INFORMAL AND POPULAR EDUCATION IN YOUTH AND COMMUNITY WORK

Seeking insights for Australian theory and practice from theories and practices in Germany and Singapore

Doctoral thesis
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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP / ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Note: I take responsibility for all translations from texts in German language.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative study of youth and community work in three countries. Using field work in Australia and Singapore, and a study of German literature I examine the way youth and community workers in these three countries theorise about their educational practice.

The following questions guide the research:

- Do youth and community workers practice informal education?
- What is successful informal education practice in youth and community work?
- Does the educational practice of youth and community workers serve to control its learners?
- Can the educational practice of youth and community workers emancipate learners?

The starting point for the research is an examination of informal and popular education in Australian youth and community work. I have practised, researched and taught youth and community work in Australia for almost twenty years. Drawing upon this experience and a series of interviews I describe and discuss the contradictions, ambiguities and different consciousnesses that characterise the way many Australian youth and community workers theorise about their practice.

I then seek insights for Australian theory and practice in German literature about youth and community work. German scholars have engaged in educational theorising about youth and community work dating back into the nineteenth century. I give an account of the history of this theorising and then analyse more recent debates between advocates of the critical-emancipatory, instrumental and historical-materialist perspectives.

In Singapore, youth and community work, if judged solely in terms of participation, is very successful, and I look for explanations for this success. Youth and community workers in Singapore are open about serving the interests of the state. Yet they use language and espouse goals similar to that of their Australian and German counterparts who, for the most part, claim to serve the interests of their communities. The study of this seeming paradox enables me to interrogate the claims of Australian youth and community workers that their practice is shaped by the needs of the people and that they seek to strengthen social wellbeing and cohesion.

I conclude my thesis by using the Centre for Popular Education at UTS as a case study and examine how the the lessons learnt in the course of my study of Australian and Singaporean practice and German theory can be used to analyse and explain the Centre's development. I close the thesis by answering the four guiding research questions.

Section 1

INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

Chapter 1

Introduction

Finding the research question

In the mid-1980s I was employed to research adult education in Aboriginal communities. I had been a community development practitioner and my colleagues in the community centre were surprised that I was leaving community work and moving into adult education. As far as they were concerned these were two different fields of practice. At that time I did not have qualifications in adult education but I could see that community workers planned and facilitated adult learning. I was perplexed that so few Australian community workers saw their work as I did. I wanted to prove them wrong and so, some years later, embarked on this study of the educational dimension of youth and community work.

I began the research for my thesis with this question in mind:

Do youth and community workers practice informal education?

I wanted to be an advocate for adult education as a field of practice and study. I wanted more youth and community workers to do university degrees in adult education as opposed to social work degrees. But as I surveyed international training provision for youth and community workers I recognised that youth and community work was already closely associated with adult and community education in many countries and that it was a peculiarly Australian situation that youth and community work was seen as separate from education. As I reviewed the literature I learnt there were various bodies of research and practice that already provided plenty of evidence that youth and community workers practice informal education. I describe these literatures in the third chapter. As I interviewed practitioners I noticed that after only a little prompting they readily

acknowledged an educational dimension to their work, and I concluded that my first research question was less profound or useful than I had originally thought.

At about this time I was planning fieldwork to study youth and community work in Singapore. I had to obtain approval from the People's Association, the lead government agency for community development there and in my application I said that the educational dimension of community work in Singapore was neither named nor analysed and that I would try to address this. The People's Association replied saying that they did not do any educational work. I persisted and after a number of exchanges persuaded senior managers in the People's Association that there probably was an educational dimension to their community work activities. For the purposes of proceeding with my fieldwork this was an important success. But the focus of my research had already changed. It now seemed obvious that in the case of Singapore there would be little value in simply examining whether youth and community workers practised informal education. The People's Action Party had enjoyed unbroken rule for over 30 years in Singapore and exercised tight control. Youth and community work, I thought, was more likely to be propaganda.

Yet community work in Singapore appeared successful. There were high participation levels in community work activities, and the workers enjoyed better facilities and working conditions than most of the community workers I knew in Australia. The more interesting research question was how to explain the seeming contradiction between the authoritarian control of community work in Singapore and its apparent success.

My focus turned to:

> *What makes for successful informal education practice in youth and community work?*

Practice and rhetoric

As my research progressed it became increasingly clear to me that in the case of Australian practitioners there was a difference between what they said and did. In Singapore youth and community workers were open about serving the interests of the State. In Australia youth and community workers claimed they were serving the interests of their communities. But I could not help conclude that they did not have a well-developed understanding of which theories and practices did effectively serve their communities. And I encountered a paradox. Despite their very different claims about whom they were serving, youth and community workers in Singapore and Australia employed similar rhetoric about their practice. Both groups said their practice was shaped by the needs of the people, that they promoted the 'voice' of people, that they supported community participation in planning and policy, and that they sought to strengthen social wellbeing and cohesion. I wanted to go beyond the rhetoric. Perhaps Australian youth and community workers also served the state.

Now I needed to ask:

> *Does the educational practice of youth and community workers serve to control its learners?*

Interrogation and comparison

To address this question I set out to interrogate the contradictions, ambiguities, and different consciousnesses that can characterise the way youth and community workers theorise about their practice. I undertook a form of comparative study involving youth and community work in three countries. I did field work in Australia and Singapore and compared the way youth and community workers in these two countries theorise about their educational practice. The third site of my study was literature about the educational dimension of youth and community work in Germany.

The value of studying Germany and Singapore

Studying youth and community work in Germany and Singapore provides insights for Australian theory and practice. Germany is valuable because there is a long history of debate about the educational dimension of youth and community work dating back into the nineteenth century. Singapore is valuable because of the apparent success of youth and community work there, and because it offers opportunities to interrogate discourses of social capital, community participation, consultation, informal education and participatory practice, all of which also have widespread currency in Australian youth and community work.

There are both intellectual and personal reasons why I seek insights for Australian practice from Germany and Singapore. I was dissatisfied with the quality of practice and level of theorising in Australian youth and community work. Helen Meekosha and Martin Mowbray (1995) writing about Australian practice describe a similar dissatisfaction.

> Community work is an identified practice in Australia; job advertisements continually appear for community workers, local service co-ordinators and social planners. Nevertheless, in contrast to other human-service occupations, there are no professional associations concerned with overall practice. Consistent with this, employers expect very general qualifications, such as social-science degrees, experience in relevant policy arenas (such as health, housing or local government), and sometimes a particular language. What practices count as community development are commensurately ill-defined and include roles entailing the delivery of direct services and organisation of social activities, with no discernable developmental, educative or transformative goals or outcomes.
>
> Australian community work literature does not help, partly because community workers, having been drawn from such a diverse background, are unfamiliar with the literature, Australian or international. There is also an anti-intellectual tradition in community work wherein there is little willingness for critical thinking, writing and reading. This deficiency is accounted for either by the declared priority of getting on with the job or as a result of long hours and 'burn-out' and, in the case of many women community workers, the double-burden of worker and homemaker. Only rarely is a community worker in touch with the research and literature on, for example, urban political economy or community studies (1995, p. 143).

I initially turned to the German literature because I visit my in-laws in Germany often and am fluent in the language. I was drawn in deeper as I studied the

debates about youth and community work there because they were often located in educational theorising. I turned to study community work in Singapore also because of family connections which take me there on frequent visits. I quickly discovered an impressive quality of community work there, if we measure success in terms of community participation, facilities and recognition of the profession.

Defining the educational practice of youth and community workers

Youth and community workers can plan and facilitate education differently from classroom teachers in schools or adult education programs. I use the term informal education to describe the distinct nature of their educational practice. I am particularly interested in informal education that enables emancipatory learning and I call this popular education. I describe and define informal and popular education in subsequent chapters.

Having flagged my focus on informal and popular education I can now be more precise about my main thesis research question, which becomes:

> *Can the educational practice of youth and community workers emancipate learners?*

Chapter 2

Research methodology

Locating this study within a research orientation

A research orientation represents:

> The entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given (scientific) community (Kuhn 1962, p. 175).

Guba & Lincoln (1994) describe an orientation as a 'basic set of beliefs that guides action' (p. 17). An orientation shapes the types of research question asked, the methodology chosen, and the way in which the findings are reported.

Peter Willis and Robert Smith (2000) suggest that there are five major research orientations:

- Empirical
- Explanatory
- Interpretive
- Critical
- Expressive or phenomenological.

The table on the following page provides a summary of each.

This doctoral study can be located within both the critical and interpretive research orientations. The study has an interpretive orientation because I was intent on exploring and interpreting meanings attached to the educational actions of youth and community workers. It also has a critical orientation because I sought to uncover whose interests were being served by the actions of youth and community workers. As a result there is a tension between different epistemological perspectives in my research, that is, between differing ideas on what counts as worthwhile knowledge and analysis.

Map of research orientations (by Willis & Smith, 2000)

Research orientation	Research purpose	Research questions	Question type	Appropriate genre of representations
Empirical orientation	To 'know' how things are	What happened? Who did it? Where?	Factual question	Factual account
		What did it achieve?	Outcome question	Outcomes report
		By what means did it happen?	Instrumental question	Means and methods account
Explanatory orientation	To understand relations within patterns of events	What kind of thing is it?	Analytical question	Categorical report
	To understand an event of practice in its causes	How did it come about?	Causative question	Report of causes
Interpretive orientation	To discover and interpret meanings attached to educational actions.	What does it mean?	Interpretive question	Interpretation
	To inquire into the moral and ethical dimension of adult educational practice	What is the moral and ethical significance of this event or practice?	Moral interpretive question	Interpretative moral narrative
Critical orientation	To uncover hegemonic interests influencing adult educational practice.	Whose interests are being served?	Critical question	Exposé
Expressive orientation	To portray educational practice as it is experienced.	What did it feel like for you?	Emphathetic phenomenogical question	Empathetic portrayal
		What was it like for you?	Intuiting phenomenological question	Metaphoric portrayal

In the interpretive research orientation, value is placed on documenting, observing, and analysing the nature of practice. A feature of my research was to interview youth and community workers and to focus on the subjective meanings practitioners and researchers had of accounts of practice. The empirical research orientation as described by Willis and Smith (2000), by contrast, values measurement and categorisation of various forms of practice. Creswell describes the assumptions about knowledge generation in an interpretive approach.

> Knowledge is within the meanings people make of it; knowledge is gained though people talking about their meanings; knowledge is laced with personal biases and values; knowledge is written in a personal, up-close way; and is inextricably tied to the context in which it is studied (1998, p. 19).

But I am sceptical of knowledge that is only generated by interpreting meaning and because of this scepticism I locate myself also in a critical research orientation. People's interpretations of practices and beliefs can be distorted and be the products of hegemonic forces that they are not fully aware of. Researchers with a critical orientation seek to make these ideological forces transparent. And if they are activist researchers they seek to emancipate people from ideologies that control them by promoting a collective process whereby knowledge is generated by all as co-researchers.

Both the interpretive and critical research orientations belong within the tradition of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics refers to the theory and practice of interpretation. There are contesting theoretical perspectives of hermeneutics and the tensions played out between interpretive and critical orientations are reflected in the differences between philosophical hermeneutics championed by Gadamer and critical hermeneutics by Habermas (Alternbernd Johnson 2000).

Both the philosophical and critical hermeneutical perspectives start from a premise that people develop understanding of new information by comparing it with their existing knowledge. In other words, people interpret their own previous interpretations. This process of interpreting the interpretation is known as the hermeneutic circle (Morrow 1994). Gadamer (1996) asserts that the

hermeneutic circle is grounded in our cultures and traditions. People's prior knowledge, or pre-understanding, can only be understood within their cultures, traditions and prejudices. He sees the purpose of interpreting being to bring deeper understanding.

> In contrast to common usage, Gadamer argues that prejudice is not something that is negative or something that we should try to eliminate. In fact, he argues that we can only have access to the world through our prejudices (Thompson 1990, p. 241).

Habermas is critical of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics because it implies a notion of interpretation that is trapped within those cultures, traditions and prejudices. Habermas argues for a critical hermeneutics where the researcher is sceptical and suspicious of interpretations (Habermas 1984, p. 120). Ricouer (2000, p. 12) refers to this as a hermeneutics of suspicion. Critical hermeneutics starts from the assumption that not all interpretations are equally true. Not all cultures, traditions and prejudices have equal power and influence. Interpretations can be informed by dominant meanings and the interpretations of marginalised groups not heard. To prevent this happening the researcher in the critical hermeneutics tradition seeks to make transparent the existence of both dominant and subordinate meanings. This means that the researcher may help the research participants critique meanings that they initially could not see (Schleiermacher 1986). This can be done, according to Habermas, through critical debates, actions to bring about change, and reflections on those actions (Habermas 1984, p. 132).

Both the philosophical and critical hermeneutic traditions inform this research. Clearly because I am writing the thesis as an individual, there will be times when the interpretive orientation will predominate. After all it is I who conducted the research and interpreted my findings. However, my research for the thesis has also been influenced by the collaborative research I carry out in the course of my university work. And the research for the thesis was in part in the form of interviews which were reflexive or iterative – from and into which I fed what I was learning as I went along. The interviews, therefore, could be said to be critical in orientation, in that they generated discussion and the formulation of ideas. My research, then, involves both a tension and an interplay between

interpretive and critical principles and processes.

Locating this study within my academic and activist work

For the last 17 years I have either engaged in or studied youth and community work. Over that period I have been a:

- management committee member of various youth and community centres
- community development worker and youth worker
- university-based research fellow
- university lecturer and academic entrepreneur
- doctoral candidate
- Director of a university research centre and academic activist.

There are two enduring themes in my study. The first is to uncover and enhance the educational dimension of youth and community work. The second theme is to examine how youth and community work either controls or helps emancipate people. My doctoral thesis has been one of many research projects in my ongoing study. My thesis data and analysis cannot be seen in isolation from my other academic work. My interpretations have developed in the various sites where I have studied the theories and practices of youth and community workers.

As a community development worker in newly formed suburbs of Western Sydney I learnt first hand about the dominance of service-delivery traditions in community work. I had the task of improving transport services for low-income families. Whereas I saw it as my priority to help residents engage in community action in order to influence private bus companies and government bus authorities, most of my fellow community transport workers prioritised the setting up of alternative bus services (Flowers 1987). They were less interested in helping residents learn to be more active agents of change, and more interested in managing local services. The dominance of this kind of service delivery tradition may help explain why the educational dimension of community work

has marginal status.

As a research fellow I learnt first hand how complex and challenging it is to turn the rhetoric of self-determination and community control into reality. I undertook research across the state of New South Wales about ways to support members of local Aboriginal communities in planning and managing their own adult education and community development programs. And I co-ordinated an action research project piloting Aboriginal community development training strategies. There is a significant gap between the rhetoric used in Aboriginal community development and what actually happens. Grassroots workers and senior decision makers alike, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, proclaim a commitment to community management and participatory decision-making. Yet my research indicated that most of their energies were invested in establishing and maintaining representative as opposed to participatory decision making structures. Building the capacities of local Aboriginal communities to plan and manage community development strategies was mostly conceived in terms of technical, training interventions. Consultants would be sent in to run one-day workshops on various community worker skills such as conducting meetings and book-keeping. My research also indicated that these short-term training interventions had little positive impact (Flowers & Foley 1988a & 1988b; Flowers 1989; Foley & Flowers 1990; Foley, Flowers, Ingram & Camilleri 1990; Flowers 1991; Flowers 1992a & 1992b; Foley & Flowers 1992; McDaniel & Flowers 2000). This led to my interest in researching and designing community capacity building strategies that went beyond training courses. Develping the capacities of Aboriginal communities to exercise more control of program planning required more than gaining technical skills. It required learning of a deeper and more complex nature. My research indicated that such learning happens not just in courses but in reflection upon action.

When I became a lecturer at the University of Technology, Sydney in 1994 I was required to think about what I had previously been doing, and I was guided by colleagues to study theories and practices in fields such as experiential learning, non-formal education, informal learning and education for social action. I was

mentored, in particular, by four colleagues – Griff Foley, Sue Knights, Michael Newman and Jane Sampson – and I have listed their publications in appendix 1.

A feature of my academic career has been the extensive amount of commissioned research and consulting work I have undertaken. As a result I have become what could be called an 'academic entrepreneur.' This role has been shaped partly through necessity. A condition of my employment as a university lecturer for the first five years was that I bring in sufficient external grant income to exceed my salary. In this period I led a range of projects in curriculum development, training needs analysis and competency standards development. All were in the field of youth and community work. I led, for example, the first national competency standards development project in the Australian community and health services industry. And I managed the development of the first accredited course in community cultural development. These projects required me to study the nature of youth and community work practice in depth. The value of this type of work for my doctoral study was that I was able to engage through workshops and interviews with a wide range of practitioners across Australia about the nature of their work. It became clear through these study experiences that youth and community work across Australia is dominated by forms and traditions of social and welfare work. Australian practitioners conceive their practice largely as case work and program delivery, and traditions of informal and popular education are barely acknowledged.

Since 1999 I have been Director of the Centre for Popular Education at the University of Technology, Sydney. This role has given me opportunities to lead and support a variety of action research initiatives. I see myself as an academic activist strengthening the capacity of a university to support 'popular struggles for democracy, equality and social justice' (Crowther, Galloway & Martin 2003).

Staff at the Centre for Popular Education at UTS undertake research, consulting and teaching activities concerned with education and community capacity building. In particular, the Centre is intent on studying and supporting educational practice that serves the interests of people who are marginalised,

and/or are engaged in advocacy, community action or community development activities. Centre members research and teach in a range of arenas, including health promotion, youth work and education, arts and cultural development, international and community development, adult and community education, basic education, and social and community action.

The Centre for Popular Education has six major research program areas. They are:

- Learning and action for the environment
- Community action and community leadership
- Pedagogy and politics of working with young people
- Health education and community development
- Community cultural development
- Education and advocacy (current work with consumer groups and refugee advocacy groups).

Much of the Centre's research is of a critical orientation. Research knowledge is generated in a collaborative process and located within an analysis of power. The co-researchers in such collaborative processes can include the university research staff, practitioners in the field and grassroots activists. The Centre has produced a variety of publications that have been co-authored by these kinds of stakeholders.

The Centre for Popular Education has developed an extensive conference and forum program. The conferences and the forums have been designed to position the Centre as a leader in creating various research agendas. The conference and forums are planned closely with external partners. They provide an opportunity for practitioners, policy makers and scholars to highlight and define research issues. The goal has been to place the Centre in a position where we spend less time responding to calls for tenders and to other people's research agendas, and more time responding to research invitations from external partners who have collaborated with us through our forums and conferences. Evidence suggests

that the strategy is working.

It is difficult to make a separation between the research I did as a doctoral candidate and as an activist researcher with the Centre for Popular Education. As a doctoral candidate I made various interpretations of theory and practice in youth and community work. As an activist researcher I not only tested, but further developed, these interpretations with practitioners. The interpretive analysis in my thesis is directly informed by the critical research I did with the Centre for Popular Education.

Data collection and analysis

In this thesis I seek to develop educational theory in youth and community work inductively, from accounts of practice. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe this approach as grounded theory. It is not developed, as many analyses are, from broad philosophies, aims and policies. I examine what workers are saying, how they describe their practice, and what ideas, values and beliefs underpin their practice.

Accounts of practice form the main data of my thesis. These accounts are drawn from youth and community workers in three countries -- Australia, Singapore and Germany. I have drawn on or generated four types of practice-accounts:

- Interviews with practitioners
- Co-authored interpretations where I took on the role of an editor encouraging practitioners to write
- Secondary accounts from the literature
- Training needs and competency analyses.

The purpose of identifying, generating and analysing accounts of practice is to make the ideological nature of youth and community work more explicit as an important pre-condition for informed debates. I use the notion of ideology in a

dynamic sense. Ideology refers to the beliefs, assumptions, hunches, inclinations, fears, hopes and discourse that are enmeshed in youth and community work practices. I am particularly interested in how youth and community workers theorise about the educational dimension of their practice. I do not see ideologies as objects, possessions or fixed codes of rules. Instead I see ideologies as complex social processes. Following Therborn I think:

> The actual operation of ideology in (youth and community work) is better illustrated by the cacophony of sounds and signs of a big city street than by the text serenely communicating with the solitary reader, or the teacher or TV-personality addressing a quite, domesticated audience (1999, p. vii – viii).

There is not a simple, deterministic relationship between ideologies and community work practice. There is, instead, an interdependent relationship in which ideologies both shape, and are shaped by, the practice of youth and community work.

First-hand accounts of practice in Singapore were generated by interviews with fifteen community workers, four academic staff and three senior managers. In 1996 I conducted preliminary interviews with three community workers. The interviewees were, however, guarded and suspicious because my research was not officially approved by their government. I then formally sought approval and support from the People's Association to conduct further interviews. The People's Association is a government statutory authority that has direct control and responsibility for community centres and their staff. The task of gaining approval and support from the People's Association involved negotiations over a period of eighteen months. At one stage, officers of the People's Association indicated approval but then advised me that my research might confuse frontline community workers and that all the information I needed could be provided by one senior manager. I prevailed upon the Head of Social Work at the National University of Singapore, who I knew was also a member of parliament, to change their minds and I finally won approval and logistical support to carry out open-ended interviews with a small sample of workers.

The interviews were semi-structured. I required approval from the People's

Association for my list of interview questions. But I conducted the interviews, as much as possible, in the form of a conversation so as to encourage the interviewees to interpret the questions in their own particular ways. I used three main prompts: what do you do, how do you do it, and why. I sought 'thick descriptions and close analysis' (Geertz 1973). Once the conversation and interview was flowing and I had already taken detailed notes about various examples of practice, I then posed questions about the educational dimension of their work. I asked them what they believed residents of local communities should learn or were learning as the result of community worker activities. On each occasion this led to discussion about their understanding of themselves as educators.

In Australia I generated accounts of practice through interviews and by supporting practitioners to write their own accounts. Some of these accounts have been included in publications of the Centre for Popular Education, UTS. The interviews were conducted in the same way as in Singapore. The written accounts were generated in a way that was analogous to interviewing. As an editor I took on a role similar to that of interviewer. I encouraged the practitioners to interpret their practice. The editor – writer relationship lends itself particularly well to a critical and collaborative research process. But for the purpose of my doctoral study I intentionally maintained a degree of detachment so as to be able to develop interpretations at a pace and in a manner of my choosing.

I also drew on reports of training-needs and competency-analysis exercises. I co-ordinated eight such exercises in the 1990s. These were commissioned consultancies. The long check-lists of competencies did not prove useful for my research. But the workshop discussions I led to produce the competency lists did. In those discussions we examined some of the same questions I asked in my interviews: what do youth and community workers do, how do they do it, and why.

The accounts of practice that made up my data were analysed using a three-stage

process proposed by McIntyre (1998) and Titchen (1998). In the first stage I re-read my field notes and accounts. I embellished them with more background information and included my own reflective comments. But the main purpose of this first stage of analysis was to make sure I understood and had documented how the practitioners interpreted their practice.

In the second stage I analysed the data using my prior knowledge of youth and community work, and informal and popular education. My knowledge was embedded in a theoretical framework shaped by notions of emancipatory learning. Here I was not just intent on faithfully documenting the ways practitioners had interpreted their practice. I interpreted their interpretations. I searched for meanings in their discourse that they themselves may not have explicitly articulated. I searched for taken-for-granted assumptions and implicit beliefs and values about learning and educational practices. I subjected 'thick descriptions' to 'close analysis' (Geertz 1973). Below are the types of comment I made and questions I formulated when analysing a particular account of practice.

My second level analysis	***Transcript of interview with practitioner***
The rhetoric suggests a sense of equality between worker and young person. But to what degree are decisions being made by both 'learners' and 'educators'? Youth workers often use the phrase 'provide options and information'. It is seen as value free and objectively given. How conscious are they of the values and assumptions that underpin their work? Is this good educational practice? Are workers helping young adults to critically analyse and act on their situation? Are they ideologues or facilitators? Do workers use rational argument and power of information to pre-determine educational outcomes? Has government and the elected management committee defined the parameters for learning?	*'We try to enable a young person to describe and articulate their situation, to know that part of their history is possibly sexual abuse and most of all that they learn how to change their situation..... We describe how other young people have responded to abuse....We help the young person identify options....we don't make value-judgements on options chosen but we do challenge sometimes some of the options chosen....like if an option chosen is prostitution, we'll refer them to the Prostitutes Collective...and talk it through...'* *'We'll rarely advise a young person what they should do. This takes responsibility away from them. For example, we aren't going to tell them whether they should continue a pregnancy or not; or whether they should take legal action against someone. However, they don't like that much when we don't offer straight advice. Then they'll try and ask in a roundabout way, 'well, what would you do in my situation'? We mostly*

What can a worker do to organise the environment and interaction in a way that promotes effective learning? The learning interaction is difficult to organise neatly and sequentially. Instead it is complex and contested. How can analysis of effective learning be developed from this?	*say, "I'm not you." Instead of advising we try and give young people information and options.'*

In the third stage of analysis I searched for common themes across the accounts of practice. I moved from analysis of individual accounts to the identification and analysis of themes and issues. Perspectives from the literature of emancipatory learning shaped my analysis. In particular, I studied an extensive amount of German literature on emancipatory learning that was located in studies of youth and community work.

Quality of my data and analysis

Creswell states that qualitative researchers

> strive for "understanding," that deep structure of knowledge that comes from visiting personally with informants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to obtain detailed meanings (1998, p. 193)

but goes on to ask: 'how do we know that the qualitative study is believable, accurate, and "right"?' (1998, p. 193). There are four criteria I propose be applied to judge whether my doctoral research is believable, accurate and 'right.' They are:

- Is it authentic and grounded?
- Is there a sound logic of enquiry?
- Is it reflexive?
- Is it credible and verifiable?

The sample of youth and community workers covered in my study is extensive and diverse. However, I do not claim it is sufficiently representative to make claims of validity and reliability of the kind required for positivist research.

Following Lather (1991 & 1993), Lincoln & Guba (1985), McIntyre (1998), and Creswell (1998) I employ different criteria to ensure the validity of my data. These theorists suggest alternative terms such as authenticity, trustworthiness, credibility and verifiability.

That my data meets these kind of criteria can be determined by the degree to which it conveys descriptions and interpretations of practice that practitioners and other researchers can relate to. Compared to questionnaire survey data, accounts of practice that reveal the context, meanings and nuances of a situation present a 'rich' and authentic depiction of what happens. My data is grounded in the perception of how youth and community workers interpret their practice. The quality of data depends on my skill in engaging in dialogue with practitioners, and in probing and helping them articulate meanings. After most interviews, workshops and editorial relationships I received feedback from practitioners on how useful and interesting they had found the dialogue to be and how it had helped them productively reflect on, and theorise about, their practice. In Sydney, for example, a group of community workers I interviewed decided they wanted to continue the theorising by forming a learning circle.

Howe and Eisenhardt (1990) assess the quality of a study in terms of whether the research questions drive the data collection and analysis rather than the reverse. McIntyre (1998) argues that a good research process should follow a logic of enquiry. He proposes the following four steps should be in continual interaction with each other:

- Define the research problem
- Interrogate the problem in terms of chosen theoretical perspectives
- Choose and apply appropriate methods to investigate the problem (the nature of the problem is shaped by the researcher's theoretical perspectives)
- Analyse the data to seek insights and answers to the research questions and problems.

I have sought to ensure a 'logic' of enquiry by following these four steps and letting the questions outlined in my first chapter drive the research.

I have already indicated that I am drawing on philosophical and critical hermeneutics in my research, but in order to select and ensure the quality of my data I have also drawn on historical materialism. I chose to study the way practitioners theorised about their practice in order to investigate whose interests were being served by the educational dimension of youth and community work. I turned to the literature of German youth work and social pedagogy which has a long and rich tradition of studying the educational dimension of youth and community work. Through this lens I compared the way community workers in Singapore theorised about their practice with the way youth and community workers in Australia do. The way elitist interests shape the educational dimension of community work in Singapore is more overt and less contested than in Australia. I sought in these three bodies of data – accounts of practice from Australia; German youth work and social pedagogy literature; and accounts of practice from Singapore – answers and insights.

To ensure quality of data I have built reflexivity into my research. Reflexivity is related to the process of making the researcher's interests and assumptions explicit, and acknowledging and making transparent the subjectivity of the researcher's interpretations. I did this in my fieldwork by feeding back to research participants both orally and in writing how I had understood them. At times the participants corrected my interpretations of what they had said and at times they developed their interpretations further. This strategy facilitated critical self-reflection for both the participants and researcher.

Creswell argues that it is better to

> use the term *verification* instead of *validity* because verification underscores qualitative research as a distinct approach, a legitimate mode of enquiry in its own right (1998, p. 201).

Lincoln & Guba suggest using terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as alternative equivalents to positivist research

terminology such as validity, reliability and objectivity (1985, p. 300).

> To operationalise these new terms, they propose techniques such as prolonged engagement in the field and the triangulation of data of sources, methods, and investigators to establish credibility (Creswell 1998, p. 197).

My doctoral research has benefited from other research work I have undertaken in the field of youth and community work and the data from one has corroborated the data from the other. This corroboration has contributed to a triangulation of data. I have also tested interpretations and arguments that have arisen from my doctoral research in a variety of forums. These have included keynote conference addresses (Flowers 2001a, 2001b and 2002b) and journal papers (Flowers 2000, 2001, 2004). Positive peer review received in response to these papers and publications has gone a good way towards verifying the quality of both the data I gathered and my analysis.

Validity and utility

The theory development in this research has been informed by, and has in turn informed, the activities of the Centre for Popular Education at UTS. Towards the end of the thesis I recount the story of the Centre for Popular Education. I use narrative and reflection on that narrative to test the validity and utility of my research.

Chapter 3

Different Literatures

In my research I consulted different literatures. This chapter carries brief descriptions of six bodies of literature which I return to and expand on throughout the thesis.

History of education

The word education is commonly associated with schooling. Since the growth of mass schooling in the twentieth century this is not difficult to understand. But youth and community workers do not want their practice equated to schooling. A survey of the history of education can usefully inform the study of the educational dimension of youth and community work because it highlights that education has not always been dominated by concerns with schooling and formal education provision. Certainly a great deal of the educational research effort in the twentieth century was directed towards education in schools, colleges and universities but it is significant for the purpose of this thesis to note that educational historians have also been concerned with education that takes place in family, community, and workplace settings. For example, writing in 1899, Levi Seely in his book 'History of Education' asserted:

> we must study the home and the family, the foundations upon which the educational structure is built (p. 17).

In 1939 Lloyd Cook argued in his book 'Community Backgrounds of Education' that education was at an impasse and suggested:

> A backward glance may be helpful in getting perspective. Time was, within the memory of men still living, when schools played a minor role in the educative process (p. 1).

In 'An Introduction to the History of Education' Aldrich (1982) asserted:

> The family is the most permanent and immediate educational unit. For centuries in this context children have learned the first essential social, economic and cultural skills. These have included speech - the most basic means of communication - and a wide variety of activities ranging from toilet training through household duties to bedtime prayers. ..... When families or friends failed, usually as a result of death or dire poverty, the parish or other body assumed responsibility, either through a substitute family or through workhouse or other charitable provision (p. 9).

In this respect, the literature about the history of education outside institutional settings is relevant to the efforts of youth and community workers who continue to plan and facilitate learning in family and community settings.

Youth and community work, community education and community development

Under this heading I am grouping various sub-bodies of literature. I am including a small sample of references for each sub-body to indicate the nature of the literature that can be found.

(a) Youth and community work as either non-formal education (see for example, Gotson 1999; van Rizen 1996; Crossley, Sukwianomb and Weeks 1987), as informal education (see for example, Brew 1946, Smith 1988, Jeffs and Smith 1990), or as community education (see for example, McClusky and Compton 1980, Ledwith 2001, Thompson 2002)

(b) Adult education and community development (see for example, Knowles 1950, Mezirow 1961, Lovett 1975, Denise and Harris 1983, Hamilton 1992, Moore and Brooks 1996, White 2002, Ellis and Scott 2003, Pauletter and Strittmatter 2004).

(c) Education and development work in the majority world (see for example, Coombs and Ahmed 1974; Crossley et al 1987; Jones 1995; van Rizen 1996; Lynch, Modgil and Modgil 1997). In this sub-body of literature the term non-formal education is mostly used. While community and youth work is not necessarily to be directly compared to development work in the

majority world the shared interests are education outside institutions, face to face work with community groups, and work with oppressed and exploited people.

Political education, social action, workers' and liberation struggles

There is a wide range of literature concerned with political education and learning. The term 'political education' is used in its widest sense here, to embrace:

- what is named 'citizenship education' in liberal democracies and 'political education' in nationalist democracies (see for example, Torruellas, Benmayor, Goris, and Juarbe 1991; Coare and Johnson 2002, Velthuis 2002, van der Veen 2003)

- education for community groups acting in solidarity with political struggles, (see for example, Arnold and Burke 1983a, Acton 2004 - Canadians supporting pro-democracy struggles in Latin America; Walters and Kruss 1988 - education for the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa; Flowers and Chodkiewicz 2004 - education and advocacy to stop the detention of refugees in detention centres.

- education for activists directly engaged in struggles, in particular workers', feminist and national liberation struggles (see for example Hammond 1998; Conrow 1999; Delp, Outman-Kramer, Schurman and Wong 2002)

- education for people involved in social movements, for example, the environmental movement (see for example, McPhillips 2002, Whelan 2002a and 2002b, Kovan and Dirkx 2003, Mündel and Schugurensky 2004)

- education for people involved in local community action campaigns (Ashcroft and Jackson 1974, Newman 1975, 1979, Lovett 1980, Sen 2003).

Much of this literature relates to learning in community settings, and examines how education can facilitate processes of politicisation, mobilisation, participatory decision-making and group development.

Informal learning

This is a scattered and diverse literature. A unifying characteristic is its common interest in education and learning that takes place outside formal, structured education programs in the course of working, social action, and involvement in community, family activities and other 'everyday' situations. There is not necessarily a clear-cut boundary between this body of literature and the other four bodies of literature briefly indicated here. But what warrants classifying this as distinct is the focused interest by a diverse group of theorists (anthropologists, sociologists, educators interested in the workplace and community settings, and development studies researchers) on the processes of educating and learning in non-institutional and 'everyday' settings.

There is a small body of research known as the anthropology of learning which provides useful insights into how people 'teach and learn' cultures (see for example, Pelissier 1991, Wolcott 1997). This research is of particular interest to youth and community workers as it examines how people learn behaviours that youth and community workers often seek to address. For example, how do people 'learn' substance addiction behaviour, or 'learn' to live with obvious oppression, or learn particular views and 'ideologies'? An associated but distinct body of research is found in the community studies literature (see for example, Bell and Newby 1971, Suttles 1972, Wilmott 1989, Etzioni 1993, Crow and Allan 1994, Warren 2003). This literature does not have much explicit interest in the educational dimension of community activities but does nonetheless throw light on the changes and developments – that is the learning - that takes place in community organisations.

Since the late 1980s a new and significant literature on informal and incidental learning has emerged in the wider adult education literature. Of particular relevance for the study of the educational dimension of youth and community work is the documenting and understanding the extent to which people learn skills, knowledge and values in workplace and community settings (see for example, Marsick & Watkins 1990; Elsdon, Reynolds and Stewart; Garrick 1998; Livingstone 1999; Foley 1999; Colley, Hodkinson and Malcom 2003; Schugurensky and Mündel 2004).

Social capital

Another relevant body of literature is that of social capital. It is a concept that, in the last decade, has been used to investigate civic engagement (Cox 1995; Putnam 1993, 2000), community development (Gittell & Vidal 1998), reproduction of inequalities (Bourdieu 1987) sustainability in rural communities (Falk & Harrison 2000), community and school achievement (World Bank 1999) and social disparity caused by access and lack of access to technological skills (Resnick 2002). It has also attracted interest from national and multi-lateral bodies in their efforts to measure the concept (ABS 2000, Productivity Commission 2003, OECD 2003, World Bank 2003).

Social pedagogy in Germany

Two features which distinguish much of the German literature on youth and community work from much of the English speaking literature is the more explicit interest in the educational dimension, and the greater degree of theorising about practice. Youth and community work, social work and adult education are constructed as fields of practice and study in Germany quite differently from the way they are constructed in English speaking countries, possibly with the exception of Scotland. Firstly in Germany, youth and community work, social work and adult education are identified much more

clearly as related fields of practice and study. Secondly in Germany, youth work, community work and social work are constructed as educational fields of study whereas in most English speaking countries they have a closer relationship to the social sciences. The construction of youth work, community work and social work as educational fields of practice is perhaps best illustrated by the development of the German field of practice and study known as social pedagogy. I discuss this body of literature in section 3.

Chapter 4

Towards a definition of youth and community work

In the course of my research I have collaborated with:

- youth development workers
- youth accommodation workers
- youth care and protection workers
- community development workers
- community arts workers
- educators and trainers in pre-entry and entry level labour market programs.

Each type of worker represents a distinct field of practice but there are several important features of practice all of them share. It is these common features which are of relevance to my research and which go together to define what I refer to as 'youth and community work.'

It should be acknowledged that youth work and community work are regarded by some practitioners and scholars as distinct fields of practice and study. In the state of New South Wales in Australia, for example, there is a peak body for youth workers – NSW Youth Action and Policy Association - and a separate peak body for community workers – NSW Local Community Services Association. Practitioners do often regard the theory and practice of working with 'young people' as requiring distinct skills from working with adults. Each field of practice commands it's own body of literature. In a series on social work edited by Jo Campling for MacMillan and the British Association of Social Workers there is one textbook on community work (Twelvetrees 1984) and another on youth work (Jeffs and Smith 1987). But for the purpose of my research I have focused less on the differences and more on the commonalities between youth work and community work. In particular, I have focused on just one aspect of

youth and community work – namely, the educational aspect. And I have, for the purpose of my research, regarded youth and community work as subsumed in the field of informal and popular education.

The majority of youth and community workers in Australia are employed or funded by the State. If they do not work directly for a local, state or federal government agency, they work for an organisation which receives the bulk of its operating revenue from government grants. In any study of youth and community work the relationship to the State is a key factor to be considered. To what extent do workers serve the interests of the people in the communities they are working with or the interests of the State? To what extent are the interests of the State in Australia different from the interests of the people?

All the above practitioners work in community settings. In organisational and workplace settings the clients or target groups are defined by the organisation. Youth and community workers also work for organisations but because of the complex nature of the concept of community, who they work with is less easily defined. A youth and community worker does not have a captive audience as a college teacher or workplace trainer usually does. For example, an educator in an early school leavers' program would be faced with the question of which types of young people she or he should work with. Should she or he work with young men, young women, people of a particular cultural or language group, people with disabilities, or all these groups? Youth and community workers have to make choices. And having made the choices they often have to seek out the people they work with. How workers deal with these questions will be shaped by politics and available resources.

The educational practice of most youth and community workers is characterised by spontaneity, situation specificity and often has no clear beginning and end. Workers rarely have structured curriculum documents to work with. Of all the workers included in this study it is the educators and trainers in the pre-entry and entry level labour market programs who come closest to the more conventional 'curriculum mode' of working. Yet, even in these programs, some

workers place importance on either working without, or outside, curriculum structures.

A further defining feature of the workers in this study is that, for the most part, they work with people who are disadvantaged, although the causes or combination of causes - class, gender, sexuality, culture, language, disability, geography or age – may vary. Youth and community workers are at the forefront of much educational work with those who are the most disadvantaged and oppressed in Australia. As well as providing a range of community services, youth and community workers often represent the needs of disadvantaged groups in negotiations with government. They help people to establish common interest groups and develop social and political networks. They develop innovative community development projects. They work to increase the organisational skills and political awareness of local people, and help them influence government policy. They plan and implement anti-discrimination educational work. And they provide those who are in crisis with information and referral advice and help them develop immediate living skills.

Further commonalities and differences of youth work and community work will emerge as I deal with the histories of their practices in Australia, Germany and Singapore.

Chapter 5

Defining informal education

Youth and community workers intentionally plan and facilitate informal learning and I believe I can best describe this practice as informal education.

Griff Foley presents a four-fold typology of education.

> *Formal education*
>
> This is the form of adult learning with which we are most familiar. Its distinguishing characteristics are that it is organized by professional educators, there is a defined curriculum, and it often leads to a qualification. It includes study in educational institutions like universities and TAFE colleges, and sequenced training sessions in workplaces.
>
> *Non-formal education*
>
> This sort of learning occurs when people see a need for some sort of systematic instruction, but in a one-off or sporadic way. Examples include workers being trained to operate a new machine, or environmental activists undertaking non-violent direct-action training in the midst of a campaign.
>
> *Informal learning*
>
> This sort of learning occurs when people consciously try to learn from their experiences. It involves individual or group reflection on experiences. It involves individual or group reflection on experience, but does not involve formal instruction. Examples includes the management committee of a community centre reviewing the operations of the its organization, or workers re-designing their jobs in consultation with management.
>
> *Incidental learning*
>
> This type of learning occurs while people perform other activities. So, for example, an experienced mechanic has learned a lot about cars, and elderly gardeners carry a great deal of knowledge of their craft. But such learning is incidental to the activity in which the person is involved, and is often tacit and not seen as learning, at least not at the time of its occurrence (1995, p. xiv).

Foley's typology has been taken up and discussed by others, but Newman (2003 personal communication) suggests it lacks consistency. The first two 'types' –

formal education and non-formal education – deal more with the context in which teaching and learning take place. The second two – informal learning and incidental learning – deal more with the way in which the teaching and/or learning is done. And the different 'types' are not exclusive. For example, a great deal of incidental learning may occur in both formal and non-formal education contexts. In view of this criticism, I suggest that it makes more sense to have two typologies – one of education and one of learning – and that to the two types of education a third should be added, namely that of informal education. My version of the typologies, then, would look like this:

Type of Education	Type of Learning
Formal education which is characterised by defined curriculum and is often credentialed.	*Informal learning* which is characterised by learners consciously trying to learn from their experiences, but does not involve formal instruction.
Non-formal education which is characterised by systematic instruction but is mostly non-credentialled.	*Incidental learning*, of which Foley says "...such learning is incidental to the activity in which the person is involved, is often tacit and is not seen as learning – at least not at the time of its occurrence" (p. xiv).
Informal Education Here, 'educators' plan and intentionally create the conditions that facilitate informal learning, which may include some systematic instruction but which will rely on many other means.	

It could be argued that non-formal education can be defined in such a way as to embrace the informal education I refer to. But the term 'non-formal education' has come to be understood in quite specific ways. It has gained currency in international development circles and is used by multilateral aid agencies, and in countries of the majority world. For example, in Thailand and in the Lao People's Democratic Republic there are government departments of non-formal education. These departments are responsible for adult basic education (literacy, numeracy, basic vocational skills training, and second-chance education for adults completing school equivalent qualifications). In practice, much of this education has defined curricula, is course-based, and credentialled. But it is seen as sitting outside the formal education system of schools, colleges and

universities. The term non-formal education refers more to a difference of sponsorship and setting. In Australia, the term non-formal education has little currency. Adult and community education is more widely used and refers to education provision outside the 'formal' system.

Tony Jeffs and Mark Smith argue that informal education is to be defined less by setting or sponsorship and more by a form of pedagogy, a way of working. They propose seven features that characterise informal education (1990, p. 6).

- Informal education can take place in a variety of physical and social settings – for example, schools, community centres, protest actions, peer support groups.
- There is no regular or prescribed form of informal education. It might involve group activities, projects, structured discussion and many other types of activities.
- The learning may initially appear to be incidental but is, in fact, planned and monitored. It is important to understand that learning takes place not only through overt educational strategies such as workshops and projects but also by being engaged in a particular process of interactions. Workers help people learn through the way language, power and cultural representations are organised.
- Timescales are highly variable.
- Learning is negotiated through collaborative forms of working.
- Informal education is dialogical. There are contesting perspectives on what learning through dialogue is and means, but Jeffs and Smith (1990) maintain that informal education is not about the simple conveying of information or the facilitation of discussion. Informal educators 'give careful attention to words, the ideas that they express and the actions that follow' (p. 9).
- Informal education can involve a variety of ways to facilitate learning. It can include, for example, some didactic instruction, experience-based learning activities, and action-research.

Of course, not all education taking place in community settings is informal

education. Youth and community workers may provide formal structured courses, and the participants in an informal activity may well give it a structure and purpose and so formalise it themselves.

Nor can we say that informal education is limited to community settings. Clearly it can also take place in workplace and institutional settings. My study focuses on community settings but I acknowledge that the distinction between education in community and institutional settings is not clear cut.

Finally, I think it unwise to assume that informal education is necessarily more flexible and creative than formal education and so different in kind. A central premise of my research is that many youth and community workers do plan and facilitate learning in quite different ways from many school teachers and trainers. But I prefer to see informal education not as a particular method but as a specialised field of practice and an array of methods.

Chapter 6

Defining popular education

The term 'popular education'

Another term is used in the fields of youth and community work to describe informal education of the kind I have described in the previous chapter, and that is 'popular education.' It is a term which has been used, as we shall see, for a considerable time but has gained a more widespread currency in the past two decades and has now been taken up in academic discourse as well. Ian Martin suggests popular education 'is implicit in the history of radical adult education in both Scotland and the UK as a whole' (1999, p. 4). It is also implicit in histories of other bodies of literature.

Jim Crowther & Ian Martin (1997, p. 20) say that the term 'popular education' 'has come to be associated with relatively recent developments in Latin America.' Recent North American texts present popular education as a field of practice that was first developed through the work of Paulo Freire. Kerl, for example, asserts that:

> Popular education emerged in Latin America in the 1960s-1970s; Paulo Freire is its best known exponent (1997, p. 1)

Chris Cavanagh states:

> The term 'popular education' is little more than 40 years old and it has come to characterize a set of principles that many educators engaged in social struggle share (1993, p. 1).

Rick Arnold and Bev Burke et. al have written several handbooks on popular education (1983a, 1983b,1991) which have enjoyed extensive circulation and likewise convey this understanding. They suggest the term has come into currency because it is

> .... a translation of the Spanish *educacion popular...*; those of us influenced by Latin American educators use the terms interchangeably (1991, p. 5).

In a 2002 book, Burke, Geronimo, Martin, Thomas and Wall offer a definition of popular education and state that:

> Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, pioneered its theory and practice (p. 8).

The above assertions are widely held but are misleading. Freire did not pioneer popular education and nor is it exclusively a Latin American tradition. I confess that I associated popular education exclusively with Latin American traditions up until 1999. It was not until Lori Beckett, a colleague at the University of Technology, Sydney showed me a book by Harold Silver (1965) with the title *Concept of Popular Education: A study of ideas and social movements in the early nineteenth century* that I began learning about other traditions of popular education. Beckett was undertaking research about drug and alcohol education in schools and was considering whether to locate her research in the Centre for Popular Education. She was not familiar with the term 'popular education' and so did a library search and located Silver's book. Beckett, a school-based education academic, readily related to Silver and the associated body of literature about efforts to establish more educational opportunities for working class peoples.

Multiple traditions of popular education

There are multiple traditions of popular education. In 1858 the British parliament appointed a royal commission to

> inquire into the present state of popular education in England, and to consider and report what measures, if any, are required for the extension of sound and cheap elementary instruction to all classes of the people (Skeats 1861, p. iii).

Skeats and the members of parliament, therefore, used the term popular education, and historians interested in the struggles to provide education for the masses and working classes continue to employ the term. I discuss this in the following section.

Another tradition that explicitly names itself as popular education is located in Sweden. I asked Kjell Rubenson and Staffan Larson who have both been convenors of a national research network of popular educators in Sweden why they choose to use the term popular education as opposed to community education in their English-language publications. I suggested that the term community education might be more readily understood by English-speaking educators because it has more currency than popular education. They explained that the study circles and folk high schools of Sweden were not neutral community education providers but were developed, and are maintained, by social and political movements – the unions, churches, environmentalists and teetotallers to name a few – and are concerned with social change (Larsson 2000, Arvidsson 1989, Sjunnesson 1998). In this respect, they argue that the term popular education is more accurate.

Traditions of popular education can also be found in other parts of the world, for example in the Philippines (Wagner 1998, Guevara 2002) and South Africa (von Kotze 1996, Walters 1988 and 1996).

In this chapter I discuss four of these traditions of popular education.

- Working-class education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries
- progressive and radical education
- adult education for democracy in the early twentieth century
- Freire and his 'pedagogy of the oppressed.'

In each I describe and discuss those features which I think are of particular relevance for youth and community workers.

The term popular education conveys what each body of literature has in common: a concern for an education that serves the interests of 'ordinary' people, as perceived by 'ordinary' people. There is an assumption of a conflict between the interests of big business groups, particular political parties and ruling classes on the one hand and the interests of ordinary people and

grassroots community groups on the other. The notion of 'popular' refers less to the idea of education *for* the people, since conservatives, liberals and radicals alike are interested in education *for* the people and more to the idea of education *by* the people and *with* the people. With the prevalence of top-down forms and traditions of education, the idea of education *by* people and *with* people takes on significant meaning.

Working-class education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

One body of literature that employs the term 'popular education' arises from the struggles of working class people in Europe and North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to develop education that was controlled by and for them. See Appendix 3 for a list of 30 selected references. I have placed them together to demonstrate that the term popular education has some currency among scholars who have examined working class education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The principles and practices of popular education, if not always the term itself, have been in existence for more than two centuries. In the eighteenth century working class people in English-speaking countries did not have the right to formal education and some educators and members of the aristocracy seriously argued that education would confuse and agitate working people. Some authorities conceded that education for poor or working people might be useful so long as it was devoted only to basic skills development.

> Among outright opponents of the idea of charity schools was Bernard de Mandeville, author of the *Fable of the Bees*, which included in its 2nd edition in 1723 an "Essay on Charity and Charity-Schools". ..... the points he make are that (a) the poor do not need any education; (b) if they have learning, they become too proud to work; (c) education makes servants claim higher wages while at the same time they do not want to do servile work; (d) though it might be reasonable to teach reading, the teaching of writing cannot possibly be justified. De Mandeville's thesis was a sociological and economic one: no nation can be great without vast numbers of ignorant people to do the drudgery (Neuburg 1971, p. 3).

Antagonism to education for the poor persisted into the nineteenth century. Davies Giddy, member of parliament in a British House of Commons debate in

1807, said:

> .... Giving education to the labouring classes of the poor ..... would be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture and other laborious employments. Instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them fractious and refractory (Neuburg 1971, p. 4).

With these sorts of views prevalent, support for the expansion of education opportunities for the majority of the population – that is, the working and peasant classes – was scant and scattered (Johnson 1988, Silver 1965) and 'extensive' education for the working 'masses' was only introduced after the Reform Acts and Education Acts in the second half of the nineteenth century (Johnson 1988, p. 14). The State provided scant education for the poor and working classes right up to 1870 (Hogg and Tyson 1969, p. 7).

With such little state provision, Churches and religious societies played an important role in education provision for the children of working people. But Hogg and Tyson point out:

> The various societies and denominations did not, however, constitute the only avenues to the provision of popular education. Local effort was of the utmost importance – even where help was given by the societies it had to be matched by local subscription...Occasionally elementary schools were established through private benefaction.... Many schools were set up by local employers... These schools were supported by subscriptions from the workmen, the owners for their part providing the school rooms and other material assistance (1969, p. 6).

Garfit suggests that popular education began with the schools. They produced a class of new readers and that in turn gave impetus to popular education for adults. But:

> It was not an easy thing for all men to embrace popular education... They were willing that the poor should learn to read, but did not see the necessity of their being taught to think, and so when the new school ... was erected... they began to fear that they were going too far (1862, p. 16).

Neuburg traces the efforts of working people's associations, particularly in the period before 1870, to develop their own forms of education in the form of 'rag' magazines, study groups, and community activities. He describes, for example, the establishment of the

> reading club where working men would gather in order to discuss religion and politics in a way that could hardly have been acceptable to holders of more orthodox beliefs. ..... Whether these clubs were regarded as breeding grounds for disaffection in politics and religion, or were taken to be notable examples of self-help in adult education, depended very much on one's view of society (1971, p. 148).

Silver suggests the 'institutional story of popular education in the nineteenth century is a kind of military history' (Silver 1965, p. 15). Efforts to establish and expand education for the 'people' met with fierce resistance. The Mechanics Institutes were established for the purpose of 'the diffusion of science among the working classes' (Brougham 1825 in Silver 1965, p. 210), yet were seen by some as revolutionary. An article in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (1825), for instance, asserted that the Mechanics Institute movement was:

> .. calculated to take the working classes from the guidance of their superiors ... to give a stimulus to those abominable publications which have so long abounded, and fill the hands of the mechanics with them; to make these mechanics the corruptors and petty demagogues of the working orders generally, to dissolve the bonds between the rich and poor, create insubordination, and foment those animosities which unfortunately prevail so much already between servants and masters ... (in Silver 1965, p. 213-214).

Silver (1965), Neuburg (1971) and Johnston (1981 & 1988) argue that, despite this kind of tirade, much of the new education, particularly that of the Mechanics Institutes, was quite conservative. It might be aimed at the working classes, who up till then, had been excluded, but it sought to teach them knowledge and skills that

> would produce a more self-reliant, economically viable worker, capable of living diligently within the status quo (Silver 1965, p. 236).

It did not foster learning that questioned the status quo. According to Silver (1965), an underlying assumption of some of the 'popular education thinkers' was that poverty was inevitable. In fact, the constitution of many Mechanics Institutes forbade discussions about politics at a time in the 1830s and 1840s 'when agitation for political and social reform was central to the preoccupations of working men' (Silver 1965, p. 222).

Here we see an ambiguity in the history of popular education that continues to this day. There were then, as there are today, concerted efforts to make

education more accessible to groups who, historically, had been excluded. The people engaged in these efforts believed that they were shifting education from an elitist to a popular form. Yet, in many cases, education continued to be controlled by elitist interests and was simply being made more accessible.

> The outcome, *un*popular education, has been a gift to those social conservatives who never wanted popular education anyway, but only, at most, a pacified working class (Johnson 1988, p. 17).

What is truly 'popular education'? Silver (1965) distinguishes between 'popular' education that 'aimed to produce a specific kind of man for a specific kind of role' (p. 236) from 'popular' education that encouraged people to oppose and imagine alternatives to the status quo. That second type of popular education invariably, according to Silver, leads to participation in social action. Johnson (1988) distinguishes between popular education concerned with useful knowledge as opposed to *really* useful knowledge. Useful knowledge serves the interests of others, in most cases employers, and is often concerned with individual advancement. *Really useful* knowledge may be oppositional and supports independent, alternative analyses and collective actions. Writers like Martin and Rahman (2001) and Thompson (2002) still employ this distinction.

Writing about working people struggling for an independent and alternative education in nineteenth century England, Johnson asked:

> How were radicals to educate themselves, their children, their brothers and sisters, within all the everyday constraints? Overwhelmingly the answer, in this period, was we must do it ourselves! That way, independence can be preserved, and real knowledge won (Johnson 1988, p. 14).

For youth and community workers today, this body of literature and practice about popular education and independent working class education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain highlights the value of examining questions related to control and to whose interests are being served. A group of resident activists may say to community workers they want to learn how to run meetings and write funding submissions better. Training providers could easily respond with pre-packaged courses. But in such a case the content and pedagogy of the pre-packaged course would reflect the interests of external trainers and not

necessarily those of the residents. If, on the other hand, the resident activists were given support to develop the content and control the pedagogy of the 'course' that would become an exercise in independent or popular education.

In this section I have made use of historians like Silver and Neuburg, who were writing some time ago. I have done this because they used or acknowledged the term 'popular education.' More recent historians of this period of education such as Fieldhouse (1996) give the same account as the earlier historians but do not make use of the term 'popular education.' It is almost as if the term - in relation to working class education at least – was forgotten for three decades.

In this section I have relied on English writers. But Australia has its traditions of working class education as well. Roger Morris is an Australian scholar who has worked in the tradition of the English educators and writers like Raymond Williams, E.P.Thompson and Paul Johnson. He has celebrated the contributions made by working class intellectuals, working class activists and 'ordinary' people to the story of Australian culture and Australian adult education. He has done this through his teaching, through the conference papers he has given in Australia, North America and Europe (eg. 1998, 1999), through his research which he has reported in book chapters (1991, 1995) and over a number of years in the form of erudite historical vignettes in the monthly newsletter of the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education. Morris co-ordinated a series entitled 'Windows on the Past' from 1993 to 1998 in the newsletter. In this series, he and other contributors wrote about people like Alice Henry (Morris 1994), organisations like the WEA (Shipp 1996), and movements like the Schools of the Arts and the Mechanics Institutes (Elzey 1995). Morris's body of work becomes in effect a tribute to this working class form of popular education in the Australian context.

Progressive and radical education

> By the dawn of the twentieth century, a new way of thinking about the nature of the child, classroom methods, and the purposes of the school increasingly dominated educational discourse. Something loosely called progressive education, especially its more child-centered aspects, became part of a larger revolt against the formalism of the schools and an assault on tradition (Reese 2001, p. 1).

Progressive and radical education literature describes the efforts, from the late nineteenth century on, of educators who have sought to develop alternatives to dominant and authoritarian forms of education and help working class and community groups work towards self-determination. Most of this literature focuses on schools. But it has also influenced adult, youth and community educators.

Youth and community workers who prefer to distance themselves from the idea that they are educators may take heart from the ideas of progressive educators that:

> ... the child be an active, not passive, learner; that the teacher should be a guide, not master; that the curriculum should adapt to a changing industrial society, not remain lodged in the past; and that something needed to be done about the many incompetent teachers who sent their pupils to nearly eternal sleep (Reese 2001, p. 23).

Progressive educators believed in education for freedom 'rather than restraint in infancy' (Stewart 1972, p. 466). This translated into a rejection of overly planned curriculum.

> For the bulk of the ordinary people education was pre-eminently concerned with intellectual, moral, and spiritual training, with pre-meditated and selected goals and practices, with curricula, subjects, and explicit methods, with teachers teaching and pupils learning, with lessons understood and examinations passed. (Progressive educators) were committed to something very different (Stewart 1972, p. 468).

Indeed progressive and radical educators sought to change prescriptive curriculum and teaching practices. In 1908 in Germany, progressive educators founded a League for School Reform to gain freedom from 'prescribed lesson plans and minute regulations of the school bureaucracy' (Lamberti 2000, p. 45). Ernst Weber in an address to that League asserted:

> Whoever believes that a future generation can be educated to be free and independent by such regimented teachers, by anxious and subaltern officials, for

> whom any free decision within their profession is made impossible, is entirely mistaken (quoted in Lamberti 2000, p. 45).

This sort of sentiment resonates with those of youth workers who value learning that happens outside formal instructional settings. Related to this tradition of 'freedom' in education is the perspective which places value on learning about human relationships rather than cognitive and functional knowledge. Progressive educators sought to value human relationships as much as, if not more than, academic success.

> Throughout the 200-year history of public schooling, a widely scattered group of critics have pointed out that the education of young human beings should involve much more than simply moulding them into future workers or citizens. The Swiss humanitarian Johann Pestalozzi, the American Transcendentalists: Thoreau, Emerson, and Alcott, the founders of "progressive" education – Francis Parker and John Dewey – and pioneers such as Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner, among others, all insisted that education should be understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the developing child (Miller 1999, p. 2).

Stewart describes the student centred 'model' of progressive education in a way which would ring true of many youth workers.

> Using such a model the knowledge dimension in school is reduced and the role of the teacher as intellectual authority is diminished. The fact that curricula abridge and compress knowledge for coherence and mastery is played down: pupils are expected to look after the knowledge aspect for themselves far more than in the traditional school situation. In the personality dimension the child-centered teacher is not expected to instruct the pupil in what to believe, but to lead him by discussion, and by example to accept worthy, but not very well-defined, objectives, and discussion is seen as a good instrument in itself (Stewart 1972, p. 469-470).

And in the following passage, the term 'teacher' could well be replaced by the term 'youth and community worker.'

> Essentially the teacher is a guide, a therapist, a psychologist more than an instructor and the assumption is that the pupil will come to see this and co-operate in the whole process. If the response of the pupil in the knowledge dimension or in the personality dimension is not co-operative, the child centred teacher tends to see this in terms of breakdown in personal relationships, whereas to the traditional teacher it tends to appear as laziness or incomprehension or moral weakness on the part of the pupil (Stewart 1972, p. 469-470).

A number of features in progressive education can also be found in popular education theory and practice. For example, the idea that learners should be regarded as subjects rather than objects of change advocated by Rousseau in the eighteenth century is central to Paulo Freire's theorising in the 1970s. The notions

of not being a teacher, of peer learning, of project based learning versus fixed curriculum, of experience-based learning, and of a democratic or participatory way of working are all features of popular education practice in modern youth and community work settings. They were features advocated by English progressive educators in the late eighteenth century. According to Stewart (1972), David Williams working in the period 1830 to 1840 was the first British educator to apply the following ideas in a school setting.

Experience-based learning:

> (For Williams) education became a process that began with the pupil's own situation, and the function of a tutor was not to impose principles by authority but to bring about situations in which the child could learn by means of his own experience. Received ideas, either from books or from the teacher, interfered with this process (Stewart 1972, p. 24/25).

Democratic and participatory learning:

> Williams tried to involve the pupils themselves in the creation of a code of conduct (Stewart 1972, p. 25).
>
> Perhaps the most revolutionary step was William's abdication of the traditional role of teacher. ..... he gradually gave up his position as a teacher and became a member of every class, receiving instruction in common with pupils..... (Stewart 1972, p. 26).

Peer learning:

> Williams put a boy who could not read under the care and tuition of another boy... reciprocal assistance (as he called it) (Stewart 1972, p. 27).

Project-based learning:

> William's academy did not adhere to the common practice of having a fixed curriculum, with regular lessons at particular times of the day. In some ways Williams anticipated twentieth century practice in the integration of subjects and the introduction of what is now called the project method (Stewart 1972, p. 29).

Another feature of educational practice in modern youth and community work is the value placed on facilitating learning through skilled conversation (see for example, Smith 1994 and Jeffs & Smith 1990). Progressive educators were sceptical of fixed curriculum and believed in the power of kind and erudite conversation.

Progressive and radical educators disagree with the idea that they have a responsibility to mould and shape people, an idea which Simon (1972, p. 17) argues was inspired by religious righteousness and a belief dominant in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that education must serve the interests of the existing ruling classes. Radical and progressive traditions believed in facilitators rather than 'teachers.'

> In *Chartism* (1840) William Lovett..... sees the task of the teacher "not as that of imposing knowledge and habits on the children, but of assisting them to acquire knowledge and habits through their own activity, so exercising their reason and moral judgement that they come to understand for themselves and know aright (Simon 1972, p. 17).

Adult education for democracy in the early twentieth century

There is a body of literature about adult education for democracy in the early twentieth century comparable in size to the body of literature about popular education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See appendix 4 for a collection of references. Two leading North American adult education scholars of the time – Ruth Kotinsky (1933) and Eduard Lindeman (1926) – made major contributions to the literature. Both shared an interest in education which strengthens the capacities of people to participate in decision-making. For Kotinsky the role of adult education in her book

> .... *Adult Education and the Social Scene* (1933) was to identify social problems and deal with them in such ways as to make the participants intelligent and responsible planners, rather than merely drifters and sufferers, or ruthless schemers for personal advantage (Heaney 1996, p. 3).

Both Lindeman and Kotinsky were writing at a time when the state of democracy in Europe was fragile, and their concerns with strengthening the capacities of people in grassroots community groups for democracy have relevance to the efforts of youth and community workers today. In disadvantaged communities in Australia the state of democracy is fragile. For example, the capacity of tenants in many Australian public housing estates to actively participate in community renewal and planning initiatives is limited (ABC 2002; Farrar, Barbato and Phibbs 2001; Hugman and Sotiri 2001; Gleeson and Randolph 2002). When

community workers help tenants learn to exercise leadership in housing estate management and community planning they are strengthening grassroots democracy. Strengthening the capacity of people, particularly those from poor and vulnerable groups, to participate in decisions about planning their community's future is at the heart of popular education. Heaney (1996) argues that in the 1920s and 1930s 'front line, grass roots educators of adults' (p. 8) – people concerned with promoting democracy - were at the forefront of the North American adult education movement but that they have since been subsumed or dominated by vocational and organisational educators.

Kotinsky was critical that American adult educators were focusing more on vocational training and less on the educational dimension of community development. In concluding a discussion of the educational role of 'the family welfare agency, the medical profession, the church, service clubs, patriotic societies and the like' (1933, p. 84) she argued against narrow skills training and proposed that the role of the adult educator was to help community workers better understand and promote the educational dimension of their practice.

> One function for a distinct and conscious adult education movement lies in .... making organized agencies conscious of their educational responsibilities .... making the adult public more educable through dealing with it educatively, by making education more consciously an end in view..... It has been found, however, that though the fountain heads of the adult education movement in America were somewhat social in character and outlook, they tended toward the academic than the realistic treatment of these very factors which brought them about. There was some tendency toward the reduction of adult education to adult schooling (1933, p. 109 – 111).

The following quotes by Lindemann mirror Kotinsky's vision for an adult education that goes beyond training and is concerned with building a better social order.

> From many quarters comes the call to a new kind of education with its initial assumption affirming that *education is life*..... education conceived as a process coterminious with life revolves about *non-vocational* ideals. In this world of specialists every one will of necessity learn to do his work.... but adult education more accurately defined begins where vocational education leaves off (1926, p. 4 – 5).

> In what areas do most people appear to find life's meaning..... Briefly, they want to improve themselves; that is their realistic and primary aim. But they want also to

> change the social order so that vital personalities will be creating a new environment in which their aspirations may be properly expressed (1926, p. 8 – 9).

John Dewey, whose writing included *Education and Democracy* (1916), also highlighted the challenge of education for a better 'life'.

> To prepare him (the child) for future life means to give him command of himself: ... so that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities (Dewey 1966, p. 27).

Lindeman and Kotinsky expanded Dewey's notions to

> adults who throughout their lifespan struggle to participate in social and economic decisions affecting them. The effectiveness of widespread participation in decision-making, such as democracy requires, demands ongoing and timely strategies for adults to reflect on and learn from their experiences and experiences of others (Heaney 1996, p. 2).

The type of adult education for democracy that Lindeman and Kotinsky advocated was not merely formal textbook instruction about governance and citizenship. They were more interested in supporting education for community action. Lindeman, for example, highlighted the importance of community action groups as sites of learning for democracy.

> ... To combat the danger of .... dictatorship and violence ... so rife in the 1930s in Germany, Spain and Italy.... a nation's citizens must be politically sophisticated and used to participating in democratic groups. Since adult learning groups were of this nature they were a crucial training ground for democratic participation.... Lindeman declared that the participation of citizens in informed social action was the hallmark of a democratic society (Brookfield 1987, p. 137).

By highlighting education *for* community action versus education *about* democracy Lindeman and Kotinsky are signalling their belief that education should not merely be about equipping people with skills and knowledge to participate more effectively in community affairs, but that education should be about helping people plan and bring about social change.

Freire and pedagogy for the oppressed

In the early 1960s in Brazil Paulo Freire developed an innovative approach to literacy education. He worked with rural peasants and urban slum dwellers and believed that learning literacy for oppressed people like these should mean much more than simply learning to read and write. Friere argued that educators should

help people analyse their situation, and saw literacy as part of the process of engaging in this analysis. As people came to know their world, so they could act on it in order to change it. Friere aimed to shift his learners from passivity to a critical and active awareness and he used the term 'conscientization' to describe this type of transformation.

Freire has had an enormous influence on the practices and theories of educators who work with people who are poor, oppressed and exploited. His influence has been so significant that many practitioners and writers attribute popular education to Freire. An extensive body of literature has arisen devoted to a discussion of his ideas and of how they have been applied. See appendix 5 for a sample of references.

Freire argues that the content of education should draw on the experiences of the people. For youth and community workers this means avoiding standardised curricula but using local knowledge and issues as the basis of educational initiatives.

Freire gave currency to the notion of cultural action and argued that a main educational challenge is to shift people from seeing themselves as recipients of culture to seeing themselves as makers of culture. People who have experienced social exclusion, poverty, discrimination, and alienation in formal education will often have a negative assessment of their capacity to influence change. They will see themselves as objects of, rather than subjects in, history. Freire identified 'generative themes' in the discourse of his learners and developed materials to trigger discussion and analysis of these themes. In the case of his own early practice, he commissioned artists to produce series of pictures evoking themes which he and his team of educators used in order to provoke dialogue.

In my experience, many youth and community workers do want to plan and facilitate learning that begins with the experience of the people they are working with but do not know how. Freire drew on the skills of artists. Who better to depict and reflect back issues and themes that arise from people's experiences?

Art generated from contextually specific themes can be used by skilled facilitators to create a dialogic learning experience very different from didactic instruction. There are now popular education handbooks which describe creative ways to use various forms of art to encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences, engage in dialogue and decide on action. (See for example, Arnold & Burke 1983a, 1983b and 1991).

Freire's pedagogy has influenced a body of practice called community cultural development which constitutes one of the major research focii of the Centre for Popular Education at the University of Technology, Sydney. The Centre has been commissioned by several agencies to study the work of various arts groups and artists engaged in youth and community development projects. These have included theatre companies, visual artists, circus performers, writers and dancers. In all the projects the arts workers have sought to support people in poor and disadvantaged communities to research problems, devise solutions and act, perform, exhibit or publish. Together with youth and community workers they have planned and facilitated collaborative art-making. These types of community cultural development project represent a translation of cultural action. Arts and community workers are helping people engage in struggle and make culture. The Centre for Popular Education at UTS, in its turn, has been asked to further develop theories and approaches to their practice, and evaluate their educational and social impact.

Common features of popular education

Richard Johnson defines popular education as that which:

> means starting from the problems, experiences and social position of excluded majorities, from the position of the working people, women and black people (Johnson 1981 in Deem 1993, p. 235).

All four bodies of literature outlined above have in common a concern with helping excluded people exercise more leadership. This is underpinned by a belief that 'grassroots community people should be leaders in deciding what changes are needed in their own communities' (Highlander 2002). Popular

education is concerned with strengthening pluralist and participatory democracies.

Most of the popular education literature relates to educational initiatives with the poor and oppressed but the pedagogical processes can be used in other contexts - for example, raising the general public's awareness about environmental concerns. There might be differences in degree but the processes and principles of popular education are theoretically applicable in any context. Indeed some have been taken over and used, perhaps in corrupt forms, in human resource development. Photo kits ostensibly based on Freiran ideas and practice, for example, are sometimes used in HRD and training contexts to evoke emotional responses as opposed to dialogic analysis.

For those advocating or drawing on forms and traditions of popular education there is, however, a two-fold problem. Firstly, 'education' has a marginal status. This has been repeatedly confirmed in research conducted by the Centre for Popular Education at the University of Technology, Sydney. Activists - be they working with young people, in the health sector, in environmental advocacy or in community cultural development - often do not perceive their work as 'educational.' Many who are engaged in environmental advocacy and development work are more interested in marketing, public relations or direct action (Guevara, Flowers and Whelan 2004). Many community cultural development workers are more interested in artistic and community development outcomes and see the idea of supporting learning about 'community' and culture as separate and less important (Flowers and McEwen 2004). In health promotion there is ongoing contestation between a dominant tradition of service delivery and mass-communication activities and a subordinate tradition of community education and community development (Flowers and Parlane 2000; Flowers, Chodkiewicz, McEwen, Yasukawa and Ng, 2001).

The second element to this problem is that the term 'educational' is widely understood as meaning teaching, rather than the facilitation of learning. School

teachers can reinforce this understanding by equating education with teaching and labelling what happens outside schools as unimportant. This was a key finding of a recent research project undertaken in Western Sydney. Andrew Chodkiewicz and Debra Hayes, for example, found that 'teachers and principals did not generally perceive parents or their local communities as resources for learning (2002, p. 89).

Popular education can contribute to the efforts of those engaged in helping 'ordinary' people have more power and opportunity - whether these efforts be called capacity building or building social capital. At the heart of popular education theory and practice lies the challenge of helping people come to know, understand, and tell their stories and those of others. This translates necessarily into education which is learner-centered rather than didactic; which builds on the issues and experiences of the learners rather than materials designated by teachers, experts and authorities; which helps people understand their situation; and which helps them act strategically. Story-making and story-telling is part of the practice of cultural action whose aim is to move people from the notion that they are merely consumers, audience members, participants, and objects to the notion that they are 'shakers and movers', the makers and performers of history and culture.

There are, however, forces that can take the edge off popular education work. These can be found, for example, in the current discourses on social capital and community building. At first glance these discourses seem in accord with popular education because they focus on interaction, active participation, people talking up for themselves, local solutions to local problems, and so on. Here, for example, is a policy statement about neighbourhood renewal from the Victorian government in Australia.

> To narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Victoria and the rest of the State by working with local communities and business providing services. Neighbourhood renewal empowers local communities to shape their own futures. The initiative builds on the strengths of each community and enhances local skills, capacity and leadership (Community Builders Unit, Premiers Department 2002).

But what is often missing is a concern with social and material change and with

the development of a critical consciousness. It is one thing to help people create and tell stories, but another to help them understand social and political structures and to act strategically to change those structures. The discourses of social capital and community building are located in a humanist framework and good practice is often judged by the extent to which people interact.

Popular education practice in the Frieran or radical and progressive education sense, however:

- goes beyond responding to people's needs and helps people assert their rights

- does more than promote active participation. It fosters robust debate, encourages questioning, fosters a sense of indignation and anger, and at times supports confrontation

- does more than help people feel more informed, responsible and self-reliant. It helps people to take action and actively pursue alternative visions for the future.

- helps people not just feel empowered but actually strive for *more* power.

The link between the terms 'popular' and 'culture' is a longstanding one.

> The idea of 'popular culture' makes its appearance in the late eighteenth century as opposed to 'learned culture' first formulated by the German writer J.G. Herder. The 'popular' here was discovered by the intellectual upper classes for whom it indicated everything they thought they were not: the 'other' of the 'sophisticated, natural, simple, instinctive, irrational and rooted in the local soil' (Burke, 1981 quoted in Steele 1999, p. 97).

Traditions of popular education recognise and value this kind of culture. Popular education is not simply about making education more accessible to grassroots people. It is about designing education so that the knowledge, values and perspectives of grassroots people is privileged and shapes the curriculum. We should continually remind ourselves how education privileges the interests and

knowledge of certain groups of people at the expense of others. Neuburg (1971) and Silver (1965) have written about how dominant educational discourses in eighteenth and nineteenth century England repressed 'popular' forms of knowledge. E. P. Thompson argued that the nature of much formal education in nineteenth century England actively excluded working class perspectives. He said that education too often entailed a denial of the validity of the life experiences of the learners 'as expressed in the uncouth dialect or in traditional cultural forms' (Thompson 1968, p. 312).

We can see popular education in opposition to dominant forms and traditions of education. Several writers comment that in the second half of the twentieth century education became predominately technicist and concerned with vocational competencies. Heaney writes:

> The subordination of education to the workplace and learning to the development of job-related 'competencies' has privileged instrumental knowledge and the techniques by which such knowledge is transmitted (Heaney 1996, p. 7).

Beder talks of a 'new' understanding of adult education in which

- Critical understanding, central to Lindeman's understanding of adult education, was replaced by developing skills
- The remnants of humanist concern found in Knowles' conceptualisation of andragogy were replaced by the adult learner as consumer, and
- Adult education became systematized and institutionalized – in a word it was reduced to a form of schooling (Beder 1987, p. 109).

I conclude this chapter, therefore with the following table in which I place the commonly accepted assumptions about popular education against those of the dominant or traditional approaches to education.

POPULAR	DOMINANT/TRADITIONAL
Learning in action	Learning through absorption
Bottom-up, negotiated and inclusive	Top-down, professionalising and exclusive
Problem solving and action	Pre-determined institutional and national goals
Education for social capital	Human capital development
Learning to conspire	Learning to be inspired

Education to champion rights	Education to meet needs
Education for resisting hegemonic ways of thinking	Education for conforming with hegemonic ways of thinking
Education to strengthen the capacity of grassroots leaders	Education to strengthen the capacity of elite leaders
Education for community leadership	Education for individual leadership
Education for social change	Education for individual change
Education for powerless groups	Education on merit
Education for the common good	Education for private good
Education to support self-help initiatives	Education to help organizations manage employees
Mass education	Education as access to privilege
Education as the great equaliser	Education as the great selector
Education as political and social action	Education as methodology
Education for community development and empowerment	Education for individual achievement and empowerment
Education as passion and commitment	Education as technique
Education for community and nation	Education for good citizenship
Education for economic, social and political democracy	Education for social mobility, private life, consumerism, authority and order
Education for participant-directed learning	Education for self-directed learning
Education for critical understanding	Education for skills development
Education for reflection	Education for diffusion of knowledge
Education for social responsibility	Education for autonomy
Learner of education	Consumer of education
Concern for social context	Concern for technique

In the remainder of my thesis I will be looking for insights into the educational practice of youth and community workers which may assist in understanding and promoting the kinds of features to be found for the most part in the left-hand column.

Section 2

THEMES FROM AUSTRALIAN YOUTH AND COMMUNITY WORK

This section opens with case study that has a very Australian flavour. From it I then move on to more general themes concerned with youth and community work, relating these to Australian practice.

Chapter 7

The value of the educational practice of youth and community workers

Community work with the Ratbags

The 'Ratbags' were a group of public housing tenants in Campbelltown on the outskirts of Sydney and they provide an example which illustrates themes of developing self-efficacy and building democracy. I came across them while working with some community workers who, in their turn were, devising and facilitating strategies to help public housing tenants exercise stronger community leadership. The reasons why they chose their name will become clear in the following description and discussion.

Public housing tenants were despondent, frustrated and angry. They felt despondent that the authorities would not take more active measures to improve community facilities and services. They were frustrated by the difficulties they had in getting their landlord, the state government Department of Housing, to carry out repairs and maintenance. There were stories of tenants having to wait for several years to get a response to their requests. And they were angered by the way their suburbs were often depicted in the media and in general public discourse as home to violence, poverty, substance abuse and unemployment (Boncyzk, Cole, Moore, Rignold and Wade 2004). Despite all this, residents were proud of their local communities and a significant number invested volunteer time in various community development initiatives.

The tenants did not deny certain problems existed, but they resented being relegated to underclass status. And they resented being seen as people who did not have valuable ideas, knowledge and qualities that could be drawn upon to address the problems.

The residents were the victims of deficit social policy planning and they were regarded by planners as problems to be removed. At this time the New South Wales government was re-locating hundreds of public housing tenants from suburbs in Campbelltown. The land and houses they occupied were being turned over to private property developers. Kathy Arthurson (2002) argued that there was little evidence from previous experiences, where such policies had been implemented, that the reduction of public housing and introduction of more private housing had led to a better quality of life in local communities. Why was it not possible, she asked, for the public housing residents to change and improve their communities themselves, given access to resources and support?

It is understandable that those residents who do have the energy and courage to become actively involved in community development initiatives will often use the language of struggle and confrontation. One resident commenting on the value of a residential retreat in 2002 that had been organised for public housing tenant 'community leaders' used raw and colourful language:

> This retreat has really boosted us... the people have to stick it up them.... The people in the Department of Housing must have the biggest dicks because they are forever pulling them..... they are confused and still want to get information from us..... the workers in the Department of Housing say they work for us... but they don't.... We have to change it round.... The Department of Housing think a lot of people in the community are stupid... but we're not.... We can be better chiefs than them.. shouldn't you be listening to people in the community who are not getting paid.... If you're getting paid aren't you gonna say what you are paid to say..... we are angry when workers take credit for ideas that come from the people...

Community workers who devise strategies to help people like these public housing tenants learn to exercise community leadership face complex challenges.

In 2002 a community development agency received government funding that enabled it to appoint a community worker to plan and co-ordinate a community leadership program in the housing estates described above. The worker, who had a long history in the region, arranged weekly 'community leadership workshops' with various small groups of residents. In the first three months the

community worker facilitated discussions that encouraged the residents to define key issues and challenges in their local communities.

These residents were mostly women and all were public housing tenants. They were all involved, to varying degrees and on a voluntary basis, in community service activities. Some, for example, were management committee members of community service organizations, assisted with food-handout schemes, supervised drop-in centre programs and helped organise local festivals and cultural events such as Christmas Carols by Candlelight and they improved the quality of life in their communities in other ways. They were known by other residents as people prepared to help out and speak out. For example, they would be often asked to help fellow public housing tenants liaise with the Department of Housing about rental payment and maintenance questions. The women were the ones most likely to make the effort to go to the series of local community consultation meetings convened by various government and non-government agencies. They had recently become active in adult education and training programs.

This was the strong and active side of these women. But there was also a fragile and vulnerable side. Some of the women had experienced violence, drug abuse, relationship breakdowns and serious illness in their families. All were on low incomes and most were dependent on social security pensions. A theme that emerged in one of the community leadership groups was their belief that no-one valued or listened to their views. Their 'voice' was being ignored by teenage and grown-up children, husbands and boyfriends, teachers, community workers, social workers, government officers and local media outlets.

This issue of no 'voice' was workshopped by the community worker facilitating the community leadership program meetings. Initially, the residents wanted the community worker to help them organise public meetings where they could have their say. They wanted help to write funding submissions. As the issue was explored in more depth, other ways their 'voice' could be strengthened, were identified. Three ideas were developed. The first was to have a residential retreat

with like-minded, resident-'community leaders' from neighbouring suburbs. The second was for them to plan and convene their own workshop for 'community leaders.' A third idea was to research, write, design and publish their own book about community development in their local area. They looked to the community worker to help them further develop and implement all these ideas.

Although the community worker and the funding agency named these activities as part of a community leadership project, the members of the group rejected the term. This became most apparent when they were deciding what title to give their book.

> We do not want to call our book *Everyday Leaders* or *Community Leaders* because we do not like identifying as leaders. We are ratbags. We do not want to be leaders. We just want to help the community. There are not ego's involved. I want to be known as someone; when someone has a problem they can come to me and get help.... What is a ratbag? We can say what we like to each other. You can have your say and if you don't like what they say, you say so. But we come back and work together; acceptance comes first. When we get together we're ratbags. It is a fun thing. It also suggests we are doing something different. If you say you are a leader, people think you are up yourself. Ratbags has a different ring about it; more equal.

The notion of ratbag draws on a particularly Australian tradition of valuing larrikinism and mateship. A recent book about environmental and local community activism in Australia devotes a chapter to Nancy Hiller, who is known as the Ratbag of Botany (Brown with Hillier, 2002) and describes her in the following way:

> In 1988, the Mayor of Botany Bay described her as the 'conscience of the municipality', recognizing her vocal oppositional work on behalf of resident action groups concerned with issues ranging from port expansion, to airport noise, to services for the elderly, to contamination at local industrial sites (p. 111).

The community worker organised a three-day residential retreat for the 'ratbags'. I attended it and became sceptical when half the participants pulled out of an afternoon session, bought a 'slab' of beer and drank it out in the garden. But as the evening wore on I could see new bonds of solidarity developing. There were over 20 resident activists at the retreat from four different suburbs and they were wary and mistrustful because they had heard negative stories about each other. As they got to know each other and engaged in lively discussions they began to question the negative accounts they had heard and to recognise the common

nature of many of the issues they faced. On the final morning of the retreat they reached a whole-group agreement to establish a regional network of resident community action groups and to call it *The Ratbags.*

The residents who attended the residential retreat found it a profoundly important experience. The following comments are included in a book written by five of the Ratbags with editorial co-ordination by Sue Angel (see Boncyzk, Cole, Moore, Rignold, and Wade, 2004).

> **The retreat...**Group discussion, February 2003 following the three day retreat
>
> *Judy*...I was pissing on with the girls from Minto. Everyone started mixing and getting to know each other...in varying degrees. Some people were and some weren't.
>
> *Ros* .... I didn't feel any connection with the group at first. I'm slower to get to know people and I don't like mixing with new people. I felt a bit scared and apprehensive at the beginning. I thought the Minto crowd were a bit overboard. I met them again recently and it was different. People tried to involve me but I needed more time. It was a chance to see other people and to see what they were up against as well. It opened my eyes...I really do feel sorry for Minto but if they don't get off their arses they're in a lot of trouble. Looks like they're fighting a battle on their own.
>
> *Jen* ... I thought it was a great way for everyone to get together. I thought it was fantastic how we did all get on together, especially the two nights. In those nights we'd get together and I'd do readings and Annette did foot massages. It made everything a lot more relaxed. We formed friendships. The second day ...brainstorming was wonderful. We were all coming from the same place. We all understood each other. The barriers and preconceptions had been broken down. The brainstorming was about the Minto demolition...we were telling each other what we were doing. Group activities allowed us to stand up and talk about ourselves and our community. We talked about the book we were going to publish.... I actually quite enjoyed listening to everyone else. I learnt that combining forces we are a force to be reckoned with. Personally I got a big high out of it because everyone wanted readings from me.... It's about being with people with similar interests and similar goals. I wouldn't have done anything differently.
>
> *Anita* ... I did think if we join forces there would be more power behind us. I also got a break from the kids and the house. It was enjoyable to get away from Airds and everyday mundane things...
>
> *Judy* ... I really enjoyed it. I got to meet a lot of nice people and I bonded with all of them. Except for one or two. One of the women is coming over for a barbie (barbecue) soon. We got out of it the fact that all the groups don't have to be on their own anymore, that's why we went to the Ingleburn Awareness Day. And we're staying in contact with the Minto group...

An assumption behind the book project was that the best way to extend their knowledge and understanding of community development issues and practice

would be for them to research and write about it. The book project was seen as a way of elevating them to the status of authors and thereby giving them 'voice.' After 18 months research and writing the book is due to be published in late 2004 with the title *Ratbags Ink: A Voice for Community Builders in Airds and Bradbury.* The co-ordinator of the community leadership project arranged a partnership with a local adult education provider that enabled the appointment of a writer/editor-tutor and visual designer-tutor to work with the Ratbags over a period of 12 months. The book includes edited transcripts of structured discussions by the Ratbags about various community development issues, short written essays and photo-essays, reports of interviews by the Ratbags of local community activists, and short creative pieces. A poem opens the book.

A is for Airds

Airds is the arse-end of the Sydney where
we all live

B is for the bullshit the workers give

C is the collector who collects our debts

D is the dreams we're struggling to get

E is the eruption that goes off in our heads
and for the enthusiasm which can leave us
dead.

F is for fun when friends get together

G is for god who may have left us forever

H is for houses that are falling down

I is for the inadequacy of people in this town

J is the joke called the department of
housing

K is for all the kitchens that need repairing

L is for lunatics, losers and lovers

M is for all us BRILLIANT mothers

N is for nuisance

O is for neighbours opposite and

P is for police who are often incompetent

Q is for quarrels which there are plenty of

R is for the rights of a diversified mob

S is for sex that usually runs rampant

T is for our teenagers who are often
pregnant

U is for understanding

V for vicious

W for the wankers who are very malicious

X for xenophobia that is not welcome here

Y is for the youngsters who we hold dear

Z is the Airds we liken to a zoo

It's a place we love and hate and yet
thoughts fly to.

During the process of writing, editing and designing the book there were tense negotiations between the writer/editor-tutor, the community worker and the Ratbags. It was difficult at times to reach agreement about the content and layout of the book. The Ratbags asserted their 'ownership' of the book and that their language, knowledge and analysis were more valuable than what they derogatively referred to as the 'university and textbook knowledge' of the community worker and writer/editor-tutor. The tutor challenged this sort of labelling and this led to spirited discussions about the respective roles of community workers and the residents they worked with. The community worker encouraged the spirit of resistance and defiance in the Ratbags but at the same time argued that the book was shaped by the editor/writer and that this was an important part of the learning.

The Ratbags may receive support in order to encourage resident 'community leaders' in other parts of Sydney to undertake similar research and writing projects yet it is also possible that the book will be regarded by some as irreverent and negative. Here is one passage that pulls no punches.

> Jen: It would be interesting to see outside workers that come in here and what their attitude is. I have found with some workers – not everyone, but some workers that come in these estates, whether paid or volunteers, they look down their noses at us and its like they're doing us a favour by doing this for us..... I think in a lot of cases, it's not so much the attitude, it's that they don't know what they're coming into.... They really have no concept of what its like to be at the bottom.

The 'story' of the Ratbags continues.

The educational dimension of youth and community work

Clearly there is an educational dimension to much youth and community work. The Ratbags story illustrates this. The community worker played a key role in planning and facilitating learning with the Ratbags. If we analyse the learning in terms of Mezirow's three domains (1981, 1991), then there was instrumental learning. The women learnt more about how to manage their environment and exist more effectively within their objective worlds. They learnt new writing,

photographic and interviewing skills. They learnt about the process of planning and producing a book of over 100 pages.

There was also interpretive learning. They learnt more about the experiences of each other, of other residents and community workers. Through the lively discussions and disagreements about the content of the book they learnt about communication, conflict and the politics of community work and publishing. They learnt more about their social worlds.

And there was critical or transformative learning in the course of which the women learnt more about themselves and their subjective worlds. They learnt to describe the way they see themselves and the values that are important to them. They refused to be labelled as community leaders and chose to call themselves 'ratbags' even though they were aware that some people, including a local school principal, believed that the notion of 'ratbag' was negative and irreverent. Freire sees this act of 'naming one's world' central to the process of 'conscientization.' The Ratbags learnt the value of communicating honestly with the editor. The communication was participant-directed and personal rather than institutional, and active rather than passive.

However, as I write, the Ratbags, are only beginning to learn to place their knowledge of community development in context. They have indicated they are only at the level of petitioning and lobbying and not yet ready to engage in complex negotiations with large organizations. And their assumption that all government agencies and their workers are against them is simplistic because public sector provision can potentially serve their interests more than non-government sector provision, and frontline government workers may well see themselves as allies of local community activists. For the moment the Ratbags profess more interest in gaining technical skills than in knowledge of political economy or self-knowledge. With time that may change.

Youth and community workers do not name and value the educational dimension of their practice

It could be argued that the efforts of community workers to plan and facilitate learning of the type engaged in by the Ratbags should be central to any democracy and community strengthening project. But the educational aspect in youth and community work is not readily valued nor recognised by Australian youth and community workers themselves. Given my description of the educational dimension of community work with the Ratbags it is an irony that most practitioners I interviewed were reluctant to name any part of their work as educational. They readily use terms such as empowerment, consciousness raising and advocacy, but explain that they are reluctant to name these practices as educational because they associate education with schooling and believe that many of the people they work with found schooling an alienating experience.

The educational dimension is discussed in the literature

While there is a reluctance by youth and community workers to recognise an educational dimension in their practice, the following selection of quotes by theorists indicates that it is recognised in the literature, and understood in holistic and generalist terms.

> The community development process is, in essence, a planned and organised effort to assist individuals to acquire the attitudes, skills and concepts required for their democratic participation in the effective solutions of as wide a range of community improvement problems as possible in an order of priority determined by their increasing levels of competence (Mezirow 1961).
>
> Community development is an educational process. It is this, first, last and all the time. All else is secondary to it and must take its place as a reflection, not as the end result (Biddle & Biddle 1965).
>
> Community education for development is a process whereby community members come together to identify their problems and needs, seek solutions among themselves, mobilize the necessary resources, and execute a plan of action or learning or both. This educative approach is one in which community is seen as both agent and objective, education is the process, and leaders are the facilitators, in inducing change for the better (Compton and McClusky 1980).

> The role of the outside agent who entered a neighbourhood or region, mobilised the people around a project and assisted the participants with technical information and resources, gradually changed, as the focus of community development shifted to process, critical awareness and empowerment. The common Brazilian term *agente de base* (base agent) took on a meaning of facilitation.... Facilitators, nowadays, tend to carry out two complementary roles: the socio-educational support of community groups in their processes of reflection, self-directed action and popular movement networking; and the technical sharing of specialized knowledge, such as agriculture, engineering or medicine, within specific projects..... Popular education, as the generator of people's own existential knowledge, values and world-view, and critical perception of their own history and of the way society is organized, eventually replaced the imposition of external programmes, techniques and attitudes. Facilitators have become sharers of a struggle for rights and social transformation, and co-learners with communities (O'Gorman 1995, p. 212/213).

> I argue for community work as critical pedagogy... (p. 171)... The community worker as intellectual, is then able not only to see the material contradictions, but to begin to hear the ideological contradictions expressed as magical or naïve consciousness..... Problematizing or problem-posing helps the community worker to understand most clearly how to work with people in an equal and reciprocal way (p. 177). ..... The skilled use of problematizing offers the possibility for new ways of seeing the world. The role of the educator is to present codifications – photos, video, song, drama, verse, prose – which decontextualise a relevant aspect of everyday reality. By skilfully posing questions rather than giving answers, critical connections emerge from the dialogue (Ledwith 2001, p. 178).

Practitioners acknowledge the educational dimension when prompted

It did not, however, take much prompting in my interviews for youth and community workers to acknowledge that there was an important educational dimension to their practice. And once prompted they were ready to reflect about the education which happens outside formal instructional settings and structured curriculum, and which is connected to peoples' struggles for personal and community development. This community worker in Western Sydney said:

> I see parallels between adult learning and community development work because with community development work you're trying to facilitate and create an atmosphere of trust and co-operation .... and passing on skills....it's sort of not education. I sometimes feel education has got something wrong with it. I see education as something we do to people, we do to kids in schools. Learning is probably a better word or just sharing of skills. It's very much a two way process.

The following quotes by other practitioners indicate various ways in which they acknowledge the educational dimension of their practice.

> The more community work I do, the more I realize that community work and community education are all part of the same process. If we're really about

> empowering people, we have to be educating them (1999, Community worker from Sydney).
>
> Educational skills certainly are useful in the dissemination of information. The core of community work is to teach people to be independent (2001, Community worker from Sydney).
>
> A community centre co-ordinator needs educational skills to teach staff, even the administrator needs educational skills to inform the management committee and funding bodies of our needs and the cost effectiveness of our programs (2001, Community worker from Hunter region, NSW, Australia).
>
> Part of community work is encouraging growth in the service users through very subtle education (2001, Housing Estate worker from Booragul, NSW, Australia).

In Australia, youth and community workers, who are in most cases paid directly or indirectly from government funds, work with people who experience social exclusion, poverty and other forms of disadvantage. Grants are often made with such target groups stipulated. These youth and community workers help people learn skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and qualities that are important for survival, for improving their quality of life, and for making their voices heard. This practice is aimed at strengthening grassroots democracy and is concerned more with community development as opposed to personal development.

But it is not always a straightforward task to define the nature of educational practice that strengthens democracy. I interviewed a group of young people who participated in youth work activities and asked them what they thought youth workers should help them learn. This was the list of responses I compiled:

- sex education
- how to cope with sexism and racism
- how to be independent, responsible and mature
- how to cope with peer pressure
- questions of religion
- how to get work
- how to sensibly use alcohol and drugs
- how to survive, especially for young people who have left home
- how to maintain good health
- how deal with family problems
- how to cope with the 'reality' of life
- respect.

This group of young people did not want youth workers to help them learn how to be active in their communities, let alone politically active. They were more

concerned with personal development than community development. But the boundaries between personal development and community development are not always clear. While youth and community workers may not have an overt agenda of democracy building, most would see their role as that of helping marginalised and disadvantaged people gain more control over their lives. A community worker in Western Sydney responded to my question about the distinction between personal development, education and community development in this way:

> I couldn't even define it...I always feel it's a process that's constantly there and it is about information giving. But as I said before it's a two way process. So, if we're reaching out by, say, Lesley reaching out to the isolated people, he's learning an awful lot about the needs of the people out there for the centre. So, you're bringing back information. It's something we're doing constantly. We're trying to give people some sense of control and it's also about self-responsibility. If they've got information they have got the basic necessity in life.

A common feature in the discourse of many youth and community workers is their commitment to helping people shift from a negative assessment of themselves as 'unimportant', as not having valuable knowledge, and as being largely responsible for their own predicament (be it poor health, homelessness, or unemployment) to a positive self-assessment where they are proud of who they are and what they know, where they believe their views are important and should be heeded, and where they not only assume responsibility for themselves but also understand the role others can have in shaping their world. This process of shifting people from seeing themselves as objects of change to agents of change is one of the most complex challenges for youth and community work practice, and it is an educational one.

Chapter 8

Informal and Popular Education in Youth and Community Work

Education in youth and community work and learning in social action

Popular education theorising, to date, has focused on learning in social action rather than in organised initiatives such as education in youth and community work. In a historical explication of popular education Crowther (1999), for example, writes about the educational potential of social action. He notes that in the nineteenth century value was placed on the role of popular movements as educative forces and he quotes the British Committee on Public Libraries in 1849 which stated that

> the consequences of social and political action led to 'exercising the minds of the labouring classes' better than any school instruction (1999, p. 29).

Crowther says the 'process of political struggle was itself educative' (1999, p. 30/31). Martin (1999) suggests that social movements are more productive sites of learning than directly planned education, and cites the authoritative '1919 Report' to support this view.

> The growth of movements which have as their aims the creation of a better social order is not less important than the process of education itself. In some ways, it is more important, for such movements create the background of aspiration and endeavour which is the foundation of more directly educational work, and suggest the questions for which men and women seek in study to find an answer (UK Ministry of Reconstruction 1919 in Martin, 1999, p. 1).

These assertions perpetuate the misleading notion that significant and meaningful learning automatically happens in community and political action. Perhaps there is always learning, but I would argue that it less likely to be significant unless it is directly shaped by the interventions of educators. In his analysis Crowther undervalues the role of activists and popular educators.

> The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries involved 'collisions' of several kinds: reason and science clashed with the traditional authority of the church and

> establishment; the new discipline needed for factory life conflicted with folk customs; poverty and destitution visibly jarred with opulence and wealth; .... Above all, the newly emerging working class which was culturally, politically and economically growing in consciousness and confidence as a class collided with the dominant order of society (see Thompson 1968). It was through such 'collisions' that popular organizations taught themselves about the nature and causes of exploitation and injustice – as well as what could be done about them (1999, p. 29).

Crowther claims an interest in the role of education but concentrates more on learning rather than education. He quotes Silver's (1965) claim that:

> Popular movements gave rise to a conviction and consciousness that education could involve 'acting and educating against the status quo' (quoted in Crowther 1999, p. 30).

But I am not sure that popular movements did this. I suspect that activists, organisers, agitators *and* educators gave rise to whatever educational consciousness may have developed. By not highlighting the role of educators Crowther, like Silver, privileges incidental learning over learning that has been organised and implemented.

Popular education can be planned

In popular education theory, there has been more interest in helping activists reflect systematically on what they learn in the process of community and political action than in helping activists plan community action in a way that actually facilitates learning. Martin notes that:

> .... popular education positions itself as the ally of progressive social movements – as distinct from much 'provided education' which is so often used to service, sometimes to suppress, them (1999, p. 7).

And Foley says:

> For me the most interesting and significant learning occurs informally and incidentally, in people's everyday lives. And some of the most powerful learning occurs as people struggle against oppression, as they struggle to make sense of what is happening to them and to work out ways of doing something about it (1999, p. 1/2).

Mündel, Duguid and Schugurensky (2004) from the Centre for Transformative Learning in the University of Toronto are researching learning about democracy in housing co-operatives in Canada. To date, their methodology is underpinned

by an assumption that co-op members necessarily learn about democracy through the experience of managing the co-op themselves. My issue with this is that the experience of self-governance in a co-op may lead to either positive or negative learning about democracy. To maximise the likelihood of positive learning one needs to pro-actively create the conditions for it.

One can go too far and concentrate only on studying incidental learning in action rather than planned learning. Lindeman acknowledges the educative potential of social action and conversely the social action potential of education.

> Every social action group should at the same time be an adult education group, and I go even so far as to believe that all successful adult education groups sooner or later become social action groups (Lindeman in Brookfield 1984, p. 192).

Heaney, drawing on Lindeman, asserts:

> Adult education is not only self-reflection, but equally attends to the common and shared experiences of the group, identifies agreed-upon meanings related to those experiences, and leads inexorably towards strategies which transform both individual and collective behaviours (1996, p. 3).

But I question Heaney's claim that education leads inexorably to transformative change. It is challenging and difficult to plan and facilitate education which does this. Drawing on Collins (1991) Heaney argues that the role of popular educators

> is not so much to stir up an issue from scratch as it is to join forces with an emerging or ongoing concern that has already energised a significant group of people (Heaney 1996, p. 15).

Again I would question this. The role of a popular educator is not simply to join forces with a community group but to help the group articulate its concerns - and that more or less is 'stirring up an issue from scratch.' Youth and community workers are often working with groups where there is only a vague and fragile desire to take action and to bring about change. Often the members of the group are frustrated and feel at a loss. They want to see change, but are uncertain how it might be brought about. Learning for transformative change does not inevitably happen in community action. There will be times when it will need to be nurtured.

Planning popular education in local community action settings is more challenging than in social movements

In one sense it is easy to plan learning for a social movement - for a group of people with a collective identity, a passion to bring about change, and a fairly well-defined idea about the sort of change they want.

> By social movements is meant movements of people in civil society which cohere around issues and identities which they themselves define as significant. Welton (1993) identifies three general characteristics of such social movements: they articulate a 'collective identity', ie. their members subscribe to a 'cause' which is common and is expressed collectively in the 'movement'; they exist in an antagonistic relation to an opposed group' (or interest), ie. they are 'for' something because they are 'against' something; they have a normative orientation', ie they embody a mobilising ethic, moral code or a set of beliefs which reflects shared values and purposes (Martin 1999, p. 9).

It is harder to plan learning for a group of people who are not sure about a collective identity or the sort of change that is needed, who perceive themselves as isolated individuals, and who lack confidence about their capacity to bring about change. These are the kinds of groups youth and community workers often work with. The challenge for these workers is to transform tentative local community action initiatives into assertive social movements. How might they help people learn a stronger sense of solidarity, raise their consciousness, and learn how they can exercise power? Martin defines:

> ..... a curriculum of popular civic education. Such a curriculum cannot be civic (in the sense of preparing people for a new kind of citizen) unless and until it is a popular curriculum, ie. one which addresses the real experience and concerns of ordinary people and actively draws upon these as resources for educational work in communities (1999, p. 19).

The notion of curriculum conveys that certain structures, skills and processes are necessary to support learning. They may not be the same as those which support classroom learning in accredited courses. But they are structures, skills and processes nonetheless and they enable community workers to plan and facilitate learning that starts from the experiences of local people, as evidenced in the following case study.

The Bunker Parade Action Group was established in late 1990. The group was made up of local residents from the Bunker Parade Housing Estate in Western

Sydney. In this estate there was an open space surrounded by houses. It was not a conducive space to meet. There was no lighting and there was a large mound in the middle. The mound, it was claimed, created a number of problems. Residents could not see disturbances on the other side of the mound. Fires were lit on it. Stolen cars were dumped behind it. And young people could hide behind it if a police patrol car was spotted. The mound had been there since 1980.

A local community worker reported:

> There were people damaging the park a lot, like leaving burnt cars. Sometimes they'd start a fire. Children's play equipment was destroyed. They were destroyed by young people who have nothing to do at night. I'm not talking about youth in general, just those who didn't have anything else to do.

The action group was established largely at the instigation of a local community worker.

> The group formed after the Bonnyrigg multicultural community festival in September last year. Residents had stalls at the festival. ..... I said, 'right why don't we do something about having something for children? We could have the park cleaned up..'.....There was one woman who's been concerned about the park. I asked her, 'who's with you for the park and wants to do something about it?' She said, 'oh, they're all very slack, one minute you have them with you, the next minute you don't. You'll have to put a bomb beneath them to get them to do something because they've done it before and nothing has happened.'

The community worker had encountered a typical dilemma. Youth and community workers are committed to serving people, yet they are committed to helping people help themselves. Many prefer to describe their role as supporter and facilitator and one of the orthodoxies of community development is that workers are to do themselves out of their job. They are expected not to be interventionist, and to exercise leadership as little as possible. The Bonnyrigg community worker shared these ideals but, as her story of the action group reveals, adopting a purely supportive role is easier said than done.

To do popular education with a community group like the Bunker Parade Action Group requires more than positioning oneself as an ally. It may, at times, require taking the initative. The community worker might have been un-necessarily interventionist but this is a difficult call. After all the resident had said that the community worker would have 'to put a bomb beneath' her fellow residents,

highlighting how engaging people and fostering dialogue about an issue cannot be taken for granted. In situations like this an effective youth or community worker cannot avoid taking a planned and strategic approach. The mixed degrees of readiness and capacity of residents to take action also highlights the complexity of community action initiatives. There is rarely a captive audience or a motivated and coherent group who will immediately appreciate the services of popular educators and who are ready to act.

The community worker with the Bunker Parade Action Group had a clear idea about the need to exercise leadership and provide advocacy support in the early stages of her work with the resident action group. Members of the Bunker Parade Action Group did not see themselves as active agents making their own history. But the community worker also had a clear idea about *relinquishing* her advocacy and leadership role.

> I first met the people who complained a lot. They didn't channel their complaint....
>
> I was pleased that the group got going again. Remember, some people who live in a housing estate haven't got the skills to organise meetings and to lobby and things like that. And just to get them out of the house, especially women... for women taking one step out of the house is developmental anyway.
>
> But the group had a very negative approach. They'd say, "oh, we've been there before". And that's why the workers can help them. I went through all the things the group had done before and heard how everything hadn't worked. Then I realised how the Council and Housing Commission had not been brought together before, at least at a senior decision making level.
>
> Through consultation, evaluation and discussion you get to know, hey, am I doing too much for this group, should they start taking over this task? How am I going to get them to do that? They say, 'I don't want to do that'. But they need to learn to do it to learn skills and for you to step back. If you keep doing that you always keep on doing it. If they have the information they are empowered. Information gives them the very first step. Doing something about it is another thing which they need to develop skills in. And an educator is the person in the middle who tries to do that. With regards to the group I've limited myself to the end of this year. I'll resource them, help them out and gradually wean them off.

The community worker was intent on helping the residents learn to exercise community leadership but there was a continuing dependence on her. There was also a deep-seated instrumental view by residents of how change is brought about: it was just a matter of getting the right knowledge and skills – that is, getting to know the right bureaucrats and learning the right procedures. There

seemed to be little or no desire to become more independent or any perception of the need for structural change. What follows is my journal entry describing a discussion with a particularly active member of the action group.

> Dorothy felt a mixed sense of achievement about Bunker Parade. She certainly expressed pleasure that the mound had been cleared away. But she was sceptical about making further progress to get lighting, trees planted and a children's playground. It was significant that she described a relationship of "them and us" when talking about local government and the Housing Commission. She often referred to herself as a dill in relation to the government officials in their suit coats and ties.
>
> I was interested in what she had learnt in her involvement with the action group. Dorothy made a classic statement which went something like:
>
> > "I learnt that government officials in their suit coats and ties can be just as much dills we are."
>
> I asked Dorothy what she and the group would do if Stella, the community worker, were to leave. Would they continue their liaison with the Housing Commission and local government? Dorothy gave a common sense answer. "We'd find out who had replaced Stella." I asked whether she felt she had learnt how government works through their dealings. For example, if the specific people in Council and the Housing Commission they had been dealing with were to change jobs, would they know who to approach? Dorothy said she'd simply ask.

What is effective informal and popular education?

There are various theories about how to facilitate effective community education and effective community development but little research for practitioners, planners and scholars to draw upon. People can under-estimate the complexity of community development practice. In my experience, youth and community workers often use strategies because there is a taken-for-granted assumption that those particular strategies work (Flowers 2002a, Flowers 2001a). So a youth worker may spend time and energy producing a brochure on the dangers of drug abuse without evidence that brochures have any effect on attitudes or behaviour. Or a community worker may assume that in order to mobilise people in a small, economically depressed, rural town all she need do is call a meeting.

Accounts can be descriptive and not analytical. I have heard accounts of community development practice which included descriptions of how meetings were convened, committees formed, and plans agreed to, but rarely have I been

provided with evidence of how effective these meetings and committees were. I have usually had difficulty finding out who came to the meetings, who actively participated in the meetings, whether attitudes shifted from apathetic or despondent to buoyant and confident, or what significant community changes came about. Not until I asked were practitioners forthcoming about the contesting models or ideas about development, about whose interests prevailed, or about how differences were negotiated and respected.

In workshops for community workers and funding managers of community work programs in government departments, and in keynote conference addresses (Flowers 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d) I have contended that if I did a survey of community work projects in Australia then over 75% would follow a staid, conservative and formulaic pattern. It would go something like this: (a) establish an action group or local committee; (b) convene a planning process making use of focus groups or workshops; (c) organise follow-up meetings to continue the planning and make decisions about implementation; (d) establish and seek agreement on management arrangements with some sort of secretariat. Few, if any, have disagreed with my contention.

There seems to be little research to provide us with evidence about how effective meeting-based strategies are. I make the following comments cautiously, but from my own experience and the research I have found that meeting-based practices are likely to have limited effect for the following reasons:

- They not inclusive. Fran Baum and Robert Bush (2001) have researched aspects of civic participation and governance in community work. They argue that working class people are not being represented in the usual types of consultation forums – such as meetings, workshops and committees. There are people who like meetings and committees but there are probably more that do not. The challenge is to engage those who do not.

- Meeting-based strategies are not pluralist. They employ a one-size fits all

approach rather than responding to the different ways people like to learn, plan, make decisions and work together.

- Meeting-based strategies are not experiential and rarely provide opportunities for learning by doing. Meetings are overwhelmingly cognitive and are often didactic in that they consist of people 'sharing monologues' (Allman 2001).

Untested assumptions are often made about the value or potential of 'participation' and 'community development.' Here, for example, are three recommendations made by a major study about community participation, health and social capital in the western suburbs of Adelaide (Baum, Bush, Modra, Murray, Palmer & Potter, 1999) each carrying contestable assumptions:

> Neighbourhood houses, community centres and community health centres build on their existing community development strategies to extend the opportunities for people to participate. Particular attention should be given to encouraging the participation of those groups who are less likely to participate in group and civic activities (recommendation no. 4, p. 68).
>
> As many health and other human service workers have not been trained to use community development techniques, training in these techniques and their considerable potential to promote health in local communities should become a regular part of human service staff development programs (recommendation no 5, p. 69).
>
> Human service policies should support the development of community health centres, neighbourhood houses and community centres in disadvantaged communities as these centres have developed skills in community development (recommendation no 16, p. 71).

Baum et al collected evidence about the role of community workers in building social capital and promoting health. But their recommendations can be interpreted as suggesting that community health centres, neighbourhood houses and community centres are all equally effective in their contribution to community building. There is insufficient other research of the varying degrees and different ways community agencies are effective in community development. Baum et al included published case studies of 25 community groups. In an associated publication Millet, Murray & Palmer explained:

> The case studies were undertaken to increase our understanding of the contribution community groups and organisations make to health and social capital, and the necessary conditions for them to operate effectively (1999).

Yet the case studies serve more the purpose of celebrating the contributions of community groups than of describing the practices and analysing how effective those practices were. Some aspects of community development practice are more effective than others. The researchers do say they want to study the conditions that are necessary for effective operation. But it is equally important to study the operations themselves.

One of the recommendations by Baum et al is that:

> Research is required to understand the dynamics of participation further, especially regarding the participation patterns of those groups that are less likely to participate (1999, recommendation no. 26, p. 73).

Here again the detail of community development practice is neglected.

More is known about mapping and assessing, rather than facilitating, community capacity. In the place of a pragmatic analysis and evaluation of techniques, as Ron Labonte and Glen Laverack (2001) usefully point out, community development researchers compile lists.

> Almost every investigator setting about to conceptualise or research community capacity creates or derives a short list of qualities of a capable community.

The flip side of research about the dynamics of participation is research about the practice of intentionally fostering it. We need to ask *why* some community work practices are effective in order to encourage practitioners to move beyond description to analysis and beyond assumption to action.

Chapter 9

Analysing the Discourse of Youth and Community Workers

Rhetoric

Margaret Ledwith (2001) claims that community workers in England use rhetoric with radical intentions but that community work has been subverted by a conservative agenda.

> The New Right hijacking of a language of liberation ('empowerment', 'participation', 'active citizenship') not only cleverly diluted this radical tradition, but it transformed rights into responsibilities by transferring the collective responsibility of the welfare state to the individual, the family and community as a moral responsibility. Thus, notions of 'community' become interpreted in the interests of the state, and the critical edge of community action become dislodged (p. 171).

Ledwith uses words such as 'confounded' (p. 174) and 'bewildered' (p. 172) to describe how community workers theorise about their practice. Martin Mowbray describes the state of Australian community work literature in the following way.

> What community workers do, or seek to do, is often very difficult to establish. Not the least reason for this is the use by community workers of extremely general formulations about their work. Descriptions of their accomplishments are frequently confusing and cryptic, even evasive. Grand claims about what community work is are accompanied by very little evidence. Abstract and poor quality descriptions abound, with frequent use of non-sequiturs, contradictory points, truisms, platitudes, and disregard for basic principles of logic and evidence (1994, p. 2).

In this chapter I want to examine a number of claims made by youth and community workers. These are claims I have encountered in my research and practice, and accord with the 'formulations' encountered by Mowbray and the 'language' described by Ledwith.

Claims about need

A community worker claimed that he responded to people's needs and this in effect was the central feature of his job.

> I am reluctant to suggest what the people should do. It is my job to find out what they need (community worker in Sydney).

But a need may not necessarily serve the interests of the people who express it. For example, one community worker said:

> I hear victims of family violence tell me they *need* (my italics) to learn how to be more understanding of those who perpetrate violence (community worker in Sydney).

Of course this expression of need cannot be discounted. Nor should it be uncritically accepted. The concept of 'need' is complex.

> Let's bring out some local people who have become sporting stars. They will tell young people that the opportunities exist and all they *need* (my italics) is to seize them (community worker in Sydney).

Another community worker countered this interpretation of 'need' by suggesting that the problem in this particular region is that opportunities to play affordable sport do not exist and so people do not *need* to be told they can do it if only they tried. Instead they *need* more local sporting facilities run by local people.

What people think they need is subject to complex and contesting social and political forces. Paulo Freire, for example, starts from the assumption that people have a distorted understanding of the world (he calls it 'magic consciousness') and his way of working is intended to help people develop a deeper and critical understanding of what they might 'need'. Many youth and community workers say they respond to needs but, in fact, they may challenge, try to extend or even reverse immediate expressions of need. This is likely to be the case, for example, for the community worker quoted above who was responding to victims of violence said they still 'needed' those who were perpetrating the violence. There can be as much danger in taking the expression of need at face value as there is in imposing a worker's view of what a 'need' should be.

Claims about whose interests they act in

Youth and community workers claimed to be concerned, first and foremost, with the interests of the ordinary people they worked with. Yet they acknowledged that their work also served the interests of parents, police, business and government authorities. So a 'rights based' perspective rests uneasily with a 'soft cop' function, reflecting a contradictory way of thinking about the nature and purpose of their practice. A youth worker put the 'rights-based' perspective in the following way:

> there's a centre based worker, who does referrals, is someone to talk to, does advocacy, support young people in whatever their needs may be at the time, we consult young people about what their needs are, and try and pursue programs to cater for these young people
>
> ..... we're pushing for young people's rights..... to have their say.....
>
> how we educate them..... we consult with them, get down on their level and find out their needs and what their wants are.....and what they'd like to learn and try to help as much as possible in pursuing their needs ..... advocate for them, help out.

Yet this same worker described her drop-in centre as performing a classic 'soft-cop' function:

> ... to put it plain and simple... to give young people something to do..... you hear parents saying that they like knowing our kids are down at the centre, they're safe there..... otherwise they'll be out on the streets and committing a crime.

To be fair she was not saying that the main purpose of a youth drop-in centre was to keep young people off the streets but, like other youth workers she was acknowledging why youth centres received support from 'adults.' At a youth studies conference in Melbourne, April 1998 it was asserted that young people rarely expressed a need for youth workers but that local government authorities, police and local business interests did (White 1998). This is not to say that youth work only or primarily serves the interests of bodies who want to control young people. But it does highlight the potential contradiction inherent in any claims made by youth workers that they advocate for young people's interests, and it points to the need for youth workers to acknowledge this contradiction if they are to effectively negotiate between these contesting interests.

Claims about participatory methods

Some youth and community workers valued participatory ways of working with people yet appeared to do so for authoritarian ends. There can be a contradiction between the workers' espousal of the principles of participation and their own narrowly prescribed or authoritarian practice. This tension was illustrated in the way the labour market trainers of young unemployed people I interviewed talked about their practice. A number stressed the importance of young people being directly involved in the planning and implementation of projects. For them, participatory planning meant avoiding the role of traditional teachers or experts, and helping young people make their own decisions.

> We don't teach. We'll often sit around a tree and discuss what needs to be done.

However, this notion of facilitation sat uneasily with their conviction about the importance of helping young people learn a 'work ethic'. When asked to elaborate on the concept of a work ethic a youth worker said:

> The trainees should learn to work hard, to have breaks not when they want to but when the boss wants them to, to work overtime if necessary. Gaining skills in horticulture is not all that important.

Another youth worker explained that the development of a work ethic involved learning to:

> work in a team, to be reliable and accountable, and to become organised and motivated. You know, these are young people who used to sleep in till midday, watch TV most of the day, who have never had a job. I think developing a team spirit is important. When they started the LEAP program they weren't motivated.

When asked how they instilled a work ethic, several youth workers talked about 'cajoling' and a 'firm enforcement of rules'. The ultimate enforcement was when trainee wages were withdrawn for non-attendance. Wilderness and adventure training was popular. A manager explained it was introduced because:

> it can be used as a carrot and stick for the trainees ... it is presented as a reward and incentive for the trainees to achieve, when they are not pulling their weight we postpone it.

Participatory planning and learning processes do not necessarily serve young

people's interests. In the projects facilitated by the workers quoted above, the young people did not participate in decisions about curriculum content. There may have been space for learning to be negotiated and to be centred on young people's issues but this was not done. What should be learnt was pre-determined and the learners only participated in the planning of minor tasks and the allocating of roles within the group.

Claims about community participation

Some youth and community workers claimed that people who participated in the planning and implementation of projects would necessarily be empowered. One worker talked in an upbeat and almost evangelical manner about the importance of supporting young people's participation.

> Can we let go? When we run projects we are nervous about the full participation of young people. Can I trust the young person to man the phones, for example? Actually we have no choice if we believe in the value of participation. We should let go and be there to support them.
>
> ..... by young people, for young people; that's what I believe in and that's what counts. ..... I believe youth workers can make a difference and do so. We give young people a voice..... oh, it's a powerful thing!

Another youth worker talked about supporting young people to plan and manage recreational activities.

> We don't just baby sit or keep them off the streets. Once you get to know them, involving them, you're empowering them to become something else..... you're assisting them and supporting them..... so a young person might come in and have certain ideas about this and that and have certain skills and we can take those skills and turn them into something and empower them. For example, on a band night a guy might come in and can play the guitar but has never played in a band and us provide the opportunity for him to come and play in a band and develop his skills ... we're empowering him to go off and do it.... and also the committee of young people that is running the band night..... it's their band night, they feel a sense of ownership..... empowering them 'cause they're running it ..... although we're working with the young people it's really the young people doing the work and we're just overseeing the process.....and assisting them with whatever it is they need....

This kind of discourse leaves me asking: to what extent can the above assertions be substantiated? What is the quality of the learning? And while some sort of learning may take place, learning for what end? The notion of empowerment in

the above account of a 'band activity' seems to be restricted to the opportunity for young people to exercise a little responsibility, a little freedom of choice, and to do something that they did not have the opportunity to do otherwise (at home or school, for example). An alternative notion of empowerment might entertain the idea of young people developing a deeper understanding of social context, developing a greater sense of agency, analysing the ideology in everyday life, understanding political and economic doctrines, and exercising power as well as responsibility.

Claims about power

Some of the youth and community workers I talked to applied an ambiguous, social analysis. Some depicted young people as lacking power, a view assertively expressed in this quote.

> Young people are commonly excluded from the power, recognition and space that is available to mainstream populations. Young people are usually denied opportunities to participate in public policy decision making, in the media and public spaces. Young workers pay tax but cannot vote. There is concern about under-age drinking but there are very few entertainment venues for under 18's. Young unemployed people are frequently blamed for not obtaining work but there are fewer jobs than there are young applicants.

Yet I formed the strongest impression that this youth worker concentrated on creating opportunities for young people to exercise power without confronting the wider structures that excluded young people from power. There is an implicit deficit analysis in the notion that many young people do not have the necessary skills, knowledge and qualities to exercise influence until they have participated in activities made possible by youth workers. The corollary is that if young people could gain some new skills and knowledge they would be sufficiently empowered to join 'the mainstream.'

> (Our youth centre) engages with young people to co-create art. In this process of collaborative art work young people are empowered because it gives them an opportunity to experience equality, to have their 'voice' as expressed in art valued, and to simply be creative. Furthermore, when young people have the goal of producing and achieving recognition for their art - at (our youth centre) projects have included a visual art gallery exhibition, a gig and music production, a drama performance, a web site display for computer graphics - this galvanises and inspires

> the groups of young people to become disciplined, harmonious and focussed. Outcomes include raised self-worth, an increased sense of belonging and a celebration of their passions.

The above account suggests that what happens within a youth centre to young people will be of significance to them in other social settings, but it offers no evidence of this. The youth worker did discuss the structural disadvantages which faced young people but tended to concentrate on helping young people change themselves in order to adjust.

Claims about informal education

Most of the youth workers I have interviewed or worked with acknowledged that they helped people learn. But a number went to great efforts not to be labelled as educators for fear of being associated with schooling.

> The program must be flexible, informal and fun. The young people we worked with would turn off very quickly to anything which seemed like school.

In this view schooling is inflexible, formal and hard work and there is the assumption that if one works in ways that are perceived as formal then one is less likely to connect with ordinary people. But by focusing on the formality or informality of their work, youth and community workers may restrict their analysis to method and technique rather than politics and philosophy.

This lack of a coherent theoretical framework is apparent in the way some workers emphasised the importance of being flexible and informal when facilitating learning, then in the next breath asserted that education must be organised via workshops and structured programs. Some workers made the unsubstantiated claim that people necessarily have more control over informal than formal educational processes. Schools and teachers were branded as authoritarian and youth workers were depicted as acting in the interests of marginalised communities and young people. When asked how the role of a youth worker differed from that of a school teacher, one worker said:

> I'd say in one way we're more on their side..... I think the school teacher basically gets paid to come in with the text book, put the message forward, put the lesson forward, teach the student and when the lesson is over walk out and that's basically it.... and the student will take what they get out of the lesson..... whereas the young person comes in to the (youth) centre and there's lot more (forthcoming). We don't just get them to open up their text books..... we're more there to work with the young people ..... if they got problems to help them get through it.

Claims about advocacy, friendship and solidarity

The notions of advocacy, friendship and acting in solidarity were central to how the youth and community workers I met conceived of their role as an 'educator.' But these notions are potentially problematic and can be used both intentionally and unintentionally to mislead. I believe it would be fair to say that youth and community workers of all political and philosophical persuasions can, and do, claim to be advocate and friend. But who defines an advocate or friend, and why should workers present themselves as better advocates and friends than school teachers? Youth and community workers are not necessarily more accountable to young people, and teachers need not be any more beholden to curriculum guidelines than youth workers are to particular program guidelines. To describe the claim by youth and community workers that 'we're more on their side' as problematic is not necessarily to be critical of youth workers but to point to a need for them to be explicit about how they understand the concepts of advocacy, friendship and solidarity.

Some youth and community workers suggested their greatest service was to offer friendship.

> Young people seem to like street workers because they are friendly and are interested in them. To me this seems more important than knowing a lot about services etc.

This street worker's almost intuitive conception of his role needs to be supplemented by the kind of thoughtful theorising provided by a London-based community worker, David Head, who wrote:

> A friend then? Community and educational workers know only too well in their work the conflicting necessities of being involved and keeping some distance. ..... Yet the model of friendship cannot be bettered, in so far as a friend is one who takes

> me and my interests seriously, who helps me to identify what is important to me, who shows me new vistas and invites me to explore them, who makes possible a relationship where we mutually contribute to each other ..... (1977, p. 142).

Claims about dialogue

Almost all of the youth and community workers I have talked to claimed that one of the most important means of doing informal education was through talking and listening, and to do this well required competence of a refined and subtle nature. Initiating and facilitating dialogue was regarded as a key educational task.

> At the heart of street work practice is the artful skill of dialogue. Dialogue is an educational process which does not rely on classrooms, lessons or brochures to help people learn. Instead it relies on conversation, listening, suggesting, acting and helping.

Peter Slattery, a drug and alcohol educator, suggests the use of 'triggers' to initiate dialogue.

> The worker may offer an activity, an image of some kind, a video, a piece of music or poetry, or it may be an intriguing comment or question..... Although initiatives are the duty of the worker, a dialogue develops within which the client's issues can be addressed (1994, p. 10).

The dialogic form of education is seen as complex, subtle and long term.

> The style of work involved is to form relationships that allow me to fit in and become trusted. My work does not create desired behaviour by using legal powers or force of numbers. It is a steady infiltration using persuasion and strength of relationship to create behaviours from young people. Therefore my work is slow, deals with individuals and outcomes are seen in more subtle ways than are generally understood (Slattery 1994, p. 7).

The tension between educating and imposing

Educators tread a fine line between imposing their views on learners and abandoning learners to their own devices. If a youth or community worker is fearful of imposing there is a good possibility that participants may not be extended and so learn little that is new. In fact, workers are often happy to assume the role of the facilitator of learning, but in the process may relinquish

the responsibility of seeking to ensure that what is learnt is meaningful. Being intent on helping people learn, and being prepared to challenge them to consider alternative views to their current ones, involves the risk of being, or at least being seen as, didactic and domineering. But if a worker is not prepared to educate, that is, to help people learn a range of ideas and knowledge, what are they there for? Slattery writes thoughtfully about the need for workers to be prepared to educate and not succumb to fears of being unreasonably prescriptive.

> Workers are not required to be accepting of all that they are presented with by a young person.... It is possible for there to be a clear statement by a worker of their views without that view corrupting a process of genuine regard which invites the young person to make their own decisions. But of course genuine regard for another is difficult to define and impossible to prescribe. No amount of description here will reveal whether or not this approach is genuinely respectful in either theory or in individual practice. Respect is so often revealed in nuance; seemingly innocuous questions can be asked which will subtly move a person in a particular direction; a statement of surprise or shock or the proverbial raising of an eyebrow can all influence a person. The extent to which the ideological or personal interests of a worker impinge unreasonably upon this process is always difficult to assess. Respect, mutuality and dialogue are essential elements of this approach, and it is for the scrutiny and conscience of each worker and their colleagues to ensure that these are present in practice (1994, p. 14).

In the following quote another youth worker describes how she challenged a young man's homophobia and in doing so seemed to achieve the right balance.

> .... if someone makes a racist comment when they are playing pool I might make a sort of informal comment on that and ask why they think that ..... maybe show or tell them another side of things..... the other day one of the guys at the youth centre asked whether one of the youth workers was gay. I said he wasn't, but what does it matter if he was. He reckoned that it did matter because the worker might be after him. I told him, "don't flatter yourself, if he was gay he'd be after someone else who was gay." I then asked him if he had a problem with people being gay and he said, "well no." He was just worried (because) he doesn't want to be gay.

Process as opposed to the content of learning

The educational encounter described above tells us about the worker's role in facilitating the learning, but it does not tell us much about what was actually learnt. We can only speculate on whether the young man learnt that the stereotype of the sexually predatory gay man was a myth or simply that this particular worker did not appreciate homophobic remarks. It has already been noted that youth and community workers place value on organising people to

participate in the planning and implementation of projects. A common assertion made by workers was that the end results of a project were less important than the learning and benefits derived by the people actively participating in the process.

> These women have had their creative writing pieces published. Seeing their writing on paper and how people responded positively was what mattered to them. I don't think we should judge the value of this project by whether they have become more effective in recruiting more volunteers or changing their community or whatever. It is more important they participated than achieved an end result (community worker in Sydney).

But when asked to expound on the nature of the learning and the benefits people derived from the process, workers were less forthcoming. Because of this lack of detail I am led to wonder how valuable such learning is, and whether opportunities are being missed. Youth and community workers are by their own accounts good at mobilising people and if this is so then the potential for political education is high. But the potential may not be recognised or even desired by the workers. A youth worker established and supported a committee of 20 to 30 young people who met once a fortnight over a period of two years to plan and see the building of a skateboard facility through to completion. In her account of the project, the youth worker talked mostly about how she maintained the momentum of participation. Clearly the educational possibilities were huge but she had little to say about these.

How worthwhile is the learning that is enabled by youth and community workers? In the following quote, two workers described what they believed a group of young people had gained from their participation in a variety of projects.

> These young people are a force to be reckoned with. They don't sit back and take what is handed out to them. They ask questions, they stand up for themselves, and if they don't like something, they do something about changing it. They know how to use the system and they know how to use the media. They also help each other as well as other young people in the area who come to them for advice because of all they've done. They are also friends. They ring each other and have reunions and invite each other to birthdays and other events.

The description captures well the aims of the youth workers I have talked to in the course of my work and research: that young people develop self-esteem,

become assertive, critical and questioning, and are prepared to engage in social action; that they acquire some knowledge of social and political structures and processes ('the system'), and some technical activist or citizenship skills ('how to use the media'); and finally that they establish deep and lasting friendships. It is a discourse that can be shared by radicals and conservatives alike. Radicals can point to their commitment to promoting a participatory form of action aimed at bringing about change. Conservatives can point to their commitment to helping people help themselves. It would seem therefore that what youth and community workers think might be worthwhile for people to learn will only take on a sharper definition when workers elaborate more fully their own theoretical and political perspectives, and in the next section I want to examine a debate in which German youth and community workers set out to do this.

Section 3

INSIGHTS FROM YOUTH AND COMMUNITY WORK IN GERMANY

Chapter 10

The nature of youth and community work in Germany

Pedagogical tradition in German and European youth and community work

The ambivalent attitude to the educational aspect of youth and community work which I have encountered in Australia stands in contrast to youth and community work in Germany and its immediate European neighbours. Walter Lorenz writes about youth, community and social work in Germany, France and Italy and notes the important place of pedagogical traditions.

> The most powerful and influential alternative to the case work paradigm is that of pedagogy and the derivation of social pedagogy. About half the German social workers hold a qualification in social pedagogy and there are more professionals working in social occupations in France and Italy with a qualification in 'animation' or as 'educators' than there are qualified social workers (1994, p. 87).

In Germany, youth and community work, social work and adult education are regarded as related fields of study whereas in Australia they tend to be considered as distinct. And again in Germany youth, community and social work are constructed as educational fields of study whereas in a review of the professional development curricula of these fields in Australian universities and colleges quickly shows that they are more closely aligned to the social sciences.

The construction of youth and community work as educational fields is perhaps best illustrated by the development of the German field of practice and study known as 'social pedagogy.' The term was not widely used until the 1890s and there are differing accounts of when it was first used. According to Helga Marburger (1981), Adolph Diesterweg used it as a heading to categorise a number of references relating to education in community settings in the fourth edition of his book 'Guide to Education for the German Teacher' published in 1850 but did not offer a definition of the term. According to Kronen (1978, p. 219-34) the term was first used in 1844 by the educationalist Karl Mager. For Mager

> .... social pedagogy signifies a concept which pays attention to the formation of society as a whole within which formal educational institutions play only a limited part (Lorenz 1994, p. 92).

From the beginning of last century when social pedagogy became firmly established as a field of study it was accorded the status of a third educational arena after family and schooling. According to Lorenz (1994) it was Gertrud Bäumer who first defined social pedagogy in this way.

> It encompasses education that does not take place in the school or family (Bäumer 1929).

The German focus on the educational nature of youth and community work was clearly expressed by the Federal German Youth Association in the Declaration of St Martin in 1962:

> Youth centres see themselves as social institutions. They regard their field of practice to be informal education. They intentionally seek to complement the educational functions of families and schools (in Münchmeier 1992, p. 377).

The social pedagogical century

Thomas Rauschenbach (1992) argues that the extent of the educational work undertaken by paid practitioners in the German community services industry is not fully appreciated and should receive more attention. He deplores the equation of education with schooling and the focus on the study of the profession of school teaching. He suggests that from both historical and contemporary perspectives, school teaching represents a narrow, institutionalised form of education. He argues that it was not until the nineteenth century that school teachers became the primary educators for most people. Before then members of the family and community performed this role. Rauschenbach describes the eighteenth century as the private pedagogical century, the term 'private' referring to the realm of the private individuals and associations which helped people learn without the sponsorship of the state. He sees the nineteenth century as the 'school pedagogical century' or the century of institutionalised education. And he describes the twentieth century as the century of the social welfare state or 'the social pedagogical century.'

He backs up his claim to call the last century the social pedagogical century by asserting that German education in the twentieth century, particularly the latter part, underwent a radical change in a number of ways. There was a significant expansion of community services. In 1961 there were 482,000 people employed in these services, in 1970 696,000 and in 1987 1,320,000. This expansion was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of social pedagogues and educators employed outside the formal school system. These practitioners worked in special education and a range of youth and community work agencies. Rauschenbach provides the following set of ratios of teachers in schools to educators in the community services industry.

The changing balance between formal educators and informal educators

1925	10 teachers to 1 educator in the social and community services industry
1950	10 to 3
1961	10 to 3.5
1970	10 to 4
1980	10 to 5
1987	10 to 6.5
1990	10 to 7.5

Rauschenbach also cites an increase in university students studying education studies as opposed to teacher training, that is, graduating with the German *'Diplom'* or *'Magister'* in education as a major, neither of which award is a teacher training qualification (*Staatsexamen*). In the 1950s and 1960s there were less than 200 doctoral and masters education students at any one time in West Germany. In the mid-1970s this number had increased to between 25,000 and 30,000 (Rauschenbach 1992, p. 404).

Rauschenbach argues that this statistic should challenge educators to re-think the nature of their field. Educational research should be directed proportionally more at the teaching and learning which happens outside classrooms. He argues that more attention should be paid to the difference between formal and informal

education, that is between education that happens in institutional settings and that which happens in everyday settings. In January 2004, he addressed the Bavarian Youth Association and called upon youth workers to be more forceful about the value of their work within the education system (2004).

It is interesting for an English-speaking 'outsider' looking in at the German research to note that a German scholar believes there is too little research directed at the educational dimension of youth and community work. From this outsider's point of view there seems to be a good deal of German research drawing links between youth work, community work and education, and in particular a wealth of research on how people learn to be politically literate and active.

Research about political education

In 1971 Oskar Negt published a book entitled *Sociological Imagination and Exemplary Learning*. In it he wrote about union education in Germany in the 1950s and 1960s and was critical of the way it was conducted. He argued it was largely didactic and failed to help workers understand basic political economy. Negt suggested that the challenge was to ground workers' education in their everyday reality. This could be done without seeking to impart large bodies of knowledge but rather by helping workers make sense of their specific situation through contextual analysis. Negt's book was significant because it provided a theoretical framework for political education in everyday settings and inspired an extensive amount of theoretical and empirical research into the role of youth and community workers in political education. In the following chapters I want to review some of this German research, looking for insights into the ways informal and popular education in youth and community work can either control or emancipate learners.

Chapter 11

History of German Social Pedagogy: socialist versus community perspectives

Social pedagogy is a term that has as many definitions and interpretations as the term community education. Rather than look for a universal definition, therefore, it may be more useful to examine the various historical forces and philosophical perspectives which shape it.

Tönnies and 'Gemeinschaft' (community)

The growing currency of the term social pedagogy at the end of the nineteenth century represented an intensified concern with 'social' versus individual pedagogy. Coming from working class activists, bourgeoisie policy makers and intellectuals alike, it was a concern with the development of 'community', of a new sense of German national identity, and the collective welfare of growing numbers of poor, working class people.

Of course, there were different understandings of what constitutes a worthwhile community. From one perspective, 'community' was seen in an idealised and abstract way. This perspective drew heavily on Ferdinand Tönnies (1887) dual concepts of Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft'. Tönnies sharply distinguished one from the other. He ascribed the following opposing descriptors to each term.

Gemeinschaft	***Gesellschaft***
community	society
real and organic	ideal and mechanical
sharing, trust and co-operation	separate individuals working alongside each other
established and ongoing	temporary and new
private	public
faith and tradition	science

Tönnies' concepts of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft' provided a theoretical framework for German educators of the late nineteenth century who feared the decay of civilisation. There was concern that industrialisation and urbanisation were creating a mass consumption society from which individuals were increasingly alienated. Educators theorised that the class conflicts of the time could be explained ultimately by individualism. They suggested that individualism was leading to social atomisation, to the strengthening of 'Gesellschaft' over 'Gemeinschaft'. For these educators social pedagogy represented a way of shifting education from what they perceived as its individualist focus and putting it to work building 'Gemeinschaft'.

Community ('Gemeinschaft') versus working class interests

Much of the literature on social pedagogy around the turn of the century is dominated by a moralistic depiction of 'Gemeinschaft' as an idealised state which could be achieved though high standards of behaviour. Social and economic conflict was seen as the failure of people to meet up to notions of co-operative, 'civilised' behaviour and to overcome anti-social individualism.

A feature of German society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the conflict between an increasingly assertive working class movement and the State (Böhnisch 1992, Marburger 1981). These contesting interests shaped social pedagogy. But it was not always apparent whose interests prevailed. Some social pedagogy programs at the time were designed to advance working class interests. Yet it can be argued they served to contain the demands for change being made by working class organisations and so, in reality, served the interests of the State. Of course, it can sometimes be simplistic to couch one's analysis in terms of working class interests pitted against the State's since there can be complex divergences and convergences of interests, as was dramatically illustrated by the election victory of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in 1918. The SPD was the leading workers' party and had been banned from engaging in

public political activity from 1878 to 1890 on the grounds that it was subversive to the State, yet now it had in effect become the State.

While there were various and contesting theories about 'Gemeinschaft' and social pedagogy it is clear that German social pedagogy was a new and distinctive approach to education, youth and community work.

Socialist traditions of social pedagogy

The development of social pedagogy closely accompanied the rise of the social welfare state and the rapid onset of industrialisation in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This was a period when there were sharp social and economic inequalities. There were large numbers of working poor, some working 14-hour days, the use of child labour, no occupational health and safety legislation and no social security provisions. But it was also the period which saw the rise of a strong, organised socialist workers' movement (Böttcher 1975, Konrad 1993).

The communist and worker's movement began in Germany later than in England. This can be partly explained by the German state's repressive policies. Until 1848 political associations were banned. Ferdinand Lassalle played an important role in the German workers' movement. In 1863 he called for the establishment of an independent worker's political party and on the 23rd March, 1863 the General German Workers Party was established with the purpose of campaigning for equal voting rights and pursuing the class struggle. In August 1869 the Social Democratic Worker's Party was established. In 1875 the two parties united and became the Socialist Worker's Party. Its aims were to create an independent state and a socialist system, to abandon the wages system, and to fight exploitation and inequalities. More specific aims were to introduce laws reducing working hours, eliminating child labour, improving work conditions, ensuring free speech, and establishing equal voting rights.

The socialists steadily increased their membership and electoral strength. This created angst in the bourgeoisie. Attempted assassinations on Kaiser Wilhelm gave Chancellor Bismarck in 1878 a reason to ban the socialist party. This ban was not lifted till 1890. But the political ban did not stop the growth of the socialist movement. In 1890 the Socialist Workers Party won 19.7% of the vote, which made them the strongest party in Germany. In 1891 they changed their party's name to the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). Marxism was acknowledged as providing the theoretical basis for the party's program and nationalisation was an important plank of the party platform. With the SPD's continued electoral gains - in 1912 they gained 34.8% of the vote - the possibility of a socialist government was very real.

The State sought to control the workers movements partly by force and partly through co-option. From 1881 to 1889 the first social security programs were established. These included a health scheme, accident insurance and old age pension. In 1927 unemployment pensions were established. These measures were the forerunners of the present day social welfare state.

The socialist tradition of social pedagogy arises from the political struggles of working-class people for rights and better working conditions. Socialist social pedagogues believed that people should learn about the nature of capitalism and socialism, and how to fight exploitation and inequalities. Where the conservative tradition wanted people to learn reverence, the early socialist movement wanted people to learn irreverence (Thiersch and Rauschenbach 1987, p. 1020). Value was placed on independent organising and self-determination. Socialist pedagogues had to compete with or work within forms of practice such as gymnastics which were as attractive to working class young people as they were to the youth of the bourgeoisie. While conservatives may have used gymnastics as an educational strategy to foster discipline and fortitude in the service of the existing political and social system, socialists used gymnastics to help people learn similar qualities but in the service of the workers' movement.

Conservative traditions of social pedagogy

Conservative social pedagogues were concerned about social disintegration. They believed this could be averted by building a 'people's culture.' But it was a paternalistic notion of a people's culture in which the working class would learn to be more articulate and cultivated so long as they stayed in their pre-ordained place. Social pedagogues Natorp (1908), Bäumer (1929) and Rissmann (1899) believed they should address the class conflict of their time by making education more accessible for the working classes. Social pedagogues openly opposed to the workers' movement became protagonists for public education and critics of the class divided German schooling system.

German schooling at the turn of the century was divided into secondary schools for pupils with superior academic grades ('Gymnasien') and schools for everyone else ('Realschulen') (Lenzen 1994). Critics argued that the separate secondary schools served to maintain the gap between working-class and wealthy children. The 'Gymnasien' drew on private primary schools for their students. The 'Realschulen' were attended by working class children who had not been able to afford a private, primary education.

The conservative tradition in social pedagogy became an important force calling for more accessible forms of educational practice. Natorp (1927), for example, argued for the division between 'Gymnasien' and 'Realschulen' to be dissolved, for school curriculum to be more relevant to working-class families, and for more educational programs for school leavers and adults. But while seeking the expansion of educational opportunities, conservative social pedagogues were clear about what people should learn and how. Many youth workers believed that they had a responsibility to help the young generation learn values which fostered respect for adult authority, for the German monarchy, and for work in the service of the State (Schilling 1991). Youth workers included apprenticeship instructors, sports teachers, welfare workers and leaders in youth associations. The methods used to help young people learn these values included physical and

military training, instruction and advice during the course of undertaking arts and cultural activities, or trade skills training. Two of the most popular youth work activities were gymnastics and trekking through the German forests. German gymnast clubs at the turn of the century were common and had large memberships. What Australians call 'bush walking' Germans call 'Wandern'. Both these activities were explicitly seen as strategies to help young people learn appropriately conservative values and attitudes.

> They were seen as a means of fostering physical and moral fortitude, and a sense of national pride.... These methods helped young people learn discipline, self-control and to suppress trivial and surface emotions! Apprenticeship guilds had residential homes which offered not only food and accommodation but also instruction and advice. They used 'teaching' methods such as singing, drawing, lectures, storytelling and so on. Even the proletarian guilds used these methods and heavy doses of religious instruction..... they did not churn out weak, self-doubting men, they churned out strong, certain and proud men (Sielert, 1991, p. 528)!

Natorp's plea for community versus a class consciousness

Paul Natorp (1854-1924) was a prominent social pedagogy theorist at the beginning of the twentieth century. He argued that all education should see itself as social pedagogy. He disagreed with suggestions that social pedagogy was a specialised field of practice within the larger arena of education, and he rejected the notion that the counterpart to social pedagogy was individual pedagogy. He argued:

> The social features of education and the educational features of social life; that's the subject of social pedagogy (1974, 7th edition, p. 98).

Natorp developed his theory of social pedagogy around the task of building 'Gemeinschaft.' He and other educators believed that this would help address the social and political conflicts of the time which were causing them concern. Rissman (1899, p. 765) for example said 'economic conflict is creating a deeply divided nation.' Natorp wrote:

> Social differences are accompanied by differences in 'Weltanschauungen' which, in turn, express themselves in irresolvable differences between the political parties..... this situation must create deep concern about the future of the nation for any observer (1927, p. 34).

To use education to build 'Gemeinschaft', according to Natorp, involved locating

learning in the communal as opposed to the individual will. Advocates of social pedagogy saw themselves as departing from previous educational theories. They argued that education since the time of Locke and Rousseau had been concerned with an individual's learning (Fischer 1892). The enlightenment tradition was concerned with people perfecting themselves, and self education was valued highly. Natorp argued that these theories of education rested on the false assumption that an individual is autonomous, and claimed that:

> a person only becomes human through 'Gemeinschaft' ..... The individual is only an abstraction, like an atom (1974, p. 90).

He argued that without 'Gemeinschaft' there could be no education and learning, and he rejected the notion that individuals could lead meaningful lives independently or that individuals could learn in isolation from each other. For Natorp the content of 'real' learning was the common good. It follows then that learning was bound up with living and working in community. For example, understanding could only be achieved as a collaborative endeavour and learning to appreciate something could only be done in the process of finding out what others appreciated.

Lorenz (1994) summed up Natorp's theory in the following way:

> Social pedagogy becomes education which directs the individual will towards a higher level of a communal will; social pedagogy is for him the concretisation of pedagogy per se. This approach gives society, as the embodiment of what is rational, priority over the needs and interests of individuals, and social pedagogy becomes a programme for bringing about better social adjustment" (p. 93).

Natorp's notion of 'Gemeinschaft' being *one for all, and all for one* and social pedagogy being the way to do this had great appeal to practitioners. They saw themselves as harbingers of equality, fairness and social justice. The notion of 'Gemeinschaft' or community continues to have a central place in the discourse of youth workers, community workers, and educators in Germany and beyond. Contemporary Australian youth and community workers, for example, draw on the notion of community when explaining why they think it is important to address inequalities, advocate for the interests of 'disadvantaged' people and work for community development.

But it is important to look beyond the surface appeal of the 'Gemeinschaft'-oriented theories of social pedagogy in Germany and ask what interests were at play. Social pedagogy first became a widely used term in the 1890s when the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) was given legal status after a 12 year ban. The SPD enjoyed significant electoral success and membership growth. Marburger (1981) suggests that conservative theorists were becoming increasingly nervous about the growth of the socialists and a possible overthrow of the monarchy and the existing social system and so saw the implementation of a social pedagogy as increasingly urgent. Marburger (1981) asserts that most of the publications about social pedagogy of the time declared their outright opposition to socialism and a worker's revolution.

Social pedagogy theorists like Natorp may have been arguing for better and fairer education for working class people not because they were representing working class interests but because they thought this was the best way to contain working class revolutionary activity. They believed social pedagogy had a role in creating a community consciousness in place of a class consciousness. A Marxist historical-materialist analysis would suggest that developing a community consciousness is a deliberate attempt to disguise class conflict and thereby distract working class people from recognising their true class situation. In an early introductory text about social pedagogy Fischer (1892) argued that the sense of class and party political loyalties was not an expression of genuine political views, that class and political struggle were not an expression of real political differences, but that they reflected moral decay which in turn was to be explained by education's focus on individualism. It was moral decay because people were only thinking of their particular 'patch', their class, their demands, and their interests. A critical-emancipatory analysis, on the other hand, might suggest that developing a community consciousness represents efforts and perspectives that are often contested and ambiguous (or confused). Some advocates of a 'Gemeinschaft'-oriented social pedagogy may have been intent on ensuring very little change to the existing political and economic system occurred. Other advocates, however, may have seen in the concept of

'Gemeinschaft' opportunities to radically reform the existing system so that the ideals of democracy and equality could be more fully realised. I will discuss these different motivations and the theories behind them in chapters 13 and 15.

In 1918 the 'Gemeinschafts' perspective on social pedagogy had the rug pulled out from under its feet. At the end of the first world war the German monarchy was overthrown and soldiers and workers established committees in all the major cities. On the 9th November 1918 Phillip Scheidemann announced the establishment of a Republic and Friedrich Ebert became Chancellor. The SPD factions taken together gained well over 40% of the vote in 1919. 'Gemeinschaft' theorists no longer could point to the threat of social democracy and to the danger of working class revolution. The threat had been realised.

Building 'Gemeinschaft' (community) is about containing and controlling socialist activity

After the defeat of the Nazi regime in 1945 until the 1960s there was a revival in the post-war reconstruction phase of the 'Gemeinschaft' perspective in social pedagogy, although the term 'social education' rather than social pedagogy was used.

It is possible that in this post-war period a conservative interpretation of 'Gemeinschaft' was more blatant than at the turn of the century. Theorists emphasised the need for education to help people learn how to fully participate in society. Haase suggested social education should have two broad aims.

> The first deals with moral education, interpersonal communication and social virtues ..... the second deals with education that enables individuals to integrate in society (1962, p. 375).

Bornemann and Mann-Teichler argued social education should seek to:

- help people live respectfully with others, with an emphasis on notions of justice, love, and responsibility
- provide political education about dominant social and political institutions
- help individuals find their place in society
- help those in acute need (1963, p. 278).

One can sense an almost missionary zeal in Bornemann's and Mann-Teichler's exhortations with their emphasis on moral education and education for community or 'Gemeinschaft.' Siegmund-Schultze called for

> education of the individual for the 'Gemeinschaft' ..... education of the group/society for 'Gemeinschaft' and how it relates to the individual ..... education of groups to interact effectively.... (1950, p. (9).

Underpinning the social education perspective of the 1950s and 1960s is an assumption that social conflict is a moral failure to attain the ideal state of 'Gemeinschaft.' Unity and harmony are seen as good; plurality and difference are seen as bad. Clausen, for example, argues that one

> needs to be careful when advancing the interests of any one particular group because the good of the whole community may be endangered, and history shows that groups do not benefit at the expense of others (1954, p. 5).

It is a particularly idealist concept of 'Gemeinschaft' which informs this perspective and by the mid 1950s many German sociologists were vigorously criticising the Tönnies concepts of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gessellschaft.' In a series of articles in the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie and Sozialpsychologie* in 1955 a number of them argued that Tönnie's concepts were no longer relevant to modern Germany. But the concept of 'Gemeinschaft' remains popular in social education or pedagogy because it provides a theoretical approach which is fundamentally conservative yet can be used to advance notions of social justice, fairness and equality.

Chapter 12

Theories and Practices of Informal Education in German Youth Work

Defining informal education in the context of German youth work

In Germany, there has been a long-standing interest in the educational dimension of 'care', which encompasses youth and community work. This interest was translated into legislation as early as 1922 when youth work was declared part of the education sector. The federal government of the new Weimar Republic introduced youth welfare legislation ('Reichsjugendwohlfahrtsgesetz' RJWFG) to help co-ordinate the many different youth work organizations, and in it made a commitment to the education of young people. Paragraph 1 states:

> Every German child has the right to education which will help them maintain physical, social and emotional well being. ..... When the family is unable to provide education the State has a responsibility to provide assistance.

The legislation does not simply refer to schooling but to the educational responsibilities of youth and community services. Great Britain did not introduce similar legislation until the Butler Act of 1945. In Australia no government has introduced legislation of this kind. This German legislative commitment represents a belief that education can play an important part in shifting the focus of social welfare services from crisis assistance and service delivery to prevention, community development and political action. This belief has been passionately advocated by various social pedagogy and youth work theorists and formed the basis of various theories of informal education. During the Weimar Republic (1918 - 1933) Herman Nohl's ideas about informal education and youth work were influential in shaping a wide range of community services. In the late 1960s and 1970s a number of theorists (Giesecke 1973), inspired by the radical student protests of the time demanding greater democratisation of education and other social services, argued that youth work should renew or

reinvigorate its commitment to education rather than welfare. These theorists succeeded in exerting considerable influence on youth work policy. For example, the educational report of the Federal Ministry of Education and Science in 1970 ('Bundesministerium für Bildung and Wissenschaft'1970) referred to informal youth education as part of the education system. In 1974/75 five German states passed youth education legislation. This legislation required that youth centres have paid workers, prescribed the type of qualifications they needed and set out detailed educational goals.

Youth work in Germany has been, and continues to be, conceptualised by many as social pedagogy and by others as informal education. The term informal education is a translation of the German term 'außerschulische Pädagogik.' The literal translation is out-of-school education and this term is used by some English-speaking educators, particularly from North America. But informal education is my preferred translation because the term conveys a sense of process, while the term out-of-school education conveys a narrower sense of place.

Charitable traditions of informal education in German youth work

Youth work in Germany has its origins partly in the efforts of philanthropic organisations to remedy what they saw as the failures of families and schools to provide the desired education for young, working-class people (Krafeld 1984, p. 112). In this sense youth work arose as an alternative way of providing education and care for young people. The alternative nature of this education provided by youth work was to be found in its informality.

In the middle ages, when families could not provide education and care, children were placed in 'poor houses' till they were old enough to beg for themselves (Böhnisch 1992). They received no formal education. It was only when poor houses were separated into specialist houses for lepers, the mentally ill and for orphans, that some sort of formal education for young people arose. However,

these young people were not educated to become socially mobile or to escape their poverty. Indeed it was deemed that they should stay poor. The idea was simply to help them survive. In the middle ages, poverty was idealised as a holy and virtuous state. To be poor was seen by some as a way of getting close to God and any education should only serve to assist this process.

In the Renaissance ideas about poverty and work radically changed. Poverty was seen less as a willing state of humility and more as the result of a person's lack of ability and application. Education was seen as a tool to address these shortcomings. The advent of mercantile capitalism laid the ground for the generation of new work ethics. Calvinism was a particularly strong German version of the work ethic. Education became seen as a tool to assist work.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century in Germany the importance of work for 'commercial purpose' spread and poor houses were established with compulsory work regimes. The rise of mercantile capitalism increased the need both for more poor houses and for more commercial work. The enclosure movement in Germany which turned peasants off the land to enable property owners to produce more wool exports led to a rise in the numbers of poor and landless people.

As the notion of education for work developed, schools were established in poor houses. These schools attracted criticism from reformist educators such as Pestalozzi, Basedow and Salzmann (Marbuger 1981) for what they regarded as their punitive and harsh practices. It should be noted that child labour was widely practised and accepted until 1903 when legislation made it illegal. It was obvious that many of the government and privately run poor houses were blatantly exploiting cheap labour for commercial profit. A view on education prevalent in the poor houses was that useful learning would take place simply by forcing people to adhere to a disciplined regime of work. It is, of course, debatable whether the forced labour had any useful educational dimension at all.

In the nineteenth century philanthropic institutions dominated youth work.

According to Scherpner all these philanthropic organisations shared the common aim to 'be quite independent of the State' (1966, p. 156) because they,

> inspired by a sense of Christian compassion, planned to discontinue the punitive character of public care for children and replace it with a greater emphasis on education (Vahsen 1975, p. 56).

The origins of youth work lie partly in the progressive educational movement of the nineteenth century which sought to reform educational and work practices in government sponsored schools and poor houses. Features of this progressive education, which are shared with youth work and stand in contrast to much formal education, are:

- an emphasis on camaraderie rather than authority
- a valuing of intrinsic rather than extrinsic achievement (in other words, fostering achievement by encouragement and self-motivation rather than punishment)
- a preference for learning through experience rather than didactic instruction
- a preference for learning collectively rather than individually
- and a preference for learning outdoors rather than in a classroom (Schefold 1973).

An overview of informal education theories and practices in German youth work

The following table – *Forms of Informal Education Practice in Youth Work* - shows the significant variety of German theoretical traditions in informal education and youth work. It traces the way educational theories and practices have changed over time and how they have been shaped by particular political movements and values. Sielert (1991) claims that ideas about perspectives and forms of practice have come less from youth workers and more from young people and the social movements they have been part of. The history of German youth work is characterised by this tension between adult interests determining pedagogies and young people developing new ones. At the beginning of the twentieth

Forms of informal education practice in youth work

(This table is informed by my reading, in particular of Sielert (1991), Hafeneger (1991), Krafeld (1991)

Perspective	Theory about what should be learnt	Theory about how it should be learnt	Typical teaching and learning activities
Youth welfare work during the German monarchy in the latter half of the nineteenth century to its downfall in 1918	Young people should learn 'proper' moral values, discipline, self-control, physical fitness and 'correct' political values. So youth work was about setting up adult role models.	Instruction, giving advice, physical and military training, adult role models, and direct care work.	Sport, in particular gymnastics, cycling, rowing, atheletics. swimming, soccer and ice skating. Expeditions through the forests and mountains ('Wandern') were especially valued. Musical and cultural pursuits such as singing, drawing, lectures, storytelling and so on.
Bourgeoise youth movement from the turn of the century to the downfall of the Weimar Republic in 1933	'Heimat' and folklore. There was much yearning for an alternative lifestyle and a return to some idyllic state, therefore the widespread fascination with medieval knights and Native Americans. Young people expressed wish for autonomy from adults. Young people should be led by young people.	Working, playing, meeting and living in a peer group. The 'Heimabend' regular group meeting became a central feature of youth work. Heroic pictures and stories of 'Wandervogel' soldiers in the first world war were important.	Forest walking or rambling, sport, folk dancing, singing, drawing, writing diaries, etc.
Proletarian youth movement from the turn of the century to the downfall of the Weimar Republic in 1933	Economic and political self-determination.	Political struggles for rights and better working conditions for working class young people.	Marxist schools and through political action and discussion.

Adult controlled youth associations of the Weimar Republic 1918 to 1933.	To renew citizenship values and ideals and to develop leadership potential.	"Freie Jugendräume" in adult controlled youth centres using instruction, lecturing, moral uplifting, physical fitness training in same age groups.	Forest walking or rambling, sport, folk dancing, singing, drawing, writing diaries, etc. ... yes, the same as the bourgeois movement.
Adult controlled Christian youth associations during the Nazi regime 1933-45	The Christian doctrine.	Church activities.	Bible reading, sermons, prayers, singing, and trumpet playing.
Hitler Youth	To serve the Third 'Reich' through activism, performance, struggle, sport and physical fitness, loyalty and obedience, enthusiasm, respect for heroes, and a willingness to sacrifice oneself for 'das Volk und Führer'.	To undertake actual work to help young people think they were making important contributions to the Third 'Reich'. Common examples included: help with harvesting, courier work, propaganda work, and fire fighting etc.	Military games, lectures and instruction, rallies and marches with many ceremonial duties, competitive sport for the 'Vaterland'.
Reconstruction and democratisation in immediate post-war period	To eschew all ambitions of dominance; to be a democrat. To learn to work co-operatively in groups and teams and to show loyalty and friendship to others irregardless of their politics and religion etc.	Through team- and group-work with an emphasis on peer education but managed mostly by adult controlled youth associations.	Forest walking or rambling, sport, folk dancing, singing, drawing, writing diaries, etc..yes, a rejuvenation of pre-war educational practices.
Cultural work of the 1950s onwards	What young people said they wanted to learn and do. Rather than camping songs and ideal notions of team work many young people were more interested in	Unstructured youth work - groups just doing the things they fancy doing rather than some structured 'Wanderung'!	Film evenings, dances, band nights, work with media, socialising, creative work etc.

	rock 'n roll and the emergence of a consumerist youth culture built on the rise of unprecedented independent purchasing power for young people.		
Workers' youth associations in the post-war period	Worker's politics and what young people said they wanted to learn and do.	'Heimabende' regular group meetings, hobby groups, research about current affairs, workshops, workplace study groups.	Auditorium discussions, debates, political demonstrations, mock TV interviews or currents affairs reporting, collages, film critiques, role plays, and photographic work.
Student movement 1968 to mid 1970s	Social and political analysis.	Consciousness raising, critical reflection, and political action.	Study circles, political action and solidarity groups, seminars and holiday camps/workshops.
New social movements; in Germany the Green movement was particularly strong.	Alternative lifestyles, peace, sustainable development, squatting and other specific social issues. The ability to articulate one's needs, solidarity in groups, and activist skills.	Project work, for example - for third world solidarity, for migrants, for peace work etc.	Living in a youth group, forest and mountain walking, campaigning, youth leadership training, work in a fire brigade, discussions etc.

century, for example, youth welfare work grew out of a concern by adult authorities that the young generation was in danger of losing the 'proper' moral values, becoming less physically fit, and deviating from safe political values. This stands in contrast to both the bourgeois and the proletarian youth movements which expressed a desire on the part of young people to be autonomous. Both movements called for young people to educate young people. Sielert takes these differences into account when he makes a distinction between the youth movements and the adult controlled youth associations.

German National Youth Associations: Informal education for camaraderie and alternative communities

One important tradition of German youth work lies with the national youth associations (Schefold and Damm 1987). These associations, many of which were established early in the twentieth century, were inspired by a desire to provide young people with alternative, some might say complementary, educational opportunities to those offered by schools and families. Some of these associations developed well defined theories of informal education which shared many of the features of progressive education championed by philanthropic organisations. There are many German youth associations which have national networks of regional and local clubs. The following sample conveys a sense of the types of association: Youth of the German Alpine Club, the scouts and guides, The Falcons - Socialist Youth of Germany, Young Christian Workers, Protestant Youth Flock and Federation of German Youth for the Environment (for more information see Böhnisch, Gängler and Rauschenbach 1991). Youth associations have a stronger presence in youth work in Germany than they do in Australia where youth workers are more often engaged by local community agencies rather than by national associations.

One well known German youth association is the 'Wandervogel.' A literal translation would be the wandering or roving birds. The 'Wandervogel' began through the efforts of a stenography teacher, Hermann Hoffmann-Fölkersamb,

who organised forest expeditions ('Wanderungen') for his students in Berlin during the 1890s. Fölkersamb regarded the forest expeditions as providing opportunities for students to explore Germany beyond their families and schools. When he was required to move abroad he asked a student, Karl Fischer, to continue the 'Wanderungen.' Fischer did and significantly expanded the group. In 1901 the name 'Wandervogel' was adopted and in the next decade the 'Wandervogel' established a large following, although various clubs were established with slightly different philosophies. In 1907 the German Federation of 'Wandervogel' was established.

The 'Wandervogel' provided young people with the opportunity to experience camaraderie and friendship. The movement leaders believed young people should be given tasks which they could successfully complete, and that this would help them to learn responsibility, respect, 'good upstanding,' compassion, self-discipline, obedience, and a sense of service. They wanted to help young people gain an appreciation of the environment through forest expeditions and camping (Böhnisch, Gängler and Rauschenbach 1991, p. 1051 – 1055).

The comparisons with the international scouting and guiding movement which began in Britain are obvious. The 'Wandervogel' came to represent a movement that believed in the value of young people learning to live, work and play together constructively. Like the scouts and guides the 'Wandervogel' are independent of particular religious denominations and political parties. 'Wandervogel' groups wear uniforms and are organised in local groups which are part of a larger organisation. But the 'Wandervogel' differed from the scouts and the guides in their notions of self-determination for young people.

The 'Wandervogel' were part of a German bourgeoisie youth movement that was full of idealism, particularly in the 1920s. The first world war, the economic depression and the political turmoil of the Weimar Republic from 1918 to 1933 had a marked influence on the shaping of the 'Wandervogel.' There emerged visions of young people being strong and united and even the notion of a youth state was entertained. Parts of the movement believed it was important, and

possible, to build a society for young people which was different from, even opposed to, a society for older people. The 'Wandervogel' saw themselves searching for an alternative world, alternative lifestyles, for the 'real community.' 'Wandern' was one important educational strategy which, it was believed, would generate the concepts necessary for an ideal 'new world' for young people. These concepts included 'community, self-education, 'Heimat' (home and hearth) and folklore. Another important educational tool was the idolisation of leaders and heroes. While there was debate within the 'Wandervogel' movement about the respective merits of authoritarian versus charismatic leadership, leaders were seen as self-sacrificing role models.

There is an ambivalence about the informal education of the 'Wandervogel.' On one hand the 'Wandervogel' represented a youth movement which rejected forms of adult authority and vigorously criticised schools and families as adult social institutions. On the other hand the learning goals with their emphasis on obedience, leadership and discipline served to strengthen their integration into the adult world. In effect they were progressive in that they sought to change culture and society but conservative in that they sought to create some sort of communal harmony. This ambivalence is a characteristic feature of much informal education theory and practice. In 1933 the National Socialists broke up all the 'Wandervogel' and made the Hitler Youth the only legal youth association.

Nohl and Mollenhauer's place-based theories of informal education

Hermann Nohl is widely credited as the theorist who first systematically developed the notion that youth and community work are specialised fields of educational practice (Krafeld 1984). Writing in the 1920s he argued that while social pedagogy and youth work cannot ignore crisis assistance they must prioritise educational and preventive work.

> If we do not succeed in highlighting the educational dimension of youth work, and more generally of the whole welfare system, we risk destroying people's characters

> and humanity. To highlight the educational dimension means to arouse the forces and will for self-responsibility in individuals, families and communities (Nohl 1965 quoted in Marburger 1981, p. 67).
>
> Taking up the high spirited ideals of the youth movement of the pre-war era, Nohl considers the 'experience of life' itself', and the values contained in friendship and personal solidarity across all social divisions, to be the pedagogical material and the pedagogical impetus for a fundamental social reconstruction (Lorenz 1994, p. 94).

Nohl's theory of informal education was marked by its eclectic and romanticised nature. When Nohl refers to the 'experience of life' he refers to experience as seen from an amalgam of socialist, Christian, women's and young people's perspectives. Like Natorp before him he believed that youth and community workers should

> rise above the level of sectional, political interests to address the material and spiritual well-being of the nation as a collective body - an idealisation which a short decade later would be usurped by Nazi propaganda (Lorenz 1994, p. 94).

But where Nohl departs from Natorp and arguably makes his most useful contribution is his argument that

> social pedagogy is the third area, besides the family and the school, which requires a supportive social policy framework in its own right and consequently needs appropriately trained staff (Lorenz 1994, p. 94).

In fact, it was a student of Nohl's, Gertrud Bäumer, who in an essay in a book edited by Nohl and Pallat (1929), first defined social pedagogy as education outside the family and school.

Bäumer's definition was taken on by various writers after the Second World War but is credited mostly to Nohl. Where Natorp conceptualised social pedagogy as the *study* of community oriented education, those who took on Bäumer's and Nohl's definition saw it as a sub-field of education. The theoretical perspective that youth and community work is a *sub-field* of education is characterised by its emphasis on place or setting and its rather vague ideas about content and process. It says little about what people should learn, or how, and tends to concentrate on where people do the learning. By appealing for people to take the best from what he called spiritual energy sources - socialism, Christian compassion, the women's movement, community development and the youth movement – Nohl does, however, imply that individuals rather than economic

and social structures need improvement.

Klaus Mollenhauer was a prominent German social pedagogy theorist in the 1950s and 1960s and pursued Nohl's idea that youth and community work should complement the education that happens or does not happen in schools and families. He believed that social pedagogy should help people learn to build a reinvigorated and 'healthy' society in response to what he perceived as the growing criticism of society from social and political movements. While Nohl may have focused on what 'destitute' young people should learn, Mollenhauer widened the focus to all young people. In 1959 Wilhelm wrote:

> The 'classical' social pedagogy assumed that the public was in need of protection from young people. The public was seen as intact and safe while young people were seen as delinquent and at risk and a threat to the public's safety. Today, the tables have been turned. The danger for young people emanates from the public (p. 101).

Wilhelm is expressing the belief that youth and community workers are capable of inspiring forms of education or social pedagogy which would not only help young people change but would also help society change in order to better integrate those young people.

Where there is a lack of detail about *what* people should learn there is a similar lack of detail about *how* people might learn. Mollenahauer divided pedagogy into family pedagogy, school pedagogy, vocational pedagogy and social pedagogy. He, and many others after him, argued that each type of pedagogy generates distinct strategies to help people learn. This theoretical framework has questionable value in as much as it assigns qualities of learning to places and institutions rather than to the ways in which the teaching and learning are done. It is quite feasible that a youth worker can be more didactic and concerned about inculcating dominant values than a school teacher. The framework does, however, serve the useful purpose of highlighting the different contexts in which learning takes place and the different sorts of potential these contexts have.

Nohl's and Mollenhauer's descriptions of social pedagogy tend to rely on an association with a setting. For example Mollenhauer argued that family and

school education were easy to define because they had readily identifiable institutions whereas social pedagogy was difficult because it took place in different contexts - kindergarten, children's homes, youth centres, youth accommodation, health education centres, centres for the aged and more. Despite this difficulty Mollenhauer did attempt to define the distinct nature of the processes used in social pedagogy by contrasting it with family and school education. He used the following terms to characterise

- family education: - care, support, familiarise and integrate
- school education: - hand down, direct/guide, train
- social pedagogy: - protect/advocate, and advise (1964, p. 97).

And he suggested that compared to school, social pedagogy:

- did not require people to strive for qualifications
- did not have fixed curriculum; instead learning was based on experience and situations
- did not rely on a set of pedagogical techniques but relied instead on creative, case by case ways of working.

A further contribution made by Nohl and Mollenhauer was their advocacy for the rights of children and young people. By emphasising the notion that social pedagogy is a specialised field of informal education practice for young people they advanced the argument that young people have rights independent of particular economic, state or church interests. A corollary of this argument is that youth workers are to be seen as advocates of young people's interests.

The 1968 student movement and anti-authoritarian informal education

The claim that youth workers represented young people's interests was severely challenged by the 1968 student movement. The students were not led by youth workers! In fact, youth workers were the butt of fierce criticism from student

activists. They were accused of being authoritarian, conformist, boring, and doing little that had relevance to young people's concerns. For a while the very survival of youth workers as a profession and youth associations was in question.

For some youth workers, however, the student movement gave fresh impetus to the further development of Marxist historical-materialist and critical emancipatory theories of youth and community work (Damm 1993). These theories continued the social pedagogical tradition of conceptualising youth and community work as informal education. The following declaration by Liebel and Lessing, which was widely discussed by youth workers at the time, captures part of this particular pedagogical tradition:

> Youth work is for us a synonym for the dialectical unity of political struggle and learning (1974, p. 23).

These youth workers regarded youth work as less bound by institutional imperatives and saw more possibilities for innovative and anti-capitalist educational practice in youth work than in schools and universities. They sought to define their practice as being less structured and authoritarian than formal education. They claimed that their educational content and process were more flexible. And they employed the slogans 'we believe in learning by doing' and 'learning through experience' (Munchmeier 1992).

The student movement accelerated changes in some of the traditional forms of youth work. Until the late 1960s a lot of youth work was organised around groups of young people of the same age and gender who met on a regular basis. These groups were often known as 'Heimabend Gruppe' (group meetings in evenings in homes). Now these were being replaced by ad-hoc groups which met for specific purposes related to projects, seminars or some form of community action. Many youth workers became openly oppositional. They organised programs specifically for working-class people and projects to help people learn how to combat authoritarianism and engage in acts of civil disobedience (Krafeld 1991).

Informal education in youth work: part of a social movement or a profession?

That youth work should be conceived of as informal education became enshrined in government legislation in various German States. This meant that youth workers gained a professional status as informal educators or social pedagogues alongside teachers in the schooling and expanding adult education system. Many youth workers sought to establish themselves as partners in the education system. According to a number of theorists writing in the 1980s, this move to establish youth work as an educational field of practice would lead to the institutionalisation and co-option of youth work by the state (Hanusch 1991, Krafeld 1991, Münchmeier 1992). These theorists argued that there has always been a tension between youth work as a movement of resistance and youth work as a field of practice which serves the interests of the state. Hanusch (1991) suggests this reflects the tension between Habermas's 'System' and 'Lebenswelt'. He argues that state-sponsored youth work was located in the 'System' and should be seen as distinct from the German youth movement which was independent, prided itself on being free of adult control and separate from the schooling system, and so could be seen as part of the 'Lebennswelt.' In the late 1970s and '80s a body of literature was developed which suggested that youth and community workers had far better opportunities to do effective emancipatory education by working with community action groups ('Lebenswelt') rather than integrating themselves as partners in the education system ('System') (Hanusch 1991, Löbbecke 1989 and Armbruster 1979).

To argue that youth work runs the danger of becoming institutionalised is to imply that youth work has more or less the same aims as schooling and other formal education. This is to reject a long German tradition stretching back to the 1920s that there is a distinct pedagogy around youth and community work. Munchmeier (1992) accepts that youth work has developed distinctive strategies to help people learn but suggests *what* they help people learn is little different

from what school teachers help people learn. He lists the following features which, he suggests, define the institutional nature of schooling:

- control by legislative guidelines
- hierarchy
- clearly defined forms and structures
- structured curricula
- issuing of qualifications
- wide recognition as an important social institution.

And he argues that although youth work shares few if any of the above features, it does nonetheless share the same goals as schooling in the broadest sense. However, he does not elaborate on what he perceives are the goals of schooling and this clearly is a weakness in his argument since the schooling sector is not homogenous and can contest the state just as youth work can.

Munchmeier argues that youth work allowed itself to become professionalised when youth workers began asking what they could do for society rather than asking what they could do for young people. This is reflected in the 1962 Declaration of St Martin where the Federal German Youth Association stated:

> Youth centres see themselves as social institutions. ..... They do not seek to exclude themselves from society and do not seek to establish an independent arena for young people (Münchmeier 1992, p. 377).

It marked a shift, Munchmeier asserts, from youth workers seeing themselves as members of a youth movement to seeing themselves as agents of the state.

The anti-capitalist fervour of the student movement of the 1960s which had infused many youth work programs declined by the mid-1970s. But there is little evidence to indicate that this decline was due to professionalisation and an integration of youth work into the education system. It is more likely that the overt politicisation of youth work declined because of assertive government policies, rising youth unemployment and a decreasing number of study places for young people from 1974 on.

A critique of youth work's focus on political education developed in the 1970s (Lüers 1973). These writers suggested that youth workers were spending too much time on political education instead of helping young people learn socially and vocationally useful skills and in the mid 1970s government funding was withdrawn from what were regarded as some of the more progressive youth centres.

The argument that youth work, by constructing itself as a field of informal but professional education practice, has become less concerned with serving the interests of young people ignores two important points:

- professional educators can still choose to contest forces which make it difficult to serve the interests of a particular group
- distinctive informal education traditions have been developed around youth work which continue to encourage struggles for self-determination, be they of young people, working-class people, women, or other groups.

By suggesting that youth workers will serve young people's interests more effectively by working more closely with community action groups we raise the question of whether a distinction should be made between youth workers as activists and youth workers as informal educators.

Chapter 13

Critical – Emancipatory Perspectives in German Youth and Community Work

In the 1970s and '80s three main groupings of theoretical perspectives influenced German youth and community work. They were instrumental-rationalist, critical-emancipatory and historical-materialist perspectives.

Theoretical roots

Critical-emancipatory perspectives on informal education have drawn heavily on critical theory, a body of thought developed by the Frankfurt School of Social Theory, whose four most prominent members were Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas. The Frankfurt School was brought into being in the first years of the Weimar Republic as a centre for the study of Marxist theory. But it was Marxism with a difference.

> The work of its principal figures has nonetheless always had a somewhat ambiguous relationship with mainstream Western Marxism, right through from the early writings of Max Horkheimer in the 1930s to the very recent work of Jürgen Habermas (Bottomore 1989, p. 7).

In 1937 Horkheimer published an essay entitled 'Traditional and critical theory.' In it he interprets 'traditional theory' as the implicit or explicit outlook of the modern natural sciences, expressed in modern philosophy as positivism/empiricism

> The sciences of man and society have attempted to follow the lead of natural sciences with their great successes. The difference between these schools of social science which are more oriented to the investigation of facts and those which concentrate more on principles has nothing to do with the concept of theory as such. The assiduous collecting of facts in all the disciplines dealing with social life, the gathering of great masses of detail in connection with problems, the empirical inquiries, through careful questionnaires and other means, which are a major part of scholarly activity, especially in the Anglo-Saxon universities since Spencer's time – all this adds up to a pattern which is, outwardly, much like the rest of life in a society dominated by industrial production techniques. Such an approach seems

> quite different from the formulation of abstract principles and the analysis of basic concepts by an armchair scholar, which are typical, for example, of one sector of German sociology (Horkheimer 1986, p. 190/191).

Horkheimer presented 'critical theory' as an opposing form of thought which rejected the procedure of determining objective facts with the aid of conceptual systems.

> Critical theory is in contradiction to the formalistic concept of mind which underlies such an idea of the intelligentsia. According to this concept there is only one truth, and the positive attributes of honesty, internal consistency, reasonableness, and striving for peace, freedom, and happiness may not be attributed in the same sense to any other theory and practice. There is likewise no theory of society, even that of the sociologists concerned with general laws, that does not contain political motivations, and truth of these must be decided not in supposedly neutral reflection but in personal thought and action, in concrete historical activity. Now, it is disconcerting that the intellectual should represent himself in this way, as though a labour of thought, which he alone could accomplish, were the prime requirement if men were accurately to choose between revolutionary, liberal, and fascist ends and means. The situation has not been like that for many decades, The avant-garde in the political struggle need prudence, but not academic instruction on the so-called standpoint. Especially at a time when the forces of freedom in Europe are themselves disoriented and seeking to regroup themselves anew, when everything depends on nuances of position within their own movement, when indifference to substantive content, created by defeat, despair, and corrupt bureaucracy, threatens to overwhelm the spontaneity, experience, and knowledge of the masses despite the heroic efforts of a few, a conception of the intelligentsia which claims to transcend party lines and is therefore abstract represents a view of problems that only hides the decisive questions (Horkheimer 1986, p. 222/223).

Since the 1970s critical theory has exerted significant influence on educational theorising. But critical theory and the term emancipatory education are used by many theorists so generally that they have come to simply refer to any education which professes to combat inequalities, injustices and oppression. This can obscure the important differences across the continuum of radical thinking. For example, there are radical informal and popular educators who believe in the central task of overthrowing authoritarian systems, and others who believe that authoritarian systems can be reformed. There are those who believe that oppression and alienation can be explained by material conditions of existence and those who seek explanation more in the development of particular ideological and cultural norms. It is debateable exactly where one should place critical-emancipatory perspectives on this continuum but in the German youth and community work literature distinctions are drawn between historical-

materialist and critical-emancipatory perspectives, and German governments from the 1970s felt comfortable taking on emancipatory perspectives in their policy discourses.

Focus on community action and political education

Critical-emancipatory perspectives shared many of the features which characterised the 1968 student movement: a commitment to further democratisation of all spheres of social life, active citizenship and the building of political consciousness. In one sense, critical-emancipatory perspectives represented a radical departure from previous traditions in youth and community work and social pedagogy. This is marked most sharply by the politicisation of youth and community work and the value placed on community action and political education. But in another sense, critical-emancipatory perspectives represented the accentuated development of long standing German traditions in social pedagogy and youth work.

At the turn of the century Natorp argued vigorously that social pedagogy should champion the cause of education for democracy (1908). He differed from critical-emancipatory perspectives in that he sought to address social and political conflict through the development of a romanticised notion of 'Gemeinschaft' rather than by supporting people with informal education to engage in political conflict more robustly.

Critical-emancipatory perspectives also accentuated the German tradition which values the educational dimension of youth and community work. This tradition goes back to the nineteenth century but was given particular impetus in the 1920s by Nohl who stressed that if youth and community work was to have a preventive and not just an ameliorative focus it must highlight the potential of informal education. But whereas the Nohlsian perspective shared with critical-emancipatory perspectives a belief in the importance of preventive and educational work, it did not share the critical-emancipatory emphasis on social

analysis and partisan commitment to chosen political causes.

A characteristic of much youth and community work, including what superficially may appear to be progressive youth and community work and socially critical theories of informal education, has been the lack of detail in their social analysis and their arguments about the nature of social change needed (Marburger 1981, Mollenhauer 1964). It is one thing to express concern about the plight of people who are disadvantaged and poor; it is another to acknowledge conflict and to take sides in struggle. Critical-emancipatory perspectives have done much to move theorising about informal education beyond a superficial level by declaring the interests they serve and defining the interests they oppose, and in making clear that theory and practice cannot be neutral because they are always developed from a set of particular philosophical and political assumptions.

The reformist nature of critical – emancipatory perspectives

Critical-emancipatory perspectives were expressed in a federal government policy document about social pedagogy and youth work in 1974. Social pedagogy, it stated:

> investigates the causes of problems in their social context.... p. 141 ..... This task is preventive and pre-emptive because it seeks to influence the root causes of social problems so that they do not arise in the first place ... p. 390 (Bundesminister für Jugend, Familie und Gesundheit, 1974).

According to this document entitled *More Chances for Youth: The substance and concept of youth work that goes on the front foot*, social pedagogues and youth workers should seek to do themselves out of a job. They should be more interested in changing society than correcting socially unacceptable behaviour. Social pedagogy and youth work should be committed to the:

> development and implementation of the optimal conditions for young people, achieving their emancipation by expanding the possibilities for decision making and action, achieving equality of opportunity for the disadvantaged (Bundesminister für Jugend, Familie und Gesundheit, 1974, p. 142).

Youth work and social pedagogy should resist attempts

> to prevent children and young people participating in emancipatory processes, it has a responsibility to assist in the struggle to achieve equality of opportunity for all social classes, and it should support community action initiatives which seek to improve the quality of life and take a stand against unjust bureaucratic or political decisions (Bundesminister für Jugend, Familie und Gesundheit, 1974, p. 159).

The reformist nature of critical-emancipatory perspectives is captured in this comment by Marburger:

> The fact that these statements come from a document issued by the federal Minister for Youth, Family and Health indicates that the emancipatory perspective is not seeking to overthrow the existing system but to improve it in the spirit of a liberal democratic state (1981, p. 139).

Hermann Giesecke (2000) argued that at the core of the critical theory project was the goal not so much of changing the system - be it capitalist, communist or other - but of helping turn the rhetoric of freedom, liberty and equality into reality.

German research about the nature of critical-emancipatory education in the context of youth and community work

Siebert (1983) argues that a critical and emancipatory adult education displays the following features:

- promotion of collective solidarity in place of egocentric individualism
- support and encouragement for responsible action as opposed to mere contemplative learning or consciousness building
- critical intellectual analysis rather than anti-intellectualism
- fostering of a relationship between work and education rather than the promoting of the separation of general from professional education
- ongoing problematisation of knowledge rather than pure accumulation of knowledge
- ideological and reflexive rather than instrumental, positivist learning .

Siebert regards critical-emancipatory education as an important means for building democracy. In Germany, given the recent history of the vicious and

authoritarian Nazi regime from 1933 to 1945, the task of democratisation has a particular poignancy, and is accorded high priority by government and private funding bodies. Siebert asserts that the task of critical-emancipatory education is to produce active, articulate and questioning people who, in turn, are central to a strong democracy.

This assertion is also made by Armbruster (1979) who co-ordinated a study about learning in community action in the 1970s. This study was one of a series commissioned by the Federal Government's Division for Political Education and sought to contribute to the development of an emancipatory and action-oriented political education praxis that:

- has 'open' curricula
- has participatory decision making processes
- builds on the life and work situations of participants
- sees the development of aims as part of the learning process
- uses self-evaluation.

The broad picture of active, articulate and questioning citizens is elaborated upon in an ambitious description of the objectives for any critical-emancipatory educational endeavour. Armbruster et al prepared a comprehensive set of competencies for the 'critically-emancipated learner'. There is a certain irony about this given the strong association competencies have in Australia with instrumentalist perspectives. Nonetheless, these competencies convey in specific terms what, according to one critical-emancipatory perspective, people should learn.

General objectives for a critical-emancipatory education 'program'
(Source: Armbruster 1979, p. 130-137)

Key purpose:
1. To understand and practice (a) democracy as one's ethical first principle and (b) politics as an opportunity to change social conditions.
2. To develop and implement the capacity to be an active citizen through community action.

General competencies

To be able to:
1. engage with the social and physical environment
2. identify social problems
3. identify needs
4. acquire information
5. articulate one's interests
6. develop a political consciousness
7. develop confidence
8. practice democratic values
9. show tolerance
10. exercise critical judgement
11. solve problems
12. undertake social action
13. be creative
14. act in solidarity

'Mündigkeit' and Conscientization

At the heart of the critical-emancipatory education endeavour is the achievement of 'Mündigkeit'. This German term is difficult to translate. Literally it refers to the coming of age. In the context of critical-emancipatory education it refers to a process of politicisation where people are able to articulate their interests and views, and become actively involved in political processes. 'Mündigkeit' possibly could be compared to the term 'conscientization,' popularised by Paulo Freire and which has gained currency among English speaking adult educators. According to Marburger 'the achievement of "Mündigkeit" depends on the ability to analyse one's own situation' (1981, p. 163). Armbruster's competencies

provide an interesting generic description of what one might need to learn and do in order to develop this ability. But what is possibly missing from both Siebert's and Armbruster's description of critical-emancipatory education is a clearer indication of what people should be seeking emancipation from. Marburger (1981) declares that when she evaluates a particular theory and practice of social pedagogy the main criterion she uses is the extent to which it achieves the goal of emancipation. Emancipation is one of six features which she suggests define a critical and emancipatory social pedagogy.

Six features of emancipatory social pedagogy

1. *Emancipation is the main aim*

   (Emancipation) "is as concerned with 'subjective' freedom from an authoritarian psycho-structure as it is with the removal of all unjust forces of power and oppression" (Marburger 1981, p. 162).

   Emancipation is instead seen as a process which is never-ending and so requires ongoing efforts. Emancipation does not depend on the achievement of a particular type of society, for example, a classless society. In every type of society at any particular point in time it requires new and constant effort. ..... Emancipatory social pedagogy has two main tasks: (a) to further develop cognitive, emotional and psycho-motor competencies that enable individuals to try and take control of their lives, encourage active citizenship and a sense of responsibility and (b) to create the circumstances which not only allow, but also encourage, community participation (Marburger 1981, p. 174-175).

2. *Social pedagogy is action oriented*

   It is committed to creating a better order, and judges the existing society against its own potential to achieve the ideals of freedom, equality, justice and enjoyment (Marburger 1981, p. 175).

3. *Partisan nature*

   Previous theories of social pedagogy usually defined the main problem in terms of ensuring social stability. An emancipatory perspective takes the perspective of a chosen target group who define the problem in terms of changing society so that their interests are better served (Marburger 1981, p. 176).

4. *Comprehensive social and political analysis*

   Emancipatory social pedagogy depends on its ability to help people analyse the social and political context.

5. *It is both an educational and political theory*

   It should not be regarded as political activity where people are regarded as participants contributing to the achievement of certain political goals. But it does feel a responsibility for people who are disadvantaged or at risk, it is committed to

> their survival and personal development, even when they are neglected by others. Likewise, social pedagogy is not to be regarded only as an educational theory but as praxis which involves both political and educational activity (Marburger 1981, p. 177).

6. *It draws on critical theory*

In the first defining feature Marburger is intentionally open about what is unjust and authoritarian. The existing system is seen as authoritarian and unjust, but the overthrow of the existing system is not necessarily seen as the means to emancipation.

Marburger's sixth defining feature is misleading in the way it suggests that critical theory is separate from the five other defining features. In many ways critical theory encompasses the five other features. While critical theory is regarded as a body of philosophical and sociological thought its commitment to guiding action and social change, that is, its applied nature, makes it as much an educational 'project.' Critical theory is intent on fostering the development of a particular type of knowledge, 'namely knowledge that is interested in changing praxis' (Klafki 1971). The nature of the knowledge can be captured by terms such as self-determination, freedom, democratisation, participation and emancipation.

> It is an interest which is concerned with the expansion and maintenance of command over oneself. It seeks to resist and liberate people from irrational authority and all other types of oppression (Lempert, 1972).

Critical theory is concerned with understanding how to achieve emancipation, democratisation and self-determination, and it does so by engaging with free society, with the consequence that critical theory becomes a continual critique of society. In this way critical theory does not set out to define an ideal society, but instead, constantly seeks new insights.

Chapter 14

Instrumental Perspectives in German Youth and Community Work

A concern with what can rather than should be done

Central to the Frankfurt School's position was a criticism of positivism and empiricism. Lutz Rössner (1973) offers an example of positivist theorising in the field of German youth and community work. While he uses the term social work in his publications he claims that his theory applies equally to social pedagogy. Rössner argues that any theory of social work must be empirically verifiable. He says the central tasks are to describe and explain facts and to develop valid knowledge. This, of course, is a central tenet of what Horkheimer calls 'traditional' theory (1986). For critical theorists, however, the notion of validity is less important than a commitment to bringing about change that will 'emancipate' people. Scholars should declare their values and assume a responsibility to help individuals and groups to achieve emancipation. But Rössner argues that theoretical work need not be concerned with the question *what should we do* ? but rather with *what can we do* ? He asserts that his primary interest is in a value free science. The criteria he uses to judge the value and quality of a theory are neutrality, precision, efficiency and validity.

Concepts central to Rössner's theory are:

- socialisation: what is learnt from social norms and what are acceptable norms are determined by each particular group/society
- socialised behaviour: when behaviour is acceptable according to the norms of a particular group
- anti-social behaviour: when behaviour is un-acceptable according to the norms of a particular group.

Rössner notes that what is socialised behaviour for one group is anti-social behaviour for another group. 'Normal' behaviour is logically then a relative concept.

Facilitating socialisation in the existing social order

The tasks of Rössner's social pedagogy are to prevent anti-social behaviour where possible, and correct it when necessary. In other words social pedagogy is about intentionally and systematically planning strategies which facilitate the process of socialisation. It is not the task of a social pedagogue to prescribe what constitutes acceptable behaviour. But it might be their task to deduce which norms are acceptable or not. This then requires the study of society. The social pedagogue should also study which preventive and corrective measures have been effective, or not, in dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Rössner views social pedagogy as an instrument which should be used rationally and neutrally, not wisely or passionately. His perspective is instrumentalist and rationalist.

Critical-emancipatory perspectives start from fundamentally different assumptions. These differences are summed up well by Horkheimer's

> criticism of positivism as a theory of knowledge or philosophy of science, especially in relation to the social sciences, on three main points: (i) that it treats active human beings as mere facts and objects within a scheme of mechanical determinism; (ii) that it conceives the world only as immediately given in experience, and makes no distinction between essence and appearance; and (iii) that it establishes an absolute distinction between fact and value, and hence separates knowledge from human interests..... (Bottomore 1989, p. 16).

A broader argument of the Frankfurt School is that instrumental-rationalism is only concerned with studying the existing social order, and so obstructs any radical change and leads to conservative politics. For example, in Rössner's theory there is no debate about how or by whom 'normality', that is, the existing social order, is defined. In contrast, critical-emancipatory theorists see as one of their major challenges helping people to question, and if need be, change existing

social orders. But it should be stressed that critical theory does not offer a firm position on what is wrong with the existing social order nor on the nature of change that should be brought about. And it is here that critical theory and historical-materialism differ.

Chapter 15

Historical - Materialist Perspectives in German Youth and Community Work

Distinguishing Historical Materialism from Critical Theory

Emancipatory thinking and practice in the German literature on youth and community work do not draw only on Critical Theory. They also draw on historical-materialism. These two bodies of theory differ but both have their roots in Marxism. In a postscript to his essay 'Traditional and Critical Theory' Horkheimer said:

> In the preceding essay I pointed out two ways of knowing: one is based on the *Discourse on Method,* the other on Marx's critique of political economy (1986, p. 244).

He then went on to describe the difference between a critical theory and materialist view of society.

> The critical theory of society... has for its object men as producers of their own historical way of life in its totality. The real situations which are the starting point of science are not regarded simply as data to be verified and to be predicted according to the laws of probability..... critical theory of society agrees with German idealism. Ever since Kant, idealism has insisted on the dynamics moment in the relationship and has protested against the adoration of facts and the social conformism this brings with it. "As in mathematics," says Fichte, "so in one's whole view of the world; the only difference is that in interpreting the world one is unconscious that he is not interpreting, for the interpretation takes place necessarily, not freely." This thought was commonplace in German idealism. But the activity exercised on the matter presented to man was regarded as intellectual; it was the activity of a meta-empirical consciousness-in-itself, an absolute ego, the spirit, and consequently the victory over the dumb, unconscious, irrational side of this activity took place in principle in the person's interior, in the realm of thought.
>
> In the materialist conception, on the contrary, the basic activity involved is work in society, and the class-related form of this work is its mark on human patterns of reaction, including theory. The intervention of reason in the processes whereby knowledge and its object are constituted, or the subordination of these processes to conscious control, does not take place therefore in a purely intellectual world, but coincides with the struggle for certain real ways of life (Horkheimer 1986, p. 245).

A historical-materialist analysis directs its criticism at capitalism and argues that there is a fundamental injustice in the economic relations of production whereby a small number of people own capital and most people rely on selling their labour to these owners. These material conditions determine the poverty, exploitation and oppression that exists. Historical-materialism is grounded in the condition of the proletariat, which necessarily struggles for emancipation. Working-class struggle is seen as the driving force for emancipation and change.

The critical theory of the Frankfurt School, by contrast, is grounded in a critique of culture and technology. In *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) Herbert Marcuse, for example, argued that capitalism created modern technologies that enabled so-called institutions and liberties to appear free and democratic although they were in fact repressive. He argued that society was controlled through the manipulation of false needs by vested interests. Critics were silenced by being duped by the presentation of modern technologies as pleasing and liberating when, in Marcuse's view, they were controlling. In the conclusion to *One-Dimensional Man* he wrote:

> Auschwitz continues to haunt, not the memory but the accomplishments of man – the space flights; the rockets and missiles; the 'labyrinthine basement under the Snack Bar;' the pretty electronic plants, clean, hygienic and with flower beds; the poison gas which is not really harmful to people; the secrecy in which we all participate. This is the setting in which the great human achievements of science, medicine, technology take place; the efforts to save and ameliorate life are the sole promise in the disaster. The willful play with fantastic possibilities, the ability to act with good conscience, *contra naturam,* to experiment with men and things, to convert illusion into reality and faction with truth, testify to the extent to which Imagination has become an instrument of progress. And it is one which, like others in the established societies, is methodically abused. Setting the pace and style of politics, the power of imagination far exceeds Alice in Wonderland in the manipulation of words, turning sense into nonsense and nonsense into sense.
>
> .... Beauty reveals its terror as highly classified nuclear plants and laboratories become 'Industrial Parks' in pleasing surroundings; Civil Defense Headquarters display a 'deluxe fallout shelter' with wall-to-wall carpeting ('soft'), lounge chairs, television, and scrabble, 'designed as a combination family room during peacetime (sic!) and family fallout shelter should war break out. If the horror of such realizations does not penetrate into consciousness, if it is readily taken for granted, it is because these achievements are (a) perfectly rational in terms of the existing order, (b) tokens of ingenuity and power beyond the traditional limits of imagination.
>
> .... Technological progress is accompanied by a progressive rationalization and even realization of the imaginary. The archetypes of horror as well as joy, of war as well as of peace lose their catastrophic character. Their appearance in the daily life

> of individuals is no longer that of irrational forces – their modern avatars are elements of technological domination, and subject to it (Marcuse, (1970, p. 194/195).

As Bottomore puts it:

> The underlying conception, which became a distinctive tenet of the Frankfurt School in its heyday, is that the domination of nature through science and technology necessarily gives rise to a new form of domination of human beings..... (1989, p. 36).

Rather than a ruling class, Frankfurt School theorists saw 'technological consciousness' and 'instrumental reason' as the primary forces of oppression and domination. Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse experienced the rise of Hitler in Germany and of Stalin in the Soviet Union and in this context it can be well understood that they were 'overwhelmingly concerned with the mounting irrationality of social and cultural values, and their reflection in the ideas of positivism and scientism' (Bottomore 1989, p. 8). The Frankfurt School did not dispute the analysis that working classes were exploited and that ownership of capital was a force for domination but in effect sought to 'modernise' and move beyond certain basic Marxist precepts. According to Bottomore the Frankfurt School theorists argued:

> domination ceases to be regarded as domination by a particular class, for the class structure of capitalist society, and the conflict between classes, as Marx depicted them, are no longer conceived as important features of the modern Western societies. As Marcuse expressed it in *One Dimensional Man*: 'In the capitalist world, they (bourgeoisie and proletariat) are still the basic classes. However, the capitalist development has altered the structure and function of these two classes in such a way that they no longer appear to be agents of historical transformation. An overriding interest in the preservation and improvement of the institutional status quo unites the former antagonists in the most advanced areas of contemporary society' (p. 35) ..... there is on one side, no dominant class, but instead domination by the impersonal power, ('scientific-technological rationality') and on the other side, no opposing class, for the working class has been assimilated and pacified, not only through mass consumption but in the rationalised process of production itself (1989, p. 39).

A Continuum of Historical-Materialist and Critical Theory Perspectives in Education

David Livingstone (1995) suggests that historical materialism and critical theory are, in fact, generic terms that have come to encompass various theories in education.

CRITICAL THEORY human agency is important ⇔		on the continuum between ⇔		HISTORICAL MATERIALISM economic and political structure is important
Cultural reproduction theory	Resistance theory	Materialist-emancipatory theory	Correspondence theory	State power theory

Each theory on the continuum offers a distinct explanation of how educational practices and structures contribute to the reproduction of privilege, inequality and disadvantage.

In **cultural reproduction theory** it is asserted that education equips the already privileged with the cultural tools (eg. vocabulary, knowledge, social habits) to reinforce their privilege. Education constructs dominant culture as 'natural' and inclusive while working-class culture is devalued. A subtle process helps people learn to accept their subordinate status as legitimate.

In **resistance theory** it is asserted that economic, political and cultural structures and practices seek to control education in the interests of dominant groups. This is resisted by some groups, who draw upon their own culture as a resource to sustain their opposition. But traditions of resistance often contribute to the reproduction of inequality. For example, if working-class learners reject intellectual labour they lose the possibility of emancipation. Resistance without knowledge merely strengthens the status quo.

In **materialist-emancipatory theory**, it is not structure or agency which shapes education but the ongoing tension between the two. Education is not a handmaiden of capitalism or any other political and economic system of domination but nor is it completely free of domination. Education is not the outcome of any particular social movement or class struggle. It is more properly understood as a field of practice where interests contest. The major contest in capitalist societies is between socialised and privatised forms of knowledge production.

In **correspondence theory** the goals of education correspond to those of capitalism. Education serves capitalism by producing workers who are subordinate, docile, punctual and conforming, and (smaller numbers of) managers who are flexible, self-controlled, and have initiative. The workers' alienation from work is a simple reflection of the alienation they have experienced in school. The 'production process' of the school has deprived them of control over their lives, just as does the production process of the workplace.

In **state power theory** the state is a capitalist apparatus, with relative autonomy but determined in the last instance by economic structures. The state exercises hegemony (that is, controls beliefs, and encourages views which support its own) through education. Education aids the state by promoting three false beliefs: social mobility ('anyone can get on by effort'); democracy ('it's a free country'); and happiness (satisfaction and fulfilment are possible in a capitalist society).

When theorising about what types of educational practice and structure facilitate emancipation, Livingstone (1995) claims there is less distinctiveness about each of the five theories.

CRITICAL THEORY human agency is important	⇔ on the continuum between ⇔	HISTORICAL MATERIALISM economic and political structure is important
What types of educational practice and structure facilitate emancipation?		
Value is placed on the inherent worth of consciousness raising - helping people understand their situation. Freire's use of trigger materials to establish dialogue has become a prominent tradition of consciousness raising work. Other traditions simply value the fostering of skills in critical analysis and reflection. Participatory action research is	Helping people better understand their situation is only seen as valuable if it includes an analysis of economic and political inequalities and class conflict and furthermore is linked to action which seeks to redress these inequalities. The unlearning of oppression and hegemony through analysis of ideology and language is important.	As education is seen as determined by economic and political structures - be they capitalist, fascist or communist - the only practice that is seen as meaningful is that which brings about change in these wider structures. Efforts to combat inequality and disadvantage within the existing education system are seen as, at best, reformist and, at worst, as hindering emancipation because they

a process which seeks to help learners plan and control the 'curriculum'. For example, a workers' history project could root curriculum in the concrete situation of the learners and possibly challenge dominant versions of history. Learning in the course of social action or exercise of 'civic' or democratic responsibilities is seen potentially as a means to help people become more 'politically literate' and gain skills to combat dominance and exploitation.	The establishment of, and ongoing support for, worker, learner and community control of education is seen as a way to both learn about, and increase the material opportunities for, emancipation. Campaigning against privatised, and for, socialised forms of knowledge production is important.	only end up reinforcing the status quo. Therefore, educational practice should be directed towards supporting wider political struggles to overthrow existing dominant structures. It can contribute to political struggles through political education, activist skills training, mobilising and solidarity work.

Debates between Historical-Materialist and Critical Theory Perspectives in Youth and Community Work

Historical materialism remains an influence in the theory and practice of youth and community work in Germany today, as can be seen in the writing of Marcus Mesch (2001). Critical theory too, is alive and well in Germany through the dominating figure of Habermas and influences youth and community work literature, as can be seen in the writings of (Grodel 2003). However, the major debates between critical theorists and historical materialists about youth and community work took place in the 1970s and I will be drawing for the main part on that period for this discussion.

The historical materialist theorists criticise critical-emancipatory perspectives for being merely liberal and reformist. Critical theorists accuse historical materialist perspectives of being exclusively concerned with long-term structural change at the expense of what can be done by youth and community workers in their immediate practice. The debate has produced polarised positions. Yet an 'interrogation' of some key texts reveals significant shared ground. It is necessary, therefore, to review the main criticisms directed by, and at, the respective positions.

Historical materialists like Peter Pott (1975) and Manfred Liebel (1971) suggest that almost all youth and community work is bound to conform to, and bolster, a system which creates the problems in the first place. They argue that truly emancipatory youth and community work should not seek to help individuals as that only strengthens or rescues an exploitative system. Emancipation can only be achieved by participating in a class struggle to overthrow the capitalist system.

Marburger criticises this historical-materialist view.

> ... Even if it is warranted to criticise social pedagogy for conforming to a system which causes the problems, one cannot ignore the present plight of people who currently live in the system and need help. It's terribly cynical to wait for the revolution before helping individuals in need (1981, p. 168).

At the heart of this criticism is the assertion that a historical materialist perspective is not interested in the specific practice of youth and community work but only in some generic form of revolutionary struggle. This reduces the role of a youth worker to that of a revolutionary propagandist rather than educator. For this reason, Müller (1983) labelled historical materialist perspectives in youth work as anti-educational.

The table on the following page by Armbruster (1979) represents the historical materialist, critical emancipatory and instrumental rationalist positions. The table indicates the different political beliefs that underpin each perspective but is less useful in indicating the implications for educational practice. For example, what marks off historical materialism from the other perspectives is its analysis of the mode of production and the ways it is shaped by political, economic and ideological forces. Consequently, a historical materialist analysis is holistic by necessity which is a strength of this approach. Armbruster's table suggests, in stark contrast, that historical materialists are interested only in the exercise of consciousness raising and the liberation of the proletariat.

It is true that historical materialists insist that youth and community work

should first and foremost be concerned with changing the material and structural conditions of capitalism, but it is misleading to suggest that they are not interested in the specific practice of youth and community work. While there may be examples of crude revolutionary sloganeering in anti-capitalist youth work the bulk of historical materialist theorising in the major German journal for youth work - *deutsche jugend* - is characterised by its detailed discussion of how youth work practice might be developed in ways that will contribute, both in the short and long term, to the 'emancipation' and advancement of young people. This concern for the short and the long term is captured by Liebel's description of a socialist youth work practice. Asserting that emancipation will, in the long run, require a change in the material conditions of capitalism, Liebel suggests that socialist youth work

> is forced to develop not only an educational but also a political program. The educational program seeks, in the long term, to contribute to political change and emancipation, and so in the short term it seeks to help people develop the skills and knowledge that will enable them to bring about such change (1971, p. 14).

Who should youth and community workers work with – working classes or other 'oppressed' peoples?

A key difference between critical-emancipatory and historical-materialist writers on youth work practice relates to the question: *with whom should practitioners and policy makers work*? Both share an interest in helping people develop an analysis of oppression and disadvantage and see this as a first step in planning emancipatory learning. But most historical materialists argue that to facilitate this analysis it is necessary to work with people who share similar oppression and disadvantage. This means youth workers should work with homogenous groups. While some critical emancipatory advocates may take a partisan line, most argue it is useful to attract and work with a wide variety of people, that is, with heterogenous groups. Historical materialists argue that youth workers should concentrate on working with the oppressed and disadvantaged because it is only they who will have a sustained interest in bringing about change. Brühl et. al (1971) suggest that this can include not only workers on factory floors, but also homeless young people and students. Among historical materialists it is a

PERSPECTIVES ON POLITICAL EDUCATION

Source: Armbruster (1979)

	HISTORICAL MATERIALIST		CRITICAL EMANCIPATORY			INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALIST	
	anti-revisionist	**orthodox-Marxist**	**radical-democratic or socialist**	**progressive liberal**	**pluralist and integrationist**	**traditional liberal**	**national conservative**
Core political goals or beliefs	To combat class inequalities and achieve democracy through revolution.		Democracy is the means and ends to be liberated from political and economic domination and achieve freedom and equality	Democracy is the means and ends to gain freedom from negative forces of compulsion - eg rules that limit individual liberty.	Democracy enables political groups to compete in order to achieve dynamic social stability and performance.	Democracy is the exercise of government legislation and is separate from civil society.	The exercise of State power is paramount to guarantee sovereignty, law and order.
Political activity	Pursue fundamental change of political-economic structures rather than change of specific injustices.		Pursue gradual change of a capitalist system which is threatened by social and economic crises.	The strengthening of democratic understanding and behaviour is important to counter State bureaucracy and technocracy exerting undue power.	It is necessary to help people deal with an increasingly complex industrial society and the danger of unchecked growth and political turmoil.	Civil society and community action is tightly controlled to maintain the strength of the 'democratic' State.	The paramount authority of the State is maintained through repression of any independent political activity.
Political education	Consciousness raising about the nature of capitalism and socialism. Education to mobilise the liberation of the proletariat.	To help people gain a class consciousness and the ability to break the power of State-capital monopolies. To learn about socialism.	To promote education and critical understanding which will bring about a socialist majority.	Educate people about their rights and responsibilities to engage in political activity at all levels - community, workplace and government.	To help people learn about the range of political and interest groups and the process of participating in political activity.	Educate people about their 'citizenship' rights and responsibilities - voting, upholding law and order, practising co-operation and charity.	Educate people to be loyal and obedient in the service of the State.

point of contention whether one should work exclusively with the 'traditional' working classes or with other 'oppressed' groups as well. Liebel (1971), for example, argues that it is the traditional working classes who are most oppressed by virtue of their disadvantaged position in the labour market and strongly disagrees with Brühl et al (1971) who suggest that other groups also can contribute to the building of socialism. By contrast, critical emancipatory advocates see value in working not only with those who are perceived as oppressed, but also those who oppress and who might act on behalf of the oppressed. All people are seen as being potentially interested, if their consciousness is appropriately raised, in supporting change.

This points to another significant difference between historical materialist and critical-emancipatory theorists. The latter want to raise people's consciousness for sometimes vaguely defined purposes whereas the former want to help people learn about the specific nature of capitalist exploitation and socialist alternatives.

The 'vaguely defined purposes' of critical-emancipatory perspectives can be seen in the theories of emancipation expounded by the founding members of the Frankfurt School. Marcuse, for instance, argued in *Eros and Civilisation* that more attention should be paid to a 'pleasure principle' he called Eros.

> In non-repressive conditions sexuality tends to develop into Eros. That translates into the transformation of self to strong and lasting relationships (this includes the workplace) and that, in turn, develops the 'pleasure principle' (Marcuse 1984, p. 219).

> Adorno, however, saw the possibility of liberating the individual from domination neither in the rise of new oppositional groups, nor in sexual liberation, but rather in the work of the 'authentic' artist, who confronts the given reality with intimations of what it could be (Bottomore, 1989 p. 41).

Historical materialists rejected these kinds of purpose because they abandoned Marx's call for the working classes to bring down capitalism and to build socialism in its place.

Method and practice of historical materialist or anti-capitalist youth and community work

Historical-materialist theorists have themselves criticised their own tradition for paying too little attention to the method and practice of anti-capitalist youth work. Pott (1971), for example, cites and partly agrees with the criticism by Giesecke, a leading advocate of critical emancipatory youth work:

> The political economy perspective (this is what Giesecke calls the historical materialist perspective) succeeds in illustrating how dominant economic interests do shape education, although a distinction between capitalist and technological conditions is barely made. But this perspective offers absolutely nothing to the task of designing education strategies and courses of action (p. 133, Pott).

This criticism is harsh. Some of the historical-materialist writing about youth and community work is perhaps more concerned with critiquing other theoretical positions and offering a 'correct' interpretation of Marxist political economy analysis than it is with considering the complexities of practice. But one might also direct similar criticism at much critical-emancipatory theorising about youth and community work.

I have already said that contributions made by historical-materialist writers to the journal *deutsche jugend* do offer a range of ideas about engaging with these complexities. Pott, for example, offers a curious historical materialist theory of youth work in which he suggests that the relationship of the psychotherapist to a client offers useful insights. He discusses the task of helping and, in particular, motivating, working class people to study and critique ideology and political economy - that is, doing political education with working people. He suggests that effective political education depends on two conditions: firstly, that enough individuals share experiences in order to develop a collective analysis and will; and secondly, that the working masses are sufficiently organised as a class and can communicate reasonably effectively with each other. Pott argues that these conditions are more difficult to create than Marx appreciated. Marx recognised the individualism within the working classes and analysed the way that competitive labour market processes prevented workers from recognising their common class position and so hindered the development of common political

goals. But Marx, Pott argues, did not appreciate the extent to which workers would be isolated in capitalism. He maintains that in Marx's time isolation, individualism and competition were not such pressing problems for the building of working-class solidarity as they became in the twentieth century.

> In the sphere of work, individual competition between workers has reached such a degree that it takes great effort to make transparent workers common, versus private, interests. The ever growing influence of recreational and consumer activities has also weakened worker solidarity. One might think that increased time for recreation provides more opportunities for reflection on one's position in the labour market but workers are swamped with attractively packaged products on the market that offer opportunities only for pseudo-reflection (p. 151).

Doing political education with people who may not have initial interest

Pott is theorising about the difficulties many youth and community workers face in doing political education with people who see little need for it. He, like other historical materialist youth work scholars of that period (Liebel 1971, Wendland 1975) discuss the question of whether young people would be more receptive to political education either in workplaces or in their 'free time'. Pott (1971) and Liebel (1971) acknowledge the long tradition of youth work's focus on recreational activities. They see the strategic importance of leisure and recreation in socialising young, working-class people. And they argue that youth workers should focus on 'free time'.

> Without doubt, the experiences young people have in their 'free time' are of decisive significance in shaping their views on life. These experiences shape their attitudes to an extent difficult to imagine 50 years ago. The leisure industry plays an increasingly important role in the reproduction of society by offering 'sweet dreams' and compensating people for their daily exploitation and oppression in work, school and family. In their 'free time' many young people feel they are taken seriously, and tend to channel their hopes for a 'free' life into their leisure pursuits and give up seeking to fundamentally change their situation (Liebel 1971, p. 121).

An important concept in historical materialist theorising about youth work and education practice, which the above paragraphs by Pott and Liebel allude to, is that of false consciousness. This concept suggests that people have deeply held views which require a correspondingly 'deep' process of education to be unlearned or changed. Because Pott suggests that the task of a youth worker can be compared to that of a psychotherapist he is in effect likening false

consciousness to being neurotic.

This historical materialist assessment of the complexities of doing 'emancipatory' education and youth work stands in contrast to the common criticism that historical materialist theories of youth and community work are only interested in the broad sweep of political action and not in the specifics of educational practice. There is, in fact, more shared ground between critical-emancipatory and historical materialist perspectives than the advocates of each tradition care to concede. They may have less in common when talking about *what* people should learn and more in common when talking about *how* the learning is done but the advocates of both traditions are interested in political education and grapple with the ways of doing it effectively.

Chapter 16

Does Informal Education in Youth and Community Work Emancipate or Control Learners? Insights from German Research

Passive and active, closed and open education

Löbbecke (1989) and Armbruster (1979) argue that community action campaigns are more likely than youth and community work programs to foster emancipatory learning. They suggest that there are just two types of education. Löbbecke describes these as passive and active and Armbruster closed and open. Both these dualisms draws on Habermas' concept of 'system' versus 'life-world' (Habermas 1984, 1987, 1991). The 'system' is controlled by dominant institutions whose rules and interests shape our lives. It comprises the processes of exchange and the systems of administration and

> in modern societies, economic and bureaucratic spheres emerge in which social relations are regulated only via money and power (Habermas 1987, p. 154).

The 'lifeworld' denotes those almost infinite understandings upon which we construct our social lives. It is the realm of everyday living which is participant-directed and where communication is personal rather than institutional.

> I can introduce here the concept of the 'Lebenswelt' or lifeworld, to begin with as the correlate of processes of reaching understanding. Subjects acting communicatively always come to an understanding in the horizon of a lifeworld (Habermas 1984, p. 70).

Using this construct, then, passive or closed education contributes to the system, active or open education to the lifeworld. Youth and community work, according to Löbbecke and Armbruster, has provided education of the passive or closed kind, and so contributed to the system.

According to Löbbecke all institutionalised education necessarily turns learners into passive participants. For Löbbecke the defining feature of institutionalised

education is that an organisation and an 'educator' are *providing* learning activities, as opposed to letting learning happen. In this sense he includes youth and community work as a form of institutionalised education. He acknowledges that youth and community work have a strong participatory tradition but argues that the opportunities for participation are instigated and controlled by the workers and their organisation. Participation therefore is a passive process. People have to be persuaded it is a good thing to 'participate.' Löbbecke compares participants in a youth or community work activity to students enrolled in an institution. They are, Löbbecke cynically asserts, ultimately 'bums on seats' which the institutions or agencies can boast about proudly to funding bodies.

Even when youth and community workers assert they are not providing, but facilitating, assisting, or acting in solidarity with others, Löbbecke argues they are still seeing people in the community as needing help. This reduces people to objects who are acted upon. Löbbecke's argument is that youth and community work, even when it has sought to do otherwise, practices deficit and compensatory education. This is education based on an assumption that people are not coping because of their own shortcomings, and that the way to address this is to design alternative curricula which will better meet their special needs. Löbbecke argues that even emancipatory and experiential approaches to community work and education will achieve the opposite of what they set out to do. They may set out to help people become active subjects by encouraging them to analyse and engage with social and political institutions. But the institutions remain in control and the providers end up learning about the learners while the learners, in the act of being helped, remain passive subjects. Youth and community work, in this sense, acts to emphasise integration and harmony rather than conflict and difference, and work as a form of institutionalised education, unavoidably serving the interests of the existing economic and political system.

This passionate opposition to what is perceived as institutionalised education mirrors the passionate opposition of the Frankfurt School theorists to what they

perceived as positivism and empiricism. Good is pitted against evil. Institutionalised education is constructed as a monolith which is often unaware of its sinful doings. The weakness of this polarised conceptualisation is the way it denies the complexity and contestation across the spectrum of education. There is not just contestation between perspectives but within perspectives and consequently education is characterised as much by contradictions as it is by any clear and particular theoretical direction.

The central question is who controls education and learning. Löbbecke (1989) suggests that either institutions or learners control learning, and that institutions serve the interests of the existing system while learners will potentially challenge it. He acknowledges that occasionally some formal education can be subversive or radical but he says this is due to the efforts of individuals not the institutions. Radical formal education is radical despite the institutions. However by admitting that educators are not always pawns of the institutions which employ them, Löbbecke, in fact, concedes that it is not a simple matter of either institutions or learners being in control. This in turn challenges the argument that planning curriculum necessarily gives control to educators and institutions at the expense of learners.

Views that planned informal education cannot facilitate emancipatory learning

Armbruster (1979) and Mader (1975) argue that planned curriculum cannot be reconciled with the goal of popular education. The implication is that because all education, apart from that which is instigated by community action, is planned it will inevitably fail in any efforts to facilitate emancipatory learning. They argue that setting out a plan limits the potential learning, gives power to the 'teacher', and values abstract, generalisable knowledge as opposed to concrete and specific knowledge. They argue that planned curriculum is not going to be able to build on the specific situations of particular learners. Armbruster coins the term 'closed' curriculum. This question of curriculum control and planning was the

subject of debate in a German journal on political education *Materialien zur Politischen Bildung* during the 1970s. It was Von Cube (1976), for instance, who disagreed with the view that planned curriculum necessarily takes away control from learners and argued that the planning process could be negotiated and transparent.

The argument that critical emancipatory education failed because it relied on planned curriculum arose in the 1970s and 1980s, a time when social movements in Germany enjoyed growing support. The German Green movement, for example, achieved international recognition for its 'successes' both inside and outside parliaments. The growth of the German Green movement probably offered an uncomfortable contrast to the declining rates of participation in youth and community work. Dauber (1983 & 1985), writing about the educational dimension of the German Green movement, makes a point in distinguishing the learning that takes place in the Green movement from the learning that takes place in youth and community work. In particular, he is critical of claims that experiential approaches to education which seek to build on 'everyday' situations can be emancipatory. He asserts that 'everyday' and experiential education are invasive and end up co-opting and softening learner-initiated education.

Emancipatory learning happens in community action, not in youth and community work programs

Reflecting on the major trends of German youth work in the 1980s Rolf Hanusch (1991) asserts that youth workers delude themselves about the importance of their work and, in particular, their impact on young people. Youth workers are fond of claiming that they help young people re-assess and change their lifestyle, find their identity, analyse social issues and engage in community development. Hanusch rejects these claims and suggests that this sort of 'emancipatory' learning happens mostly in community action campaigns and social movements. Furthermore, traditional German youth associations have declining

memberships and, in order to compete in the commercial leisure market, rely increasingly on attractively packaged activities geared more to entertainment than 'emancipatory' learning.

Löbbecke (1989) describes emancipatory learning as action oriented and contrasts it with planned educational activities. He suggests that the whole dynamic of people working and learning together in a social movement is quite different from learning in a formal education program. People are bound not by their common status of being enrolled but by being members of an action group, which might be loosely or tightly organised. This, Löbbecke says, conforms with Habermas' notion of lifeworld and Illich's idea of learning webs. So he says 'learning in social movements is, to a high degree, embedded in the lifeworld' (1989, p. 64).

Armbruster (1979) and Löbbecke (1989) assert that the nature of the learning which takes place in community action matches the nature of their ideal constructs of 'open' and 'active' education. Löbbecke suggests that in 'active' education there is no institutional provision. Instead education arises from the concrete situation of the learners and in fact, is initiated and organised by the learners. They are according to Löbbecke, in the literal sense of the word, 'subjects' acting upon and changing the world rather than 'objects' being acted upon. In this ideal construct the role of education providers is not so much to initiate and provide education but to support education initiated by people in the community. Armbruster's construct of the 'open' curriculum is much the same as Löbbecke's construct of 'active' education. Drawing upon Habermas' notion that the most meaningful knowledge is that which is generated through self-discovery, action, and collaboration (Habermas 1984, p. 335-337) Armbruster sees learners' efforts to deal with oppression as being ideally the driving force for any curriculum. He views 'open' curriculum as organic and flexible in the way its content emerges from the concrete situation and the problems of the learners rather than in response to set objectives.

The following table indicates how Dauber (1983) and Löbbecke (1989)

distinguish learning in community action from that in formal education programs. The correlation between their view of learning in community action and the ideal constructs of 'open' and 'active' education is apparent.

Formal education	*Learning in community action*
set objectives	evolutionary development of action goals
aimed at a target group	emergence of a group
ready availability of teaching resources	reliance on what skills and resources exist in the group
attempt to learn about all perspectives (neutrality)	learning which has a declared political purpose and affiliation
abstract content	content grounded in learners' specific context

Armbruster defines community action 'as an "open," structured field of learning and action' (1979, p. 56). And we can summarise his ideas and those of Löbbecke, Gronemeyer, Daube, Hanusch and Mader on learning in community action in the following way.

It is problem-based learning

What is learnt is not prescribed by set curriculum content but by real problems at hand. This, in turn, generates a high level of intrinsic motivation in contrast to traditional, formal education which relies on external pressures to motivate learners.

It is exemplary learning

Exemplary learning helps people make analytical connections between local and global developments. Armbruster relates an example of a community group dealing with a particular government agency and from this experience developing an analysis of the relationship of the state to local community action. At another, but similar, level exemplary learning involves a process

> in which the individual learns that his or her situation can be understood not only in a private or personal context but a social one (Rammstedt 1977, p. 456).

It is action learning

> What takes place is not theoretical instruction that one is expected to learn, but rather learning through experience, action and trying things out. The group is an arena in which learning takes place on two levels; on one level one learns within the group, for example about new roles, and one learns with the group collectively through the group's work (Höbel & Siebert, 1973 p. 82 in Armbruster, p. 57).

It is contextually specific learning

> The learning relates directly to the lives of the learners.

In many respects those arguing for learning in community action are advancing ideas similar to those of Ivan Illich in *Deschooling Society* (1971). Illich argues that planned education suppresses learning because educators are established as authority figures, and programs are controlled by institutional imperatives such as rules and timetables. Despite good intentions educators who seek to plan learning for other people take away opportunities for people to learn independently. A central assumption for Illich is that independence is essential for emancipatory learning. Illich argued that people should be allowed to organise their own learning through casual encounters, through the establishment of networks, and by finding people who can help them learn whatever it is they wish to learn. In a similar vein, German critical-emancipatory theorists present a picture in which members of community action and social movement groups organise their own learning, calling upon the assistance of educators if and when needed.

German research on the educational dimension of community action has highlighted its political nature. 'Political' should be understood here in the philosophical, rather than party, sense. In a major study commissioned by the Federal German Government's Division of Political Education, Armbruster asserts that all the literature on community action which was reviewed mentioned its potential importance for political education. He lists a range of references to back this assertion up and argues that

> community action should be studied as providing the means of political and social education which has developed as a form of education quite independently of traditional forms of education provision (1979, p. 123).

Furthermore, he argues, community action is a quintessential form of liberal political education where the citizen is engaged in learning about and changing her or his environment and that it is both an individual and social emancipatory process. It is significant that there is extensive German *educational* research into community action because studies of community action undertaken by sociologists and community-development scholars are usually less interested in learning, and more interested in what conditions and possibilities are presented for participation and empowerment.

Gronemeyer's description of what one learns in community action captures the optimism that characterises the German educational research.

- One gains a 'big picture' - links the local to the global situation.
- Needs change from selfish egocentrism to 'actual human needs' - for example, to have a useful occupation, to be with other people, participation, self-realisation, moral achievements.
- The desire for information increases and particularly for information which one creates oneself for others as opposed to information provided by external sources.
- The extent and intensity of the conflict and resistance increases from a localised arena to a wider arena.
- Competence and independence expands so that members of the community action group take over the roles of any activists or educators or advocates.
- Anxiety to take risks declines.
- Communicative competence increases.
- The principle of building consensus is realised (1997, p. 92).

Informal learning versus informal education for community workers

I would like to take issue with the argument that emancipatory education cannot be planned or implemented. It has an internal inconsistency. The implication is that there cannot be emancipatory education, there can only be emancipatory learning. It follows then that educators are relegated to serving activists and learners who know what they might most usefully learn and how to go about organising it. But the same argument concedes that learning can be enhanced through intervention, which is in fact a process of education. The inconsistency

highlights a lack of clarity about the nature of *informal education* versus *informal learning*.

These theorists are only drawing a contrast between informal learning and formal education. They point to informal learning in community action where learners plan and manage their own learning and contrast this with formal education where learning is organised by educators within structured programs. In chapter 5 I discussed typologies of learning and education and added 'informal education' to the list alongside 'formal education' and 'non-formal education.' Informal education is where educators engage with learners mostly in a semi-planned manner but rarely employing structured programs. There seems to be an assumption by the theorists that educators will inevitably structure programs, whether in formal or non-formal contexts. But educators can and do facilitate unstructured and semi-structured processes of learning. What distinguishes an educator from a learner is the degree to which he or she goes about intentionally planning learning. Learners, of course, do plan and organise their own learning in both structured and unstructured ways. But there is a point at which a learner becomes an educator and that is when intention clearly over-rides spontaneity and serendipidity. Educators who do not use structured and planned programs but are methodical and intentional in their efforts to facilitate learning can be distinguished from both learners and formal educators by being labelled 'informal educators.'

The contradictory roles of youth and community workers in facilitating popular education

There are contradictory messages about the role that youth and community workers, and educators in general, play in the facilitation of critical emancipatory education. Their role can be depicted as merely technical. In this case, all the learning is initiated, planned and organised by activists and the worker or educator is at the beck and call of the community action group. But it is acknowledged in the literature that planning and managing learning in

community action can be complex. In this case, instead of just serving and responding, the worker or educator becomes an activist, collaborator and even perhaps an initiator her or himself.

The intention of the argument developed in the 1970s and 1980s was to re-conceptualise the role of educator from that of provider to that of a supporter. Löbbecke (1989) argues that educators and education providers should declare their solidarity with various social movements and leave all initiating of programs to community groups. He then expects educators to act as resource people delivering programs on request. He describes this as 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' education. In terms of competence required by youth and community workers less emphasis is placed on the ability to plan and develop programs and more on the ability to work in organic and responsive ways. In fact, Löbbecke is elaborating on an argument put by Höbel and Siebert in their book *Community Action and Community Work* sixteen years earlier. In it they argue that community development workers should be seen as resources for community action groups and they define community work

> as a learning process which fosters self-help activity, solidarity, and capacity to make decisions and organise (1973, p. 50).

This is an appealing argument but it rests on a questionable assumption. To suggest that political education in a community action group occurs best through the unaided efforts of its members is a wish-it-were-so assertion. If it were accurate it follows that youth and community workers and educators are superfluous. But German theorists themselves allude to the difficulties of achieving useful learning and other outcomes in a community action campaign and so acknowledge at the very least that there might be a need for youth and community workers to address these difficulties.

Of course, community action can have its shortcomings. Here, for example, are some common criticisms I have heard levelled against community action groups. It is said that they:

- mobilise people only when there is an immediate problem
- draw on shallow motivation
- address negative issues only
- rely on quick successes
- are spontaneous and autonomous making planning difficult
- address only current and local problems and rarely develop long term or 'big picture' strategies
- in comparison to government agencies lack resources and competence
- are largely middle class
- tend to represent narrow interest groups
- dramatise and exaggerate problems
- can be ineffective and cause frustration and disappointment.

The above list is polemical and examples can be found to either substantiate or contradict each point. But the list does point to the sort of challenges that need to be faced if community action is to facilitate emancipatory learning. Armbruster (1979) indicates some of these challenges. He argues that 'open' curricula holds much more opportunity for emancipatory learning but concedes there are various, significant factors which make the practice of emancipatory education in a community action group difficult.

He warns against thinking that 'open' learning is a license merely to improvise. He argues that 'open' curriculum requires the learners to have the necessary level of competence and motivation to collaborate in planning. The learners, for example, may not know where to obtain essential information. He argues that 'open' curriculum runs the danger of allowing the particular to dominate at the expense of generalisable knowledge. People may get bogged down in action and not learn. He suggests that community activists are often not competent in social analysis. They may be too close to the particular action and not have the 'big picture'. And he asks how, and by whom, are decisions made about what should usefully be learnt in a political education program? He argues that conflict about learning goals can be debilitating. Poor group dynamics can jeopardise the learning process. Group members may not know how to articulate, identify, and

define their learning goals. They may define learning goals that are not useful. And he asks who takes responsibility for creating a climate or environment that encourages learning. Löbbecke (1989) also indicates potential limitations of learning in community action. Time and opportunity for reflection may not arise. There can be a tendency for anti-intellectualism. And unstructured or poorly organised group processes may not facilitate learning effectively.

It is almost as if these German theorists are saying that too much action and too much freedom can be a bad thing. I want, therefore, to leave German theory for a while and examine youth and community work in Singapore where there is an emphasis on state-sponsored community building rather than emancipatory community action.

Section 4

INSIGHTS FROM COMMUNITY WORK IN SINGAPORE

Chapter 17

Overt or Subtle Ideological Dominance: Cadres or Community Workers in Singapore

Ambiguities

I have long had a favourable impression of community work in Singapore. Over a space of 30 years I have witnessed the massive development of new, high-rise residential towns. My relatives moved from the older dwellings of inner-city Singapore to high rise blocks in outlying new towns. For an Australian privileged to live in a beachside suburb of Sydney, the endless rows of high-rise residential blocks of Singapore's new towns, at first glance, offer a dismal quality of life. Yet on my many visits to my Singaporean relatives I have been impressed at the vibrancy of neighbourhood life, the ever-increasing quality and range of community services, and the highly visible presence of huge, multi-purpose community centres and resident committees on the housing estates.

To convey the scale and nature of community centre infrastructure in Singapore, here is a description of the facilities at one community centre I visited. This particular centre has a new, purpose-built building and so is larger than some community centres located on the ground floors of high-rise blocks. But its facilities are fairly typical.

First Floor
- Open-air foyer with food outlet, tables, chairs and computer terminals to gain information about government services.
- Office spaces
- Daycare centre
- Student Assistance Centre
- Committee and meeting room
- Large multi-purpose hall
- Lounge
- Pottery Club
- Health & Fitness Club with state-of-the-art equipment

Second Floor
- Two reading rooms
- Conference room
- Senior Citizens Club
- Music room
- Multi-purpose room
- Computer room
- Two piano rooms
- Photographic dark room
- Two etching studios
- Karaoke Lounge

Third Floor
- Homecraft room
- Three multi-purpose rooms
- Two dance studios
- Three art studios

Fourth Floor
- Roof garden

The apparent success of community work in Singapore was driven home to me in a recent interview with the Director of a community health centre located in the middle of a high-rise public housing estate in Melbourne. He commented on the absence of a genuine neighbourhood life in the Melbourne high-rise estate, the limited quality and range of community services and the negative images people had of public housing estates in general. He had recently visited Singapore and remarked on what he saw as a stark contrast between the poor quality of life on the Melbourne estate and the much better quality of life on a similar estate in Singapore.

But Singapore's impressive community work achievements can be understood in different ways. Not only have community work activities visibly contributed to community development successes in physically unattractive, high-rise developments, they have also played an overt and significant role in building the political dominance of the People's Action Party in Singapore.

Community work in Singapore has its ambiguities. Here are five I have

identified from my reading and research:

- Community work in Singapore is presented as overtly ideological by some (Chan 1976, Chee,1994, Chua 1995, Gomez 2000, Jackson 1981, Meow 1978, Riches 1973, Rodan 1996, Swee 1978, Wong & Chen 1978) and neutral and pragmatic by others (Koerte 1984, Lee, C. G. 1984, Lee, K. Y. 1978, Lee, K. Y. 2000, Lim 1984, Vasoo 1994, Wong & Chua 1984, Teo 1976).

- Community work in Singapore is controlled by a none-too-subtle authoritarian agenda. However, it would be too facile to simply depict it as authoritarian because there is a demonstrated commitment to both consultative and participatory practices.

- Singapore has an impressive community development infrastructure. The government has invested in an extensive network of community centres, many of which boast modern and generous facilities that would make community workers in Australia envious. The community work scene in Singapore is dynamic, supported by a nation-wide network of resident committees, community management committees and citizens' consultative committees. Yet community work initiatives not directly controlled by government are discouraged.

- Many commentators argue that Singapore's civil society and social capital are weak and attribute this to the curtailment of activities of non-government organisations (for example, Khiang 2000, Chee 1994, Rodan 1996, Gomez 2000) yet there are high levels of community participation and locally-initiated activities in government-sponsored community work activities.

- There is the tension between inculcation and education in community work practices. I was struck by how often the term 'inculcation' was used by the community workers I interviewed. It is also widely used in the

literature written by Singaporean authors (Heng 1992, Chua 1996, Vasoo 1994). The term is used quite intentionally to describe efforts of community workers not only to convey messages to the public but 'to drum the message in.' Yet, I was also struck by the understanding these same community workers displayed of ways to help people learn through a variety of community development activities. They were able to talk about inculcation and informal education in the same breath.

Electoral dominance of the People's Action Party

Community work in Singapore is not shaped by an overt ideology of the same order as that exercised in a right-wing, communist or religious fundamentalist regime. There are, for example, no compulsory classes in state-endorsed ideology. Opposition political parties are not banned. There are no obligatory oaths of loyalty to, or hero worship of, political leaders. In fact, Singapore has an elected democratic, parliamentary system. But government is unashamedly dominated by one political party, the People's Action Party (PAP), which has won the vast majority of parliamentary seats since 1959, making Singapore effectively a one-party state. In the November 2001 election, 55 parliamentary seats were uncontested. The PAP captured 75 per cent of the vote in the remaining 29 seats to claim a total of 82 seats in the 84-member parliament. The degree of dominance exerted by the People's Action Party is not just reflected in the ballot box. It is also reflected in the way that many community workers conflate the interests of the communities they work in with the interests of the People's Action Party. I asked one community worker how he evaluated the efforts of his community centre. He said, 'at the end of the day we know we've been successful if the government is voted back in.'

Ideological hegemony

The People's Action Party is overt about its desire to maintain dominance and has not been reluctant to use strong-arm measures to do so. For example, in 1987, twenty-two community workers associated with the Catholic Church were imprisoned without trial (Far Eastern Economic Review, June 4th 1987, p. 8). They were drawing on traditions of education for development inspired by Paulo Freire. It was alleged by government that they were engaged in a Marxist conspiracy to overthrow the state (Rodan 1993, p. 92 & Heng 1990, p. 25).

> To critics who were not convinced of the government's case, these detainees were, at worst, anti-government activists with a leftist bent and not subversives (Heng 1990, p. 25)..... (This rare case of political detention) was followed by supportive church services held for the detainees which drew large congregations (Heng 1990, p. 14).

But the success of the People's Action Party in the exercise of power lies more with the sophisticated ways they exert an ideological dominance and community workers have played no small role in this. There is, among Singapore's community workers a quite well developed understanding of the People's Action Party's ideological intentions. It reveals a dispassionate and strategic style of working.

Chua argues that the People's Action Party has successfully wrought change through a well-planned effort to transform the ideological system. Chua draws on a Marxist analysis of ideology and change, suggesting that the People's Action Party has successfully made their political ideas the dominant political values of Singapore's social order. He argues that the People's Action Party has successfully achieved a 'high value consensus between the leaders and the led' (1995, p. 3). He calls this 'ideological hegemony.'

> The new ideological/normative order is sustained through the voluntaristic production and reproduction of acceptable and appropriate routine social practices of the population (Chua 1995, p. 2).

> The depth of ideological hegemony/consensus of the PAP government was clearly evident in the common sense of the population; thus, its electoral popularity. This had enabled it to introduce certain unpleasant social policies without apparent damage to its political dominance and legitimacy to rule. However, the weakening of the hegemony/consensus became noticeable from the early 1980s. In 1981, it lost

> a single seat in a by-election, the first since 1968. Subsequently its electoral support declined in each successive election in 1984, 1988 and 1991, from a commanding 75% of all popular votes to around 60%, which remains, of course, a sizeable majority by any standards (Chua 1995, p. 4).
>
> .... The PAP's continuing political legitimacy among the population is achieved largely through its ideological efficacy (Chua 1995, p. 37).

Williams, describing the views of James Gomez, an undaunted and prominent activist in Singapore, puts it another way:

> His main beef these days is that Singapore has become such a cowed and complacent society over the years that censorship, as such, really isn't necessary any more because everyone self-censors as a matter of course (Williams, 2000, p. 6s).

Ideological or neutral community work

Community work in Singapore has played an important role in the development of services and activities for the 70% of Singapore's population who live in public housing estates. A substantial body of literature describes the successful efforts of community workers to address issues associated with high population density such as cultural difference, social isolation, poor mental health and crime (see Koerte 1984, Wong & Chua 1984, Lim 1984, Lee, C. G. 1984, Vasoo 1994, Teo 1976, Jackson 1981). Drawing on these achievements it is possible to present community work in Singapore as a field of practice that is little different from community work in liberal, democratic states. The ideological and political dimension can easily be left as implicit. For example, Jackson says

> If only the 'official' aims and functions of the Resident Committee are studied, then the Resident Committee appears to be an organisation with largely 'social' functions, essentially the provision of social and recreational activities and programs and the promotion of neighbourliness and community ties. However, such a narrow perspective is incomplete for a thorough understanding of the Resident Committee. My findings indicate that the Resident Committee serves very important political functions for both the government and the People's Action Party in addition to the social services provided to the residents (1981, p. 94).

'Official' reports often depict community work as apolitical, but it is not difficult to find pronouncements by policy makers and workers that are overt about the ideological dimension of community work in Singapore as was the case in this address by the Deputy Prime Minister to a conference of community workers in Singapore.

> I am prepared to bet that not more than three people in a thousand of the Singapore public are aware of the real reason for the establishment of the People's Association and the community centres. I was involved in this together with the Prime Minister and can give you the real purpose of starting this organisation which has now grown to giant proportions. In 1960, the People's Association was established as a government grass-roots organisation to combat the Communist United Front which was the dominant political force at that time. The underground Community Party was in full control of the trade unions, students' organisations, farmers' organisations, rural residents and the most dynamic of Singapore's cultural groups. They even infiltrated most of the PAP branches, as a result of which the Party's Central Executive had only tenuous control over these branches. We started the People's Association as a second line of defence in case the Party branches went over to the Communists (Swee 1978, p. 22).

This ideological imperative may not always be evident when studying the discourse of community workers, but the deputy prime minister implies that the 'community workers' employed by the People's Association are conceived as party political cadres. The term 'cadre' is used to denote a party functionary whose role is to promulgate a political party's policies. Part of the cadre's role is also to help monitor and curb public support for other political parties. So, does the People's Association employ community workers or cadres? I put this question, in respectful terms, to the three senior managers of the People's Association who I interviewed. I suggested to them that the People's Association appeared to emulate the early efforts of the Chinese Communist Party in organising and engaging communities. They asserted it was the other way round. The Chinese government had sent many delegations in the past ten years, they told me, to study Singapore's models of community development.

Lee Kuan Yew, prime minister from 1959 to 1990, described the first of these study visits. Lee's description reveals the conscious efforts of the People's Action Party to rely not just on strong-arm measures or discipline to maintain control but on effective community development. Implicit in his description is a conflation of the role of community worker and cadre.

> ...the head of the International Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party asked our ambassador in Beijing if we would brief them on "how we had maintained strong moral standards and social discipline." Specifically, they wanted to know "if Singapore had experienced contradictions in the process of absorbing Western technology that was needed to develop the economy, and how to maintain social stability." .... A delegation led by their vice-minister of propaganda, Xu Weicheng, came for a 10-day briefing. "Vice-minister of propaganda" was a misnomer: he was actually vice-minister of ideology. We explained our belief that

> social control could not depend on discipline alone. People had to have a decent life with reasonable housing and social amenities if they were to lead moral and upright lives (Lee 2000, p. 715).

The advice given to the Chinese minister for ideology was, essentially, use community workers and long-term community development schemes as part of the strategy to achieve ideological goals.

Cadres or community workers acting as a bridge between the government and the people

In my interviews with community workers I encountered certain ambiguities which I believe resulted from the tension of performing joint roles of community worker or cadre. All the community workers I interviewed said that their role was 'to serve the public' either using those words or expressing the sentiment. All said their role was to act as a bridge between the government and the people, again either actually using the word 'bridge' or words with a similar meaning. This notion of a bridge can be interpreted as meaning that the community workers act as advocates, helping people communicate with government departments, but it can also be interpreted as meaning that they act as conduits, helping government departments sell their policies in more effective ways to the people. In the case of the community workers employed by the People's Association their roles as advocates was circumscribed since the Association would not support them if they advocated for political, rather than administrative, changes.

The seeming de-politicisation of community work is, in fact, an important way the People's Action Party maintains such a high degree of ideological dominance. Singapore's community workers act more as conduits than advocates. In one case, a community centre manager said that she reported on local issues to the Constituency Secretariat on a weekly basis. The same community worker said that her role was 'to inform the government of the people's needs.' Other community workers said that one of their roles was 'to inform the public about government initiatives.' One community worker went

further by saying that their role was not just to inform, but to build public support.

I witnessed first hand community workers performing these two associated roles. When the Central Provident Fund (similar to a superannuation scheme) was cut, the community centres and resident committees organised 'dialogue' sessions to enable residents to discuss the issue with government MP's. The community workers I observed went about planning and supporting these sessions with an impressive level of skill and sophistication, listening to the people, telling their political masters what they heard and so in effect playing a part in shaping public opinion in the interests of the People's Action Party. Community workers in Singapore not only organise, mobilise and facilitate public support at a local, grassroots level, they also assist in national campaigns such as the Courtesy, Speak Mandarin and anti-litter campaigns.

Organising and informal education versus welfare work

Community workers in Singapore commonly declared that their primary role was to promote 'community bonding' (their term). Their use of the term resonates with the way community workers and academics in Australia use the term social capital. By community bonding they refer to notions of building trust, social harmony, self-reliance and willingness to help others. By defining their role as facilitators of community bonding, community workers in Singapore are foregrounding their roles as organisers and informal educators well in front of any roles they play in welfare assistance. In fact, a senior manager in the People's Association whom I interviewed said:

> community centres have a very minor role and responsibility to work with the poor and needy. Welfare service delivery, support for self-help groups, advocacy and so on is not carried out by community centres.

Community workers may not deliver welfare services to the poor, but they do have an important role in informing the poor. One community worker said that this was one of the most challenging aspects of their work:

> we need to disseminate information... for example about government policies, the state of the economy.... The hardest job is to disseminate information to the lower classes (his term) because they don't readily understand government policies.

He, like his colleagues, also talked of getting among the people to find out what was going on. He said he organised coffee shop meetings in order to facilitate informal conversations with residents. Clearly the business of getting feedback is taken seriously. But what sort of feedback? From my interviews I formed the strong impression that the community workers are interested in individualised feedback and not feedback from organised groups.

> The best way to find out what people are concerned about is to talk them one-to-one. That way they trust you and tell you what is on their mind (community worker in Singapore).

The process of disseminating information and gathering feedback is an atomistic one, and is firmly controlled by the People's Association.

Chapter 18

Communitarianism and Community Work in Singapore

Non-liberal and communitarian ideology

The ruling People's Action Party has a commitment to strengthening free market capitalism. According to the 'conservative Washington-based Heritage Foundation and the Wall Street Journal' and using indicators such as

> trade policy, taxation, government intervention in the economy, monetary policy, capital flows and foreign investment, banking, wage and price controls, property rights, regulation and the black market (Korporaal 1998).

Singapore has the world's freest economy.

But the People's Action Party also draws on traditions of democratic socialism. For example, over 70% of Singapore's housing stock is publicly owned. In *The Straits Times*, Singapore's major broadsheet newspaper, a columnist commented that:

> The PAP has (also) been described as Leninist, rigidly hierarchical and shrouded in secrecy. It has been described as similar to the Catholic Church: cadres choose the leaders who, in turn, appoint the cadres, just as cardinals choose the Pope, who then appoints the cardinals (Latif, 2001, p. H4).

Chua (1995) suggests the People's Action Party's guiding ideology can be called non-liberal and communitarian and Rodan (1992) refers to the People's Action Party's 'corporatist ideology.'

The People's Action Party has sought not to be identified with any particular ideological doctrine. Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister from 1959 to 1990, in his recently published memoirs (2000) reiterated his claim that the party's rule has been shaped largely by a philosophy of political pragmatism. But in a speech shortly before he was appointed Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong argued that Singapore faced the challenge of stemming a shift to individualism and

strengthening a national ideology of communitarianism. The Prime Minister was drawing directly on a book *Ideology and National Competitiveness: An Analysis of Nine Countries* (Lodge & Vogel 1987). In his address at the opening of the Seventh Parliament on 9 January 1989, President Wee Kim Wee supported Goh's call for a campaign to strengthen communitarianism and a set of communitarian values was tabled in a parliamentary paper in 1991. The authors of the parliamentary paper argued that those countries with communitarian traditions and values are more likely to be economically competitive than those countries with individualistic traditions and values. Today, most community centre buildings in Singapore have a small plaque inscribed with this set of national values.

Our Shared Values

Nation before Community and Society above Self
Family as the Basic Unit of Society
Community Support and Respect for the Individual
Consensus, not Conflict
Racial and Religious Harmony

The three senior managers at the People's Association whom I interviewed told me that community work in Singapore has no guiding ideology. I presume they were defining ideology as a fixed set of rules and political values. I would argue that the notion of ideology is broader. The community development managers in the People's Association may point to the absence of a single, political doctrine. But there are particular assumptions which guide and prescribe community work practice in Singapore and I have attempted to summarise them in the following points.

- Community workers have an important role and responsibility to build political support and consensus. Political socialization is conflated with community development. I discussed this in chapter 17.

- Needs are more important than rights. Communitarianism is more effective than totalitarianism in maintaining ideological dominance. I

discuss this in chapter 18.

- Informal education should foster community bonding and not community action. This will be discussed in chapters 19 and 20.

- Interactive and consultative community work is more effective than didactic community work to promote community bonding. I will discuss this in chapter 21.

- Public versus community management of community work will better contribute to nation-building efforts. I will discuss this in chapter 22.

- Community workers should engage in advocacy efforts only for administrative, not political, changes. I will discuss this in chapter 23.

Communitarianism, social capital and economic growth

Lodge and Vogel's communitarian thesis has some similarities with Robert Putnam's ideas on social capital (1993, 2000, 2003). In his concept of social capital Putnam includes membership of groups, social ties and participation in collective activities. He saw social capital having benefits beyond the creation of community and argued, for example, that Northern Italy was more economically developed than Southern Italy because it had more social capital.

The idea that social capital is a pre-requisite for economic growth, rather than vice-versa, has become influential in public policy. For example, the World Bank has commissioned extensive research into the role of social capital in economic and community development. There is, of course, considerable debate. Solow, in a collection of essays published by the World Bank, is sceptical.

> Such things as trust, the willingness and capacity to co-operate and co-ordinate, the habit of contributing to a common effort even if no one is watching – all these patterns of behaviour, and others, are supposed to have a payoff in terms of aggregate productivity .... (But) the main finding of recent research – Kim, J. & Lau.

> L. (1996) The Sources of Asian-Pacific Economic Growth, in *Canadian Journal of Economics* 29, Special Issue Part 2, p. 5448-54 and Collins, S. M. & Bosworth, B. P. (1996) Economic Growth in East Asia: Accumulation vs Assimilation, in *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, no. 2, p. 135-203 – is that the extraordinary fast growth of the four 'tigers' does not owe anything to special proclivity or talent, but is imputable to very intense accumulation of physical and human capital (Solow, p. 7 - 9).

The support for communitarian values indicates the privileging by the People's Action Party of community needs over individual rights. The Singapore education minister S. Gopinatham in 1996 outlined this political philosophy when addressing a conference in Singapore jointly convened by the Singapore and Australian Research in Education Associations:

> Singapore's leaders rejected US individual rights type politics and philosophy. They argue education was to strengthen community, cohesion and solidarity. The 'need' to build a disciplined and loyal population is more important than promoting individual rights.... And so policies for inculcating values are central to education in Singapore.

This type of political discourse is similar to that championed by Amitai Etzioni, the American scholar who is regarded as a founder of the communitarian movement. He argues that in the United States too much emphasis has been placed on rights and not enough on needs and responsibilities. He deplores what he perceives as the privileging of individualism.

> A study has shown that young Americans expect to be tried before a jury of peers but are rather reluctant to serve on one. This paradox highlights a major aspect of contemporary American civic culture: a strong sense of entitlement – that is, a demand that the community provide more services and strongly uphold rights – coupled with a rather weak sense of obligation to the local and national community.
>
> A society that is studded with groups of true believers and special-interest groups, each brimming with rights, inevitably turns into a society over-burdened with conflicts.
>
> A return to a language of social virtues, interests, and, above all, social responsibilities will reduce contentiousness and enhance cooperation (Etzioni 1993, p. 3-7).

Notions of community and nationhood in Singapore

All the community workers I interviewed in Singapore justified the interventionist, sometimes proselytising nature of their work with a belief that they were serving the greater common good. They were determined to build

communities in new, high-rise estates that cut across ethnic and religious differences, and interpreted the idea of a common good in terms of nation-building, harmony and economic growth.

> Nation building was deemed crucial for our survival. Community development serves nation building (community worker in Singapore).
>
> ..... we had serious racial conflict, so harmony is crucial (community worker in Singapore).
>
> ... New Towns had to be built up. We had to re-locate people. We're a growing economy (community worker in Singapore).

The People's Action Party's determination to develop a communitarian ideology can be explained by the fact that nationhood was thrust upon them. They had to create it and they had few historical roots to draw upon. Throughout the independence struggle after the second world war it had been assumed Singapore and Malaysia would become one united country. There had been no planning for a small island only 42 kilometres by 24 kilometres to be a separate nation. The island had no notable natural resources and was, and remains, dependent on the Malaysian mainland for much of its drinking water (Drysdale 1984). But in 1965, in a rapid turn of political events the mainland, dominated by an ethnic majority of Malays, and the small island of Singapore, dominated by an ethnic majority of Chinese, separated. Ethnic conflict between Malays and Chinese continues to plague neighbouring Malaysia and Indonesia. Within Singapore issues of race and national identity remain sensitive. The population is made up of 75% Chinese, 15% Malays and 7% Indian with the rest being Eurasians and other races. The People's Action Party has used the threat of ethnic and religious conflict to win the support and acquiescence of the public for its policies and programs (Rodan 1996 and Boshier 1994).

This political history goes some way to explaining the commitment the People's Action Party has to the task of building community. Of course, there are contesting notions of community and the Party has defined what it deems a desirable community. And it is in pursuit of a desirable community that the People's Action Party justifies the significant investment it has made in an extensive community development infrastructure. Chua maintains that their

notion of community is informed by a number of beliefs:

- that the *need* for cross-cultural harmony is more important than a *right* to cultural separatism;
- that the *need* to provide housing for the nation overrides the conventional *rights* of property ownership;
- that the *need* to win support for economic growth measures overrides the *right* to political defiance;
- that the *need* for social order is more desirable than supporting *rights* to complete artistic freedom (Chua 1995).

Community work in Singapore: Public versus community interests

Community work in Singapore is not only funded but directly managed by a central government authority. Non-government or independent community organizations are not supported to do community work. This degree of government intervention is not, as some critics suggest, only about maintaining political control. It is also informed by an ideological belief that if community development were to be carried out by a diversity of independent non-government organisations this might lead to social and political fragmentation which would allow the rights of a few to prosper and the needs of the many to remain unmet. One of the community workers told me:

> .... We can't rely on church groups to facilitate community bonding. There are too many different religions. Only 20% in Singapore are Christian. So we can't rely on pluralist models.

The commitment of the People's Action Party to public versus community (or private, non-profit) management of community development activities is seen by critics as yet another example of an overbearing state. Chua presents a typical critique.

> The state has over the years thoroughly penetrated and controlled society in the name of ensuring economic growth. Schools, once financed and run by ethnic and local communities, have been nationalised and transformed into a system of stratified occupational training. The public housing program benefited the populace but also simultaneously transformed them into dependants of the state. Community organising efforts in the high-rise, high-density housing estates are carried out in turn by government-sponsored agencies, controlled through the Prime Minister's Office. Historically, the negligence and inactivity of the colonial regime had produced a rich network of voluntary organisations, constitutive of a strong civil society, which carried out many such social welfare activities. In contrast, the penetration of PAP government/state progressively reduced not only the power but also the initiatives of these voluntary associations in community affairs (Chua 1995, p. 19).

Community needs versus individual rights

Striking a balance between collective needs and individual rights is complex and will always be contested. Singapore has an international reputation for favouring needs above rights. A community worker challenged me with these words:

> In Singapore we don't encourage selfish protesting behavior. We have community centres where people can talk about things that upset them. Do you think people prefer the protest of this group and that group?

This translates into an interventionist practice that values public versus community management and is prescriptive about the mode of public debate.

At times, it would seem that the state has sought to exercise its collective control over people's most personal lives. For example, the People's Action Party has gained some notoriety for direct government involvement in the provision of dating services. At my first visit to the headquarters of the People's Association, I was given a set-piece presentation about the youth and community work programs. This took place in a disco and dating lounge where 'relationship-building activities' organised by youth program officers took place in the evenings. But again these issues are complex. This may be an example of the high degree of social control exercised by government in Singapore, but it might also be read as an indication that the People's Action Party does not want to rely on the free market to support something as significant for the individuals' future wellbeing as dating.

In some respects the People's Action Party does represent a moderate ideological position. It is openly committed to a 'common good' and it has eschewed any commitment to a particular religion. Loyal supporters of the People's Action Party would, of course, identify the Party's desirable community with Etzioni's 'middle ground' between extreme libertarians who make personal rights an absolute and authoritarians who sometimes talk of suspending them (Etzioni 1993, p. 16).

Chapter 19

Community Work, Social Capital Building and Community Bonding in Singapore

Community workers and their role in community bonding

Etzioni argues that communitarianism requires the building of interpersonal and social bonds. He calls it making community.

> Community facilitators may be a modern necessity. Here I do not mean quick-buck dating services that often exploit the lonely, but individuals who organise social activity in which interpersonal and social bonds can be initiated. These may range from church choirs to weekend outings, from groups that discuss books to groups that organise charity events (1993, p. 125).

Putnam's latest book examines the process of actively 'restoring community' (2003). But the notion of making or restoring community is vague and open to diverse interpretations. Community workers in Singapore perceive their primary role as promoting community bonding. On one level, community bonding is understood simply as bringing people together. One worker said:

> The activities organised by the Resident Committees are a means to an end – to bring residents together. We aim to attract at least 200 people to each event. That's cost-effective.

On a deeper level, community bonding is part of government efforts to build national identity, address ethnic divisions and combat the social isolation that is a feature of rapid urbanisation. For the three senior managers at the People's Association, community bonding is about helping people learn to get along with each other, building trust, and fostering active engagement in local politics. They pointed to the many opportunities created for Singaporeans to participate in local politics or planning and policy making – Resident Committees, Community Centre Management Committees and the various sub-committees, Citizens' Consultative Committees, Town Council committees and more. While there is an emphasis on fostering participation in local politics, the focus is on social and political stability and not protest or disputation.

The notion of community bonding has much in common both with social capital, and with another concept now also coming into use - community capacity building. Fran Baum reports:

> ... that 20 journal articles listed social capital as an identifier prior to 1991. Between 1991 and 1995 there were 109 listings and from 1996 to March 1999 there were 1003 listings (Baum 1999, p. 171).

And I suspect that there will be a similar growth in published interest about community capacity building. Certainly in Australia the large community service organisations such as the Benevolent Society, Mission Australia and St Vincent de Paul are increasingly making use of the term.

Two interpretations of social capital

I suggest that there are two broad interpretations made by theorists and policy makers when defining social capital and community capacity. One is to do with trust, participation in community initiatives, membership of groups, and reciprocity. If one adopts this interpretation there is evidence that community work activities in Singapore have helped create an impressive amount of social capital and community capacity. Another interpretation is to do with questioning, problem-solving and taking action. If one adopts this second interpretation, there is less evidence that Singaporean community workers have been successful in their efforts to generate social capital and community capacity.

Lee Kuan Yew and social capital

Lee Kuan Yew was Prime Minister of Singapore from 1959 to 1990 and continues to hold the post of Senior Minister. His views of a desirable or capable community are similar to the views of social capital researchers such as Putnam (1993, 2000 and 2003), Cox (1995, 1997), Bullen & Onyx (1998) and Baum, Bush et al (1999). In a speech to a conference of community workers in 1978, he talked of

the aims of community centres and the People's Association, indicated what he regarded were desirable features of local communities, and argued that building social capital was far more complex than building physical capital.

> The community centre was first forged in 1960 to provide a meeting ground for the various ethnic-language religious groups (Lee 1978, p. 17).
>
> The People's Association, through the community centre management committees and the new Residents' Committees, have the task of getting whole segments of resettled people to get to know each other, to adjust to each other's ways and customs, to be considerate and helpful to one another (Lee 1978, p. 18).
>
> The physical side of community cohesion can be met – better community centres, better facilities, squash courts, libraries, greater range of activities. What cannot be easily created is that intricate web of human relationships which will bring strangers together and weld them into a cohesive community (Lee 1978, p. 19).

Fran Baum (1999) has undertaken research into the role of social capital in building healthier communities in the western suburbs of Adelaide, South Australia. Where Lee Kuan Yew uses a metaphor of strangers being welded together, Fran Baum uses a metaphor of social glue.

> Social capital comprises the collective values of trust, co-operation and goodwill that act as the 'social glue' which holds a society together (Baum, Bush et al 1999, p. 8).

Eva Cox, drawing on Robert Putnam's work, presents this definition:

> Social capital refers to the processes between people which establish networks, norms and social trust and facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit (1995, p. 15).

Social capital in Singapore

Paul Bullen and Jenny Onyx (1998) undertook research to measure the amount of social capital in local communities in New South Wales, Australia. The questions they used to guide their fieldwork relate directly to Cox's definition, and are similar to the types of question used by Putnam (1995) in a study of local communities in the USA and by Chiew (1990) in a study in Singapore. The questions indicate the kind of social capital being discussed here.

- Do you help out at a local group as a volunteer?
- Are you an active member of a local organisation or club (eg. sport, craft, social club)?
- Have you ever picked up other people's rubbish in a public place?
- Does your local community feel like home?
- When you go shopping in your local area are you likely to run into friends and acquaintances?
- Over the weekend do you have lunch/dinner with other people outside your household?
- Do you think that multiculturalism makes life in your area better?
- Do you feel valued by society (Bullen & Onyx 1998, p. 5) ?

There is debate not only about how one should define social capital or community capacity, but also whether one can measure it, and if so, how. Bullen and Onyx argue that it is possible to quantify social capital. They acknowledge that numerical measurement is simplistic but suggest that numerical scales when used with qualitative research methods do provide useful and valid forms of evidence (p. 8). Such attempts to measure social capital are viewed sceptically by other social capital researchers (Goodman et al 1998, Hawe 2000, Lomas 1998, Leeder & Dominello 1999, Labonte & Laverack 2001), mostly because concepts like trust and reciprocity are changeable and open to diverse interpretations.

From my interviews with Singaporean community workers I formed the impression that they did believe they were effectively building social capital of the kind implicit in the Bullen and Onyx questions. They saw themselves helping to develop trust, community participation and reciprocity. But it did seem that the particular type of communitarian ideology dominant in Singapore was more concerned with moral notions of responsibility and commitment. Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong captured this when he said:

> The success of our public housing scheme should be judged not only by the number of housing units we construct, or the percentage of our population housed in HDB (Housing Development Board) flats but by the spirit of camaraderie that exists between residents of these housing estates. These housing estates must have a character, a goal and their residents, a strong sense of group commitment (1980, in Vasoo 1994, p. 51).

A positive view of social capital in Singapore

A number of researchers have suggested that Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's dreams have been achieved and that Singapore has been successful in generating a good deal of social capital. Meow, who undertook research about community participation in the 1970s in Singapore, maintains that:

> The Singapore society is in many ways a highly participatory-inclined society: its people are involved in voluntary organisations, professional and social clubs (1978, p. 22).

Wong and Chen (1978), who undertook a study about the role of community workers in Singapore, assert that community workers have been successful in 'inculcating in the people a better community spirit and national consciousness' (p. 37). A 'better community spirit' might be understood to convey qualities of trust and reciprocity. In 1990 Chiew published the findings of a survey of a representative sample of 709 people aged 15 years and older, concluding that:

> ... racial goodwill, mutual social acceptance and cross-ethnic consensus over race relations and mutual dependence exist in abundance in Singapore. There is a large measure of social cohesion. This "social capital" must not be allowed to diminish but should be treasured, maintained and built upon so that it may grow from strength to strength (Chiew 1990, p. 74).

A negative view of social capital in Singapore

There are, however, commentaries that suggest Singaporean society is not characterised by trust, reciprocity, self-initiative and goodwill. Chee was the leader of an opposition political party and argued that communities in Singapore had few of these qualities and that Singapore was a paternalistic and dependent society.

> The PAP's policies and campaigns may have raised the financial status of its citizens, but they have failed miserably in raising the quality of the hearts and minds of Singaporeans. Instead of using punitive measures all the time, the Government should appeal to the intrinsic goodness of the people (1994, p. 23/24).

He talks of the 'robotic-like structuredness of the Singaporean society' (1994, p. 12) and goes on:

> In our case excessive societal regulation actually undermines the spirit of communitarianism where care for the community is performed more out of obligation and blind obedience to authority than a genuine caring for the society. For example, for all the fuss about our Asian sense of caring for the community, 40% of the population in the US (which is supposedly an individualistic society) is involved in volunteer work compared to only 6% in Singapore (1994, p.13).

Singapore's success in building a communitarian type of social capital

Chiew's (1990) survey of Singaporean 'national values' provides some corroborating evidence for Chee's criticism. Over 60% of Chiew's survey respondents agreed that Singapore is over-regulated (p. 70). But Chee's argument that there is a much lower level of volunteer work in Singapore compared to the USA is spurious. He draws on a survey about social security that only measures how many people help ***non***-government organisations organise activities and services (Ramesh 1992). Chee does not count the number of people who volunteer their time on management committees and various program sub-committees of community centres, resident committees and other committees because these are directly sponsored by the government through the People's Association. But this volunteer effort should be counted in any analysis of social commitment and community bonding in Singapore. People may well serve on these committees for the same range of reasons as people who assist non-government community service organisations.

A shortcoming of Chee's critique is that it concentrates on a perceived dichotomy between non-government and government-sponsored community work. Nor is it precise enough about what is understood to be community bonding, or a desirable quality of community life. Chee claims that

> the people must be given the freedom to achieve their true potential and contribute voluntarily through non-government and civic organisations (1994, p. 26).

But he does not adequately explain why people could not achieve their true potential by contributing voluntarily to government sponsored committees and community centres. And although he uses the word 'freedom' he does not convey clearly what he means by freedom, beyond arguing that it would mean less dominance by the People's Action Party.

If I apply the definitions proposed by commentators such as Putnam, Cox and Baum, then I must conclude the resident committees and community centres do build community capacity and social capital. They organise activities that foster interaction, co-operation and mutual benefit. They effectively represent and implement a version of communitarian ideology. But we need to take account of Chee and other critics as well. Perhaps the social capital created by community centres and committees in Singapore is a 'softer' version than Putnam, Cox and Baum envisage, since fostering participation, encouraging membership of community groups, strengthening organisational structures, building networks and other trust-building activities are the kinds of community capacity which can assist rather than threaten the aims of the People's Action Party.

Chapter 20

Popular Education and Community Building in Singapore

Robust version of community capacity building

According to Labonte and Laverack (2001) an important feature of a capable or bonded community is that there are structures and processes to foster capacities of problem-assessment, critical inquiry and action. I suggest that these capacities taken together would enable people to engage in 'the unlearning of dominant discourses and learning of resistant discourses' which Foley (1999, p. 14) describes as 'emancipatory learning.'

Community workers working in this paradigm help people question previously taken-for-granted assumptions about the 'common sense' of government policies. They help people learn to find and create spaces where they can resist and develop alternative discourses. This involves more than simply helping people lobby and petition government agencies. It involves helping people consider the possibilities that community capacity and democracy might be strengthened by moving from a petitionary to a more dialogical political culture. In Singapore this kind of practice might translate into efforts by the various local community development committees to gain more independence from the People's Action Party. Or it might mean investing less effort in Meet-the MP sessions, where it can be intimidating to question the seeming 'wisdom' and authority of the politician, and investing more effort in a collaborative arts project that provides opportunities for the views and ideas of local residents to be independently and fully developed.

Possibilities for emancipatory learning: Unlearning versus learning dominant discourses

Community workers in Singapore have been effective at community bonding but not at facilitating emancipatory learning. They have helped generate considerable social capital of a communitarian kind, but little of an emancipatory kind. We can see how these kinds of social capital differ by comparing a community festival in an Australian city suburb with a community festival in Singapore.

North Richmond Community Health Centre in Melbourne is located in the middle of the one of the largest high-rise housing estates in Australia. Since 1995 community workers with the health centre have organised an annual Moon Lantern Festival inspired by traditions from the large Vietnamese community in the area. The community workers see the festival as an act of advocacy for working-class and poor people. They want to help local residents re-define and imagine their local community in ways that run counter to the negative perceptions of high-rise estates in the media and public mind. The community workers see the process of helping residents plan and organise the Moon Lantern Festival as an opportunity to help them challenge and unlearn dominant and negative discourses about their neighbourhood. As in North Richmond they see the festival more generally as a participatory activity that encourages residents to identify and solve local problems and to question who makes decisions about their communities and how.

In Singapore, all the community workers I interviewed emphasised how community centre activities are a means to an end, and that the 'end' was community bonding. They see festivals as a typical community activity and they, too, place considerable value on the planning and management of these festivals. Chee, however has this to say:

> The celebration of festivals and the occasional street carnivals organised by the government have about them an air, not of enjoyment but of purpose. "We are celebrating because we have been asked to do so." It is not without significance that

> the Minister for Information and the Arts said: "Fun is a serious business" (1994, p. 8).

As in the case of North Richmond, community workers employed by the People's Association in Singapore also see the process of organising a festival as a participatory planning activity. The difference lies with the intentions. Singaporean community workers are more likely to be intent on helping residents *learn* rather than *unlearn* dominant discourses. They are intent on helping residents learn to be more trusting and co-operative with each other. They support efforts of residents and local community development committees to be actively engaged in identifying problems and proposing strategies to address them. And they also want residents to develop pride in their local neighbourhoods. The coordinator of one community centre told me:

> The Malay sub-committee put in enormous effort into their festival. Of course, I support them because it is a way that we can work together, they work together and make friendships with others. They welcome Chinese and Indians to contribute.

When I asked if discussions in festival planning meetings ever touched on contentious issues, the community worker told me that she did not regard it appropriate to allow such distractions. Unlike in North Richmond, this community worker did not encourage residents to question authority or to imagine alternative ways of bringing about change beyond petitioning the ruling party.

Civic versus civil society

At a public forum on 'Active Citizenship and Politics' held in Singapore Khiang suggested that Singapore has a strong *civic* society but a weak *civil* society. He was reported in Singapore's largest selling tabloid – *The New Paper* – as saying that:

> the people's involvement is still largely in the areas of social welfare and development where they help implement government initiatives and policies - exercising civic responsibilities. "But we should move to become a civil society," he added, where "people should play an active role in discussing and analysing the impact of policies and should be able to speak freely and critically without fear" (in Ponnampalam 27th Nov. 1999).

Khiang suggests that the community work activities of the government only strengthen the monolithic discourse of the People's Action Party and that non-government organisations have an important role in fostering critical and plural discourses. Chee states unequivocally that:

> rather than rely on laws to shape behaviour, the Government should allow civil organisations to help educate Singaporeans (1994, p. 15).

Spaces to do popular education

There may well be a need for strong and independent community organizations but it may also be possible to plan and facilitate popular education in government agencies and programs as well. Spaces can be created in Singaporean community centres where people can discuss and analyse the impact of policies. The People's Action Party currently dominates government, and may exercise hegemonic influence, but there are people who nonetheless do not fully subscribe to the 'PAP way.' Peter Mayo when discussing Gramsci and Freire suggests that counter-hegemonic educational work does and should happen both inside and outside state institutions.

> Committed adult educators working in state institutions can become mediating influences in the process of cultural transmission. After all, no matter how reproductive (in the sense of reproducing the social conditions that sustain social arrangements) a state program may be at face value, this reproduction is never complete (Mayo 1999, p. 137).

His assertion translates well to Singapore. Community centres in Singapore are subject to direct control by the People's Association which is a 'state institution,' but there is always the potential for contestation between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic education.

Emancipatory educational work in the government controlled community centres of Singapore will carry risks because it involves 'pushing back the limits of what is the long accepted political space' (Heng 1990, p. 43). Newman makes use of a Gramscian concept and describes this type of practice as entering organisations and waging 'a war of position.'

> This may well involve some kinds of covert action, and since their intentions are to counter hegemonic control – that is to bring about radical change to the organisations – they may be tempted to move outside the strict confines of the law and engage in a number of semi-illegal actions (Newman 1999, p. 151).

In Singapore, such covert actions will be more difficult than in multi-party parliamentary democratic regimes. But there are possibilities for emancipatory educational practice that is subtle rather than covert. One recent example is the establishment of a web-site think tank in Singapore <http://www.thinkcentre.org/>

> The "politics 21" Web site talks about vague democratic ideas for Singapore, pushing the boundaries of acceptable political challenges to the Government but staying within the legal limits of various internal and national security regulations (Williams, 2000, p. 6).

Culturalist arguments are sometimes used by leading figures of the People's Action Party to make the existing political scene seem a natural extension of a so-called Confucian tradition. Equating ideological hegemony with a cultural tradition makes it harder for people to challenge it. When these arguments are used, we need to look at the quite different political cultures of Taiwan and South Korea. They, like Singapore's majority Chinese community, have strong Confucian heritages but recent, contrasting histories of robust political debate and change.

The challenge in developing emancipatory educational practices for community workers in Singapore lies not just with debating different versions of social capital or theorising about ideology. Khiang's call for a civil rather than a civic society translates, in practice, into a call for more courage and a willingness to be outspoken. But simply to call for a larger and more independent NGO sector provides little inspiration to community workers to develop emancipatory educational practices. The challenge lies with developing ideas and skills for strategic action. Fostering participation, encouraging people to engage in more public and critical analysis, and supporting people to exercise leadership and take action, require skilled educational and community work practice. In this respect, it may be more useful to examine education for community action.

Rodan (1996) makes a distinction between activism for more consumer power

and activism to challenge the distribution of influence and power in Singapore. He argues that in Singapore there is plenty of activism, but of the former rather than latter kind. The challenge, then, is to convert one kind of activism into another.

Roger Boshier argues that the densely built urban environment and the prospect of state-of-the-art electronic networking offers possibilities either for more social control or more popular education in Singapore. Boshier is an academic with the University of British Columbia and has taught postgraduate students in Singapore for a number of years. He writes:

> The public housing developments are, without doubt, one of the outstanding urban features of Singapore and have been a potent instrument of racial integration and social control. But as Singapore moves into the Next Lap (period of second prime minister) they represent new possibilities for community-based education. Moreover, if these buildings are appropriately wired almost every Singaporean could be hooked into computer networks that educational and other services. There is probably no other urban area in the world that could be so easily transformed into a 'wired' city.' Of course, this could lead to even more surveillance. But, since early 1991, the Goh Chok Tong government has created broader and more differentiated possibilities for education and dialogue than was previously the case and might permit the kind of uninhibited discussions that occur in other countries (Boshier 1994, p. 148).

Chapter 21

Building Political Support and Communities for the People's Action Party

Community workers in Singapore have played an important part in building political support and consensus for the People's Action Party. For most community workers I interviewed this role was an explicit part of their practice. But the activities they devised were seen as helping to promote community bonding. The roles of supporting community development and the People's Action Party had become enmeshed. There is considerable discussion about the degree to which Singapore's community work activities should serve the purposes of community development or political socialization but it is my contention that community workers in Singapore are more explicit about the ideological dimension of their practice than community workers in Australia are.

Political loyalty of community workers

Most of the community workers I interviewed displayed an almost warrior-like loyalty to what they often referred to as the 'Singapore way.' This phrase denotes the policies and achievements of the People's Action Party in the 42 unbroken years the Party has reigned. This loyalty has been carefully developed and continues to be monitored by the People's Action Party. One community worker said,

> if nothing else, the Singapore way is very thorough. They don't just double-check, they triple-check if it's under control.

She was referring to the various structures and processes the People's Association lays out for its community workers.

Several community workers argued that the 'Singapore way' was superior to

that of other countries. They depicted other countries as having to wrestle with high levels of crime, and social unrest, and Singapore as stable, peaceful, safe and efficient.

One community worker claimed:

> No other government in the world offers their citizens so much. The government in Singapore effectively meets our most important needs – secure jobs, good homes, no crime, good education, health and transport services.

They consistently referred to Singapore's preference for constructive criticism and debate versus protest.

Are community development and political party development mutually exclusive?

In one sense these community workers came across as loyal party functionaries and propagandists. They were demonstrating loyalty above all to the party and conflating that with loyalty to the cause of community development. But these community workers were also articulate and gave the impression of having made independent and reasoned judgements about their politics and practice. Did they foster community development or political party development? Teo (1976), Riches (1993), Chee (1994) assert that community workers of the People's Association only foster political party development. Teo in his study of community centres undertaken in the 1970s, concludes:

> Findings in this research have refuted these grassroots community organisations as intended for community development in Singapore. They should instead be seen as part of the political network of the ruling elite for political and national development. The whole operations of this network are made possible by the kind of political culture that are conducive to its emergence and maintenance. At least, the ruling party has found its political strategy and ruling ideology successful means to its own self-defined economic, political and social ends in the midst of modernization and urbanisation and if the people themselves believe it to be so, then perhaps, the present system of community centres and citizens' consultative committees will continue to exist and expand throughout the republic (Teo 1976, p. 111).

Teo's identification of community development with political party development may be too glib. Many community workers in Singapore are partisan, but this

does not preclude them from facilitating discussion among local residents, creating opportunities for people's voices to be heard by those with political power, and fostering and supporting participation for local residents in cultural activities and local politics. These are central tenets of classic community development practice. A definition of community development espoused by a United Nations agency at the time the People's Association was established places an emphasis on a synergy between the people's and government's efforts.

> (Community development means) the processes by which the efforts of the people themselves *are united with those of governmental authorities* to improve the social, economic and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress (my emphasis) (UNDP 1959).

With this sort of definition it is possible to see how community workers and their managers in the People's Association rationalise their identification of development as defined by government agencies with development desired by residents.

Historical perspectives on the importance the People's Action Party places on community development

In his recently published memoirs, Lee Kuan Yew explains why he placed considerable importance on building community work structures and processes. The following passages are included because they convey the way Lee Kuan Yew and the People's Action Party have tied community development activities in with the political machinery of the People's Action Party. For Lee and his party colleagues the socialization of people into the politics of the People's Action Party is synonymous with community development.

> The PAP has won 10 successive general elections since 1959, a period of 40 years. ..... Our critics believed we stayed in power because we have been hard on our opponents. This is simplistic. .....
>
> We had learnt from our toughest adversaries, the communists. Present-day opposition leaders go on walkabouts or decide where they will do well, based on the way people respond to them at hawker centres, coffee shops, food courts and supermarkets, and whether people accept the pamphlets they hand out. I have never believed this. From many unhappy encounters with my communist opponents, I learnt that while overall sentiment and mood do matter, the crucial

> factors are institutional and organisational networks to muster support. When we moved into communist-dominated areas, we found ourselves frozen out. Key players in a constituency, including union leaders and officials of retailers' and hawkers' associations and clan and alumni organisations, would all have been brought into a network by communist cadres and made to feel part of a winning team. We could make little headway against them however hard we tried during elections. The only way we could counter their grip of the ground was to work on that same ground for years between elections.
>
> To compete against the self-improvement night classes at the pro-communist unions and associations, we formed the People's Association (PA). We brought in to the PA, as corporate members, many clan associations, chambers of commerce, recreational clubs and arts, leisure and social activity groups. They provided advice and services in more than one hundred community centres we set up to conduct literacy classes in Chinese and English, and courses in sewing, cooking and repairing motorcars, electrical instruments, radios and television sets. By competing against and outdoing the communists, we gradually won back part of the ground they had cultivated (Lee 2000, p. 143/44).

Lee Kuan Yew described how he identified local leaders of various associations and clubs and organised them into management committees of community centres and citizens' consultative committees. Not content to rely on the community centres to build and maintain support for the People's Action Party, Lee Kuan Yew established a further level of grassroots community organisation, in the form of Residents Committees (RCs) (Vasoo 1994 and Jackson 1981).

> By creating semi-government institutions like the management committees of community centres (MCs) and citizens consultative committees (CCCs) we mobilised a wide spectrum of elders who were respected in their own communities. They worked with our MPs between elections, and during election time their influence and support flowed through into voting....
>
> Later, as the population moved into Housing Development Board (HDB) high-rise blocks, I formed residents' committees (RCs), each serving a precinct of six to ten blocks. This made for closer interaction between leaders and the residents of these blocks. Hence in our HDB new towns, there is a network that leads from the RCs (resident committees) to the MCs (management committees) and CCCs (community consultative committees) on to the prime minister's office, the nerve centre. Opposition leaders on walkabouts go through well-tended PAP ground (Lee 2000, p. 145).

Lee Kuan Yew regarded the appointment of community workers as an effective way of enabling the government to be more responsive and consultative.

> (In the early 1960s) on constituency tours, Premier Lee was struck by the number of people who had accumulated various grievances about roads, bus shelters and schools but who were disinclined to consult the civil servants. Lee then realised the need to establish a permanent channel for such interest articulation (Teo 1976, p. 17).

In his memoirs Lee Kuan Yew does not describe fully how community centres

were managed before the People's Action Party came to power and the People's Association was established. Before 1959 community centres were run by elected, autonomous management committees (Meow 1973, Wong & Chen 1978, Jackson, 1981), and many of these management committees 'were controlled by those who harboured political aspirations' (Meow 1973, p. 27). The People's Action Party set about stifling oppositional political forces:

> ... upon taking office (in 1959) the People's Action Party abolished local government and in 1960 also disbanded all management committees of community centres. The latter had been established in the 1950s to encourage grassroots participation in community developments but were brought under the central control of a new statutory body, the People's Association, whose staff reported directly to the Prime Minister's Office (Rodan 1993, p. 80).

Participatory community work can strengthen authoritarian rule

Teo argues that the first community centres set up in the early 1950s by the British colonialists were concerned primarily with fostering community participation and self-help. However he goes on to say:

> It was when the PAP (People's Action Party) took over the community centres in the late 1950s that the community centres take on a different role in the Republic, ie. that of political and national development (Teo 1976, p. 15).

Various commentators (Riches 1973, Chan 1976) who undertook research about community work in Singapore in the early 1970s agree with Teo. People are not elected to the management committees of the community centres controlled by the People's Association. They are appointed. There is an impressive level of participation on the many and various local community development committees in Singapore today, but the committees are firmly controlled by government authorities. The People's Action Party has drawn on lessons in mass organising from the Communist Party, their former coalition partner in anti-colonial struggles. They have, however, developed and adapted communist practices of mass organising for the situation in Singapore (Chua 1995).

Community centres are owned and controlled by the People's Association but each one also values the support of a local management committee and various sub-committees for youth, senior citizens, women's, Indian and Malay activities.

Recommendations for membership of the management committee are made by a 'Local Advisor' who is appointed by the People's Association. In electoral constituencies controlled by the People's Action Party the Advisor is mostly the PAP member of parliament. In opposition wards the local MP is not appointed as the Advisor. Clearly, these arrangements enable the People's Action Party to exercise significant control over community centre activities, and exclude opposition parties.

Riches who undertook comparative research about community development in Hong Kong and Singapore, argues that :

> Community centres in Singapore (since 1959) have not been used as agents of community development but become the tools of political and social control rather than instruments of political and social development (1973, p. 114).

The community centres, Residents' Committees and other structures established by the People's Association have fostered significant levels of community participation and provide myriad opportunities for self-help activities. These are important features of community development. But the centres are also used as tools of political and social control. The Singapore experience demonstrates that participatory community work and authoritarianism are not mutually exclusive.

Community work for political socialisation

While the People's Association and community workers make no great effort to hide the role many Resident Committees play in building political support for the People's Action Party, the notion that community development in Singapore is distinct from political party development is still current. For example, in a study of grassroots leadership Vasoo a senior academic at the National University of Singapore argues that since the 1970s community work in Singapore has not been partisan.

> The community centres and citizens consultative committees were established in the 1960s ... for political mobilization and socialization of the residents to accept the rationale behind government policies and political philosophy.... The political socialization role of the two community-based organizations was rather

> conspicuous in the 1960s because the government at that time was caught up in the struggle with the communist united front and needed popular support of the masses to paralyse the efforts of the communists to gain control and power. After the communists were defeated in the late 1960s, this role was de-emphasized and the community development role took precedence (Vasoo 1994, p. 50).

Vasoo draws on surveys of Resident Committee leaders which indicate that their primary motivation for serving on the committees is to improve the quality of life in their local communities. All the community workers I interviewed expressed similar sentiments. But this may only indicate that the People's Action Party has been effective in propagating an ideology and practice that conflates the task of political socialization with community work. The People's Action Party may be less concerned now with communist opposition. But critics will say that it is still mightily concerned with denying space to new opposition parties and that it remains as intent as ever on using community development agencies to help socialise Singaporeans into accepting its policies and political philosophy (Boshier 1996, Rodan 1996, Gomez 2000).

Part and parcel of political socialization is the shaping of what people think and do. Or as Chua (1995) puts it, the People's Action Party's sponsorship of community work helps to 'de-limit vocabulary for opinion formation.' These efforts include the exclusion of oppositional voices in community development agencies. One opposition party, the Singapore Democratic Party, criticized such exclusions.

> The community centre management committees (CCMCs) have always been a political instrument. Opposition MPs are not invited to sit on the CCMC. They are not allowed to hold any functions in the community centre itself. Ridiculous! The Citizens Consultative Committees (CCC) are said to be the Prime Minister's eyes and ears. The CCCs and RCs report directly to the Prime Minister's Office. ..... Today, all these purportedly grassroot organisations serve the PAP.
>
> We cannot have a cohesive community when one portion is excluded. We cannot have a caring community when the grassroots organisations serve ideological goals. Only bipartisan organisations can develop the cohesion that a modern society needs (author not named, The Demokrat, Dec. 1992).

The assertion that you 'cannot have a caring community when the grassroots organisations serve ideological goals' might hold true when the goals are determined by just one group. But it is possible to have a caring community when a range of grassroots organisations with various and contesting ideological

goals work alongside each other. We could argue, then, that it is less significant that the community centres and Resident Committees are openly ideological, and that the truly significant feature of community work in Singapore is that community development agencies employ a range of measures to exclude opposition voices.

Chapter 22

Petitionary vs Dialogical Democracy in Community Work and Informal Education in Singapore

How democratic is community work in Singapore?

The degree to which community work is democratic should be judged not only by the structural arrangements in place for management and the support given to community participation, but also by the extent to which the workers and managers are critically reflective and committed to a dialogical instead of a petitionary political culture.

On the first two counts community centres in Singapore do have a degree of democracy. Since 1960 community centres have been directly controlled by a statutory authority which is subject to the elected government of the day. The community centres may not be managed by independently elected local committees but they are managed in the public interest. As already discussed the public interest for the last 41 years has been largely conflated with the interests of one political party. But the community centres do provide opportunities and support for independent community participation. And while the management committees are appointed by government, the various sub-committees – youth, women, senior citizens, Malay and Indian - are elected. The community workers in Singapore I interviewed were clearly concerned with the challenge of engaging communities and fostering participation in the many committees and activities they support.

I would contend that where community centres demonstrate least democracy is in the small degree to which the workers and managers are critically reflective about their practice and politics. The community workers I interviewed demonstrated little willingness to recognise that their practices and management

arrangements were the product of historically specific decisions, and could be contested. When I asked a community worker why management committee members were appointed and not elected, she was initially non-plussed and then said: 'The People's Association owns the community centre and they want good people.'

Defining petitionary and dialogical political culture

In a petitionary culture people believe they can best achieve changes through supplication and entreaty to their political masters. In a dialogical political culture, change is achieved by debate and negotiation and these will often be robust and conflictual. In a petitionary political culture there is an acceptance that the political masters should rule. In a dialogical culture there is ongoing debate about who is best placed to rule. One does not have to go further than Singapore's major daily newspaper *The Straits Times* to get a clear sense of Singapore's deeply-entrenched petitionary political culture. The following contribution to the 'letters to the editor page' was part of a discussion about whether there is any value for Singapore to have opposition parliamentarians.

> I do not doubt for one moment that an independent MP may well display greater courage and independence of mind. But what if the independence stems not from a sense of serving the nation but from an acute desire to arouse the people against the ruling party with the view to creating confusion? (Singh 1996).

This contributor is questioning the value of political debate.

In Singapore the community workers' role was shaped by this petitionary political culture. This was evident in two main ways. Community workers use the term 'dialogue' widely. In particular, they refer to the 'dialogue' sessions they organise between residents and members of parliament. But they use the term to denote the encounter between residents and the MP and not the process of that encounter which as we will see in a subsequent example is constructed around one-to-one interviews. Secondly, community workers emphasize that their role is to promote consensus rather than conflict to such a degree that it excludes voices

that are oppositional and inhibits action. One worker said:

> We don't accept riots and protests. We believe in people sitting down and talking.

Suppressing dialogical practices

Many community workers in Singapore do not draw a distinction between community development and political party development. A member of a Residents' Committee said:

> I became interested in doing community work as a student in Canada. Then when I came back to Singapore, I moved into a new HDB (Housing Development Board) estate in Jurong West and just went to offer myself to the Residents' Committee. I later got involved in party work (ie. PAP). I see serving the party as part of community service (Hoong 1994).

The People's Action Party provides an illustrative case study of how community work activities can play an important role in creating and maintaining conditions of ideological consensus and hegemony. Chua makes this observation:

> ..... under conditions of strong ideological consensus/hegemony, the issue is not whether one can speak freely but that the vocabulary for opinion formation is already greatly delimited (1995, p. 179).

Community workers across the nation-wide network of residents' committees and community centres could play a key role in creating more space for 'opinion formation.' They could help encourage debate about the petitionary political culture, or as Gomez (2000) calls it, the culture of self-censorship. But the People's Action Party has developed and maintained structures and processes which make community workers less likely to do this. As we have already seen the community workers are responsible to an appointed committee, opposition MP's are excluded from any form of office in community centres, and debate is restricted to 'sitting down and talking.' But the suppression of dialogue can be more subtle. Because the People's Action Party has conflated its ideological or political education work with community development. When people are recruited to residents' committees or community centre management committees it is not seen as recruitment to the People's Action Party. It is seen as recruitment to a community development agency. This helps the Party win broad appeal.

And it also enables it to portray dissenting voices as acting against the interests of community development rather than against the interests of the People's Action Party.

Dissolving the boundaries between community work and political organising

The following account describes a regular, monthly 'Meet-the-MP' meeting. It illustrates how resident committees and community development are intertwined with the People's Action Party's attempts to mobilise local support.

Once a month, local MPs meet with local residents in their electoral constituencies. I attended a session at a community centre located on the ground floor of a 13 storey block of Housing Development Board (HDB) flats. It was late afternoon as people went about their business of returning home, shopping, picking up children and so on. A large plastic banner hung over the entrance advertising homework classes and other tuition activities. I had imagined the MP leading a friendly, lively discussion with residents about a variety of local, national and international issues. But it was not so much a meeting as an allotted time when residents could talk on a one-to-one basis to the local MP and his staff.

I accompanied a local resident who was not involved in any community development agencies, and attending this kind of meeting for the first time. The session was led by an MP who was also a senior government minister. He came and greeted my companion and me himself. He wore an open-neck shirt and was an approachable and modest man and did not give the impression of being a powerful government Cabinet member. He made a point of getting to know my companion and explaining to her how the local Resident Committee worked. There was an air of informality about the session. People could help themselves to coffee and tea. Children were at a counter organising a sporting event. But while the MP was friendly he was also intent on recruiting my companion to the Committee. He introduced her to the chairperson and instructed him to take

down her contact details. And the chairperson, after explaining the role of a Resident Committee and that new members are first observers before they actually participate, then outlined a range of benefits for Resident Committee members such as priority on housing and school waiting lists.

Local residents got to meet one-to-one with either the MP or one of his assistants. Desks were set out towards the back of the room as if in a classroom. Notes were taken by assistants of each resident's concerns. Rather than being a meeting this seemed to be an exercise in gauging people's views and acting on *individuals'* concerns. The MP described to me the typical concerns residents brought to these meetings. These included issues to do with unemployment, schooling, lack of amenities, and marital breakdowns.

The session operated as if it were run by a social work agency. But my strong impression was that this was a well-organised, party political event. As people arrived, Party (PAP) volunteers were registering people's names and the nature of their concerns, and giving them plastic tags with numbers so they would know when they could see someone. The roll-call was on People's Action Party letterhead. My companion was slightly bemused by the whole affair and had no intention of joining any group. But she did tell me that her cousin was chairperson of a Residents Committee in a nearby neighbourhood.

The People's Action Party's political dominance has less to do with strong-arm measures than with the development of a political and ideological culture. But it should be noted that:

> ... there is seriously anti-democratic legislation in place that greatly constrains the political sphere. In addition to the Internal Security Act, there is the Societies Act that delimits 'political' activities narrowly to the purview of political parties. Civic voluntary associations, quintessential institutions of civil society, are barred by the Act from making political statements beyond the interests of their respectively defined constituencies, under threat of being deregistered (Chua, 1996, p. 205).

The Act effectively prevents independent community organisations from promoting reformist causes.

A letter from a director of a department in a university in Singapore to the Head of the Department of Community and Aboriginal Education at the University of Technology, Sydney carries an example of the extent to which a culture of censorship has been built up so that educators and community workers act on their own initiative as arbiters and censors. The director was responding to an enquiry about the 1987 incident when 22 community workers in Singapore were arrested. He explained that Vincent Cheng, the leader of the community workers, had some association with Rajesh Tandon, a community educator with an NGO in India. Nonetheless, he assured his counterpart in Sydney that:

> No one in Singapore will be arrested for visiting Rajesh Tandon because I don't think he is that dangerous to the security of Singapore. *He himself will not be arrested on his visit to Singapore unless he tries to promote popular education here* (my emphasis).

Chapter 23

Administrative versus Political and Educational Advocacy in Singapore

The importance accorded by community workers in Singapore and Australia alike to advocacy

While the People's Association has an agenda of control and exclusion this is not immediately apparent in its everyday practice. Most youth and community workers I have interviewed, whether it be in Australia or Singapore, argue that the job of community workers is to act as advocates and to facilitate change in the interests of the people they work with. Many community workers passionately believe that such advocacy and facilitation is of central importance to their practice. Initially it struck me as incongruous that community workers in Singapore should talk about advocacy in ways not dissimilar from Australian community workers. After all, the practice of community workers in Australia is located in a pluralist democracy and community workers in Singapore are in a strict one-party democracy.

The advocacy by community workers in Singapore for local residents is described in this account in *The Citizen*, a monthly publication of the People's Association, and is much the same as the advocacy work many Australian community workers do.

> .... The Brickworks community centre helped to resolve a water pipe problem at Block 37 of Jalan Rumah Tinggi..... the matter was raised to the Public Utilities Board. The Brickworks community centre has also successfully requested for the continued service of Singapore Bus Service number 62. It was discontinued in the constituency and the residents had no bus to bring them beyond Brickworks (The Citizen, Oct. 1995, p. 6).

Which ideologies shape advocacy practice?

Ideology is reflected in practice. To identify the ideology behind the advocacy described above we would have to establish whether the community workers saw their task in administrative, educational or political terms. Did they see it as a matter of engaging with a bureaucracy? Did they see it as an opportunity to help the residents learn to plan to do some advocacy for themselves? Or did they help residents analyse why the problem arose in the first place, problematise the issues, question who makes the decisions, and suggest alternative arrangements?

Administrative advocacy and depoliticisation

A number of commentators claim that the advocacy practice of community workers in Singapore is controlled to serve the interests of the government Boshier 1994, Rodan 1996, Gomez 2000). The government supports and expects community workers to engage in advocacy that may bring about administrative change, but advocacy that seeks political change is strictly circumscribed. Advocacy focusing on the administrative rather than the political will in its turn facilitate learning more concerned with administrative rather than political issues.

Chan argues the People's Action Party established an administrative state as a strategy to remove the 'competitive and conflictual style of politics in the fifties and sixties' (1979, p. 13). Politics is seen now as a matter of management. Vasoo observes that the so-called administrative state 'has affected the political behaviour of the masses so that they have become politically less active' (1994, p. 47).

Chua argues that the People's Action Party systematically set out to turn potentially political issues into administrative matters. He describes how this was done with housing.

> Hitherto, near-universal provision of public housing has not been achieved in any Western capitalist nation because developers' lobbies have been effective in limiting

> direct government housing production to welfare housing alone (Wright, 1982 in Chua, 1995, p. 127). Contrary to this situation, virtually universal provision has been achieved in Singapore. This near-universal provision 'appears' to have made public housing a political non-issue. A small minority of dissatisfied real estate developers and related professionals, unable to put their dissatisfactions on the political agenda, have had to restrict their profit making to the small market of very expensive private housing development (1995, p. 127).

Community work is another potentially contested political issue that is regarded more as a matter for administrative discussion. Church groups, cultural groups, resident action groups and government agencies might sponsor it and in contesting ways. But in Singapore the government has to all intents and purposes monopolised community work. Its practice is seen more as a technical exercise that can always be improved but not be subject to political criticism.

This exercise in depoliticisation is ideological because it maintains the status quo desired by the government of the day. Chua maintains that it

> .... reproduces precisely what the state would have its citizens believe and how it would have them behave. ..... (the state) would rather encourage the electorate to treat such provisions as a purely administrative matter, and to confine their comments and criticisms to that of improving the bureaucratic effectiveness of the agencies entrusted with the delivery of the goods (1995, p. 126).

Administrative versus political change

At the meeting with the MP described in the previous chapter views and ideas provided by residents to community workers seemed to be largely about making services more efficient. Heng (1990) and Rodan (1992) suggest that the Feedback Unit is an example where advocacy is allowed for administrative change but not for political change. The Feedback Unit was set up after an electoral swing against the People's Action Party in 1994 and

> .... is an extra-parliamentary body headed by a government MP. Its four stated objectives are: to receive suggestions from the public on national problems; to gather information on existing policies; to facilitate prompt responses by government departments to public complaints; and to instigate public information programmes.... The intention, it would seem, is to provide both an opportunity for these people to air their views and feel they are being taken into account, and at the same time for the government's case on policy to be sympathetically put (Rodan 1992, p. 87).

Heng pointed to some early administrative changes recommended by the

Feedback Unit, such as an extension for squatters to move out of acquired land and the scrapping of a fee for air-conditioners. Writing from first-hand experience, he said there had been no shortage of ideas for serious political change aired. For example, at some sessions organised by the Feedback Unit opposition was expressed against a bill to prevent religious organisations participating in politics. However, Heng goes on, the Feedback Unit has made few if any recommendations for serious political change (1990, p. 24).

Advocate more than educate

The expectation placed upon community workers in Singapore is that they advocate more than they educate. The Head of the Feedback Unit in the 1990s called the community workers 'grassroots leaders.' He said their role was 'to mirror' the views of the people. Community workers can consult and advocate but they are discouraged from engaging in dialogue whereby views and ideas are further developed and government policy and practices questioned.

> One important role of the grassroots leaders is to mirror the views and sentiments of the masses to the Government. Grassroots leaders are important sources of feedback for the Feedback Unit and other government organisations. The Feedback Unit collates and analyses their input for the ministers and senior civil servants (Boon 1996).

The significance of this focus on administrative rather than political and educational advocacy is that:

> even the few legitimate channels of articulation such as the community centres are concerned with only administrative defects, such as housing, transport, hawking, etc, than with questioning of basic values and goals (Teo 1976, p. 107).

Chapter 24

Informal Education and Ideological Hegemony in Singapore

Participatory and engaging, but not emancipatory

Community workers in Singapore have 'didactic' goals but do not use traditional didactic methods. They extol the virtues of the ruling political party, but they do not preach. They use methods that have many similarities to methods used in pluralist democracies such as Australia and Germany. Singapore's community workers have impressive skills in engaging communities, organising, facilitating participation, and in devising and managing informal education activities.

Didactic versus dialogical, informal education

The community workers I interviewed consistently emphasised that they believed the most effective way to educate the people about government policies was to do it indirectly and informally.

> At our big functions – for example, Mother's Day event – we impart messages indirectly. It's not just about food and socialising. There's a message – look after the elderly. We inject cultural values.

The phrases 'inject' and 'impart messages' suggest an underlying didacticism far removed from the values and concerns described by Jeffs and Smith who argue that

> informal education emphasizes certain values and concerns: the worth placed on the value of the learner, the importance of critical thinking, and the need to examine taken for granted assumptions (1990, p. 3).

'Injecting' and 'imparting' leaves little room for encouraging people to examine taken for granted assumptions.

Just like formal education, informal education can serve the full spectrum of interests from authoritarian to democratic, but the distinctions may not always be apparent. The informal education practices of Singapore's community workers may have elements that are distinct from the informal education practices of the British community workers Jeffs and Smith describe, but there are many common elements. Jeffs and Smith suggest that an important element of informal education is 'the focus on the everyday' (1990, p. 2). Learning is related to, and drawn from, the experiences of living and working in communities. Community workers in Singapore would agree.

In a later book, Smith introduces the notion of local education. He says:

> Within local education there is a strong emphasis on promoting associational life and democracy (Hirst 1993); on working with people to identify common interests, to co-operate and to organise. This is clearly seen in the activities of many community workers and their concern for community development, mutual aid and collective action (1994, p. 3).

Again, if we exclude collective action and, of course, it is a significant exclusion, there is an emphasis on similar elements within the informal education practice of Singapore's community workers.

Thoughtful planning of informal education

The informal education practice of the Singaporean community workers I interviewed was carefully planned. The workers were clear about what they wanted people to learn, and what strategies were likely to facilitate that learning. However they did not name their practice. One community worker said:

> We do informal education without people knowing it. Officially education is not part of our portfolio. But a lot of work is about raising awareness about crime prevention, racial harmony, new laws and new technologies.

Their argument is that if people knew community work activities were designed to 'educate' people about government policies they would be less likely to participate. Another community worker said:

> We do not give speeches on government policies. We do it subtly. We have information on hand and pass it on informally when the occasion arises.

And another community worker said:

> ... we introduce government policies in CC (community centre) activities.

Five major sites of informal education

Singapore's community workers use a number of major sites to undertake or support informal education. They are festive events, continuing education courses, informal conversations, formal dialogue and sporting, recreational and cultural facilities.

Festive events: Imparting information

Community centres organise a standard number of festive events. These include Mother's Day, the Malay New Year, the Indian New Year, and the Chinese New Year. They also organise some ad-hoc events such as a Chinese orchestra concert, or a Malay sporting tournament. Community workers set up project teams made up of volunteers to plan and manage each event, and they devote considerable time to organising these sorts of events because they see them as effective informal education.

If one valued helping people learn to engage in independent action and analysis, then the process of planning, organising and implementing community group activities for a festival could be used to help people unlearn dominant discourses. Value would be placed on supporting them not only to plan the event, but also to decide on the content of the event. The aims would be to build upon and extend the experiences and views of the local organisers. From the interviews, however, it seemed clear that the informal education practised by the community workers employed by the People's Association in Singapore was used to help people learn the dominant discourses. The community worker and party functionaries had

the final say in the planning, and the content related as much to ruling party policies as to any local experiences. One worker told me:

> My role is to ensure the committee members understand the latest government policies in relation to their topic. It would not do to allow them a completely free hand. After all we have to make sure people who attend the event do not get conflicting information (community worker in Singapore).

Continuing education classes: Getting close to the people

All community centres offer a large number of continuing education courses. These range typically from computer skills, to arts and crafts, to foreign languages. The Singapore government invests in these courses in order to make continuing education affordable for those on low incomes. One community worker said that the government subsidises classes as a community development activity. Because some of the continuing education activity is academic coaching for school students it is also seen as a good way of establishing contact with parents.

Subsidised continuing education courses provide a means for community workers to respond to people with financial and other disadvantages. One community worker said:

> We serve mostly low-income people through comparatively cheap fees. Parents worry about their kid's education and cannot afford a private tutor who normally costs about $200 a month. We provide tutorial assistance much cheaper.

Community workers also said that the continuing education activities are targeted at those who could not speak Mandarin or English, the two official national languages in Singapore, again indicating that the courses were provided for people who were perceived as disadvantaged.

Informal conversations: gathering feedback

The community workers I interviewed placed value on informal conversations, whether they were over the counter or in the course of organising activities. These conversations were seen as an important way to help people learn about the policies of the government, and conversely, for the government to learn about the views of the people.

But how was this sort of informal education evaluated? I asked community workers how they knew people were effectively learning to engage with the ruling party's values and policies and how they knew that people were telling them what they really thought. One community worker said: 'We get feedback at MP-meet-the-people sessions or directly to the CC.' Another community worker said 'if they don't give feedback we know they're happy.'

This community worker believed that people could and would express their views directly. He said the community centre staff made every effort to be approachable. And this did appear to be the case. While I was visiting one community centre, a hawker came in giving staff little gifts of food as an unsolicited gesture of gratitude for the centre's advocacy efforts. But if one is interested in hearing and supporting the expression of alternative views then the notion of people coming up to the counter of the community centre and volunteering those views is problematic. In all my interviews I formed the strong impression that community workers used opportunities for informal conversations to gather feedback rather than engage in dialogue.

Formal dialogue (meet the MP sessions): Creative and thoughtful planning

As we have already seen, community centres hold regular meet-the-MP sessions. Another community worker described how she planned and organised a public 'dialogue' session with a government minister. Public dialogue sessions are actually occasions where government ministers deliver formal speeches, but she conceived the whole event as a process of informal education. Although it was not a course activity, she was intent on devising strategies to maximise learning. It is an example of the effort applied at grassroots level to nurture support for the People's Action Party, and it highlights the ways participatory community work is used in Singapore. This particular community worker was a Malay woman with a Masters degree in adult education delivered in Singapore by the University of British Columbia. She explained:

> The dialogue sessions are formal speech events but we try to make it informal by organising a series of activities which the Minister is expected to participate in.... so the Minister interacts with the people informally before engaging in a dialogue session.... before giving a speech.
>
> We organised activities around seven stations.
> - Children's activities in a sports field.
> - Children's activities on the ground floor of a high-rise block.
> - Senior Citizen's Lounge.
> - Visit to a Study Skills Centre.
> - Sports carnival at a public park.
> - Cultural events – Malay wedding, dances etc
> - Dialogue session.

The same community worker explained that effective informal education was aimed at engaging people so that they would be more receptive to the ruling party's messages and that to engage people effectively a community worker should devise opportunities for interaction.

> We try to be creative to get people involved. For example, we didn't want to hold a boring baby show. So we organised a baby race. It wasn't a health promotion event but about providing an opportunity to foster family values and for a government MP to mingle with residents.

Extensive recreational, sporting and cultural facilities

Recreational, sporting and cultural facilities, like the continuing education activities, help make community centres popular sites where community workers can engage residents. Many community centres in Singapore have a range of modern facilities that would be the envy of community workers across the world. These can include basketball and badminton courts, theatrettes, seminar rooms, IT labs, fitness gyms, dedicated study rooms, and canteens.

The People's Action Party's use of informal education

The People's Action Party has developed and maintained a wide range of structures and processes to bolster its political dominance. There is a tendency in reports on Singapore in the international media to highlight measures used to exclude oppositional voices, in particular media censorship. But other measures play an equally, if not more, important role and these include an array of grassroots educational activities planned and managed by community workers. These activities are designed, either directly or indirectly, to explain to the public the merits of government initiatives as perceived by the People's Action Party. For opposition parties this is intensely frustrating. The Social Democratic Party commenting on a report of the government's Advisory Council on Family and Community Life published in May 1989 had this to say:

> The report revealed itself when it said that CCC and RC members should become "opinion leaders' and help explain government policies. ... Grassroots leaders are now expected to become PAP apologists. The PAP intention is clear. If the people hear their side of the story often enough, they will accept the PAP version as truth (The Demokrat, Dec. 1992).

The authors are saying that community workers use grassroots educational activities to bolster support for the People's Action Party but that because this process has become so enmeshed with the practice of diverse community work activities, it does not necessarily come across as partisan propaganda. The newsletter quoted above gives the impression that the expectation that grassroots

leaders became PAP apologists is new, but postgraduate research undertaken at the National University of Singapore in the 1970s indicates that community workers from at least the early 1970s perceived that they had an important role in explaining government policy and garnering community support for its policies. It is clear that the People's Action Party was successful in inculcating these aims into community work practice from the time they established the People's Association in 1963. Teo interviewed 30 paid and unpaid community workers in two housing estates. He reported:

> The perceptions of the leaders could be listed as follows in order of frequency in which they are articulated:
>
> 1. to stimulate participation in the community centre from all sectors of the community by organising activities for them.
> 2. To manage the daily affairs of the community centre.
> 3. To disseminate government's policy to the grassroots through public campaigns
> 4. To look after the welfare of the community residents.
> 5. To recruit members to be trained in organising work (1976, p. 26).

Educating the public is more important than promoting welfare

The community workers whom Teo interviewed put the task of educating the public about government policies above the task of promoting welfare. The tasks of stimulating community participation and doing day-to-day centre management are ranked as higher priorities than political education. But these two tasks can be interpreted as pre-requisite for the task of political education. People need to be mobilised for political education to be effective. The community workers I interviewed reiterated this. Stimulating participation is a means to an end.

Jackson's (1980) research provides further evidence of how successful the People's Association has been in socializing people to serve the interests of the ruling political party. Jackson interviewed resident committee members in 1979.

> In terms of the role-perception of the Resident Committee members interviewed, all 23 interviewed (100%) saw the most important role of the Resident Committee as being the "link-agent" between the government and the residents (1980, p. 87).

Resident committee members are an important part of the community development networks that are directly controlled by the People's Association.

I do not believe that it is productive to draw a distinction between community work which is ideological and community work which is not ideological. Instead it is more productive to assume that there is an ideological dimension to all community work practices and to make the ideology explicit. If criticism is to be expressed, it should be directed at those who hide their ideology and at the ideology itself. This, in turn, leads to a wider argument that ideology has a foundational place in any analysis of community work practice. In the case of Singapore, the ideology of most workers has been shaped directly by a single, political party. Community work in Singapore is unlikely to change unless either the People's Action Party radically changes or its political domination is successfully challenged. It would be naïve to think that community workers or resident committee members in Singapore could otherwise be influenced to change their practices in any significant way. Latif made a similar point when commenting on occasional calls by members of the public in Singapore for more 'freedom of expression in political debate, in the arts and the media' (2001, p. H4). She argues that the People's Action Party has a strongly held and long-term ideological opposition to a pluralist democracy.

> Like the Church, the PAP does not change its opinions every Tuesday and Thursday. .... What I am saying is that the PAP, contrary to its emphasis on pragmatism, is an ideological party. Like the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), it is driven by ideas, not by practice (Latif, 2001, p. H4).

It seems clear that for the foreseeable future the People's Action Party will continue to use government paid community workers to go about persuading the people to support government policies.

Section 5

CONCLUSION

Chapter 25

A case study

Case for a case study

This study of informal and popular education in youth and community work has been a discursive one. I began by analysing the educational practice of youth and community workers in Australia and raised questions about whether it served to control or emancipate learners. I discussed certain English-language bodies of literature about informal and popular education, analysed debates in German literature on youth and community work, and examined community work practice in Singapore. In this chapter I want to draw the ideas and issues together and illustrate their utility by recounting the story of my role in the Centre for Popular Education UTS.

I embarked on my thesis shortly before the Centre for Popular Education was established with the result that the development of the Centre coincided with the development and writing of my thesis. I am therefore presenting the story of the Centre as a case study of popular education in the Australian context that was informed and influenced by the research, reflection and writing I was doing. With the benefit of hindsight I view my association with the Centre of Popular Education as an example of praxis - a reflexive process of theory informing action and action informing theory.

I indicated in chapter 2.2 my intention to write about the reflexive relationship between my thesis development and my practice in the Centre for Popular Education. This process of using one's practice to inform one's writing and theorising has been used by various writers in the field of adult education and conforms with the established educational practice of learning by reflecting on experience (Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985). Stephen Brookfield in *The Skilful*

Teacher (1990) draws extensively on his own experience with adult groups to illuminate and develop theory. Griff Foley wrote a reflective account of his teaching practice with groups and its association with his theoretical positions in 'Going Deeper: Some insights into teaching and group work in adult education' in *Studies in the Education of Adults* (1992). Michael Newman uses his practice as a community education worker in London (1979) and then as a trade union trainer in Australia (1993) to develop his ideas on learning in conditions of conflict and opposition. Peter Willis examines and constructs his 'adult education practice as lived experience using an expressive research method' (2002, p. ix). He takes seven episodes in his practice and presents them metaphorically as installations in an art gallery.

About the Centre for Popular Education, UTS

The Centre was established in the University of Technology, Sydney in 1996. Griff Foley was the driving force behind its establishment and was appointed as its first Director. I was appointed Alternate Director. Foley initiated a number of scholarly projects about democracy-building and education. At this time he was working on his book *'Learning in Social Action'* which was published in 1999. I was charged with developing the entrepreneurial side and co-ordinated several commissioned curriculum and professional development projects. In 1996 I co-ordinated the Centre's first major conference called *'Youth Work, Community Work and Popular Education.'* Tony Brown, another UTS colleague associated with the Centre, won a grant from the Henderson Foundation to study the effect of economic re-structuring on workers' learning.

In 1998 Foley resigned as Centre Director and shortly thereafter retired from the university. At this time the Centre was in a moribund state. Tony Brown was about to leave and take up a post as Director of Adult Learning Australia in Canberra. I had been on sabbatical and not driving any new projects for the Centre. We had not succeeded in engaging UTS colleagues, even those who had expressed interest in being part of the Centre. Michael Newman was the

exception. But he, like myself, had just returned from sabbatical, was immersed in writing his fourth book *'Maeler's Regard'* (1999) and was not available for new research projects. The Centre's administrative assistant was on indefinite sick leave.

I took on the role of Acting Director but my thoughts were to wind the Centre down. I gave away office space and equipment and for three months the Centre existed in name only. Newman played the elder and urged me to not make any rash decisions about the future of the Centre.

I decided to re-build, and in December 1998 the Centre co-ordinated the first of what has become its flagship conference series 'Education and Social Action.' The Centre took on some new externally funded projects and appointed research staff. In mid-1999 Deb Hayes was appointed Alternate Director after a competitive selection process. I persuaded university management to approve the appointment of Daniel Ng as a full-time Centre Manager on the proviso that the position would be fully funded by externally generated income.

We chose not to pursue tenders because we did not want the Centre to become a research consulting group beholden to agendas determined by clients. Instead, as indicated in chapter 2.2, we wanted the Centre to exercise leadership in developing research agendas in various areas. Those areas included: community leadership; learning and action for the environment; health education and community development; pedagogy and practice of working with young people; and community cultural development. We embarked on a public program of one-day forums planned and facilitated collaboratively with community partners. The purpose of the forums was to support stakeholder groups identify and define the types of research they believed would be useful. We pro-actively developed proposals for research and sought interest from public sector agencies to fund them. This strategy has worked.

The Centre's research income rose from $50,000 in 1998 to $700,000 in 2003. At the time of writing it employs six research fellows on contracts, a full-time

manager, research assistants and seven tenured staff work with the Centre.

Making the decision to re-build the Centre

When considering whether to re-build the Centre we had to decide whether there was a place for a university centre that would undertake research about the educational dimension of youth and community work and social action. My thesis research had alerted me to the difficulties Australian activists and youth and community workers had in naming an educational dimension of their practice. (See chapter 7.3). They associated education closely with schooling and didactic instruction. One community worker with a neighbourhood centre had said:

> If I say that I educate then people will think of me as a teacher. I don't teach.

But my research had also indicated there was indeed an educational element in youth and community work. This could be verified from the literature (see chapter 7.4.) and was recognised by some practitioners (see chapter 7.5). One practitioner, when asked if youth work was educational, put it this way:

> I wouldn't say it's educational to the extent of a TAFE College or something like that but educational in the sense that you are educating someone and giving them a chance to gain skills and knowledge and they're learning and most certainly because they come in and they are grasping something and developing themselves to make more.....except in a TAFE course they'd expect the teacher to come in and stand in front of the black board and this is more an informal, hands on kinda thing and you find out that most courses demand a certain amount of placement or work experience .... a youth centre is voluntary..... in a TAFE course on cooking they will give you all the skills in cooking and you go to TAFE because you have decided that's what I want to learn whereas in a youth service it's more about more working with the young people and finding out how or why they want to pursue it..... and then once we've worked with them for a while..... then they might move on to a TAFE course.....

On the basis of this kind of evidence I decided to try and rebuild the Centre.

Theory behind the early practice of the Centre for Popular Education

Until about 1999 I was concerned more with the practicalities of developing a research program than with looking for a theoretical basis. In the early stages of the Centre I found Foley's categories of education and learning – formal education, non-formal education, informal learning and incidental learning – useful and, as indicated in chapter 5, developed the view that a further category of informal education was needed. In so far as I did draw on theory it was from the two major traditions evident in the work of the UTS Faculty of Education (see chapter 2.2).

A liberal-humanist tradition was manifested in the adult education strands of our undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses both in content and process. And there was an emphasis on reflection on experience and discussion about learning contracts, non-graded assessment, and work-based learning projects, Various colleagues acknowledged the influence of educational theorists such as Malcolm Knowles (1980), Carl Rogers (1969) and David Kolb (1984). Colleagues influenced by and writing in the liberal-humanist tradition included David Boud (1993, 1997), Geoff Anderson (1996), Sue Knights (1994, 1995), Jane Sampson (2001a, 2001b), Elyssebeth Leigh (1999), John McIntyre (1998, 1999 and 2000) Ruth Cohen (1993, 1999), Kate Collier (1995, 1999), Hermine Scheeres (1999, 2002), Mark Tennant (1993, 1997) and Geoff Scott (1999). Some have written extensively but I have only included references which specifically demonstrate their debt to the liberal-humanist tradition.

Instrumental-behaviourist traditions were manifested in the vocational education and human resource development strands of our teaching programs. Colleagues such as Robert Pithers (1998, 1999), Tony Holland (1995, 1999), Ian Cornford (1997, 1999), Peter Russell (1994, 1999), and James Athanasou (1999, 2003) drew on educationalists like Robert Gagne (1970, 1988) and placed an emphasis on learner and organisational performance. In the first half of the 1990s I undertook a large amount of competency-based analysis and curriculum development work which was located in an instrumentalist tradition, and I benefited from the

support of Paul Hager (1991, 1993), Andrew Gonczi (1992) and Clive Chappell (1989, 1995, 2000) who are UTS colleagues and leading researchers in this field. My involvement in this sort of work continued into the early practice of the Centre for Popular Education.

A precursor to the Centre was the Community Consultancy Group. It was established in 1991 as a Faculty unit and headed up by Jane Sampson. I was part of this group with Sue Knights and Michael Newman. We ran train-the-trainer and communication skills workshops for community workers, planning exercises for community agencies, and curriculum development projects. These activities drew on liberal-humanist ideas and made use of experiential learning methods. I benefited from the support of Sampson and Knights who are skilled and experienced practitioners, academic course co-ordinators and facilitators. Newman in his contributions to the group drew upon the principles and processes of Paulo Freire.

Retaining the name 'Centre for *Popular Education*'

We inherited the name of the Centre. The Dean suggested the name should be changed because popular education had little currency in Australia. We needed to decide whether to keep it. Was it appropriate for what we were doing and intended doing? Was it appropriate in Australia? Through my discussions with Lori Beckett recounted earlier and then my thesis research I learnt that the term had a historical and theoretical justification, and that, although not widely used was gaining currency overseas. We decided to keep the name and by doing so accepted that in part the mission of the Centre was to promote both the term and the philosophies associated with it. From the outset, drawing on my thesis research, I emphasised there were multiple traditions of popular education and that the Centre should undertake research and advocacy work to examine and make popular education meaningful to Australian activists and youth and community workers.

Looking for a stronger intellectual base for the Centre

With the Centre now growing and its survival more secure, we could begin looking for a stronger and more consciously espoused intellectual base. In the final period under the founding Director there had in effect been four people associated with the Centre – Griff Foley, Michael Newman, Tony Brown and myself. Foley established the Centre, chose its name and defined its initial mission. He was an established and influential writer in the field of adult education and influenced significantly in his thinking by Marxism (1991a, 1991b, 1992a, 1992b, 1994, 1999). In much of his writing during the 1990s, Foley located his analyses of education in community, workplace and social action settings in a context of the restructuring of capitalism:

> Adult education, through its instrumentalist, professionalized and decontextualised practices and discourses, is implicated in processes of capitalist domination and capitalist reorganization. Adult educators who wish to contribute to struggles against capitalist domination must stop seeing adult learning and education as purely technical, interpersonal and institutionalized activities, They must recognize that adult education and learning are also complex, and contested, social, cultural and historical processes. Above all, they must learn to recognize and work with workers' resistant learning (1999, p. 67).

Foley examined adult education through the prism of a Marxist political economy. In the preface to *Strategic and Organisational Learning* he wrote:

> There is a struggle underway in our workplaces, communities and societies, between use values and money values. For most of us life is about love and useful work: loving our family and friends, doing a good job, being justly rewarded for it and being treated, and treating others, with decency and respect. But or working and social lives are increasingly driven by the profit imperative, which turns people into tools whose productivity must be maximized, and sets people against each other (2001, p. viii).

In the conclusion he wrote:

> My account is a materialist one... organizational life is determined by material realities like capitalist social relations, gender relations and unconscious motivations and dynamics (2001, p. 227).

The origins of the Centre for Popular Education can, therefore, be said to have been in Marxist thought.

Tony Brown was also a Marxist. In the early stages of the Centre's work he was undertaking research about training reform in the context of workplace and economic restructuring. In his PhD thesis Brown spelled out his Marxist perspective.

> The analysis laid out so far places class and class interests as central to understanding developments in a society's social and economic relations. It is capitalism that shapes people's lives and the social institutions and relationships, which go to making up those lives. If the key to capitalism is the market in human labour-power then the role of trade unions as the primary institution of the working class assumes a central importance (2003, p. 22).

The other person who was part of the small group in the beginnings of the Centre was Michael Newman. From 1993 onwards his writing was increasingly influenced by critical theory and an interest in ethical and moral issues of activist education. In *Maeler's Regard* he wrote:

> Adult education for critical thinking is constructed on an ethical stance. It is a form of education by and for those wanting to understand the world in order to change it. It is education for social justice (1999, p. 56).

During 1996 and 1997 the four of us met in each other's homes and a café near our campus and discussed issues to do with the Centre for Popular Education. The most memorable feature of these meetings was the debate about the nature of critical theory in education. I suggested we should be more precise when using the term and define the difference between a historical-materialist and critical-emancipatory perspective on critical theory. I suggested that critical theory was being used by the four of us in different ways.

It was at this time I came across the debates in the German literature from the 1970s between advocates of historical-materialist and critical-emancipatory perspectives in youth and community work. (See chapters 13 and 15). This helped crystallise the debates we were having in the Centre between Marxism and critical theory. On reflection, I can now see the influence of my study of the German literature upon the theory and practice of the Centre.

Applying ideas from German theorising in the Centre's work

I drew four broad ideas from my study of pedagogy, youth and community work in Germany. Each of these ideas can be found in the Centre's work.

- There is a need to continually interrogate educational theory and practice in youth and community work.

- Emancipatory learning can, contrary to some theorists, be planned and informal education strategies are useful in this respect.

- There are both materialist and critical perspectives on emancipatory change and learning.

- And finally, there is value in trying to define the micro-detail of emancipatory practice.

Interrogating educational theory and practice

My study of German literature highlighted the theory building that can be developed from a close interrogation of the values, politics and ideologies that underpin youth and community work. See, for example, in chapter 12.3 the table drawing on Sielert (1991), Hafeneger (1991) and Krafeld (1991) of the relationship between political values and forms of youth work practice. This type of theory building has informed my research and teaching practice. For example, as chairperson of the Youth Sector Training Council of NSW in the late 1990s I instigated a project to describe and discuss how values shaped the educational practice of youth workers (see Flowers 2000a). I also developed and taught a new subject in UTS called 'The Educational Dimension of Youth and Community Work.'

The Centre received expressions of interest to undertake research from a number

of youth and community workers but we wanted researchers with the capacity to analyse the educational dimension of practice. To this end we appointed Andrew Chodkiewicz, Celina McEwen and Derek Waddell as research fellows. Each was an experienced activist. Each had completed postgraduate study in adult education. And each had a track record as a practitioner in informal and popular education.

Planning emancipatory learning

My study of the German debates helped me understand my disagreement with community activists and workers who took the view that radical learning cannot be planned, and sharpened my resolve to develop research projects based on the conviction that it is possible and desirable to plan and facilitate emancipatory learning. We took these ideas from German debates into a project the Centre for Popular Education conducted for the Mittagong Forum. This is a coalition made up of the national environment advocacy organisations in Australia – including Greenpeace, Australian Conservation Foundation, Worldwide Wildlife Fund, Wilderness Society, Friends of the Earth – and state and regional peak conservation councils. It commissioned Linda Parlane, a former Director of the Victorian Conservation Council, and myself to undertake research about capacity building and learning in the advocacy oriented Australian environment movement (Flowers and Parlane 2000). The research established that there were sharply differing views about what should be the priorities for strengthening the capacity of grassroots environmental activists. Some placed an emphasis on their technical skills in organising campaigns. Others emphasised organisational leadership abilities. Yet others argued that activists should be supported first and foremost to engage people in local communities and work with them to raise their awareness and preparedness to take action. People holding this third view saw activists as informal educators.

However, in the course of the research we encountered a good degree of sceptism. A number of environmentalists still believed that critical learning

about the environment leading to action could only come from within the activist him or herself. As a result one of the long-term goals I set for the Centre was to pursue research which would counter the sceptism and foster informal and popular education about the environment. To this end, I have been collaborating with Robbie Guevara from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and James Whelan from Griffith University. They have both recently completed PhD theses about environmental popular education. The debate that Guevara, Whelan and myself have begun with the presentation of a conference paper (Guevara, Flowers and Whelan 2004) carries elements of the German debates.

Including materialist and critical perspectives

The Centre draws on both materialist and critical thinking in our action research for community leadership development. Our research is underpinned by an assumption that most people can, at different times, exercise community leadership. They may be long-term unemployed, tenants of a public housing estate, ex-offenders, and young people who have left school. They are often not office-holders or anointed 'leaders' but on certain issues and at certain times will be capable of exercising positive community leadership.

The critical theory perspectives in the German literature encouraged colleagues and myself to research practice that would develop critical thinking, facilitate emancipatory learning and bring about incremental change in individuals and communities of which they were a part. A critical perspective to community leadership development emphasises the enabling of 'ordinary' people to have voice, become more effective in communicating, and to develop a stronger sense of belief in their agency – that is in their own capacity to bring about change leading to a greater degree of social justice. Critical education is to do with the construction of a civil society.

The critical theory perspectives in the German debates helped me understand that the Centre had a role in helping people construct their own knowledge

about popular education, and develop their own theory. The Bulletin of Good Practice is a journal published by the Centre and is an example of this construction of knowledge, in which we place academics alongside practitioners and encourage practitioners to describe their practice and develop their own analytical frameworks to explain that practice.

We drew on the historical-materialist theorising by working in areas of Australia occupied by the traditional working class. The Ratbags, for example, were people from this class. The historical-materialist debate in the German literature emboldened me to encourage analysis which recognised the conflict of class interest, and to develop research that took the political economy of the areas and the people we were researching into account. More recently the Centre has researched the educational elements within the programs of the large social clubs in the western suburbs of Sydney. These clubs, associated with football teams or branches of the Returned Serviceman's League, are centres for leisure and recreation in traditional working class areas.

Defining the micro-detail of emancipatory practice

The influence of a fourth idea taken from my study of German theorising can be seen in efforts at the Centre for Popular Education to define the micro-detail of emancipatory practice. In chapter 13 I discussed the work of Siebert (1983), Armbruster (1979) and Marburger (1981) who developed definitional frameworks. A step in the development of research about informal and popular education at the Centre was the devising of tools and frameworks that attempt to deepen understanding about how particular types of youth and community work practice facilitate particular types of learning, and how particular values and discourses shape practice. I have included an example of one of these tools in appendix 6.

Drawing on my research in Singapore

There is an irony in the way my research in Singapore has influenced work in the Centre for Popular Education. Youth and community work in Singapore is shaped by an authoritarian agenda, yet the study of it has encouraged me to develop a democratic research agenda grounded in collaborative inquiry. I am aware of the dangers of a university research centre being too theoretical, too ideas-focussed and as a result failing to be relevant and useful to practitioners. Here I drew on my research in Singapore where I observed successful practice, varied programs with wide appeal, effective consultation and evidence of enthusiastic participation. This strengthened my view that the details of practice matter.

My research and experiences in Singapore convinced me there were successful strategies and techniques which could be used either for emancipatory or oppressive ends, either for socialist or capitalist ends. There was value in examining these 'successful' strategies wherever they existed, whether in Singapore or a large, social club in Western Sydney. I have discussed how Australian youth and community workers use empty rhetoric from time to time, particularly when it comes to claims about community participation rates. Workers may be co-ordinating community development projects that attract fewer than ten people, yet will say the project has been successful, claiming that one or two individuals have undergone emancipatory change and this will have a 'ripple' or 'trickle-down' effect for others. Participation numbers do matter and there are community agencies that successfully achieve them. In Australia one does not have to look further for examples than the club houses of sporting associations, unions, returned soldiers' leagues and faith-based organizations, all centres with a particular focus or ideology.

My experience in Singapore strengthened my conviction that participation numbers do matter and that one should never lose sight of practice. It encouraged me to ensure that all of the Centre's work was related in some direct way to practice in the field. We did this in a number of ways. Firstly, the Centre

studied practice. Secondly, the Centre engaged academics who had also been activists or practitioners in the field. Thirdly, the Centre undertook participatory action research.

We use the label 'practice-based research' to describe the Centre's commitment to studying practice. One of my first initiatives after being appointed Centre Director was to establish a research program about 'cultural action,' and I will describe the process of establishing this program because it conveys the nature of the practice-based research that we developed.

In the mid-1990s we were receiving a growing number of requests by practitioners for examples of popular education in Australia. Youth and community workers who had worked with the Centre learnt about theories and practices of informal and popular education. Most of them had not initially recognised an educational dimension to their practice. We introduced them to the writings of informal education theorists such as Mark Smith and Tony Jeffs, and to popular education theorists such as Paulo Freire, Griff Foley, Michael Newman and Bud Hall. As they learnt more they wanted to apply these theories to their practice in Australian settings and looked for other examples. I could find few Australian examples that drew directly on traditions of informal and popular education. But I did find examples that exemplified features of practice highlighted in these traditions. In 1998, I had just completed writing a diploma course in community cultural development for the Community Arts Association of New South Wales. That project provided me an opportunity to write about practice where artists collaborated with youth and community workers effectively engaging people and creating opportunities for active participation and emancipatory learning.

In 1998 the Centre called an informal meeting of practitioners interested in studying more examples of community cultural development and popular education in youth and community work. There was an encouraging response. Youth and community workers from health, local government, community development, environmental education projects, and schools attended, and we

received e-mails from across Australia with requests to be placed on a mailing list. The enthusiastic response confirmed my belief that there was a high level of interest in practice-based research. This type of research involves theorising grounded in the reality of practice and is undertaken collaboratively between practitioners and academics. Most of the people who expressed interest in the network were experienced practitioners and were keen to learn about ways other practitioners were theorising about, appraising and evaluating their practice. They wanted to make more sense of what they were doing and to improve how they did it.

A number of us believed it would be possible to develop a collaborative research agenda between the Centre and various practitioner groups. We were aware, however, that this might not be regarded as scholarly research because of the leading role played by practitioners. Bob Pease writes about this tendency to regard practitioner-theorising as second rate. He is a social work academic who started out as a practitioner. He describes his use of reflection and analysis when a practitioner in the early 1970s.

> Much of my work during this time involved the establishment of alternative community-based social services projects. In the development of these services, we endeavoured to create alternative collectivist/democratic structures and aimed to link service provision with collective action. .... Throughout the time I was associated with these alternative social services, I monitored and assessed my attempts to relate the radical models to my practice. To facilitate this self-evaluation of practice, I set up a study/support group of progressive social workers, maintained a daily diary of my work and wrote a series of discussion papers on my practice. They were just my attempts to make sense of what I was doing. It has taken me a long time to validate this reflective practice as research and to recognise the potential with such research for the generation of new knowledge (1999, p. 3).

In youth and community work there are other examples of the practice-based research Pease describes. At Fairfield Community Centre in Western Sydney a group of experienced practitioners wrote an impressive collection of reflective papers (Fallapi, Falconer, Nicholas, Rew, Wannan and Way, 1984). It was published in-house and has not been distributed widely. Now we wanted to validate and support this sort of research from a university centre but did not know how such research might be funded, sustained and developed.

Together with Soraya Kassim, a cultural activist, I planned and convened the first of what became a series of public forums about cultural action. At the first one-day forum there were the following presentations:

- A nun, a visual artist, and two community workers from the St Vincent de Paul Society discussed how Freire's ideas informed their work. The visual artist told us how he immersed himself in a community and showed how he produced codified pictures.
- Three women from the Older Women's Network talked about how they organised and advocated for more services and rights. They combined their talk with a performance on electric guitars.
- The leader of the Sydney Trade Union choir talked about how his philosophy of emancipatory learning underpinned his practice and led forum participants in singing exercises and de-briefed the exercises.
- Two academics from the University of Western Sydney presented their developing theoretical framework of cultural action for degree programs in social ecology.
- Five activists from a group called Culture Lab presented a chanting, drumming and breast beating session arguing that their theory of cultural action drew on ideas of internationalism, meditation and ritual performance.

Over 80 forum participants attended. They were mostly youth and community workers and they needed little encouragement to interrogate the politics and practice of the various groups of presenters. The forum presented a snapshot of practices and the theories that shape them. But the quality of the theorising was mixed. There was a striking diversity among the presenters but they all professed a common interest in social justice, transformation and emancipatory education. In the concluding discussion participants expressed a strong interest in having more opportunities to engage in discussion and analysis and to write and read about their work.

I responded to this interest and with Celina McEwen, Julieanne Hilbers and

Michael McLaughlin at the Centre convened other forums related to cultural action. They were focused on different aspects of practice including Theatre and Storytelling for Cultural Action, Songs and Music for Cultural Action, Dance and Movement for Cultural Action, Celebrations for Change and Development, and Youth Arts for Social Change. At all these forums we invited experienced practitioners to describe and discuss their practice in a critically-reflective manner. In many cases we taped their sessions and used transcripts to encourage the practitioners to write about their work. The forums were well attended and participants expressed strong interest in strengthening a culture of research and enquiry.

After four of these forums I approached the Australia Council for the Arts and asked if they could provide funding support. This led to a three-year partnership between the Centre and the Australia Council. We had an open-ended brief to foster more research and analysis of community cultural development practice, with a particular focus on evaluation. We were invited to undertake commissioned research by other agencies such as VicHealth, a health promotion foundation, and the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, a major community service and advocacy body.

With the forums and projects led by staff at the Centre for Popular Education a body of theory and accounts of practice is growing. We are asking what particular sorts of knowledge are likely to improve informal and popular education practice in youth and community work. In a context where youth and community workers in Australia have not had much exposure to *educational* theorising about their practice, one obvious type of knowledge contribution is to name the educational and learning dimension of youth and community work.

Practitioners value reading reflective and analytical accounts of practice. We make a particular effort to bring academics and practitioners together and we use our forum series to generate this type of knowledge. Another strategy is to create opportunities for experienced practitioners to co-author research reports with staff from the Centre. Sometimes this takes the form of edited transcripts of

interviews being included in the report. A further strategy has been the Bulletin of Good Practice in Popular Education. This journal or magazine provides opportunities for practitioners in Australia to write about their work and thereby contribute to the study of different perspectives on good practice. We invite practitioners to write for the Bulletin and provide them with editorial support.

Broadening the theoretical base of the Centre's work

As the Centre has grown we have become more confident and consciously drawn on a broader range of influences and expertise. Deb Hayes (2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Lingard, Mills and Hayes 2003; Lingard, Hayes, Mills and Christie 2003), for example, is a postmodern critical theorist and her research about emancipatory learning is mostly in schools. Tony Webb is a new research fellow and has 20 years experience in the prison reform, men's health and the environment movement. His theoretical roots lie in the social psychology of Richard Hauser (Webb 2003). Teri Meryln has just completed a doctoral thesis about Australian radical literature and adult education. These newcomers join Brown, McEwen, Chodkiewicz and Waddell. They differ from, but complement, each other. Waddell and Brown are an example of this. Waddell has over 20 years experience of practice in community education and is regarded in the state of New South Wales as an elder among Outreach Community Educators. Newman compares him with Myles Horton. Brown has experience as a union representative, researcher and university lecturer, and was Executive Director of Adult Learning Australia, a national advocacy organization. Both have a longstanding commitment to emancipatory learning and education for social justice.

Bringing the strands together

The way the different elements reflected in my thesis have influenced the work of the Centre for Popular Education can perhaps be best seen in the Centre's

three-day conference - *Education and Social Action* - convened since 2000 on a bi-ennial basis. We have devised these conferences to have both a festival and seminar character. They do have academic papers and keynote lectures. But they also have workshops, some of considerable length, led by activists and practitioners. Some of these workshops encourage dialogue and some concentrate on skills, exchange and development. There is a strong performance dimension, to create a festival-like atmosphere in which action and theory mix. Radical choirs, poets, dancers, acrobats and theatre groups perform in the foyer spaces during the breaks. The conferences have been collaborative endeavours. We have invited partners to devise and co-ordinate particular strands. These partners have included small NGO's such as Action for World Development, government departments such as the NSW TAFE Access and Equity Unit, peak advocacy groups such as the Youth Action and Policy Association of NSW, and other university centres. The conferences have attracted international scholar - activists including Bob Hill from North America engaged in Queer education and advocacy, Astrid von Kotze and Linda Cooper from South Africa with histories of participation in the anti-apartheid struggles, Luc de Keyser who is a social movement theorist from Belgium, and Maria Khan a Filipino activist and adult educator. A sample of keynote speakers lined up by our partners illustrates the broad theoretical base. They have included Lyn Yates and Deb Hayes, postmodern critical theorists; Peter Willis, a phenomenologist; Budd Hall and Lyn Tett, critical-emancipatory theorists; and Bob Boughton and Griff Foley, historical materialists.

The conferences were influenced by my study of the educational dimension of youth and community work inasmuch as they sought to draw on the eclectic traditions and theories of youth, community, adult and popular education, sought to emulate the rich intellectual debates I encountered in the German literature, and acknowledged and examined practical strategies and techniques of the kinds I had seen in Singapore. And as I have tried to do in my thesis, the conferences encouraged the naming of difference as well as commonalities amongst those with an interest in informal and popular education.

Chapter 26

Answering my Research Questions

In the opening chapter I posed four questions and now I want to answer them.

Do youth and community workers practice informal education?

Yes, they do whether they say so or not. The practice I have observed illustrates this, the statements of the workers themselves prove this, the case studies I have investigated and recounted in this thesis provide living evidence of this, and the literature affirms it. The research programs at the Centre for Popular Education at UTS were developed with this in mind and are intended to encourage and promote this aspect of youth and community work.

What makes for successful informal education practice in youth and community work?

This still remains a difficult question to answer. Various definitional frameworks have been developed. See, for example, Siebert (1983), Armbruster (1979) and Marburger (1981) in chapter 13. In various research projects at the Centre for Popular Education we have also developed definitional tools and they are useful for dissecting components of practice. But the question of what makes for successful practice should be considered in the context of the type of change and learning that is valued.

Should we apply the criteria used in Singapore or those proposed in the German literature? Do we require structural or social change as a criterion for success? Or is it sufficient to help people feel more confident as individuals in their capacity to bring about change in the future? In the work of the Centre for Popular

Education we have sought to keep in mind the objective of bringing about social change, but not lose sight of the good practice which encourages an increased sense of capacity at a local level. Successful informal education practice, then, would seek to carry elements of both. At the very least we would want the youth or community worker to be informed of the debates and theory behind their practice and the Centre for Popular Education was set up to help achieve this.

Does the educational practice of youth and community workers serve to control learners?

In Singapore it is undeniable that the purpose of youth and community work is to promote cohesion and harmony as defined by the ruling People's Action Party, and so therefore is a form of control. The workers are the servants of the ruling party. In the German literature much is made of the reformist or revolutionary role of the youth and community worker but there is little evidence of youth and community workers bringing about major social change. There are, however, various accounts of how they have acted as advocates for promoting and enabling an independent, critical and politically active way of life. In Australia, youth and community workers often espouse a reformist or radical role but actually perform a controlling one. Our research in the Centre for Popular Education has attempted to bring these paradoxes and inconsistencies into the open.

Can the educational practice of youth and community workers emancipate learners?

In revolutionary political terms the educational practice of youth and community workers is unlikely to lead to emancipatory change. But in the context of leading to change at a personal and local community level it can. The Ratbags discussed in chapter 7 are a case in point. Informal and popular education can bring about change for whole groups of people. It can influence the values and beliefs people hold. It can lead to people taking action and becoming actively involved in or

opposed to the political structures of the day. It may just be that it was this belief in the revolutionary potential of informal and popular education which convinced the People's Action Party to exercise such control over youth and community work and put it to work for them in the development of the Singaporean state.

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Appendix 1
References of four colleagues who mentored me

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Jane Sampson

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APPENDIX 6

Evaluation framework to define and reflect on the focus and type of community leadership development

HAS IT STRENGTHENED ISSUE BASED ACTIVISM?
... are community action campaigns more vibrant and populous... eg. in Leichardt they recently had over a thousand dog owners protesting in a local park about insufficient dog walking rights ... are they exercising community leadership? yes...

HAS IT STRENGTHENED CIVIC PARTICIPATION ... OR PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY?
are more local people standing for Council elections... are more people standing for election on local management committees... are more people volunteering to run local sporting clubs

HAS IT LED TO POSITIVE PLACE-BASED CHANGE?
.... residents in a street plant tomatoes on their nature strips, they join up with residents in neighbouring streets and bring about the building of street benches... they make a point of engaging those who have previously not been active ...eg. boarding house residents, recently arrived Indonesian migrants

HAS IT STRENGTHENED GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?
... have hidden strengths and assets been identified? Has local knowledge and expertise been better exploited? For example, is it possible that a group of recently arrived migrants who are learning English have knowledge and skills that can be drawn upon to exercise community leadership for Marrickville?

HAS IT SUPPORTED LOCAL AGENCIES TO EXTEND LINKS WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY?
The principal of Wilkins Public School has been seeking ways to extend the links her school has with the community. Can the Marrickville Community Leadership Program claim any credit for extending her school's links with the community?

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING INDICATORS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

INDICATOR	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Community engagement is measured by the degree to which people and groups are investing time and energy in community initiatives.	Passive engagement; local residents are involved in a tokenistic or superficial manner. Their interest is low and demonstrated by brief attention spans and attendance.	Episodic engagement; local residents appear either indifferent or are only occasionally active in project activities but do participate.	Deep engagement; local residents are energetic, enthusiastic, active and volunteering to do more.

ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS WHO EXPERIENCE SOCIAL EXCLUSION

INDICATOR	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
It's easy to do community capacity building work with successful business people, experienced local government officials; people who do already feel they are in charge of their community's future. *It's much harder working with people who feel relatively powerless to influence change*	Socially excluded groups do not participate in community activities. Project activity is perceived to be largely of interest to one or two dominant groups.	A small number of socially excluded groups participate in community activities. Some inclusion of others' cultures by reference to their existence and perhaps some activities based on their interests.	A large number of socially excluded groups participate in community activities. Diverse community groups, including those who have experienced social exclusion, experience a strong sense of their community, identity and pride. Diverse cultures are explicitly valued in the content and process of the community activities.

BONDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

INDICATOR	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
A 'strong' community is measured not only by its material wealth, but by the ability and willingness of its members to pitch in together, and support bottom-up initiatives.	Community groups struggle to recruit volunteers willing to get involved in planning and management of activities. People show little care or concern for others outside their immediate families. They are more interested in receiving than initiating community services (ie. welfare mentality).	Willingness to help out with planning and management of community activities is sporadic. For short periods of time, group memberships are high and people applaud community initiatives.	There is never a shortage of volunteers able to plan and manage community activities. Many people are committed and determined to initiate local solutions to local problems.

COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY AND PRIDE

INDICATOR	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Community and culture may be defined by class, sexuality, gender, disability, occupation, ethnicity, religion and place.	People feel subjugated and alienated. They feel shame and embarrassment about their place, histories and culture.	People are not sure about which places and cultures to identify with. They have ambiguous feelings about their place, history and culture. They profess not to be interested in history or culture.	People feel strong and secure about their place, identity and culture. They are proud of their histories and of their suburb.

BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL

INDICATOR	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
It is one thing to have vibrant community groups and people willing to pitch in. It is another to have exchange and interaction between the various groups. It is possible to have high bonding social capital in various local parts of a suburb. But groups from those different parts may mistrust each other.	The community is deeply fragmented and factionalised. A sense of community is defined less by 'place' and more by ethnicity, language, religion, age, sexuality or interest. Conflict is common between various groups and factions within groups.	There is tolerance and respect for and between the diverse groups in the community. But there is still a widespread feeling of 'us' and 'them' between many groups. There is widespread perception that there is a 'mainstream' community and that there are 'peripheral' communities.	While there are communities defined by interest, culture, religion, work etc. they are united in a shared pride in place. There is significant trust, and high levels of exchange, sharing and co-operation between various groups. Not only is there tolerance and respect for different groups, there is also considerable empathy.

TECHNICAL, INTERPRETIVE and TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE AND LEARNING

INDICATOR	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
TECHNICAL CHANGE AND LEARNING *This refers to the learning of technical skills and knowledge.*	Local people who participated in the project activities miss out on opportunities to gain specific skills.	Local people who participated in the project activities gain some useful knowledge and skills.	Local people who participated in the project activities gain skills and knowledge that enable them to successfully do and get work.
INTERPRETIVE CHANGE AND LEARNING *This refers to gaining knowledge and understanding of other people's views and analyses. This sort of knowledge is often acquired in meetings and workshops and by reading.*	Local residents learn nothing new about other people and gain no new appreciation and empathy for other residents.	Local residents gain insights into the experiences of other people and groups. They gain some new knowledge about local issues, challenges and community action initiatives.	Local residents win deeper and new insights and knowledge of local issues, challenges and community action initiatives. They gain more understanding of the perspectives of other people and groups. They learn

			more tolerance and compassion.
TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE AND LEARNING *This refers to that change when people who previously had low self-efficacy believe in the value of their own knowledge and ability to change their circumstances. It also refers to that transformative change when powerful people are questioned about their domineering and excluding behaviours.*	People seem to be resigned to the way things are, even in the face of things that make them unhappy. They do not question the status quo. They do not question others who show disrespect to them. They do not question inequalities, social exclusion and apathy. They believe they do not have the necessary qualities, skills and knowledge to be 'enterprising.'	People begin to name things that make them unhappy. In particular, they begin to name challenges and issues in their community. They question what they perceive as injustice. They imagine the possibilities of being enterprising and of change for the better in themselves and their communities.	People assert that their knowledge is as valuable as 'expert' knowledge. They question taken-for-granted assumptions about many social issues. Powerful people seek to include previously excluded people in analyses and actions. People see themselves as 'enterprising' and sufficiently powerful to make change.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

INDICATOR	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
This refers to people's willingness and capacity to exercise leadership and develop projects; ie. to research and offer their own analyses of local challenges and issues and then to plan and pursue actions.	There is a tendency to depend on others, especially figures of authority, to not act on challenges and issues.	Individuals and groups are interested in supporting various enterprise initiatives and activities. They actively seek opportunities to make their voice heard and convey their ideas.	Individuals and groups actively support each other in their efforts to improve quality of life in a community. Recognised 'leaders' actively seek to nurture 'emerging' leaders. Significant amounts of time are invested in planning and pursuing community development / action initiatives.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, COLLABORATION AND OWNERSHIP

INDICATOR	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
One important indicator to measure the value of a particular project for community strengthening is community participation. Here an assumption is made that it is not so much the extent of participation that is important, it is the nature of the participation. In particular, have strategies to foster participation enabled collaboration and ownership.	The *cargo cult* – the project concept is imported from outside the region. The *agency* - a group of professionals undertake planning, production and management according to a brief. The *artistic hero* - a group of artists work together on the artistic director's vision.	*Travelling players* - hired professionals work with members of the community to create the project. The *masterclass* - a tireless artistic director builds a group of volunteers into semi-professional practitioners and performers.	The *tapestry* - a group of volunteers co-operate to plan and manage the project production together. The *studio and workshop* - studios and workshops open to all in which individuals motivate themselves to produce their own project activities, with guidance where necessary.