the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (UJ, Poland).

Anna is a Roma rights activist, co-founder of the Roma Educational Association “Harangos” (Poland) and the Roma Youth Association “Ternikalo XXI” (Spain). Both organisations are associated to the European Roma Youth Network ‘TernYpe’. She is co-author of the recently published study ‘Lost in Action? Evaluating the six years of the Comprehensive Plan for the Gitano Population in Catalonia’, coordinated by the Federation of Roma Associations in Catalonia (FAGIC) and EMIGRA Research Group (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain) and financed by the Open Society Foundations.

Currently Anna is an Open Society Foundations Roma Initiatives Fellow, conducting a comparative study of Roma associative movements in various countries of Latin America and Europe.

**Thanos Morphitis** was born and brought up in the London Borough of Islington where he went to school and attended local play and youth centres. He started volunteering in his early teens and started part-time play centre work at 16. He studied Social Policy and Administration at university, going on to become a qualified youth worker, working in the voluntary sector for 10 years. This led on to a series of posts within the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) as Specialist Youth Officer for Recruitment and Training of Black and Ethnic Minority Youth Workers and then as Deputy Senior Youth Officer for Islington, before moving on to the role of Assistant Chief Education Officer for the Borough following the abolition of the ILEA in 1990.

Thanos leads on the financial strategy and commissioning for schools; early years services; health services for children; play and youth services; services for disabled children; CAMHS; youth safety and crime; and family and parenting support in the London Borough Islington. He plays a lead role in the children’s trust, chairing several of borough-wide strategy boards and leading a number of strategic reviews. Prior to this Thanos was Assistant Director for CEA@Islington, the Council’s education partner, taking responsibility for strategy and service delivery across a wide range of services including special educational needs, school admissions and exclusions together with responsibility for special schools, Pupil Referral Units and oversight of a number of mainstream schools in the borough. Previously, he was Deputy Director of Education (also in Islington) and

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

in addition to the above responsibilities, led on the establishment of one of the first fully integrated Early Years Services nationally. Currently he is Director of Strategy and Commissioning for Islington Children's Services. Thanos was awarded an OBE in 2014 for services to children and families.

**Miriam Teuma** has an M.Ed in Educational Leadership from the University of Sheffield and been a lecturer in Youth and Community Studies at the University of Malta for the past ten years. She is a founding member and President of the Maltese Association of Youth Workers.

Miriam has extensive experience at European Union, Council of Europe and international level on youth related issues and is a member of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ). She is also a board member of ERYICA (European Youth Information and Counselling Agency). She has worked with the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, SALTO and the EurMed Youth Platform.

In December 2010, Miriam was appointed as the first Chief Executive of Agenzija Zghazagh, the National Youth Agency of Malta. As Chief Executive she has implemented a range of initiatives including a youth information and counselling service and an extensive youth empowerment programme as well as youth training centres, youth cafes and youth hubs.

**Hans Skott-Myhre** is an associate professor in the Child and Youth Studies Department at Brock University. He is cross-appointed to the graduate programme in Popular Culture as well as being core faculty for the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Humanities and adjunct faculty in the Child and Youth Care programme at the University of Victoria.

Hans spent twenty-five years as a youth worker and family therapist working primarily with runaway and homeless youth before retiring into academia. His research interests include radical and political approaches to youth/adult relations, subcultures, critical disability studies and anti-psychiatry, post-capitalist subjectivity, post-Marxist politics, undoing whiteness, and political readings of popular culture.

He is the author of *Youth Subcultures as Creative Force: Creating New Spaces for Radical Youth Work* and co-author with Chris Richardson of *Habitus of the Hood* as well as co-author with Kiaras Gharabaghi and Mark Krueger of the forthcoming book *With Children*.

**Curtis Worrell** was raised in a small town in the South of England on a council estate by his Bajan mother.

Whilst attending school, Curtis was placed in an Inclusion Unit due to his unacceptable behaviour. This was located on the same site as a youth centre called Junction 6. It was this place that gave him his first experience of youth work and he began attending the youth club to use their music studio facilities. Whilst attending, Curtis began to engage in services, and was able to be part of trips to Africa,

exploring Edinburgh and social engagements that most young people from council estates did not have the opportunity to access.

Drifting away from the youth club as he got older, Curtis struggled to find a job or a course that satisfied him until a family friend suggested he got in touch with his youth worker from Junction 6. Curtis went to meet his previous worker at the youth club and whilst waiting for her to become available, he met some young people there. Curtis was then invited to attend a post-session discussion with the youth workers and some of the young people.

It was from this visit back to Junction 6 that Curtis began volunteering his services and pursuing a career working with young people. Whilst employed with Junction 6, Curtis embarked on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) training. He realised that his inquisitive nature could enhance his studies and decided to qualify as a professional youth worker. At the time of writing he is now close to gaining his professional degree in this field.

Curtis is the product of youth work, having interviewed his first line manager as a young person back when he was 13-years-old. He is passionate about working with young people.



# THEORY



BRIAN BELTON

## **PROFESSIONALIZING YOUTH WORK: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

*Criteria for Professional Youth Work; Its Principles and Values*

*This chapter is a development of work that first appeared under the auspices of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Youth Programme Asia Centre (India) in 2012. This was a mid-point of a project, working together with colleagues in India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to develop professional practice in these contexts and begin the process of building professional associations for youth workers.*

*What follows reflects the joint learning at the conclusion of the project, bringing together ideas and findings, in particular from conferences in Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Bangladesh that have led to policy and practice developments in those countries.*

### PROFESSIONALISING YOUTH WORK

On a global level it is hard to argue that it is not part of the mission of peoples and governments, from an earliest possible point, to establish within populations the advantages and values associated with the promotion of equity, human rights and good governance. Throughout the world these qualities are fostered by youth work. Broadly stated this has historically involved adults working with and alongside young people, taking responsibility for their actions and dealing with the consequences of the same. This might be understood as the foundation of adult attitudes that youth workers have traditionally presented as a model for young people to evoke responsible, human and ethical conduct, as a means to improve their lives and society.

The field of youth work (variously labelled and in a range of forms) has been integral to participatory nation building. This is particularly present in the context of the dynamic role youth workers can play in addressing young people's welfare and rights in a responsive manner and by providing an interface between young people and decision-making processes at all levels. Throughout the world youth workers have taken socially important steps in professionalising youth work, which have included (and continue to encompass) a vast range of educational and training initiatives in the field. This has also seen the creation of complementary programmes to strengthen mechanisms and procedures, professionalising youth work in terms of developing competency and ethical practice in youth work.

Now, globally, governments and NGOs continue to consolidate these processes. It is hoped that this document chapter might add to this process, by helping advance a responsive approach to the requirements of young people and their expectations. At the same time, what follows will seek to reflect the principles and purpose of youth work, while adhering to and promoting Human Rights conventions. This stance looks to strengthen practice/components to continue the professionalisation of youth work throughout the world. Professionalisation does not equate only, or necessarily to a salaried occupation but an attitude and response to practice.

#### TOWARDS BUILDING A CONCEPT OF YOUTH WORK

Youth work can be generally defined as a profession practiced by those working with young people in a range of settings. Youth workers, worldwide, can be found working in clubs and detached (street based) settings, within social/welfare services, sports/leisure provision, schools and, over the last decade or so in museums, arts facilities, libraries, hospitals, leisure and sports centres, children's homes and young offenders institutions.

The focus of youth work is on (but not limited to):

1. *The social learning of young people.*

This is not usually simply forms of instruction, but includes a range of approaches, mostly developing learning opportunities out of everyday experience. This may consist of leisure and social pursuits, but also calls on more formal methods when appropriate.

2. *The wellbeing of young people.*

This includes attention to and working with young people, their parents, guardians and carers to understand, relate to and make use of their rights, promoting and having concern for young people's welfare, while extending appropriate professional care.

The above, although for purposes of analysis separated into two discreet areas, might be usefully understood as complimentary foci; one confirms and enacts the other. The overall aim of youth work is to enhance the life experience of young people and their contribution to society as active, involved, useful and valued citizens.

The central purpose of youth work could be defined as *working with young people to play an assertive and constructive role in the strengthening and regeneration of their immediate communities and wider society.* This said youth work is not a specialism as such. Historically and socially its function has been to adapt and change according to social, economic and political needs and exigencies. Indeed, in places like the UK where there has been an ongoing pressure for youth work to become 'informal education' or latterly identify a 'core' competence or function, such as 'social pedagogy', the move towards specialisation threatens to effectively deskill youth workers whilst transforming them into mobile class room assistants, homework tutors or surrogate remedial teachers.

In a number of global regions youth workers can be found working directly for the government or local government, often involved in community development and community learning situations, capacity building, providing forms of accredited and non-accredited learning. However, in Europe for example, youth workers are increasingly deployed by voluntary organisations (although via a range of funding arrangements, including direct and indirect state resources) in issue-related work (drugs, sexual health, homelessness, parenting etc.). Many such organisations, particularly faith based groups, will concentrate more on less directive and informal practice, although most youth work will be set within formal institutions and include forms of guidance and instruction from time to time. Like a good teacher a skilled youth worker will blur the rather false dichotomy of informal and formal learning.

Youth workers can and are involved in education; they are employed to operate in formal institutions like schools, colleges and universities and can, in such situations, be thought of as wholly involved in the external structures that are education. However, their work is nearly always more inclined to working with young people that the latter might be motivated or inspired to learn; learning being an internal, psychological event or events. On a consistent basis this might be thought of as the ‘getting of wisdom’. While schools and other related institutions might almost invariably be tasked with delivering education, they are not always, for everyone, unfailingly places of learning. In different places and different times they are and have been (wholly or partly, consciously or inadvertently) sites of indoctrination, propaganda or dominated by forms of memorisation and the pressure to conform.

In Africa, Asia, South and Central America youth workers are likely to be working for non-governmental organisations in sport, arts, social welfare and health fields. Substantial numbers will be involved in contexts similar to their counterparts elsewhere in the government/statutory sector, as youth service officers or youth volunteers within Youth Ministries, other Ministries and Departments.

Globally, youth work is a very diverse profession in terms of social tasks and employment situations. In recent years, with transnational economic and political changes, what youth workers do worldwide is becoming more similar. The demise of the national youth services internationally, alongside cuts in State funding of welfare and capacity building services, is likely to give rise to a growth in the role of voluntary and faith organisations in youth work.

#### VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Generally speaking youth work’s initiatives to professionalise reflect the values and principles enshrined in the ethos of Human Rights, which affirm the promotion of international understanding and a shared belief in:

- The liberty of the individual
- Equal rights for all regardless of race, colour, creed or political belief
- The inalienable right of the individual to participate by means of free and democratic political processes in framing the society in which they live.

World-wide, youth workers have risen above all forms of colonial domination and racial oppression and have been consistently committed to the principles of human dignity and equality via the promotion of self-determination, overcoming poverty, international cooperation, association based on consultation, and the continuing exchange of knowledge and views on professional, cultural, economic, legal and political issues.

All this has been framed with the intent to foster and extend multi-national association in order to expand human understanding and contribute to the enrichment of life for all.

The values of youth work further emphasise the anti-colonial values effectively recognising:

- Human rights as the foundation of democracy and development
- Equality of all human beings, regardless of gender, race, colour, creed or political belief
- Self empowerment, pursued through education, self and joint freedom of expression and participation
- Equity and/or fairness in the relationships between nations and generations, protection of vulnerable groups within a non-deficit/asset conscious approach.
- Democracy – facilitating the opportunity for to express their opinions and promote participation in decision-making
- Social and personal development based on principles of sustainability
- Diversity of views and perspectives in both national and international forums
- Dialogue and co-operation, building common ground and consensus
- Peace, without which the above values are unobtainable.

This list, in terms of language and trajectory, has and continues to evolve and change with circumstances and over contexts. For it not to do so would be self-contradictory. However, it is certain that in recent decades youth work has acted to facilitate and provide forums tasked with essentially decolonising initiatives via the continued focus, in spirit and action, on the principles and values that underpin humane practice. This has strengthened and continues to seek to maximise the contribution of youth in peace building, democracy and development worldwide.

#### TRANSLATING PRINCIPLES TO PRACTICE

Values have little impact if we fail to act on them. Youth work, in its most effective incarnations, critiques and confirms, extends, develops and alters the above goals. This said, the above ambitions provide a strong foundation for the development of professional youth work. Setting out expectations for professional practice and can also provide the academic standards for professional qualifications as well as criteria for training at a more practical level.

Governments and voluntary organisations can promote the professionalization of youth work by the delivery of quality services, through three main principles of work with young people ('FEC'):

- *Facilitating*: creating the conditions in which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than relying on other people, in particular professionals, to do things for them.
- *Endowing*: putting democratic principles into action in the fullest sense, so that young people can play a constructive part/role in decision-making that affects them at different levels of society.
- *Confirming*: operating in accordance with value systems that give a sense of purpose and meaning to how young people use their skills and knowledge.

Many regions and institutions have developed generic core competencies of youth work. These competencies can be built into the way that youth workers undertake their practice with young people, professional peers and with organizations/institutions that are duty bearers, in fulfilling the rights of young people. FEC is intended to elucidate the same in a compact way.

Putting the emphasis on the youth worker's role in facilitating, endowing and confirming demonstrates the commitment to 'expediate' rather than set up a 'welfare' or entirely educative model of service delivery; to expediate (from the Latin) means to 'set loose' or 'freeing the feet'. This expansively equates to a laboratory practice. Although the youth worker is not unconcerned about the welfare or education of the young people they work with, as their well-being and understanding of the world is central to being active and useful citizens. The professional role of the youth worker, therefore, involves balancing core values with the personal and collective potential of those they work with and amongst with political and economic realism.

#### BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL YOUTH WORK SECTOR

The professionalisation of any service is a process rather than an exact science. Professional youth work, in any national situation needs to be shaped by and evolve out of cultural and social contexts; each country may have different sets of institutions, processes, procedures and criteria to make professionalization possible. It is hoped that the ideas presented in this chapter will not be taken as merely a plan to be implemented, but as part of this book offering something of a beginning to an ongoing dialogue that will, by response and adaptation, result in professional youth work customised to the context of respective countries and cultures. The vision is not conformity to one model of professional practice, but a diversity of interpretations adhering to a set of shared values and principles that may develop and adapt over time and place. Youth work, by its character and aims, is a bespoke practice. Hence by definition it does not need to be tied to forms of pedagogical intervention (for instance) although it might inculcate the same. Indeed to make youth work any one thing for all time and everywhere is to effectively kill the essence youth work as a responsive and flexible form of practice.

## INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH WORK

Youth work involves relating to and taking a level of responsibility for other people's children and the life direction of young people and therefore is fundamentally concerned and primarily focused on *care*. However, this care needs to be expressed in a suitably professional manner, which includes an appropriate level of detachment; youth workers are not 'big brothers/sisters' neither are they 'friends' (although they might be 'friendly'), nor is the youth worker's role a parenting one (in most contexts youth workers are not legally considered, because they are youth workers, to be in 'loco parentis' – they do not legally take the place of the parent). Consequently a professional detachment needs to be developed in terms of care. I will return to this issue later in this chapter.

Given the cultural and national differences in legal requirements, age groupings and social expectations connected with the care of young people across countries and cultures, this care role needs to be set within the parameters of Universal Rights. This framework can complement and underpin existing national legislation, practice, ethical and care standards/requirements. This means that youth workers not only need a working knowledge of childhood and Human Rights, but also the ability to interpret this knowledge and the associated principles into practice (see *A Rights Based Approach* below).

Youth work premised on the values and principles of universal Human Rights conventions needs to achieve a number of outcomes in terms of the delivery of practice and social development. These outcomes include creating opportunities for young people to develop their individual and inter-relational capacities for personal and social benefit. This is understood as 'a good thing' in itself; it has both social and learning benefits. This process serves young people in terms of becoming more aware of themselves, but at the same time they provide part of the means to make themselves understood by others, to be a valuable resource with regard to the life of their neighbourhood, district or nation and the betterment of wider global society. This, being achieved within a framework of equality and democratic principles, requires the professional youth worker to be cognisant of care principles, human rights considerations and more generally a 'social and political educator' (see *Social and Political Education* below).

Worldwide, youth work has traditionally been seen as a sort of secondary or 'para-profession' in relation to occupations like teaching and social work; it has been understood as something of a luxury rather than a necessity. While youth work does have distinct skill sets and is informed by a range of theory and practice, claiming guiding principles and values, these do change over time, context and sometimes, even from person to person. Writers, academics and practitioners have reasoned this is because youth work is 'no one thing', but a combination of roles. However, others, looking to give the practice a greater level of integrity, purpose and perhaps status, have looked to provide youth work with a more definite grounding. This has, in some places, led to attempts to label or rename youth workers as 'youth support workers', 'youth development workers' or 'informal' and/or 'community' educators. But these titles have proved to be transitory and

provide no clearer indication of the professional role. In fact they seem to give rise to evermore vague time, place and culture specific definitions of and justifications for practice.

There is very little critical literature relating to youth work. Most of what is written promotes and rationalises models of practice, which are, in the main, based on heresy and stories, romantic and/or unconventional political views, guesses and assumptions. Such material often results in workers preaching homespun morality. This echoes the colonial/missionary era, which was underpinned by forms of instruction and domination. We need to move away from this by avoiding simplistically telling youth workers how to operate “on” young people. If we are to be of service to young people we are going to need to understand ourselves more as servers (servants) than authority figures; we exist professionally to work with or serve young people, to develop their influence and authority rather than merely extend our authority over them.

At the same time, young people are portrayed as a group (as the colonial ‘native’ was) to be personally or socially lacking (in deficit); deficient in terms of education, morality or even the civilising effects that can only be accessed with the aid of the ‘informal educator’, ‘social pedagogue’ or ‘youth development worker’. As sections of this book confirm, youth, as a population group, are commonly depicted by way of assumptions, developed out of social fears, not unusually inflamed by the media, about declining personal standards and/or moral degeneracy. The whole age group is frequently portrayed as in need of ‘support’, ‘help’, being beset by vaguely described psychological problems such as ‘lacking self esteem’ and ‘attention deficit’. As such young people are contradictorily represented, sometimes at the same time, as both a threatening ‘enemy within’, the seed of moral and social degeneracy, and as a relatively incapable or infirmed group, in need of extensive adult and professional patronage; they are taken to be both ‘weak and vulnerable’ as well as ‘intimidating and powerful’.

It is this strange duality of response that translates to a social view of young people as being ‘pathological’ relative to ‘responsible adults’ and as such this invites a model of intervention that smacks (reeks) of a treatment (deficit) model; the overriding aim of much of the work with young people is correctional in ethos, being applied to individuals or groups understood and responded to as ‘non-conformist’ or ‘disaffected’ (abnormal). This project or effort to ‘normalise’ is understandably not that popular with young people. Hence places or programmes earmarked as ‘youth facilities’ tend not to be called upon by the majority of young people for any significant length of time.

Logical analysis of this suggests that this deficit model of practice relies on convincing workers and young people that they (young people) have innate insufficiencies and that there is something inherently impaired in the condition of youth. Apart from being inherently unattractive (repellent) this perspective is covertly oppressive. In effect its basis is rooted in what Franz Fanon, a psychiatrist, philosopher, activist and writer who worked in the North African context, saw as the propagation of a ‘colonial mentality’; this dismal outlook implies that some population groups have ‘inborn’ inadequacies that need to be treated or

compensated for by way of forms of social discipline or reformation. South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko saw that convincing people that this lack was real was a means of the continuance of coercive domination. As he remarked; *The most potent weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed*. Echoing this is Bob Marley's plea, repeating Marcus Garvey's counsel to; *Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery* recognising that *none but ourselves can free our minds*.

This being the case, a new concept of youth work is required that rejects such deficit models and promotes instead, one that is diametrically opposite – a model which lays emphasis on young people as personifying the vibrant hope and potential of any society; a model based on Human Rights and a recognition that the individual is confirmed in their humanity by their contribution in and to their community, their nation and the world.

#### ARTICULATING PRACTICE

Youth work, globally, needs to adopt a distinctly anti-colonial philosophy in keeping with the principles and mandates of Human Rights, creating a strand of homogeneity in practice that diversity can inform and develop. The ethos and rationale articulated in humane principles lays the foundation for this new vision that regards young people as stakeholders in society. It also places a positive emphasis on youth, seeing this stage of life as a well of human resource with enormous potential; it understands young people to be the custodians of all possible futures and the section of society that can preserve the best of the past.

Although the strength of youth work lies in its ability to be responsive in terms of conditions, demands and environments, providing bespoke services over a wide horizon of practice delivery, it is also held back from developing as a profession because it is unable to clearly and succinctly articulate precisely what it aims to do and how it intends to do it. This does not imply youth work is intrinsically complex, but it does indicate that following contemporary western models of practice is problematical. On the one hand, western states have looked to youth work to respond in pragmatic ways to demands driven by socio-economic necessity, developing a comparatively cheap, relatively flexible work force. On the other hand, historically and culturally, youth work has been shaped by moral, spiritual and political motivations, aimed at producing a more ethical and/or questioning population. This is what Indian scholar and author Shehzad Ahmed has described as 'Education versus Idealism'<sup>1</sup>. In this situation the State looks to youth work to respond to regional, national and/or global conditions (largely economic), however at the same time youth workers focus on aims, primarily driven by personal values/feelings/points of view and/or often poorly informed political/social objectives. As such, youth workers have sometimes found themselves in conflict with management and State policy.

Youth work internationally, as part of its initiatives to professionalise, has consistently aimed to propose a model of practice that avoids the replication of this antagonistic situation. This involves building a pragmatic vision of practice that

harmonises broadly-based professional ethical concerns, State policy and the requirements of young people. This needs to be undertaken by encompassing models of care, development and education that to some extent arise from and are relevant to the post-colonial context.

As such, this chapter is informed by the anti-colonial/anti-oppressive attitude and values as exemplified by the likes of Julius Nyerere, Mahatma Gandhi and Nawal Sadaawi. Their principles are incorporated in the philosophy of Ubuntu (see Box 1 below) and similar ideologies and theories.

*Box 1*

Nyerere's ideas of *Ujamaa* (1968)

- 1) The advancement of social, economic, and political equality through the enactment of basic democratic practice; challenging all forms of discrimination and prejudice
- 2) Villagisation – looking to make the best use of and developing local resources
- 3) The encouragement of self-reliance within a framework of interdependence – promoting a consciousness of how individuals are reliant on groups, while groups are dependent on the cooperation of individual members

Gandhi, *My Views on Education* (1970)

- 1) The focus of practice being on the development of the whole person
- 2) Look to draw out the best qualities of people
- 3) The development of the personality/culture being as important as forms of academic learning and acquisition of skill
- 4) Practice to aim to be self supporting

*Ubuntu*<sup>2</sup>

- 1) Listening to and affirming others with the help of processes that create trust, fairness, shared understanding and dignity and harmony in relationships
- 2) Consciousness is about the desire to build a caring, sustainable and just response to the community (village, city, nation or global family)
- 3) Emphasis on our common humanity and the ethical call to embody our communal responsiveness in the world, offering an alternative way to re-create a world that works for all.
- 4) Learning how to live together with respect, care, dignity and justice and to re-organise resources accordingly

- 5) Sharing ideas and resources and making basic services, such as food, housing and access to health and education accessible and visible to all.

The political underpinning of Ujamaa and the attitudinal disposition of Ubuntu confirm and mirror the values and conduct of social learning.

Nawal El Saadawi (2010)

- 1) Encourage thinking (use of the brain) rather than instruction following
- 2) Promoted understanding that education is not separate from politics
- 3) Develop a comprehension that we need to advance from old-fashioned ways; need for intellectual renewal
- 4) Advocate independent thought; doubt is the servant of knowledge. Truth will withstand all tests. Doubt is the first step towards knowledge
- 5) Work to discover personal creativity from inside; we are all born creative

### *Care*

Youth work provides care in a context, which requires an appropriate level of professional detachment. Box 2 below throws light on the character of professional care.

#### *Box 2: Nursing as Professional Care*

Nursing perhaps provides the clearest examples of ‘caring detachment’. For instance, my father passed away a couple of years ago. My family and I rushed, from all over London, to his bedside at the East End hospital where he died. My mother was already with my dad, understandably very upset after close to 60 years of being with him, which added to the general grief we were all experiencing. However, the nurses did not gather around my father’s deathbed, crying and attempting to share in our feelings of loss and relative helplessness. One went and made tea, two others started to look after my father’s body, disconnecting life support systems, cleaning him up a little, doing what needed to be done professionally.

All the time they were reassuring us, as individuals, as a group and as a family; they were attentive and respectful, without being intrusive or pretending they were ‘one of us’. Collectively the activity of the nurses was thoughtful, showing that they knew what they were doing; they provided a strong scaffold of professional behaviour at a time when my family and I were exposed and

vulnerable emotionally and needed their surety and sensitive but sensible and at points quite firm, support. The nurses never lost their focus; they were not family members; they were not there to mourn, but to extend the necessary and appropriate care expected of professional nurses (carers). The level to which they succeeded in doing this, without intrusion, was a measure of their professionalism. As we, my family and I, were free to fall apart, they ‘kept it together’ so, eventually, we could re-group and effectively pull ourselves together and deal with the situation.

This is managing care; it is a concern for the welfare and wellbeing of others, but it is tempered by appropriate objectivity and thoughtfully sensitive detachment. This is not disinterest, but neither is it presumptuous. This level of professional detachment is what your workers must try to mirror in their work.

### *Nursing versus Youth Work*

A young person, Nurul, approached a youth worker, Farah, asking to talk to her in private. After they found a suitable place to chat, Nurul told Farah that she wanted to go swimming with her friends, an activity that Farah had arranged, but that she couldn’t swim, and was embarrassed about this becoming known to everyone else. At this point Nurul became quite emotional, saying she was unhappy about being ‘left out’ and being seen as ‘stupid’.

Here, Farah had several courses of action open to her; she was called upon to make a professional judgement:

1. She could have told Nurul not to be so silly/emotional and that her friends would probably understand
2. She could have put her arms round Nurul and told her no matter what her friends thought she (Farah) would always like her
3. She could have promised to teach Nurul to swim herself
4. She could have found a class, run by a qualified swimming teacher, that Nurul might attend
5. She could spend more time with Nurul, working with her to explore her feelings and finding out what she might want to do about the situation

Just by starting to consider options Farah showed professional care, however how she proceeded would demonstrate her ability in terms of extending appropriate professional care.

1. Farah might want to explore Nurul’s emotional response further. Was her response typical of her, was it ‘over the top’ and if so why might that be? How can Farah be sure that Nurul’s fears about the reaction of her friends are just related to swimming?
2. Can Farah really commit to ‘always liking’ Nurul? What does ‘liking’ entail? Does Farah understand ‘liking’ in the same way as Nurul?
3. Does Farah have the time/skill to teach Nurul to swim safely?
4. Should Nurul’s parents be involved in any decisions about going to

classes? How can Farah be sure that Nurul or her family might be able to meet the cost of swimming lessons?

For a youth worker, extending professional care is often not quite as straightforward as it might be for a nurse. However, appropriate care is a constant consideration in the role of the youth worker.

It is probably a mistake to think of ourselves, as professionals, as having ‘relationships’ with young people. Our work is ‘associative’; we have a professional association with our clients (young people). Unlike lawyers or politicians, we do not ‘represent’ our clients; we work *with* them (as a service) in order that they might *represent themselves to what they judge to be their best advantage/interests* (as individuals and as a group). We are not nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists or doctors, so we are not looking to ‘cure’ or ‘treat’ people. We are not teachers, so we are not *centrally* concerned with forms of instruction, although our work might, from time to time encompass mentoring, leading or guiding, and we want young people to become more knowledgeable, aware and ultimately wise. We are not counsellors, therapists or social workers, but this does not preclude us from making referrals to such professionals if we think this might be suitable or necessary (not to do so might be understood as being unprofessional). We are not police officers, however we should be aware enough to know at what point we need to involve the police in our work. An understanding of all this is encompassed in having the ability to extend appropriate care.

#### SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

The approaches outlined in Box 1 might be translated via an understanding of *social learning*. This is the intellectual and personal means to interact and develop in the social context. It is an adaptation of social education as mooted by Davies and Gibson (1967: 12), *any individual’s increased consciousness of themselves, their values, aptitudes and untapped resources and of the relevance of these to others*. For them social education *enhances the individual’s understanding of how to form mutually satisfying relationships*. This involves a search for the means to discover *how to contribute to, as well as take from* associations with others.<sup>3</sup>

The replacement of ‘education’ with ‘learning’ represents an understanding that youth work is not reliant on a formal structure – this is what educational essentially is understood to be – delivered via a curriculum by way of the ‘educational machines’ that are schools, colleges and universities, by people trained in various techniques, procedures and strategies of delivery. The emphasis on learning recognises youth work, in its most effective and humane incarnation, to be a creative process of involving and learning with young people, which can produce the physiological process of learning as a means to advancing understanding, awareness (of self, other and the world) and ultimately social wisdom. Social learning recognises learning not so much as a ‘one-way-street’ (wherein one

teaches while the other learns) but more of a collaborative, mutual and complimentary process that can be engendered more between people (including youth workers and young people). Learning in youth work is a 'two-way street' as the youth worker to be effective needs to be, at times, taught by young people, about their viewpoint, culture or other perspective in order that their practice might be effective. This might be understood to encompass the political underpinning of Ujamaa and the attitudinal disposition of Ubuntu. It is a means to promote not only the interdependence of individuals, groups and communities for the benefit and well-being of all, but promote understanding of 'interdependence'; that each is reliant on all and all is reliant on each.

Social learning also reflects the role of the youth worker, working with groups of people, creating a collective consciousness, working for social change collaboratively with duty bearers to advance positive development at local, national and international levels. As you can see, the active, social and asset focus is quite the antithesis of the individual, psychological, deficit, treatment model. As part of this, a sense of personal and social responsibility can be generated and the motivation for betterment of the self, but also an understanding of how this will contribute to the positive development of society. For an example of this see Box 3 below.

*Box 3*

A youth worker came into contact with a group of young refugees. She identified that they had a common interest in playing soccer and that they wanted to form a team. The youth worker and the young people started by discussing a name and a motto for the team. This allowed for the group's first self-designed democratic activity; names and mottos were discussed, nominated and voted on.

Thus 'Better World United' (BWU) was born, with the agreement that they existed to 'Play by the rules for the good of all'.

Following this several tasks were identified that were necessary to starting the football team. This included organising training, team selection, arranging matches with other teams and identifying sponsorship to pay for kits and balls.

Within a year BWU were cooperatively organising three teams, sponsored by a local sports shop. Seven of the young people were taking coaching qualifications, while three were involved in training other young people involved in the teams, having gained basic coaching qualifications. The youth worker continued to keep in contact with the young people, but did not need to be actively involved beyond giving the occasional piece of advice when asked. But she also referred other youth workers to them, working on issues such as sexual health and clean water projects. Out of this several of the young people became involved in voluntary youth work themselves.

So, starting from a collective, fairly straightforward desire of a small group of young people, the youth worker had worked with this group to fulfil their wishes, out of which arose a sense of responsibility for each other and others, which in turn provided a range of resources for the wider community/society. In the process the physical, academic, organisational, leadership, innovatory and collaborative skills

of the young people were developed and enhanced. These of course represent a pool of qualities/social capital that can be redirected and deployed in other aspects of personal, community and national life.

Thus social learning facilitates fundamental political education (democracy, representation, advocacy etc.). First and foremost the professional stance of social and political learning requires practitioners to personify, by way of their practice;

- a) *The ability to take and manage responsibility*
- b) *Deal with the consequences of action.*

### EXPECTATION

Youth work, framed within a professional context of social and political learning and Human Rights, is anchored to a raft of expectations of both practitioner and client. The expectation of the youth worker is that they will have the ability to make professional judgements aligned to the aims, objectives and desired outcomes of their practice. However, we need to have expectations of young people in order that they might detect an interest in/care about their wellbeing and that they might develop the motivation to have expectations of themselves.

In the west, much youth work has failed because of expectations being seen as a burden on young people; that they should be largely left to 'find their own feet' without 'pressure' (as if pressure might be expunged from life). This *laissez-faire* attitude has effectively abandoned many young people in terms of their wider socialisation; largely being left to their own devices, although supported by youth workers to take advantage of rights/entitlements/welfare benefits. However, because of the lack of expectations, many young people, have no real sense of duty (other than to themselves) and have been drawn into pockets of social selfishness, an 'all against all' attitude, which is ideal for the development of cultures of crime and disaffection (that is in some cases generations long). This whole package is a microcosm of a capitalist society at its most abstracting and destructive.

### PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT

The nature of professional judgement starts with the understanding that youth workers, as practitioners, are not neutral; they are obliged to make judgements. A judgement might be understood as being different from an assumption or an opinion; a judgement is an opinion based on evidence. The more evidence one has, the more secure one's judgement might be said to be. There is of course better and worse evidence, but the difference between the two is a judgement in itself. However, the more an opinion is made without evidence, the more likely it is that it will be prejudiced (a 'pre-judgement') or discriminatory.

So you can see that it is important that youth workers are able to evidence professional judgement by demonstrating how and why they choose to do one thing rather than another. The following youth worker's recording of practice demonstrates this;

The group came into the club shouting and, what looked like play fighting, with each other. Others looked a bit intimidated, backing away from the group quite quickly. I chose not to immediately reproach them about their behaviour, as when colleagues had done this before it had seemed to make matters worse. However, I had worked with a group previously that acted in much the same way, and I had noticed that engaging one or two of them in conversation had appeared to help the group acclimatise to the environment relatively straightforwardly. So, recognising Abidin, I commented how she had styled her hair differently and how I thought it looked good ...

The worker, using a range of evidence drawn from her experience of practice, makes a professional judgement; it is a 'professional' judgement because it is based on practice and experience rather than personal bias. Her judgement might have been good, not so good, or even poor (depending, at least partly, on the outcome) but she had nevertheless used judgement because she had drawn on evidence; her action was not based wholly on supposition, feelings and what is sometimes vaguely called 'instinct', but on judgement built on evidence. This enabled her to make what might be considered to be an 'ethical choice' to take one course of action rather than another/others. This is something more than reflection, although reflection and consideration might be part of the process.

Youth workers, committed to social and political learning, working within a Rights framework, are required to make professional judgements, work with young people in order that they might make effective judgements (ones that can be acted on) for the development and betterment of society.

*Box 4*

In a message delivered to the UN General Assembly Special Session on 8 May 2002, delegates Gabriela Azurduy Arrieta, aged 13, from Bolivia and Audrey Cheynut, a 17-year-old from Monaco, outlined a range of objectives premised on a concept that, a world fit for everyone must be a world fit for young people. It was stated that this requires to be founded on respect for children's rights, which is reliant on;

*... governments and adults making a real and effective commitment to the principle of children's rights and applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child to all children.*

The overall vision encompassed a range of provision relevant to youth work including:

- The provision of centres and programmes.
- Education for life that goes beyond the academic and includes understanding, human rights, peace, acceptance and active citizenship.
- Active participation – raised awareness and respect among people of all ages about every young person's right to full and meaningful participation.
- Involvement in decision-making and planning.

The message went on to make a number of points concerning the identity and reputation of young people, asserting:

- They are not the sources of problems, but the resources that are needed to solve problems.
- They are not expenses but investments.
- They are not just young people; they are people and citizens of the world.

There was also a commitment by young people to:

- Defend the rights of young people.
- Treat each other with dignity and respect.
- To be open and sensitive to difference.

The message was concluded with the statement;

*You call us the future, but we are also the present.*

#### A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

A rights-based approach to youth work entails a process of engagement with young people based on human rights. Within this process all rights should apply equally to all and young people are understood to be agents in determining the actions and activity that are best for them as individuals and collectives. The role of ‘duty bearers’ is understood as being primarily the State with regard to ensuring these rights and this should be recognised and acted on.

The primary document that articulates basic human rights is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is also an important document for youth work as many young people are legally or socially considered to be children.

The statements by young people in Box 4 demonstrates how they, through effective social and political learning, are able, by the taking and using of their authority as growing citizens, to influence their immediate environment and also have an impact at national and international levels.

Furthermore, at local, regional, national and global levels, the UDHR and the UNCRC can act as a foundation to the underpinning care basis of youth work that might complement and reinforce existing local and national care frameworks/custom and practice. Importantly, this involves transparent practice that proceeds from and is informed by consultancy and negotiation with young people.

Article 19 of the UDHR says,

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 12 of the UNCRC states that children should be able to express their views  
 ... freely in all matters affecting the child ...

This is congruent with the attitudes and values encapsulated within the principles and practice of social and political learning. However, to maintain such equivalence human rights cannot be an immutable set of gospel like texts. Human rights, like any other formulation of ideas, precepts and principles are given value and meaning to the extent that those they impact upon have access to the means of elaboration on and/or altering the same. For the rights of young people to be relevant and effective the informed involvement of young people needs to be sought and promoted.

#### YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

Central to the social learning response is the acknowledgement (as hinted at above) of the need for the professional *to be able to be taught about the wants and needs of young people by young people*. This is led by an understanding that the motivations, desires and passions of young people will likely be the richest seams of their future accomplishments and social contribution. In this approach, young people take the lead in learning within the social context. It is the job of the youth worker to respond to this in an appropriate and adequate manner. This stance allows the young person to enable and empower themselves – the opposite, to foster the reliance of an ‘enabler’ or look to other people to empower oneself, is close to the suppositions of the colonial missionary. Such an approach proceeds from the presumption that young people have, in the form of their integrity as human beings, potential, ability, influence, authority and power and as such is counter to colonial assumptions of deficit. Conversely, the professional who sets out to empower or enable others relies on inherently colonial attitudes, as this outlook assumes a lack of power and ability on the part of young people.

As seen in Box 5 below, many pertinent ethical and competency considerations from youth work stem from response of young people.

##### *Box 5*

The following is adapted from *Declaration of Learner's Rights and Responsibilities*, which was written by a group of six young people between the ages of 15 and 17. It is quite a formal model that demonstrates young people taking responsibility for their lives and their learning via a rights agenda. The original document was presented at a Rights of the Child Conference in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada and to the Canadian Minister of Education in June 1995. It was again presented to the UN Conference Habitat II, Istanbul Turkey in 1996. The Declaration was also published internationally by UNESCO and many organisations in countries around the world have shared it with their communities. As citizen learners this statement asserted that young people had the right to:

1. Allow their own experience and enthusiasm to guide their learning.
2. Choose and direct the nature and conditions of their learning experience. As a learner they take responsibility for the results they create.
3. Perfect the skills to be a conscious, self-confident and resourceful individual.
4. Be respected while taking the responsibility to respect others.
5. Be nurtured and supported by their family and community, while their family and community have the right and responsibility to be their primary resource.
6. Enter into relationships based on mutual choice, collaborative effort, challenge and mutual gain.
7. Be exposed to a diverse array of ideas, experiences, environments, and possibilities. This exposure being their responsibility of themselves, their parents and mentors.
8. To evaluate their learning according to their own sensibilities; also having the responsibility and right to request to be included in the evaluations of their mentors.
9. Co-create decisions that involve and concern them.
10. Openly consider and have the responsibility to respect the ideas of others, whether or not they accept these ideas.
11. Enter a learning organisation, which offers, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical support, and operates in an open and inclusive manner.
12. Equal access to resources, information and funding.

#### A PRACTICAL DEFINITION FOR YOUTH WORK

The aims of youth work practice need to be measurable and achievable. Vague and indeterminate terms need to be avoided if this is to be made possible. Looking at youth work worldwide, the following definition of its key purpose seems to express much of global practice:

Youth workers engage with young people that they (young people) might work with them (youth workers) to cultivate their (young people's) innate abilities to develop their personal and human potential, in a holistic manner. Working alongside young people youth workers facilitate personal, social advancement and learning. This encompasses the political learning of young people, developing their own voice and capacity to influence, and so take authority/responsibility, within society.

This is entirely compatible with the principles and values of youth work and human rights. Young people are our most important resource and we need to collaborate with them to develop their individual potential in order for them to live fulfilled lives.

At the same time, this formulation of youth work enables the development of appropriate standards of practice by which the quality of youth work can be measured, providing a means to develop, better deliver and achieve desired outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has offered a paradigm of facilitating, confirming and endowing youth work practice that can be tailored to specific contexts over time, place and culture. Being able to say what youth work is and what it might do is necessary to lay the ground for the instigation of professionalisation of practice, as you cannot professionalise that which you have not defined and agreed on. In short, the above is an attempt to put the horse before the cart as sense might dictate. It might (and I hope it will be) the purpose of writers, academics, practitioners and young people to refine and reach consensus in relation to the character and function of youth work in respective countries, and on this foundation, move on to develop appropriate policies, occupational standards, professional associations, supervisory structures, training and the infrastructure to build a vibrant and consistently evolving/adapting profession as befits situation and context.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Ahmed, *Educational Thinkers of India*, (New Delhi: Anmol Publications).
- <sup>2</sup> See for example Caracciolo and Mungai (2009), Harber and Serf (2004).
- <sup>3</sup> Quote Davies and Gibson.

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CURTIS WORRELL

## **HIP HOP IS DEAD! YOUTH WORK IN A STATE OF DECLINE?**

### *Synopsis*

In 2006 Rapper Nas proclaimed, ‘Hip-hop is dead’! This chapter sets to find out whether or not youth work is also in a state of decline. I seek to establish a comparative parallel development between youth work and hip-hop by looking back to the histories of the two phenomena as well as conducting interviews with past colleagues. What I discovered is that the style of youth work that has become my norm, being “informed by political and moral values”, as well as having, “belief in equality and respect for the environment” (Belton, 2010: 69), is in decline. However, looking at the historic reasons behind youth work it is evident this style will forever be in the minority and therefore constantly in a state of decline. Using hip-hop’s new recruits, such as, J Cole, Kendrick Lamar and Wale, I unearth the catalyst behind the revival of hip-hop and highlight how it can be used to suggest a way forward in youth work.

### SHOUT OUTS!

It is customary in hip-hop for a DJ, or Rapper, to give a shout out to the ones that offered support, inspiration and assistance. First and foremost I would like to thank the people who gave up their time to allow me to interview them. Writing this has allowed me to recognise how lucky I am to have been given to opportunity to work alongside some of the best youth workers I have ever witnessed.

A special shout out to Bianca for allowing me to volunteer at J6 and your continued support and so much more.

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Thanks to Brian for encouraging me to become more critical and supporting my development as a professional youth worker.

And last, but not least, my proofreader TB, for making my words legible-ish.

INTRODUCTION

“Everybody sound the same, commercialise the game  
Reminiscent when it wasn’t all business  
If it got where it started  
So we all gather here for the dearly departed”  
(Nas, 2005: 3:10 – 3:20)

Youth work and popular culture is a broad subject, which would be impossible to critically examine in depth within a chapter of this length. I have decided to concentrate on the parallels between youth work and hip-hop, not only because I am a hip-hop fan but also because I feel that they have both followed similar paths.

Hip-hop and other genres, such as punk, were formed by young people feeling discontent with their environment and their status within society, prompting them to use music as a vessel to voice their frustrations. As this chapter has a focus on hip-hop, I aim to bring hip-hop’s energy to fruition with the use of metaphors, imagery and the occasional use of profanity. I do this not to alienate but to, ‘keep it real’, and to share my passion as well as, ‘show love’, to both hip-hop and youth work.

I met this girl when I was ten years old  
And what I loved most she had so much soul.  
She was old school,  
When I was just a shorty,  
Never knew throughout my life  
She would be there for me.  
(Common, 1994: 0:20 – 0:30)

In 1994, rapper Common Sense (now known as ‘Common’<sup>1</sup>) spoke these words on his track entitled *I used to love H.E.R.*<sup>2</sup> This track tells the story of a girl Common met as a young man and fell hopelessly in love with. Over the years, she was led astray by materialistic elements of life and they drifted apart and fell out of love. Common reveals in the last line of the song that the female in question was indeed hip-hop.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the song’s lyrics could relate to my own experience of youth work. Youth work opened my eyes to so much of the world and as a young man I found myself bewitched by her passion and the unwavering belief that she held for me. Over the years I have become disenchanted with her but unlike Common, rather than say I used to love her and move on, I aim to fight for this relationship with youth work and cover my ears when she says, ‘it’s not you it’s me, I’m just in a bad place right now’.

My intention is to look at the condition of youth work whilst critically examining the similarities youth work has with hip-hop. I am aware that it is unconventional to draw comparisons between hip-hop and youth work, as I have not been able to find any literature which does this, or that analyses youth work through alternative lenses. Popular culture grows out of youth culture, therefore it follows that youth work is intrinsically linked to youth culture.

The rationale behind focusing on a comparison between these two phenomena was sparked by the Jimmy Hoffa<sup>4</sup> style disappearance of ‘real’ hip-hop in 2006, which prompted rappers and many people involved in hip-hop to start saying, “Hip Hop is dead” (Nas, 2006). It struck me that there has been similar thoughts that real youth work is disappearing and that it has been replaced by statistically charged and economically motivated work, leading young people and youth workers to suffer as a result. I believe the two disciplines have followed similar developmental paths and both have suffered institutional strangulation, cutting their flow of creativity. In order to prove this suspected link, I will begin by analysing the journeys that both have taken. To do this, I will be taking a particular slant on the history of youth work (all history of course being ‘a particular slant’).

In order to define what real youth work is to me, I carried out interviews with youth workers who operated the youth club that I attended while growing up. These youth workers took me on residential, both within and outside of the UK, as well as supporting me in my development as a youth worker. Through these interviews, I hoped to discover where I have inherited my key values from and the fundamentals that inform my practice. I wish to establish an understanding of what I believe youth work is and what I believe to be in decline.

The death of hip-hop in 2006 (like any murder case) prompted an investigation, with rappers playing the role of detective, asking pertinent questions. By using the questions rappers asked about the death of hip-hop and adapting them to youth work, I formulate a list of suspects and cross-examine them to enable me to ascertain the cause for youth work’s demise.

The question of whether hip-hop is dead or not was raised eight years ago. Since then, hip-hop has loosened the garrotte from its neck enough to allow creativity to flow once again, leaving hip-hop in possibly the best place it has been since the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> I will be attempting to discover the catalyst behind this revival and if hip-hop’s methods can be adapted and applied to youth work so as to ignite its revival and loosen the noose that seems to threaten to cut-off the life-blood of the practice.

#### THE HISTORY OF YOUTH WORK

Bernard Davies placed the birth of youth work in the 19th century with the, “establishment of a range of philanthropic organisations providing (usually separate) leisure-time facilities for boys and young men and girls and young women” (Davies, 2009: 65). Other historians date youth work’s birth back to the late 18th century, placing, “the activities of pioneers such as Robert Raikes and Hannah More as an important forerunner of the work” (Smith, 2014). Smith regards Ragged Schools as the precursors of youth work due to their targets, demonstrated in the 13th annual report of the Ragged School Union held in 1857. This report identified that,

The surest way of lessening juvenile crime and fitting outcast children for “the battle of life”, is to give to the very poorest the opportunity of acquiring a sound Scriptural and Industrial Education. (Ragged School Union, 1857: 4)

The report is similar to the current aims of youth work (if one disregards the scriptural education for young people) and consequently reducing crime amongst the young while preparing them for independence. However, the Ragged Schools were similar to Sunday Schools with a strong focus on religion and held helping the less fortunate as central to its aims. This can be seen in the subtitle of the report:

ESTABLISHED FOR THE SUPPORT OF FREE SCHOOLS  
FOR THE DESTITUTE POOR OF LONDON AND ITS SUBURBS.  
(Ragged School Union, 1857: 1)

But this movement was a very disciplined, formal and authoritarian compared to anything we would see today. In practice such places, with their beatings and aims, were miles away from the kind of provision that would be recognised as youth work – they were closer to prisons in terms of their mission to reform and general regime

An interesting point made by Davies is that the work after the 19th century, “unlike Raikes and More’s initiatives, was not being done to working-class people by their ‘betters’ but by and for the working class peoples” (Davies, 2009: 65). Smith also points out that the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), which was set up in 1844, is considered the first dedicated youth organisation, although it has to be said this was initially premised on reading rooms and the study of the Bible. Smith does go on to talk about more radical youth work like the creation of ‘the Espérance’ by Emily Pethick and Mary Neal. Pethick, who, “went on to become the treasurer and key organiser with the Pankhurst’s of the English Suffrage Union” (Smith, 2014).

However, with the exception of the latter, it is apparent that Smith’s historical account is dominated by a religious movement. This is contrary to the youth work that I have been involved in and religion has not been the driving force of the work that I have witnessed. Youth work, as the practice we’d recognise today, undertaken for its own sake (rather than with evangelical or political purpose) was instigated by duties given to local authorities (most widely post Second World War) via the state – this was essentially a secular process – youth work continues to be used by faith and other interests, although not as an end in itself, but as a means to other ends.

A view that holds more familiarity with me is described by Jon Savage. Savage describes the ‘Rainbow Corner’ (opened in November 1942) as a result of the American GI<sup>6</sup> coming to Britain during the Second World War. Rainbow Corner, “aimed to recreate that staple of American adolescent life, the corner drug store” (Savage, 2008: 418). This demonstrates that Rainbow Corner was not influenced by ragged schools, Sunday schools or The YMCA; Rainbow Corner was a simulation of what the American soldiers had back at home in the United States of America.

GIs shot pool, played pinball or listened to a jukebox stocked with the latest hits. The two dining rooms could seat two thousand men, while the basement

snack bar (...) served waffles, hamburgers, doughnuts, coffee and endless Cokes. (Savage, 2008: 418)

The ‘mass observation’ project enabled this model to be adapted for what we’d recognise as a youth club – a place to ‘be’; chiefly concerned with socialising and the fundamental benefits that can arise out of the same.

This recreational hub for young people to hang out in is more in keeping with my own experience of a youth club, as well as public perception of what youth workers do. It appears that public opinion is that most youth workers simply play pool with young people. I have personally experienced this on many occasions.

The influx of American soldiers brought its own problems, such as a rise in crime; “figures for 1944 showed an increase of 50 per cent from 1938”, and also, “during the war, one-third of all babies were born illegitimately” (Savage, 2008: 419). Rainbow Corner did have workers but they were not specifically called youth workers. I find it difficult to imagine that the workers were encouraging illegitimate babies and criminal activities as opposed to working with the young people to reduce this issue, like a youth worker would. Sexual expression is an expression of youth; encourage youth expression and sexual expression – unlike the ragged school’s repression – will occur. Maybe it’s a matter of personal perspective which of these might be preferred, but perhaps most 16-year-olds would probably pass on the ragged school option.

Late in the Second World War, *Picture Post* ran an article about Rainbow Corner and they described it as, “the perfect example of what a club for young people should be”, stating that,

... this US establishment shamed most wartime British efforts to cater to its youth: The Americans have come and created fine centres of recreation for their men. (...) Rainbow Corner should become a shining model for the new voluntary service response for the needs of ‘British young people’. (Savage, 2008: 421)

Savage paints a picture closer to my experience of youth work and the journey I have taken; yet it is still very different. I am no closer to defining what youth work is or understanding where it came from. Maybe this confusion concerning the history of youth work is the reason why the phrase itself is so hard to define. Smith’s religious historical account of youth work may be down to how his own experiences have influenced his perspective, as it has my own. Or perhaps it is typical of the most common mistake of the amateur historian – to read the present into the past? The earlier ‘enclaves’ of ‘work with the young’ (with faith, political and even military ambitions) might be thought of to have about as much in common with youth work at its ethical zenith as a penny-farthing has with a modern racing motorcycle? Rainbow corner might at least be understood as a sort of 1950s BSA TT model.

## RESEARCH AND RESULTS

The aim of my research was to gain insight into where I have inherited my own values and perceptions of youth work. In order to substantiate my claim that youth work is in decline and to establish whether others support my claim, I carried out qualitative research, interviewing key members who have inspired my own youth work journey.

The responses from my interviews highlighted that work with young people should aim to work with young people so that they might, “participate in new experiences” (Appendix 2), and, “broaden their horizons”. As a young person, I was exposed to new experiences, such as, seeing my first play whilst taking part in a trip provided by my youth club. I was also encouraged to resign from my job to enable me to go on a month’s long trip to Africa. Having been given opportunities like these, I learnt to see that expanding the horizons of the young people I work with is important and this is an aim that I continue to work towards.

Another goal that came up often was to ‘challenge young people’. This is some thing of a clichéd catchphrase that gets bounded about in youth work. Bit like ‘confront’ it feels inappropriately aggressive. Others include being ‘non-judgmental’ and ‘boosting young people’s self-esteem’. The overuse of these phrases renders them meaningless. For instance, there is no reliable or expedient way in the course of youth work practice to measure relative self-esteem both prior to, or subsequent to, the worker’s intervention. Youth projects have attempted to measure these outcomes through evaluations, which are normally no more than numerical score cards. These are then used to generate statistics, but offer no realistically authentic indication about an individual’s feelings. The idea that youth workers should remain non-judgemental is inaccurate and maybe risky as their ability to make professional judgements (be they paid or voluntary) is at times crucial. Although this is situational, and maybe youth workers avoid consciously looking to convert young people to their views, youth workers do need to make judgements in the interest of safeguarding but also about things like ‘is this person feeling hurt?’ or ‘am I helping this person too much?’ Consequently it could be deemed unprofessional to actively avoid making judgements, or probably more accurately, pretending we are not making them.

Despite this, I feel similar to one of my interviewees that youth workers, “constantly challenge themselves and therefore can’t help but challenge others”. While perhaps we might need to see ourselves as more questioning than ‘challenging’ or; confrontational (one doesn’t necessarily want to sound too much like a latter day Mike Tyson) one might hope that this would eventually lead to discovery and understanding – challenge can expect counter challenge and as such a confrontation.

This questioning stance encourages dialogue, which can lead to dialectic and, it is often claimed, the same can result in the building of positive associations with young people, although who decides what is ‘positive’ and how do we know how positive is sometimes moot points.

My research also uncovered a more passionate sense of the origins of youth than those claimed by Smith or Davies. Bruce spoke to me about how he feels that, “youth work was always seeking to challenge authorities and encouraging young people to do the same”. He started Basingstoke’s first Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) group after noticing a lack of provision for these groups. Although initially management refused to support it, Bruce was able to get the backing of other professionals and run it voluntarily for a year before presenting a report to the head of service and obtaining the support of colleagues in the field.

Che Guevara argued that,

The arms of the enemy, his ammunition, his habits must be considered; because the principal source of provision for the guerrilla force is precisely in enemy armaments. If there is a possibility of choice, we should prefer the same type as that used by the enemy. (Guevara, 2008: 56)

I have found this to be resonant amongst some youth workers who can take something such as a grant (funding) form, which is meant to be used for encouraging young people back to work, and instead using it to provide a more generic experience for a much wider group of young people.

I started in youth work as a volunteer, inspired in part by my own experiences as a young person and the work I witnessed and benefited from. One example of this is when I witnessed a previous manager of mine, Bianca, facilitating a sexual health session working with the ‘naughty’ boys from the local school. They were playing a sexual health version of the popular children’s game ‘Pass-the-Parcel’. I was amazed at how Bianca had turned this sensitive and potentially embarrassing subject into a fun and competitive game.

I know I am not alone when I say that somebody has inspired me to pursue youth work. Bruce said there were several people who inspired him to want to work with young people, one of who was Mike Jones. Jones led the first ever team in the world to kayak the river Dudh Kosi, which runs from the summit of Mount Everest. Bruce was impressed with Jones’ ability to work with young people so that they might thrive in demanding and unfamiliar circumstances.

While speaking to my interviewees about how they see current youth work, overall there was a tendency to use relatively emotive phrases such as, “it’s a shame”, “youth work does not exist”, as well as speaking as if youth work has been a victim and its demise a planned attack. I feel that youth work is currently in a critical state. When I say this, I am not referencing all aspects of youth work; I am referring to the passionate, innovative, questioning guerrilla warfare type of youth work (see Belton, 2009: 145-165). This type of youth work is concerned with working with young people to create new opportunities and experiences for young people, rather than generating statistics and moulding young people in to commodities for the labour market to exploit; youth work in the UK having been given the task of readying young people for exploitation, playing a part in providing a relatively skilled, relatively compliant, relatively cheap workforce.

Whilst thinking about the past, it is not uncommon to reflect on it through rose-tinted glasses, or even a rose-tinted magnifying glass. I was therefore pleased that

my interviewees did not paint an idealised picture of the past. Amongst the responses was Clare, who hoped,

That it's not still mostly happening in second-rate rooms with 'five a day' and other public health posters on the wall, with cupboards filled with equipment that no one knows how to use (because Dave who used to work there has left).

Chris echoed Clare's fears adding that, "at its worst it can be a pool table in the corner of a hall amidst a hubbub of chaotic behaviour – little more than a shelter with some semi-responsible adults keeping a watchful eye on young people".

While some youth workers might see the above scenario as a great starting point for a more dimensioned sort of youth work than the 'get 'em doing stuff' school, it is important to take the potentially distorted view of past practice into consideration when discussing the history of youth work. Todd Boyd highlights this when he argues that the, "civil rights generation has come to stand as something sacred" (Boyd, 2002: 9) and the post civil rights generation are seen to have achieved nothing in comparison. They are almost held, "hostage because its members did not have to eat at segregated lunch counters" (ibid., 2003: 9). However, Boyd is not trying to disrespect the civil rights generation. Like myself is grateful for those who 'laid down their life'. However, the fight continues and constantly living in the past, effectively downplaying the achievements of the current generation, can halt a generation from moving forward. I feel that this hostage situation can be related to in both youth work and hip-hop where the past is held up as the golden years and those who have been around for a long time sometimes have a 'been there done that attitude'.

‘YO! HIP HOP STARTED OUT IN THE HEART’  
(HILL, L 1998: 00:00 – 00:20)

The lyrics 'Hip-hop started out in the Park' have been repeated for generations starting with MC Shan in 1988 and Jay Z some 20 years later. Which is no surprise given its accuracy, in 1970, by a group of people in the Bronx. I have no certainty about this but I do not believe that their aim was to change the world while they stole electricity from streetlights to power their block parties. However, shape the world they did. As hip-hop grew it began to infiltrate the world from water<sup>7</sup> to the White House.<sup>8</sup> Drake once said, "Started from the bottom now we here" (Drake, 2013). The history of this social movement is so expansive and like the roots of a tree, it would be implausible to follow each individual root. The purpose for delving into the history of hip-hop is to draw out the comparisons between it and youth work; I have therefore kept the history brief.

'Hip-hop' has become a noun that describes a genre of music; however it is actually describes a movement or culture. Within hip-hop culture there are many elements, the main four being 'graffiti', 'b-boying' or break dancing, 'DJing' and 'rapping'. KRS One expanded on this with five additional 'elements: beat boxing, fashion, language, street knowledge, and entrepreneurialism' (Hess, 2007: X). My

focus will be the rap element of hip-hop, as a comparative to the element of dialogue in youth work.

Amongst many places rap can trace its roots, such as, Girot story telling in West Africa and spoken word jazz. Many of its characteristics can be traced back to a game called, 'The Dozens'. The Dozens is, "a game of exchanging, in contest form ritualized verbal insults, which are usually in rhymed couplets and often profane" (Greene, 2012: 376). A typical dozens verse could be,

I don't play the dozens, the dozens ain't my game, but the way I fuck your mother is a god damn shame. (Wald, 2012: 3)

It is thought that its name derives from a punishment for slaves whereby they were, "grouped in lots of a 'cheap dozen' for sale to slave owners. For a black to be sold as part of the 'dozens' was the lowest blow possible" (Saloy, 1990). As slaves faced insults on a daily basis, the dozens made light of these insults in a 'sticks and stones', tongue out kind of way. Many anthropologists and sociologists see the dozens as a game, ritual, or rite of passage for young black men. Robin Kelley disagrees with this believing that they have misinterpreted it. Kelley claims:

Ethnographers seem to be oblivious to the fact that their very presence shaped what they observed. Asking their subject to 'play the dozens' (...) creating a ritual performance for the sake of an audience. (Kelley, 1998: 52)

He argues, "the pleasure of the dozens is not viciousness of the insult but the humour, the creative pun, the outrageous metaphor" (Kelley, 1998: 53). I believe that the characteristics used in the dozens, such as the use of outrageous metaphors, creating humour, the essence of competition and rhyming are prevalent in modern rap music. Given rap's connections with the dozens it would be logical to conclude that hip-hop has hereditary connections with struggle and oppression. This is further confirmed when one learns that the 1970s' Bronx is the birthplace of hip-hop.

The Bronx, in the 1970s, was, amongst other things known as: 'America's worst slum', 'the city of despair', 'ghetto of ghettos', 'the cancer' (Hess, 2007: 1), confirming that hip-hop is the music of the downtrodden. Further evidence that hip-hop spoke for the have-nots, is that the first block parties were only able to take place because DJs illegally plugged in 'their sound systems into the street lights to party' (Hess, 2007: 5).

Block party DJs used the breaks from other musical genres to create their own sound. Hip-hop continues this tradition of sampling and of reworking pre-recorded music; a practice Mark Dery calls the, "musical equivalent of shoplifting" (Dery, 2004: 471). Dery believes for this reason, "Rap by definition, is political music" (Dery, 2004: 471). Hip-Hop music grew out of a harsh dissonant environment, but due to its survival instincts and rebellious mentality, it has been able to adapt and evolve in order to make beautiful music in harmony with the struggles of the people. Hip-hop has also become so prosperous and popular that it is now out selling other genres. It is this prosperous nature that has led a significant number of hip-hoppers to question hip-hop's 'realness', claiming that it has sold out and that

it is now an inferior imitation of what it once was. Gloria Clemente, Rosie Perez's character in the film, *'White Men Can't Jump'*, summarises this double-edged sword of success that hip-hop has found itself impaled on. Perez said,

Sometimes when you win, you really lose,  
and sometimes when you lose, you really win,  
and sometimes when you win or lose, you actually tie,  
and sometimes when you tie, you actually win or lose.  
Winning or losing is all one organic mechanism  
(White Men Can't Jump, 1992)

As perplexing as Perez's monologue is (if everyone loses there are no winners – or losers) hip-hop's success has in some way been its own undoing. It is similar to the 'girl' that Common referred to; as she became more attractive she became corrupted in Common's eyes. The penalty for placing your head above the parapet is that you will either be decapitated or recruited. However, with hip-hop having this much power it is inevitable that it will become corrupted with businesses wanting to make money from it, as well as being able to hold a certain level of control over the public. Hip-hop artists promoting various brands such as 'Timberland' and 'Crystal Champagne' demonstrate this.

Youth work's success of being able to build relationships with young people and encourage them to question their environment has been hijacked in something of the same way. The success of hip-hop is no longer just attracting rappers who want to show off how nice<sup>9</sup> their raps are, or those seeing it as a medium to address injustice. It is now also attracting those who have infiltrated the industry purely for monetary gain. The music that once was referred to as the, "CNN for black people" (Cowen, 1998: 173) has now become the butt of some people's jokes. Comedian David Alan Grier talks about hip-hop in his stand-up routine, saying,

The world lost a luminary recently. Hip-hop. And it drowned from too much [bleep] AND CHAMPAGNE. What the hell happened to you, hip-hop? Artists with names like, terminator x and furious five AND [bleep] WITH ATTITUDE Once preached about social awareness and political enlightenment when did fight the power<sup>10</sup> become WAIT TILL YOU SEE MY [Bleep]?<sup>11</sup> [Sic] (Grier, 2010)

Grier highlights the downfall of hip-hop, and how others like Joell Ortiz<sup>12</sup> agree that for a time, hip-hop was seen as a laughing stock.

In the introduction, I made reference to my view that both hip-hop<sup>13</sup> and youth work have followed similar journeys. From examining the literature of both, it is evident they both started with an idea of growing organically in response to needs – the need for education, finding a voice, and escape by way of entertainment. In my experience, youth work had the aim to increase social awareness, to encourage young people to question their environment and to have fun. Some youth workers believe that having your practice, 'informed by political and moral values', as well as having a 'belief in equality and respect for the environment' (Belton, 2010: 69), is '*radical youth work*'. However, I consider this to be the very spirit of youth

work, because my formative years were spent working with youth workers who promoted social awareness and questioning. Radical youth work has become my constructed norm. In fairness to Belton (2010) he does make clear that that is kind of what ‘radical’ means – ‘back to foundations’. He makes this point pretty clearly – he is not trying to be ‘rebellious’, he sees current practice (including the attempted contortions of ‘informal education’ and ‘social pedagogy’) largely as the antithesis of what youth work ‘is’ – just like what might be called ‘hip hop’, that which has been appropriated by the means of exploitation, can be said to authentically be hip hop.

It seems doubtful that the growth of youth work as we know it stemmed from Ragged Schools, which were really an institutional injection of social conformity and control at the base of society, faith interventions such as ‘the Espérance’ or even from its affiliation with the political and social struggle of the Suffragettes. However, the obvious similarities with the Rainbow Corner provision, that reflected the need of young people to be provided with something different than what perhaps adult society might collectively approve of, demonstrates the inherent rebellious nature of youth work and those who have facilitated the practice. They have suffered with the rose tinted glasses syndrome of believing that everything was better ‘back in the day’, but it stands to reason that there must have always been both good and bad examples, as it is not possible for one to exist without the other. As the saying goes ‘if something is everything then it is actually nothing’. It is this spirit of being politically motivated, questioning your environment and speaking out, which was once inherent, that is now being considered extrinsic, leaving those who choose that path wearing the label of radicalism, or ‘political rapper’.

But maybe we pick our own labels. Seeing what was once ‘normal’ as being now radical is saying that what is now considered radical was once reactionary. Many in the past managed to fool themselves and not a few may still suffer from the false consciousness that they do not serve political masters of an ideological hue they might not wish to understand they salute at every turn. At least to some extent fibbing about funding bids does not a revolution make. Drawing a salary, using resources for state or organisational ends implicates one; to deny this is to be a fool or a liar – working with it is another option – ‘it is as it is, and this is what I do with what it is?’

“THE QUESTION AIN’T WHETHER IT’S DEAD. IT’S MORE LIKE,  
WHO KILLED IT AND WHEN”

(BUDDEN, J 2005: 00:14 – 00: 20)

In December 2006, veteran rapper Nas released an album entitled, ‘*Hip Hop is Dead*’. The album featured a gloomy cover with the photo taken from the perspective of looking out from a grave. Nas is dressed all in black, crouched down at the mouth of the grave with vultures circling above him in the sinister skies, as he drops a single rose into the grave. The cover sets the tone, and confirms that Nas is not in two minds about what he feels about the state of hip-hop. In an interview,

Nas explained his reasons for the controversial title and claimed, “Hip-hop is dead because we as artists no longer have the power” (MusicMP3.RU, 2006).

This album sparked others to question the state of hip-hop. Rapper Joe Budden turned detective on his 16 minute track entitled, *Who Killed Hip-Hop*, where he set about finding the culprit for this crime. He listed a range of suspects from the humble iPod to hip-hop’s self-proclaimed king, Jay Z. This track was the catalyst behind my questions to the culprits of the demise of Youth Work.

Budden begins by pointing the finger at the highlighting of record sales, he raps, “It was a few years ago, but I remember the summer. 50 Cent made fans start looking at the numbers” (Budden, 2005, 01:00 – 01:10). In the summer of 2007, rapper 50 Cent made a statement, prior to the release of his *Curtis* album and Kanye West’s album *Graduation*. The statement said that if Kanye out sold him he would retire.<sup>13</sup> Competition has always been part of hip-hop, from Kool Moe Dee vs. Busy Bee in 1981 to LL Cool J vs. Canibus in 1997. However, this 50 Cent and Kanye feud was different, as unlike previous rap battles where the winner would be the person with the best lyrics, like in the dozens, instead this time it was all about record sales.

This statistical approach came up during my interviews with youth workers. Bruce felt the source of the demise of youth work is that it is becoming ‘statistic led’. He also concurs with Budden<sup>14</sup> claiming, ‘to be honest statistics mean very little’. But of course they do mean something, in terms of gaining funding for the work we do.

In the UK (like other contexts) the shift in the emphasis for youth work has been gradually moving from working towards outcomes such as, ‘achieve economic well being’ and ‘enjoy and achieve’ (Fraser, 2007: 5), to now working with youth contracts, which have an emphasis on taking NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) young people and turning them into EET (Engaged in Education, Employment, or Training) young people. Along with youth contracts comes Payment By Results (PBR). However, given the character of our society one can’t help but want what the alternative to this might be – payment despite results? That latter doesn’t feel possible or realistic.

However, when I first heard of PBR it reminded me of the summer I spent cold calling and canvassing for double glazing sales, working on commission. Commission driven environments are notoriously cut throat places, and therefore I was confused as to why it was being introduced to youth work. Within this new scheme a provider can receive payments, ‘up to £2,200 per person, depending on how successful they are at helping young people to make a sustainable move into a positive outcome’ (Department for Education, 2013). But why would this be surprising given we live in a capitalist society – why would I expect some kind of socialist model to be employed by a capitalist government?

By positive outcome they mean turning young people into commodities for the labour force market. A 17-year-old has around 12,500 working days ahead of them, maybe more if the retirement age keeps on increasing. When I was 17 I was encouraged to quit my job to enable me to go to Mali for four weeks. That helped convince me to become a youth worker – as such this trip had a function. It was a

good investment in terms of the maintenance and advancement of capitalism because it made me a potential agent of the same; a person who might help in creating a relatively skilled, relatively compliant, relatively cheap work force.

While there is no way of knowing what effect that trip had on me, when I returned I knew I didn't want to work in retail for another year. – in effect this was part of what transformed me from a worker into a worker who produces workers.

Fran Abrams questions the logic of setting targets like those that pertain widely in youth work. She asks, "... could there not be some flexibility for the voluntary sector just to do what it did best – to form relationships that worked" (Abrams, 2010: 148). But how exactly did they 'work'? The voluntary sector historically has gained most of its funding from the state, its agencies and allies (including big business) – might Abrams believe that somehow the sector was at some point independent of those who funded it? That feels simply naive.

Although Abrams is referring to the voluntary sector, building relationships is what youth workers do best (but that has a rationale to it like every other target). The attention that youth workers now have to pay to results (although results have long been a factor, although perhaps not as overtly as over the last 20 years) I can see only resulting in two possible outcomes:

- 1) Youth workers conform, which most do, although many talk about 'working within the system' as if they were able to both be part of the system while rebelling against it – at least some of this feels like self delusion once you've heard overt compliance described in this way for the 10,000th time
- 2) They revert back to the guerrilla tactics.

However, neither of these possible tactics avoid young people being seen as potential commission instead of as individual human beings. The introduction of PBR also confirms Moira's (research respondent) fears that youth workers have been 'wooded by money', leaving them chasing the funding and forgetting the reasons why they become youth workers. But this is not altogether new. Youth workers have always been obliged to 'go for funding', certainly since the 1970s.

Hip-hop has also been seduced by money and many have forgotten why they became rappers; their aim is just to wear their wealth and live an extravagant life, or as rappers refer to it to 'floss'. Jay Z openly admits that he, "... dumber down for my audience to double my dollars" (Jay Z, 2003: 01:40 – 01:50), and he goes on to say, "If skills sold, truth be told, I'd probably be lyrically Talib Kweli. Truthfully I wanna rhyme like Common Sense. But I did 5 mill" (Jay Z, *ibid.*). Jay Z is acknowledging that being lyrical does not necessarily bring the money in, so he is opting to simplify his rhymes in order to sell more records. The point that Moira was making is that you don't need lots of money to carry out good youth work and history shows youth work has never got lots of money ever – but you do need some money some times.

I feel that at one point in history, to obtain funding for projects was easier with initiatives such as the Youth Opportunities Fund, but that too had political strings attached, as did the 'Manpower Services Commission' and 'Youth Opportunities Programme' before that. But need for funding seems to have made youth workers more dependent on money than their own skills and motivation. This dependency

has meant the creativity that used to develop through running sessions with just a stack of old newspaper and some balls made from balloons and rice is lost, and these skills are not passed on.

Budden also listed the temporary nature of rappers in hip-hop as cause for concern; he explains, “Hip-hop is just a stepping stool. Till we find another role we can step into” (Budden, 2005). This was in reference to rappers jumping ship, leaving hip-hop to become actors, fashion designers and nightclub owners. This is being mirrored in youth work as youth workers leave to become social workers and teachers, or setting up commercially oriented training organisations. Of the people I interviewed, not one of them is still practicing youth work. So it seems even those who critique the practice selling out have sold out? ‘Things aint wot they used to be’ – more Max Bygraves than Gill Scott-Heron? Some have moved into similar sector professions such as teaching, while others no longer work with young people due to the constraints around it.

Prior to embarking on my own professional training I was encouraged to think about what I was doing from my then Head of Service as they believed a Social Work degree would open up more doors for me in the future. There is a belief that social work is somehow a more proficient and adaptable profession. Although one might wonder what a social worker would have to say about that proposal, youth workers have a different set of skills, which are equally as valid as that of social workers, although youth work has always had trouble providing the evidence to back such a claim. The problem that comes with youth workers leaving the profession is its affect on the group; as members leave the group becomes potentially weaker. That said, if the liabilities leave, those that lack the commitment, skill, tenacity or belief, this might result in solidarity between kindred souls. The boat moves faster when it’s lighter and those who don’t row anyway are effectively passengers.

However, for the most part employed youth workers are not given the choice of staying in professional practice. I worked for one of the youth services that merged with Connexions to become the Integrated Youth Support Services. Once this happened there was a move towards working with targeted groups and careers and as a result many of the youth workers, who did not work exclusively with targeted groups, were made redundant and open access youth provisions were closed.

This also had an impact on voluntary workers but in the UK, as throughout the world, there are hundreds of times more volunteer youth worker than those in employment. Youth work, as a practice, is not reliant on those paid to undertake it; far from it.

In the context of hip hop Budden drew attention to a list of label mergers<sup>15</sup> and YouTube.<sup>16</sup> For him, because YouTube and social networking sites give everybody the facilities to put their music out there, the record companies no longer monitor it, so the quality cannot be guaranteed. I feel that this is a good thing for music as it encourages variety. I am not about to blame YouTube for causing a decline in youth work; however, the British government has given a similar ease of access to young people’s services. The National Citizenship Service is the Coalition’s initiative started in 2011. The aim is to build, ‘skills for work and life’, while

young people, ‘take on new challenges and meet new friends’ (GOV.UK, 2014). The programme consists of residentials and young people setting up projects, which are activities that youth work has traditionally carried out. However, in 2012, Serco, a company which has a history of winning military contracts,<sup>17</sup> began pursuing contracts to monitor and tag offenders, as well as becoming one of the world leaders in providing custodial services to governments. Now, ‘the private sector services firm has won the largest number of regional contracts to deliver the government’s National Citizen Service in 2013 and 2014’ (Third Sector, 2014). With large organisations, such as, Serco, carrying out so many roles in society my fear is that it won’t be long until we are living in a world similar what George Orwell described in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*.

Having looked at many reasons for the decline of youth work, for example, a focus on measurable outcomes (although it is difficult to see how one can have unmeasurable outcomes) it seems youth work has been suffocated by the seduction of money as well as large private organisations carrying out the work. The work that is on offer looks sterile or clearly ideologically led, but that doesn’t mean we have to do it. There are still ‘real’ rappers out there – they don’t have to be defined by their recording contracts.

However, these reasons have a common thread and the thread that has managed to weave its way into the fabric of youth work is more like capitalist stain. With the emphasis being on encouraging young people in to the job market as well as new monetary initiatives such as PBR. This said, it has to be questionable if this has ever been different. From its inception as a generic service in the 1960s youth work has been part-and-parcel of the capitalist system, how could it have ever somehow dodged (not been part of) capitalism, its functions and norms?

The role of youth work has never been what I define youth work to be – encouraging, questioning, giving young people the chance to experience new things and develop their own ideas. My research corroborates my ideals. However, the aims that youth work has been funded for is: to create a, ‘relatively flexible, relatively compliant, relatively cheap work force with the aim of making Britain more competitive within the international capitalist labour market’ (Belton, 2010: XI). What else could be the case – unless we believe there is some sort of philanthropic strain within the kind of state that kills innocent people with drones to facilitate international capitalism?

Due to the guerrilla tactics youth workers employed in the past, youth workers were able to work under the radar and work towards the alternative aims, which were not total economically driven. But this has not gone unnoticed. In the UK and probably elsewhere, this stealth-like work has caused those who fund the work to place tighter restrictions on youth work. This is substantiated with the ‘Department for Education relinquishing responsibility for youth policy in England to the Cabinet Office’ (CYPnow, 2013). I see this response as similar to a teacher who moves the troublesome pupil to sit next to them so that they can keep a closer eye. The question is can the pupil still manage to talk to their peers from under this watchful eye.

“YOU CAN REMAIN STUCK IN A BOX. I’MMA BREAK OUT  
AND THEN HIDE EVERY LOCK”  
(LAMAR, K 2012: 2:45 – 2:51)

Hip-hop is now in a state of recovery and is arguably in the best place it has been for the last decade or so. This rejuvenation is due, in part, to the influx of new rappers giving hip-hop a new lease of life and is no longer being detained by the past. Hip-hop, as a youth and/or cultural movement, has matured and been impinged upon by those who wish to change it. As a result the founders of the genre act like the guardians of hip-hop, as pushy over protective parents who wish to direct their child down a certain path, meaning hip-hop has grown up with creativity and defiance for parents. Therefore it was inevitable that new rappers would inherit the rebellious gene. The new wave of rappers have swaggered into hip-hop with a backpack<sup>18</sup> full of energy and ambition surrounded by a youthful air of self assurance, even with a whiff of arrogance. Along with this injection of youthful exuberance, youth work should consider other strategies from hip-hop to ensure its own survival.

Youth work and youth workers have suffered in the same way that hip-hop did, falling victim to looking at the past as the answer. In models put forward by Tuckman (1965), which are used by youth workers, studies that took place over 40 years ago are regurgitated as if they were facts not theories. Ideas like usefulness of ‘thinking-in-and-on-action’ fall into the same sort of bracket, being overused and their relative usefulness under substantiated – perhaps the likes of this stuff aren’t even theories as it is hard to see how they might be proved or disproved in any robust way?

Part of the work that youth workers carry out is about praxis, whereby you read and understand the theory and then try it out, to see how it works, and use some professional judgement instead of merely responding to order. It is easy to fall into the trap of shoe horning theories into practice, as Sherlock Holmes once said, “Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts” (Doyle, 2003: 189). For example, seeing a group arguing, and interpreting this as the ‘storming phase’,<sup>19</sup> believing that how you respond to this is a, “moment of truth from which either optimal functioning or hopeless fragmentation will likely follow” (Behrman, 1998: 154). Instead I urge new youth workers to have a similar self-assurance to that shown by freshmen rappers and believe that their opinions, judgements and ideas are just as valid as Tuckman (indeed one is tempted to say they have to be more valid ... at least they were born after 1938!). Concluding that a single intervention is not the making or breaking of a group.

New rappers are not completely dismissive of the past. For example, in 2013, J Cole released a track entitled *Let Nas down* Cole states, “long live the idols, may they never be your rivals” (Cole, 2013). Cole uses the song to explain to Nas and his fans the reasoning behind releasing the pop rap record called *Work out* in 2011. In a talk Cole said that he was so happy with the *Work out* record and that he had learnt the radio game and believed that he ‘beat the game’ with that record (Mike YI, 2013). On the *Let Nas Down* track Cole is disappointed but unapologetic, believing that Nas should understand as Nas has made radio tracks<sup>20</sup> in the past.

I feel that in order for youth work to be rejuvenated youth workers should be respectful but not obsequious of the work of those who write instructional style youth work books. That said, respect is something earned. While the 'nostalgiaites' disallow entry into the sect of anyone they see as heretical (anyone saying something other than backing up their repetition) it's a moot point how much respect they might warrant.

Youth work could also benefit from learning the game and beating the game philosophy, as shown by Cole returning to the guerrilla roots of the past. Youth work may be constantly given directive policies and initiatives, such as youth contracts, but for the revival of youth work to occur youth workers need to find ways to make these programmes work for young people, or formulate their own programmes. Youth work, like music, is never going to be a one size fits all, as it is about dealing with individuals and individual tastes, as well as dealing with the times and contexts.

As rapping has evolved from 'the dozens', challenging and competition is inherent. This trait has enabled hip-hop to grow and gave breath to its new life. In 2013, rapper Kendrick Lamar featured on a track with rappers Big Sean and Jay Electronica. On the track Lamar said,<sup>21</sup> "I'm Makaveli's offspring, I'm the king of New York,<sup>22</sup> King of the Coast, one hand, I juggle them both" (Lamar, 2013), as prior to this rappers were competing to be the best rapper from either coast. He goes on to say,

I'm usually homeboys with the same niggas I'm rhymin' with  
 But this is hip-hop and them niggas should know what time it is.  
 And that goes for Jermaine Cole, Big KRIT, Wale,  
 Pusha T, Meek Millz, A\$AP Rocky, Drake,  
 Big Sean, Jay Electron', Tyler, Mac Miller  
 I got love for you all but I'm tryna murder you niggas.  
 Trying to make sure your core fans never heard of you niggas.  
 They don't wanna hear not one more noun or verb from you niggas.  
 What is competition? I'm trying to raise the bar high.  
 (Lamar, 2013)

Lamar is not trying to cause beef<sup>23</sup> he is laying down a challenge to other rappers, reminding them that competition is part of rap's make up. I'm not suggesting that youth workers start challenging each other to a rap battle, but in my experience youth workers are not good at self-promotion. There are many great youth projects going on, the problem is that no one hears about what great work they are doing. The surrounding community may see and value the work of a youth provision but it is not appreciated in a wider context. If it were, it would be more difficult to close these projects.

On the other hand, if youth work achieves it is because it takes a political stance, as soon as this is recognised it tends to become a target to be reformed or wiped out – much the same as happened to hip-hop.

I had the pleasure of working in a youth club that had been there for over 30 years and I spoke to older members about their experiences of the club. I am sure

that this is not the only youth club with this type of legacy. If youth workers started to share their practice with other youth workers and professions I believe it would bring respect for the profession, enable the transfer of skills, as well as enable front line youth workers to shape youth policy. Add that to the self-policing approach that hip-hop has shown, such as rappers using their songs to discuss the over-use of words such as Nigga and Bitch. Wale uses his Track *Kramer* to talk about the difference between Nigga and Nigger claiming that:

Nigga ain't bad, see, niggas just had  
 A clever idea to take something they said  
 Into something we have, something we flipped,  
 to something with swag, nigga, don't be mad.  
 (Wale, 2008: 01:58 – 02:08)

Lupe Fiasco has a similar track but this time he refers to the word 'bitch'. On his track *Bad Bitch* he tells a story of the current use of the word and how it is becoming confusing for kids. Lupe has a Freudian view of the word and suggests it is similar to Freud's Madonna/whore complex, whereby, "men love they have no desire and where they desire they cannot love" (Singer, 1987: 32). In Lupe's story the boy and girl have different perceptions of the word claiming, "He thinks disrespectfully, she thinks of that sexually" (Fiasco, 2012).

This is exploration – it is akin to youth work in this respect – it doesn't just shut something down because it is or potentially is offensive – it looks at the world square on which is different to applying sellotape to someone's mouth or just shutting them down.

As a profession that places great importance on the use of dialogue it's surprising that questioning and self-policing are not commonplace in youth work. Much of the time we seem to do little more than focus on 'confronting' and 'challenging', what is taken as unacceptable or against personal or social norms – it tends to often be 'dialogue on my terms'.

Both Lupe and Wale question the over-use of words that are commonplace in hip-hop. Yet it's rare in youth work that youth workers will question accepted norms, such as, working towards boosting self-esteem and the agreement that youth work is almost impossible to measure. We sing ourselves one song but the lyrics belie the actions?

I feel that employing this approach in a youth work setting could be vital to its rejuvenation. As Eldridge Cleaver once said, "Too much agreement kills a chat" (Cleaver, 1968: 31). By replacing the agreement with questioning we could resuscitate the chat and hopefully youth work.

There are countless numbers of reasons for the revival of hip-hop but I feel the largest contributor is that it has regained its political voice on a global scale. Whether it's Palestinian hip-hop group Dam, who rap about poverty and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or French Rapper Keny Arkana who comments on the 2005 civil unrest. In the UK we also have politically aware rappers such as Plan B. On his track, *Ill Manors*, Plan B talks about the state of Great Britain. He claims that, "We got an Eco-friendly government, they preserve our natural habitat. Built

an entire Olympic village around where we live without pulling down any flats” (B, 2013). Plan B is commenting on how the government is seeking to preserve the conditions in which some people live, in this case the feverish tower blocks of east London. He goes on to ask, “Who closed down the community centre? I kill time there, used to be a member. What will I do now until September?” (B, 2013). Plan B is commentating on the London riots of 2011, suggesting that maybe, if the community centre wasn’t closed, the youth would have something to do during the summer. These themes are carried on throughout the album, as part of the hip-hop musical *‘Ill Manors’*.

However, this is resonant of social engineering, arguably ‘making the world safe for capitalism’. Does the state care about the so-called ‘riots’ because capitalism doesn’t like its investments threatened? Bring in the youth workers to quell the restless young with no stake in capitalism – get them to have a stake in it so preventing them from trying to resist or threaten it?

Becoming politically aware, challenging stereotypes and questioning young people’s norms, and the norms of how young people are viewed and referred to, was a feature of the youth work that I experienced when younger. As a young person I felt that I was politically informed from reading the papers and watching the news. It was through attending my local youth club that I gained perspective on politics and began to realise that it did affect my area and me. I have led sessions where young people are telling me about benefits scroungers and how they steal our money. Regardless of my personal view, I feel that youth workers should be giving a more balanced opinion on the political system that they live in. If they don’t they are effectively supporting every negative perspective relating to you that’s turned out in the media – can we honestly or meaningfully declare our neutrality without betraying our own cause?

Youth work has always been politically led but now it is becoming overtly so; youth workers need to respond and tackle it.

## CONCLUSION

People talk about Hip-Hop like it’s some giant livin’ in the hillside  
 Comin’ down to visit the townspeople  
 We are Hip-Hop  
 Me, you, everybody,  
 We are Hip-Hop  
 So Hip-Hop is goin’ where we goin’  
 (Def, M, 1999: 01:15 – 01:30)

In conclusion, I believe that youth work and hip-hop share similar traits from their birth, this is due to the intrinsic link between youth work and popular culture. Over the years, both youth work and hip-hop have shown themselves to be powerful adversaries but also allies to capitalism, which placed them unknowingly in capitalism’s crosshairs. This resulted in both social movements being assassinated by way of corruption. Hip-hop with its ‘bling bling’ mentality and living to excess

is the embodiment of a capitalist culture. The same is happening with youth work. One of my interviewees (Moria) said that, “Youth work at its best is when there is no money involved and it is done voluntarily”. But there’s always money involved – arguably not if one just operates on the street – but every facility means an effective donation – again to think otherwise is naïve – even the bus ride to where people are costs money.

This was confirmed when Moria went on to say, “I can only wax lyrical now because I have the car, house and can afford to live comfortably”. This need to live comfortably and aspiring for more possessions in search of comfort can hinder people from speaking out and placing their head above the parapet. To quote a one of part-time youth workers circa 1980 – ‘in this game you got to take shit and shoot shit’.

Youth work, being intrinsically connected by purpose and practice to national policy, state institutions, connected welfare and education, must be shaped, informed and confirmed by the same. At the same time youth work plays a part in shaping, informing and confirming these institutional structures. This has been so ever since youth work has been identified as such (at least). There has *never* been, and arguably could never have been (given the nature of the social form) a nationally defined and sanctioned youth service that was somehow not only organically separated from and independent of the nature of the state (from an Althusserian perspective) but also, practically unopposed or even encourage, to operate in direct contradiction of state ideology and function. To believe that this is not the case, the position effectively touted in much of the dialogue that surrounds our practice, has to be delusional; the product of false consciousness.

While young people’s welfare has been consistently mooted as being at the centre of the purpose of youth work, their ‘education’ (they are seen as/assumed to be relatively ignorant) ‘development’ (from a state of taken-for-granted ‘underdevelopment’) and ‘transition’ (their effective ‘reform’ from non-conformist youth to compliant adult) have been part of the officialised social function of youth workers. However, as facets of the above research indicate, youth workers have been on the defensive since day one.

For all this, hip-hop has shown that it is possible to both have your opinion and still live comfortably, although it depends how comfortable you want to be and what you regard as comfortable. I believe that comfort is about more than possessions and money; maybe youth workers can find comfort in knowing that they are equipping young people with the skills to be questioning and critical thinking adults. However, they may already have the skills – they not unusually come to us with anguish – they often just need a place to express this and someone to listen and respond. This, in itself, is action and the start of something more than mere reaction (the likes of which was demonstrated in the UK in the riots of 2011).

I set out to discover what state youth work is in and whether, or not, it could be saved. What I discovered is that my expectations of youth work are actually what is considered to be radical youth work by reactionaries (what in another time and place might have been called ‘the capitalist running dogs’). But radical just means

going back to first principles – the soul and spirit of the work (not it’s formularised ‘history’ but its essence) – bit like some of the new hip hoppers are trying to do?

Although my expectations are ideological, they have been built from my own experiences; therefore I have seen that this form of youth work is possible.

I have also discovered that both hip-hop and youth work have been infected by the capitalist rich soil in which they both grew up. Hip-hop critics are forever pointing the finger at rappers saying they sold out and that they are no longer ‘keeping it real’, as they become more and more successful. My initial thought prior to embarking on this research was that youth work had indeed sold out. What I have come to realise is that selling out is inevitable and it is not a reason to fall out of favour. Once hip-hop was adopted by the masses and was seen to exert power it was inevitable that it would be exploited by industries that have been built to enable that power to be harnessed. Youth work has also been a victim of this and has been led astray by the material elements of life, just like the girl Common was talking about in my introductory quote.

This said, it feels incumbent on youth workers to get away from asking those who have given up or effectively sold out what they think because that is always going backwards – ‘we are what we are, we are where we are, the past is a foreign land they do things differently there’ (to paraphrase LP Hartley’s 1953 opening of *The Go-Between*) – a view of history from the standpoint of delusion, false memory and false consciousness is inherently retrogressive – the future is surely the field we need to plough?

Youth work has been, and will be, a tool in encouraging non-conforming young people to conform, which is now labelling people as NEET to EET. In 1857, the Ragged Schools had the aim of doing what they could to enforce an ‘industrial education’ on the poorest of young people. Although I have learnt that this is not the reason why youth workers come in to the field, it is what we are now effectively funded to do.

People I interviewed who spoke about youth work in a *Holistic* manner were accepting that we are part of the system but suggested we can learn the game in order to beat it. As well as bringing new *Energy* to youth work, no longer regurgitating the instructions of old and finally being *Resourceful* like in the past, youth workers can work below the radar to bring about change. This has always been a minority pursuit, hence the ‘rebels’ are living in nice big houses, with nice cars. While they head up departments or direct policy, they lament the loss of the revolution and blame it on the system they have always been part of – perhaps there is no justice, just us!

Understanding that H.E.R. (Holistic, Energy & Resourceful) can be something of beauty but can equally be easily corrupted. But trying to understand says that we are proud of what she stands for. Rapper Rapsody summarizes this by using Common’s acronym where she states that, “Hip-hop in its essence is real; I’m still hearing every rhyme”<sup>24</sup> (Rapsody, 2011). I believe the very essence of youth work is ‘Real’.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> He had to change his name due to a band already having the name Common Sense.
- <sup>2</sup> H.E.R. is an acronym which means Hear Every Rhyme.
- <sup>3</sup> “Cause who I’m talkin bout y’all is hip-hop” (Common, 1994).
- <sup>4</sup> Jimmy Hoffa disappeared in 1975, although his body was never found it was presumed he was murdered.
- <sup>5</sup> 1990s is commonly referred to as the golden age of hip-hop.
- <sup>6</sup> The word G.I. used to describe the *soldiers* of the U.S. Army.
- <sup>7</sup> Rapper 50 Cent worked with Glacéau to create a vitamin water drink called Formula 50.
- <sup>8</sup> Barack Obama joked about Jay Z on a trip to Cuba by saying, “I got 99 Problems and now Jay-Z is one”.
- <sup>9</sup> ‘Nice’ is often used to describe how good a rappers lyrics are.
- <sup>10</sup> Public Enemy released ‘Fight the power’ single in June 1989.
- <sup>11</sup> Ying Yang twins released ‘Wait (The Whisper Song)’ in March 2005.
- <sup>12</sup> “Sometimes I wish it was dead, rather than look this stupid alive” (Ortiz, 2009).
- <sup>13</sup> 50 Cent’s album sold 691,000 in it first week in comparison to Kanye’s who sold 957,000. However 50 Cent did not retire.
- <sup>14</sup> “I hate to break it to you numbers always lie” (Budden, 2005: 04:20 – 04:25).
- <sup>15</sup> “They fired everybody and labels stared merging” (Budden, 2005).
- <sup>16</sup> “Was is it when Youtube came in the game, Now nobodys from their living rooms can make a name” (Budden, 2005).
- <sup>17</sup> “1960s the company won a piece of work that was to shape its future direction – a maintenance contract for the UK Ballistic Missile Early Warning System” (Serco, 2014).
- <sup>18</sup> The backpack is a feature of new rappers.
- <sup>19</sup> “The group goes through a period of more outspoken disagreements as members feel ‘safer’ to reveal themselves” (Sapin, 2009: 129).
- <sup>20</sup> “I mean, you made ‘You Owe Me’ dog, I thought that you could relate” (Cole, 2013). Nas’s *You owe me* was a track made for the charts.
- <sup>21</sup> Makaveli is an alias of rapper West Coast rap legend Tupac Shakur.
- <sup>22</sup> Christopher Wallace best known as The Notorious B.I.G. to as the King of New York.
- <sup>23</sup> Beef is wanting to start a fight or argument with somebody.
- <sup>24</sup> Rapsody uses changes the H.E.R to mean Hip-hop in its essence is real while paying homage to Common’s by saying I still hear every Rhyme.

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