

WELSH ASSOCIATION

Conference 1980
Swansea

REPORT

"Youth in the 80's"

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Mr. Hamblin started by questioning the significance of the title - (are the 80's any different?) and warning that it was necessary to beware of over statement and romanticism and publicly held views of youth ranging from the negative, to seeing youth as our salvation,

Changes have to be envisaged as we move to a post-industrial society, changes equivalent to the arrival of the industrial revolution, with its pains, disillusionment and need for change as a result.

The key elements are therefore work and unemployment. By 1990 it may be that the average working week will be 20 - 25 hours, and this means that our work with youth is even more important. Youth, however, is being held for longer in a marginal position in society. There is a potentially anomic situation, social bonds are weakening. The effect on youth is strong – they will have a sense of not really belonging, of not being able to take up a fully responsible role in adult society.

We may have to abandon the traditional concept of work, but this is related to the concept of identity and will result in a loss of anchorage, The work situation has been relied on to give structure to life. For the less able in particular the "self" is lodged in working life, for males especially work is associated with friendship grouping (miners* heavy industry). We can all see evidence in the devastating effects of middle age redundancy and its resultant loss of friendship.*

The threat is of a growing dissociation of youth. The structural changes seem to be leading to the danger of reinforcing negative attitudes to society - a sort of "them" and "us" view.

It is difficult to predict the future. There is evidence of varying impacts on different areas of youth. Identity is weakened, when identity is necessary to be able to cope with the stresses of change.

Adam Curle offers us two types of identity

" - the id through self awareness

- the id by belonging^d

The latter is being eroded through unemployment. When it is reinforced through peer-group reliance an unhelpful, even dangerous situation can result. and associations?

This has an artificiality as the job creation schemes have.*

There is a need for hard thought about this.

In an age of affluence there were mass movements among adolescents.

There are symbols of identity other than work, dap (?) in "Currents of Unrest" shows that mass movements create heroes and martyrs images and symbols.*

What about images and symbols for the unemployed? Their sense of belonging to a group is devalued. Groups of young people may be becoming more vulnerable. There will be negative response to the unemployment threat. We must be aware of the contagion of mass movement, heightened by the loss of individuality as people become "the unemployed" All this leads to dangerous responses - irresponsible behaviour and the increase of prejudice especially in larger cities - The youth vs Authority situation, disadvantages youth vs other groups; a displacement of aggression, such as has already recently been, seen in Bristol *complicated by versions of territoriality. The signs are there already in the large? cities. Areas become insulated from outside influences and show hostility to outside approaches,*

There is intense interaction based on a negative view of the chance in life. Against this is to be placed the strength of peer group influence. Groups of young people may, feel devalued and separated.

All this is only an introduction to the problem. What is to be done about the search for new forms of identity? young people are very dissatisfied with traditional institutions. What is to happen in an age of contraction of opportunities? We must pose the question* Institutions will perhaps be seen more positively.

Durkheim distinguishes between mechanical and organic solidarity (the primitive' separation of processes and interdependence). Will interdependence continue to exist. A large section of the population is supported by others. If it does not continue to exist we may be at the beginning of a divisive new social structure.

Youth could be seen as

- those with a REAL job (i.e. one that is functionally necessary)
- those with a job* but a palliative job, with consequent elements of inferiority.
- those with no job at all and little prospect of one.

This will call for great adjustment for young people, especially in the last five years of the decade. The need for planning for a future career will become less and less applicable, as a job becomes not inevitable for all. youth will have to be trained to re-define the concept of work.

All groups will not necessarily have the same reaction (see Sheffield study of Fleming and Lavercombe). For example

a) the disadvantaged who have always exhibited limited perceptions* Stress has been endemic in their background* and is likely to be long lived in this type of climate. Perceptual adjustments will have to be made, e.g. in how to use time. They are resistant to long term planning, for the idea is not a relevant one; they think in terms of expediency. Training has either to be work specific or is seen as a waste of time.

b) Those who would have taken apprenticeships and the like. It is not easy for them to overcome the bitterness of having no job. In a respectable artisan background work is seen in terms of the Protestant ethic, so family attitudes make it hard for them to cope. Negative reactions will come from a skilled unemployed father; who is experiencing a sense of an insecure and threatening world. Such a man has experienced a sudden reduction \$& his areas of authority. The child may become the focus of this in a negative way. There are great problems for young people in accepting all this and the structural change.

o) Unemployed graduates.

A degree is no longer a passport to employment. Middle management is not necessary in a silicon chip age. There is here a potential source of danger -or a possibility of constructive use.

Conflict need not be negative. . We must not be manoeuvred into pushing youth into unthinking conformity.

Ruth Benedict gives two models of men.

-Appalonian man; dominated by the Protestant ethic, materialistic, accepting deferred gratification etc.

-Dionysian man; immediate sensation +less materialistic

It would be too easy to say Dionysian man is the move appropriate to the future. We need to look at the forces pushing people into dependence, few senses of initiative are necessary. An erosion, of the level of aspiration is to be foreseen, What do young people say themselves? Mr Hamblin gave examples from his recent research involving 26Q responses of fifth year pupils in 9. comprehensive schools, on unemployment. The research was an unstructured one carried out by experienced operators in a neutral way.

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Over.

Summary of responses given (responses codified-,, questionnaire was not multiple choice.

Question What advice would you give to a young unemployed person?

Replies

Continue looking-for a job	24%
Seek further qualification	23%
Take voluntary social work	18%
Take up a hobby or sport	35%

Question What advice would you give as to the legitimacy of school, work

And education.

Stay on for an extra qualification	46%
Defending leaving school	40%
No jobs available.	8%

Wait for exam results before deciding

5%

Question Is school work more or less -important as jobs become scarce

More	important	94%	
Less	important	2%	
No reply	4%		4

Question Why is school work more important?

Jobs are scarce	18%
More chance of a job	18%
Good results help	13%
Willingness to work is shown	8%
Educated person is more worthwhile as a worker	5%

Question How do young people see older peoples views of the young jobless?

They are lazy	46%
They make nd effort	31%
They are scroungers	10%
They are no good	7%

Question What reasons are there for older people .viewing young jobless in these ways?

Older people don't understand	29%
This is the view of the younger generation	27%
They like to put you down or pull you down	27%
Reflect the views of their own youth'	15%

There are other changes in young people. . Youth have been over valued latterly. In the 60' s arid 70 s the middle aged were imitating adolescents. Adolescents are less important now as a market, for example there is less advertising directed at youth. They will become numerically less important as the decade goes on. After 2000 a relatively small population of young able will be keeping a large population of geriatrics.

So because of demographic trends the significance of "youth" in society* generally will change. There are changes in sex typed role behaviours. It may be that the developments of joint roles in marriage will be halted. The perception of sobs is sex linked. There is not true equality* youth club activities are directed at boys. 'How far will husbands move to follow a wife's career. May we go back to more restrictive views? In the past there has been an association of masculinity with the job, especially in Wales, which has created conflicts. 15 - 16 year olds attitudes are still very traditional. For example from the research views of young people

Question Should the mother go out to work?

/to 80% Yee 20%

Questions Reasons?

Mother is the natural child rearer	48%
Men get higher wages	20%
Men are physically stronger	17%
Woman's place is in' the home	15%
Father's place is to support the family	5%

Is this a reversal of trends for economic

Question If boy and girl of equal qualifications apply for a job, which should get it?

Boy	52%
Girl	11%
Either	37%

Question Reasons?

Men- are the breadwinners	29%
Men are more reliable	28%
Men are better	23%
Girls leave to get married	16%
Men are stronger	7%

The impact of unemployment had highlighted themes which have been basic.

Do we have to produce courses abdicating our standards? Many courses have been survival kit ones. Now we have real tasks to deal with threat. Maybe entrepreneurial skills are necessary? (such self-employed tasks as gardening, cleaning ...)

A positive response is needed to raise standards. How about making and selling things? The initiative and the talent are there. Such ideas can build self-respect. The skills of a team approach are needed, the young unemployed have a negative life style. They indulge in simple activities to pass the time - such as scrounging and borrowing! They become passive. Delinquency tends to be only of an opportunist nature. Then there is negative approach to the opportunity of a job.

Will the 80's see new rigidities among youth, new types of conformity? Will there be styles of thinking dominated by resentment? Such young people are conditioned into unthinking conformity to peer groups. They have low awareness and high need of belonging. Their reactions are shaped by what they belong to and so alienated groups will affect society.

Tensions will turn to grievances, there will be heroes and martyrs among youth. By the end of the 80's we will be in a state of negative but uneasy truce.

Mr. Hamblin's talk was followed by questions, some of the replies to which included

Question on future research

It was hoped to follow up the research, given time. The results were not what teachers would have expected. Things like the black economy should be looked at. The impact on feelings of potency (not sexual), there is a need to monitor to discern trends, to look at changes of feelings of being in control. Values of youth are very similar to those of parents. What are the costs and consequences if we intervene?

Question on historical influence

There are special disorientations in areas where unemployment is a recent phenomenon. The unemployed 17/18 year old with A levels reacts strongly, as he has always assumed that there would a job available.

We need to look at how people cope – it may be comparable to coping with bereavement.

Question on drink problems

We need to educate young people to use alcohol responsibly. Denial of drink would boomerang. There are associations with masculinity and social functions. We should teach hard physiological facts about the ability of the body to cope with drink and watch for those susceptible to becoming over reliant.

Small town ethics may help, when young people are likely to be known, We should exercise pressure especially on the supermarket situation and there should be structural changes in the pub ethos.

The evidence on young people imitating elders seems inconclusive. The peer group exerts pressure. We need controls to deal positively with the situation.

Question on marginality

There is evidence that the rate of achieving physical maturity has been stable since about 1967/88. The marginal position of youth is related to perceptions - the disadvantaged often see things differently.

Full involvement in society implies having a job, being able to make independent decisions, and a degree of financial independence. One possible solution to unemployment is the delay of entry to adulthood (of U.S. A.) young people do not feel involved.

Groups of young people with unemployment as the common denominator have little relation to society as it is fit present. They are vulnerable to fashion, mass Movements, prejudice. Attempts to involve them must continue but also look at the reduction of marginality. We must talk to young employed about these things.

Question on forms unrest may take

Possibly attacks on minority groups.

Displaced aggression gives a tendency to give negative characteristics to those worse off to justify aggression. People with low self respect are rash, awkward in initiating relationships and this makes them vulnerable to prejudice. The closed mind sees things in black and white, refuses to admit other evidence or refers decisions to authority. But who will be the source of authority.

Question on career education

40-50% never thought in terms of a career structure. We need a programme to equip young people to make social and psychological adjustments to unemployment Also to cope with the tensions of work - initiation rituals, working with "skivers", coping with mistakes - norms of doing as little as possible for as much as possible, skills of job search ~ preparing for unemployment without implying it will be permanent, We need to educate teachers and head teachers in the need for such skills.

M.J.Howells

Any errors are my responsibility not Mr. Hamblin's

