

Commonwealth Youth Programme  
Diploma in Youth Development Work

## Module 2

# Young People and Society

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## The Commonwealth Youth Programme's Mission

CYP works to engage and empower young people (aged 15–29) to enhance their contribution to development. We do this in partnership with young people, governments and other key stakeholders.

Our mission is grounded within a rights-based approach, guided by the realities facing young people in the Commonwealth, and anchored in the belief that young people are:

- a force for peace, democracy, equality and good governance,
- a catalyst for global consensus building, and
- an essential resource for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

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# Module contents

Module overview.....	7
Unit 1: Ways of seeing young people .....	19
Unit 2: Adolescence .....	59
Unit 3: Young people and the family .....	97
Unit 4: Young people and social issues.....	137
Summary .....	171
Assignments.....	181
Readings .....	183



# Module overview

Introduction .....	9
Module learning outcomes .....	10
About this module.....	11
Assessment .....	12
Learning tips .....	15
Studying at a distance .....	17
If you need help .....	18





## Introduction

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Welcome to Module 2 *Young People and Society*. This module is designed to help you understand some of the theoretical background of youth development work, so that you can relate what you are doing to the social context in which you are working.

You will already be aware that young people have roles and responsibilities. These responsibilities are different in each society, yet particular aspects are common across most societies.

In the module you will examine:

- how young people are seen in various societies, and from different sociological perspectives
- the range of definitions of 'youth', 'adolescence' and 'family'
- the problems and issues facing young people and the societies in which they live.

Understanding the social situations of young people is crucial. This module aims to illuminate the situation of young people in your society by exploring what researchers and theorists have said about youth in different social contexts, and relating that to general theories about society.

Your role as a youth development worker is to help to improve conditions for young people. In doing this, you will be helping to develop the society in which they live.

## Module learning outcomes

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Learning outcomes are statements that tell you what knowledge and skills you will have when you have worked successfully through a module.

### Knowledge

When you have worked through this module, you should be able to:

- describe the experience of growing up as a young woman or as a young man, and the different perceptions held by young people and adults
- outline and give a critique of different theories of adolescence
- analyse the position of young people in your society
- discuss the influence of family, peers and community on individuals and groups
- discuss the range of social contexts as they relate to young people in your region
- compare the ways in which different social and cultural traditions treat young people.

### Skills

When you have worked through this module, you should also be able to:

- work in a way that is sensitive to social and cultural traditions
- identify situations in which you need to adapt your practice to take account of different social and cultural traditions
- communicate your knowledge to young people and adults in a way that is accessible to them.

## About this module

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Module 2 *Young People and Society* is divided into four units.

### **Unit 1: Ways of seeing young people**

This unit will help you to define key concepts and to examine three approaches to the study of society. You will also look at the ways in which different cultures perceive young people.

### **Unit 2: Adolescence**

In this unit, you will look at the concept of adolescence and how it varies in different cultures.

### **Unit 3: Young people and the family**

In this unit, you will examine types of families and the roles and responsibilities of family members, including young people. We will also apply the three sociological theories that we looked at in Unit 1 to families.

### **Unit 4: Young people and social issues**

In this unit, you will look at some of the ways in which a society deals with its young people. You will also analyse important issues that are affecting today's youth.

This table shows which units cover the different module learning outcomes.

Module 2 Learning outcomes		1	2	3	4
<b>Knowledge</b>					
1	Describe the experience of growing up as a young woman or as a young man, and the different perceptions held by young people and adults.	x	x	x	x
2	Outline and give a critique of different theories of adolescence.		x		
3	Analyse the position of young people in your society.	x	x	x	x
4	Discuss the influence of family, peers and community on individuals and groups.			x	x
5	Discuss the range of social contexts as they relate to young people in your region.		x	x	
6	Compare the ways in which different social and cultural traditions treat young people.	x			x
<b>Skills</b>					
1	Work in a way that is sensitive to social and cultural traditions.	x	x	x	x
2	Identify situations in which you need to adapt your practice to take account of different social and cultural traditions.	x	x	x	x
3	Communicate your knowledge to young people and adults in a way that is accessible to them.			x	x

## Assessment

Each module is divided into a number of units. Each unit addresses some of the learning outcomes. You will be asked to complete various tasks so that you can demonstrate your competence in achieving the learning outcomes. The study guide will help you to succeed in your final assessment tasks.

## Methods

Your work in this module will be assessed in the following three ways:

- 1 A written report of 2000–2,500 words (worth 50 per cent of the final mark).
- 2 A review of the learning journal you keep (worth 20 per cent of the final mark).
- 3 A written examination set by the institution in which you are enrolled for this Diploma programme (worth 30 per cent of the final mark). As an alternative to the examination, you may be given the opportunity to complete a second written report of 1,000 words.

You will also do activities throughout this module that will help you prepare for your major assignment, as well as for the final examination. You will find full details of the assignment at the end of the module.

Note: We recommend that you discuss the study and assessment requirements with your tutor before you begin work on the module. You may want to discuss such topics as:

- the learning activities you will undertake on your own
- the learning activities you will undertake as part of a group
- whether it is practical for you to do all of the activities
- the evidence you will produce to prove that you have met the learning outcomes – for example, learning journal entries, or activities that prepare for the final assignment
- how to relate the assignment topics to your own context
- when to submit assignments and when you will get feedback.

## Learning journal

Educational research has shown that keeping a learning journal is a valuable strategy to help your learning development. It makes use of the important faculty of reflecting on your learning, which supports you in developing a critical understanding of it. The journal is where you will record your thoughts and feelings as you are learning and where you will write your responses to the study guide activities. The journal is worth 20 per cent of the final assessment. Your responses to the self-help questions can also be recorded here if you wish, though you may use a separate note book if that seems more useful.

Again, we recommend you discuss the learning journal requirements with your tutor before you begin, including how your learning journal will be assessed.

## Self-test

Take a few minutes to try this self-test. If you think you already have some of the knowledge or skills covered by this module and answer 'Yes' to most of these questions, you may be able to apply for credits from your learning institution. Talk to your tutor about this.

**Note:** This is not the full challenge test to be held by your learning institution for 'Recognition of Prior Learning'.

Put a tick in the appropriate box in answer to the following questions:

	Yes	No	More or less
Can you describe the experience of growing up as a young person?			
Can you compare the perceptions of a young person and an adult?			
Can you discuss different theories of adolescence?			
Can you discuss the position of young people in society?			
Can you describe the influence of family, peers and community on individuals and groups?			
Can you describe the range of social contexts in your region?			
Can you compare the ways in which different social and cultural traditions treat young people?			
Do you work in a way that is sensitive to social and cultural traditions?			
Do you recognise situations where you need to adapt your practice to take account of different social and cultural traditions?			
Can you communicate knowledge to young people and adults in a way that is accessible to them?			

## Learning tips

You may not have studied by distance education before. If so, here are some guidelines to help you.

### How long will it take?

It will probably take you a minimum of 70 hours to work through the study guide for this module. The time should be spent doing the activities and self-help questions, and completing the assessment tasks and studying the readings.

Note that units are not all the same length, so make sure that you plan and pace your work to give yourself time to complete all of them.

### About the study guide

This study guide gives you a unit-by-unit guide to the module you are studying. Each unit includes information, case studies, activities, self-help questions and readings for you to complete. These are all designed to help you achieve the learning outcomes that are stated at the beginning of the module.

### Activities, self-help questions and case studies

The activities, self-help questions and case studies are part of a planned distance education programme. They help you make your learning more active and effective, as you process and apply what you read. They will help you to engage with ideas and check your own understanding. It is vital that you take the time to complete them in the order that they occur in the study guide. Make sure that you write full answers to the activities, or take notes of any discussions.

We recommend that you write your answers in your learning journal and keep it with your study materials as a record of your work. You can refer to it whenever you need to remind yourself of what you have done. The activities may be reflective exercises designed to get you thinking about aspects of the subject matter, or they may be practical tasks to undertake on your own or with fellow students. Answers are not given for the activities. A time is suggested for each activity (for example, 'about 20 minutes'). This is just a guide. It does not include the time you will need to spend on any discussions or research involved.

The self-help questions are usually more specific and require a brief written response. The answers are given at the end of each unit. If you wish, you may also record your answers to the self-help questions in your learning journal, or you may use a separate notebook.

The case studies give examples, often drawn from real life, to apply the concepts in the study guide. Often the case studies are used as the basis for an activity or self-help question.

## Readings

There is a section of Readings at the end of the study guide. These provide additional information or other viewpoints, and relate to topics in the units. You are expected to read them.

There is a list of references at the end of each unit. This gives details about books that are referred to in the unit. It may give you ideas for further reading. You are not expected to read all the books on this list.

**Please note:** In a few cases full details of publications referred to in the module have not been provided, as we have been unable to confirm the details with the original authors.

There is a list of Further Reading at the end of each module. This includes books and articles referred to in the module and are suggestions for those who wish to explore topics further. You are encouraged to read as widely as possible during and after the course, but you are not expected to read all the books on this list.

Although there is no set requirement, you should aim to do some follow-up reading to get alternative viewpoints and approaches. We suggest you discuss this with your tutor. What is available to you in libraries? Are there other books of particular interest to you or your region? Can you use alternative resources, such as newspapers and the internet?

## Unit summary

At the end of each unit there is a list of the main points. Use it to help you review your learning. Go back if you think you have not covered something properly.



## Icons

In the margins of the *Study Guide*, you will find these icons that tell you what to do:



### Self-help question

Answer the questions. Suggested answers are provided at the end of each unit.



### Activity

Complete the activity. Activities are often used to encourage reflective learning and may involve a practical task. Answers are not provided.



### Reading

Read as suggested.



### Case study

Read these examples and complete any related self-help question or activity.

## Studying at a distance

There are many advantages to studying by distance education – a full set of learning materials is provided, and you can study close to home in your own community. You can also plan some of your study time to fit in with other commitments, such as work or family.

However, there are also challenges. Learning away from your learning institution requires discipline and motivation. Here are some tips for studying at a distance.

- 1 **Plan** – Give priority to study sessions with your tutor and make sure you allow enough travel time to your meeting place. Make a study schedule and try to stick to it. Set specific days and times each week for study and keep them free of other activities. Make a note of the dates that your assessment pieces are due and plan for extra study time around those dates.
- 2 **Manage your time** – Set aside a reasonable amount of time each week for your study programme – but don't be too ambitious or you won't be able to keep up the pace. Work in productive blocks of time and include regular rests.

- 3 **Be organised** – Have your study materials organised in one place and keep your notes clearly labelled and sorted. Work through the topics in your study guide systematically and seek help for difficulties straight away. Never leave problems until later.
- 4 **Find a good place to study** – Most people need order and quiet to study effectively, so try to find a suitable place to do your work – preferably somewhere where you can leave your study materials set out ready until next time.
- 5 **Ask for help if you need it** – This is the most vital part of studying at a distance. No matter what the difficulty is, seek help from your tutor or fellow students straight away.
- 6 **Don't give up** – If you miss deadlines for assessment pieces, speak to your tutor – together you can work out what to do. Talking to other students can also make a difference to your study progress. Seeking help when you need it is a key way of making sure you complete your studies – so don't give up!

## If you need help

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If you have any difficulties with your studies, contact your local learning centre or your tutor, who will be able to help you.

**Note:** You will find more detailed information about learner support from your learning institution.

*We wish you all the best with your studies.*

# Unit 1: Ways of seeing young people

Unit introduction .....	21
Unit learning outcomes .....	21
The concepts of society and culture .....	22
Theoretical approaches to society .....	33
Defining youth .....	44
The nature of youth work .....	51
Unit summary .....	54
Answers to self-help questions .....	55
References .....	57



## Unit introduction

Welcome to Unit 1 *Ways of seeing young people*. To work with young people in a development programme, you need more than a commonsense understanding of them. It's important to have some insight into how they come to be what they are. A crucial part of this is to understand how they fit into their society, community and family.

The way young people are perceived, and how the term 'youth' is defined, are not the same in all societies and cultures. Therefore, to grasp fully what is meant by 'youth', we have to examine what is meant by 'society' and 'culture' and how they are interrelated.

Social theorists have developed three basic ways of explaining how societies form in the ways that they do and why people behave as they do. Each of these three approaches can contribute to our understanding of how to work with young people. The three approaches – functionalism, conflict theory and the interactionist approach – are explored in this unit.

Following that, we will discuss the definitions of youth as an age category, as a transitional stage and as a social construct.

Finally, we consider the nature of youth work and how your understanding of young people's experiences and their place in society influences the way you work with them.

When you finish this unit you will have a working knowledge of how young people are perceived by themselves and by others.

## Unit learning outcomes

When you have worked through this unit, you should be able to:

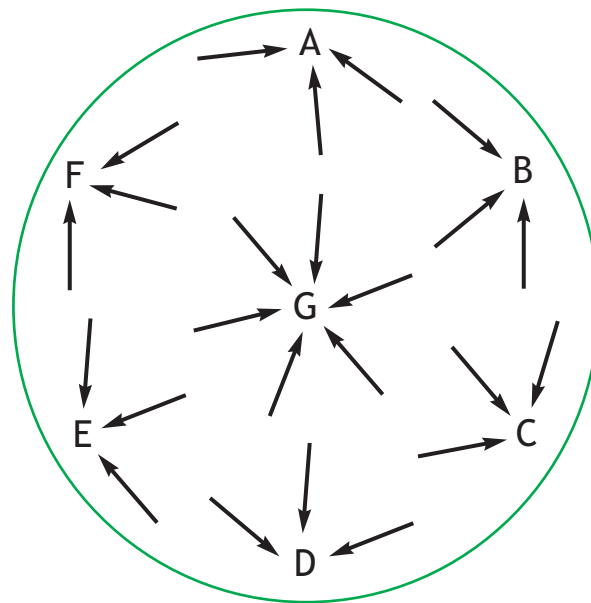
- define the key concepts of society and culture
- outline three theoretical approaches to the study of society
- compare different ways of defining youth
- discuss different perceptions of young people in different cultures
- apply these ideas to different examples and your own view of your role as a youth development worker.

## The concepts of society and culture

Young people do not exist in isolation; they are a part of their society and culture. In fact, young people are defined by the society and culture of which they are a part. Before we can understand fully what the term 'youth' means, we need to look first at the concepts of society and culture.

### Society

Human beings are social beings. That is, we live together in societies and communities. We talk to each other; we laugh and cry together; we love and sometimes hate each other. What I do, and what you do, affects others. We interact with each other and so develop social relationships. By interacting with others, we change ourselves and change them at the same time.



Relationships among individuals in a society

In the diagram above, A, B, C, D, E, F and G represent people living in a social group. The arrows show that they have relationships with each other. 'A' relates to 'B' and 'B' relates to 'A', and so on. The arrows also show that they affect and influence each other.

Human beings are not the only creatures that live in societies. There are other social creatures, such as ants, termites, bees, monkeys and apes (to name only a few). Social creatures are highly organised. Each individual (or group of individuals) has specific tasks to perform. This idea is emphasised by the ecosystem concept that you will meet in Module 13 *Sustainable Development and Environmental Issues*.

Picture some ants going to or from their nest, carrying food. If you get the chance, spend a few minutes watching some real ants, or bees in a hive or a colony of termites. Perhaps you could talk to someone who has studied similar creatures.

You will probably notice at least three things about the ants.

1. As social creatures, ants communicate with each other as they pass each other.
2. If an ant is trying to carry a piece of food that is too large, it enlists the help of others, or others come to its aid.
3. If an ant is injured, the others don't just leave it there, they carry it back to the nest.

So, what can we learn from the ants? Observations reveal that creatures living collectively need to develop complex social relationships and communication systems in order to be able to live together successfully. It is known that in ant colonies, groups of ants have different, specialised tasks to perform. They are able to transmit crucial information (about food, danger and changed conditions) rapidly, through a complex, shared signalling system. Some of the ants form specialised groups of workers who go out to look for food. Others make up the various specialised groups of 'warriors' who guard the nest. The task of the Queen Ant is to lay huge numbers of eggs, and her attendants protect and nurture the eggs and the Queen. All of this information is built into the ants' collective communication system.

What all this makes clear is that the condition of living in social groups means that, though individual members may experience their worlds individually, they must interact socially.

All creatures that live in societies must have certain basic processes in common. The members of the society, whether they are human beings, ants or monkeys, must communicate and relate to each other. They must also be protected from harm or danger. One source of danger is from changes in their environment, such as wind, rain, snow and heat. But harm can also come from predators – animals that prey on other animals. Human beings build shelters to protect themselves. They also select some people to lead and guide them, others to protect them physically, others to develop specialist knowledge that will protect them against the dangers of disease and environmental change, and so on.

At the base of collective insect societies there appears to be an overwhelming drive and a system to ensure the survival and continuity of the social group. All the sub-systems of their collective behaviour are subordinate to that. In order for the society to continue when members die or are killed, the population balance must be restored in such a way that the social group can survive. It can be argued that this collective drive is there in human groups as well. But the sub-systems of human societies are much more adaptable and complex. For example, we exchange members with other social groups to guarantee long-term prosperity and survival. We even engage in social revolutions, if possible, when it is recognised that the leaders of our system threaten our collective survival. No matter how much we disagree and quarrel, for a society to survive there must be a

significant level of collective action – some general commitment to fulfil the tasks that have to be done. There must be enough consensus about shared common values and objectives to keep us working together, or at least an ability to manage our disagreements.

Obviously, not all the members of a society have the same values and goals and not all are agreed about the essential tasks that have to be done. It is normal enough for individuals and groups to be in conflict with each other. Some conflict is inevitable, and even desirable, in a complex human society.

In many developing societies today, because of the ethos of rapid change, young people find themselves in a situation where there is a continual struggle to reach a minimum level of agreement about what the society should believe in and what goals it should pursue, if it is to survive and prosper. Under the impact of these group processes, young people are having continually to reconstruct their skills and renegotiate their identities. The youth development worker is very important in this process.



### Activity 1.1

(about 10 minutes)

Use your learning journal to write your own definition of what you observe society to be, based on your experience and on what you have just read.

Write short notes about how you see the role of the youth worker.

You will get a chance to add to these first thoughts later.

## Defining culture

The concepts of society and culture are closely related. Sometimes the terms are used almost interchangeably.

Culture can be defined simply as the total way of life of the people living in a society. Culture encompasses all that people know, say and do as members of a particular society. The anthropologist, Sir Edward B. Tylor, gave a comprehensive definition of culture:

“... that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

(Tylor, 1871).

Every society has a culture, a constructed way of life, no matter how simple that culture may be. We are all immersed in the culture or cultures that we share with our social group. The requirements of living in the culture permeate every aspect of our being.



Members of a society usually share a common culture, which they have to learn. They may also belong to subcultures which they acquire within or around the main culture (such as Maasai culture within Kenyan culture). Those subcultures may be very different from the main culture, and may well be in conflict with it. What is more, they may for periods belong, while inside the subculture, to an even smaller subculture with an ethos dramatically different from mainstream culture and even from the subculture. You will be able to analyse how this works later on, with an account in Case study 1.3 of the differences of culture between junior warriors and elders among the Iparakuyo Maasai of Tanzania.

Culture is not inherited. Culture is transmitted from generation to generation and member to member of the social group. Children acquire it by being immersed in it, usually from birth. The prevailing expectations of our culture normally tend to limit our behaviours and values to those of the cultures we live in and identify with.

In Case study 1.1, a teenage Caribbean girl describes a social event in which she took part. As you read, think about her experience, comparing it with what might or might not happen in your own culture.



## Case Study 1.1

### My first dance

'I will never forget the first public dance I attended. I was fifteen years old and there were two reasons why my father allowed me to go to the dance. Firstly, it was being held in the hall of my school and secondly, my big brother was going to be there as well. If the dance had been scheduled for the nightclub at Fort James-by-the-Sea, there was no way my father would have given me permission to go. He said that the atmosphere of a nightclub is too seductive.

I wore a blue dress that my friend Janet had made. I spent the whole day polishing my fingernails, crimping, and curling my hair. But I also remember the anxiety; the fear of being a wallflower. Us girls sat in chairs lining the walls of the hall. The boys milled around, chatting and joking with each other until the music started up. With a rush they all went quickly to the line of girls, asking them to dance. Would I be picked? Would I be left out? I tried to look unconcerned as one girl after another left her seat. The boys held the girls' hands as they led them onto the dance floor. Their bodies pressed lightly on each other as they started to dance to the rhythm of the steel band. But the embrace didn't last long. The steel band was playing a jumpy calypso and soon every boy and girl was twirling and twisting away, doing their own thing.

Thank God, I wasn't left out. Yes! I was among the last to have been asked to dance, but I made it onto the dance floor! Never mind my partner was not the most popular boy in our set. At least I was not

still sitting in my seat like Karen. There she was, trying to look as though she didn't care that almost everyone else was dancing.'



## Activity 1.2

(about 15 minutes)

Based on your reading of Case study 1.1, reflect on the following questions and record your responses in your learning journal.

1. Do teenagers in your culture go to these sorts of dances?
2. Are teenage boys and girls allowed to dance with each other in public? If not, why?
3. Do fathers in your culture decide what types of public activities their teenage daughters and sons can engage in?
4. In your culture, are older brothers given the responsibility of protecting younger sisters, as indicated in the case study? If they are, in what circumstances do they do this?
5. Can you sympathise with the young girl's fears of being rejected or left out of the dance? Do her fears make sense to you?
6. Clearly, dancing is important to the young people in the case study. Why is this?

For some cultures, the practice of young people dancing in public with a member of the opposite sex is not allowed. Even the thought of holding the hand of a member of the opposite sex, unsupervised, may be disturbing. If you find the experience of the young girl in the passage strange, you will realise that cultures differ widely. What is acceptable behaviour in one culture may be totally inappropriate in another. Observing and comparing behaviours in different cultures helps us to understand young people's different experiences of growing up.



## Activity 1.3

(about 10 minutes)

Use your learning journal to write your own definition of culture, based on what you have just read and on what you know from experience.

Again, you will get a chance to add to these first thoughts later on.

## Defining society

You will have your own view of the nature of society and culture.

Now let's refine our definition of society by looking at the concept of society in two ways:

- first at a concrete level
- then at a more abstract, theoretical level.

First, let's look at the concrete level of political economy. At this level society can be viewed as an entity – something that has a distinct and independent existence. We can think of a human society as consisting of a population of individuals who occupy a particular territory, who have some form of shared government and who share some common patterns of behaviour.

For example, in Nigeria, in spite of the existence of at least three major separate cultures, at a general level we can still speak meaningfully of a Nigerian society. The same is true in Pakistan, where there are large cultural divergences between the different states. Jamaican society and English society are much more homogeneous, though there are still considerable regional differences of culture.

Governments usually have a vested interest in emphasising the unity of their societies rather than the rich differences of culture. When you work with young people, however, they may tend to identify themselves more with core elements of their cultural experience rather than with the larger society. Young Kashmiris from Pakistani Kashmir may see themselves first as Kashmiris and Muslims, and secondly as Pakistanis. If so, you may have to engage with them on that basis first, before you tackle the broader, societal issues with them. In the developing world, where the social formations are frequently the complex outcome of tribal relationships and colonial social engineering, the youth worker has to tread extremely carefully.

Let's look more closely at the example of Nigeria again to illustrate this point. The Federal Government of Nigeria is the government of a huge population occupying a vast, internationally recognised territory – Nigeria. But the name of the government tells us that this is really a powerful federation of large states, not a single nation state. The similarities between the federal constitution and the regional constitutions are deceptive and hide wide differences of practice. Nigeria was constructed by colonial powers out of separate, ethnically disparate societies. Several of them throughout history have been hugely influential, with separate complex and vigorous cultures, and involved in serious disputes, sometimes war, with each other.

If we look at the Nigerian society at a global level, we would be referring to a specific population called the Nigerian people, as distinct from other peoples such as the Ghanaians or Kenyans. The members of that population share a common culture: some patterns of interpersonal behaviour, 'hi-life' and *juju* music, plaiting of the hair

in intricate designs and so on. These are the norms of general Nigerian culture. But at the deepest levels of beliefs and values and felt experience, there are considerable differences in religious orientation, family and community expectations and adaptation to the postmodern world, because of the influence of religious, tribal and regional differences. And the youth worker has to take account of that.

Now let us look at a more abstract or theoretical level. At this level we can define society as a 'system of social relationships between individuals and groups'. Individuals and groups in a society interact with one another and develop crucial social relationships. Young people negotiate their identities first at the subjective, interpersonal level.

One of the first social relationships to be established is that between a mother and her child. From the moment children are born, they interact closely with their mothers (or substitute mothers) thereby forming the core experience of their personal relationships, something that normally lasts throughout the lifespan.

But that is not the level of personal identity that they engage with when they find themselves in group situations such as cultural gatherings. Sometimes, such gatherings end in riotous, even violent, behaviour. Family and community elders, knowing a young person at the interpersonal level, may not be able to recognise the youth who has rioted as the person they know. Of course, it's not the same features of the youth's identity that have caused the violence. This has come from a different level of identity: the identity that is negotiated inside the subcultural group that rioted and the situation in which it rioted, not the one that is constructed around family and intimate life.

The following case study gives an account of culturally influenced behaviour. It tells us something about the way culture affects young people's negotiation of their identities. When you have read it, do the activity that follows.



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## Case Study 1.2

### London's Notting Hill Carnival

A recent study by a UK Open University team includes a film of the Notting Hill Carnival in London, run by people who originated in the Caribbean but are now living in London.

The Carnival is world famous, and has been at times 'infamous' because of riots that have sometimes broken out. Over the years there have been many explanations put forward for the rioting, including the claim that 'people are different when they are in large crowds; they are mindless and just go along with the crowd.' The Open University team show clearly that this is a myth, that one of the most infamous Notting Hill riots was brought about by 'insensitive policing', by the failure of the police to 'read' the cultural meaning of

the abnormal behaviour of the Afro-Caribbean youths, which had then broken out into riot.

The origins of the carnival are in Jamaica, where one of the carnival's purposes is to renegotiate, at least for a time, the ordinary community's relationship with authority, and where it is normal to see the police during carnival dancing alongside the community – a clear break from their normal, tough, policing role. The effect and value of this is that it reduces tension in the community.

The youths who rioted in Notting Hill were trying to negotiate something similar, perhaps to make London feel friendlier and more homelike to them. When the police investigated the causes of the riot, and learned the reasons for it, it is to their credit that the following year they softened up considerably, and the carnival was as peaceful and beautiful as it should be. The same abnormal behaviour took place, but the police treated it very tolerantly and empathetically. So important bridges were built in the area between young Afro-Caribbeans and authority, and these have tended to last.



### Activity 1.4

(about 10 minutes, not including the discussion)

Note what the case study suggests about how culture influenced the youths' attitude to the carnival and their sense of identity.

If possible, discuss the Notting Hill example with friends, and consider how it may be relevant to the role of a youth development worker.

Write your notes in your learning journal.

Next we look at the impact on society of economic conditions.

## Society and the economy

'People are as the time is.' This is a slightly adjusted version of a line from Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*. It reflects the fact that society and culture change with the social and economic conditions. Therefore the way that people's identities are constructed also changes.

Take the example of China over recent years. Twenty-five years ago, the public and the social behaviour of most of the people from the People's Republic of China were collectivist. The Cultural Revolution – which aimed to create a fully collectivist, co-operative ethos by reducing the contradictions between town and country, manual and intellectual labour, teachers and taught – had only recently finished. Everyone tended to dress in the same, fairly drab tunic suits, and

millions rode bicycles or walked. Individual identities were played down in favour of collective values.

Today, in China's rapidly developing cities and regions, the opposite is true. The new middle classes negotiate their identities around how much money they earn, or make through entrepreneurial activity, compared with others. They buy huge amounts of consumer goods, and take pride spending a lot of money on a car or jewellery, in boarding their children in famous schools in metropolitan countries, and in setting up businesses and making profits wherever possible around the world. These people are vastly different socially and culturally from their parents. They are developing a new Chinese consciousness: they are engaged in the struggle of all against all, which is the very core of the global free market. Young middle-class people are consequently very like young people in the metropolitan countries: many of whom drink and take drugs and attempt to live free sexual lives when they find themselves in a situation where that is possible, while at the same time struggling to become rich adults.

The reason for the change is that the ruling Chinese Communist Party has changed, because of the earlier failure to lift the country out of its under-developed state by the method of cultural revolution. It has accepted the strategy of setting free the market forces of capitalism and the psychological force of individualism, under a protective state umbrella. Given the size and potential wealth of China, this will rapidly transform the country's capacity to develop. The classical capitalist free market principle is that the rich will produce so much wealth that this will generate prosperity for everybody through new businesses and so on, built on the private investment of the rich. Perhaps when that development has taken place, the Chinese government will seek to revert to collectivist principles of distribution of wealth. Or perhaps those who have become wealthy will persuade the rulers of the country that the new individualist values will always be best for China. Who knows?



Now turn to Reading 1: 'The Global Economy' by Pam Woodall and Reading 2: 'The Threat of Globalization' by Edward S. Herman. These discuss opposing views of the global market and of the capacity of the free market to generate wealth for the mass of a country's population.

Read these articles now and use them to stimulate your own views. For example, compare the views that are expressed with your own experience and knowledge. As the articles were written several years ago, how far do their arguments still hold true?

To explore further the impacts of economics on society and culture, we look at the examples of Britain and Commonwealth countries.

The economic and social theories that dominate Commonwealth countries have also gone through great changes since the Second World War.



In 1945, under the influence of social democratic economists and politicians, certain collectivist ideas came to dominate public thinking in Britain as a result of the failure of free market capitalism in the period before the war. The national health and education systems were set up: health became free at the point of delivery; a system of free secondary education for all was developed, so that all children could stay at school until the age of 15, later 16. In order to guarantee a proper balance between spending and investment, to prevent the horrible results of the downswings of trade in the capitalist marketplace, the economy became more state-managed, sometimes with huge state corporations guaranteeing jobs and investment to millions of people. People constructed their identities around their places in this semi-collective system, and youth work principles were semi-collectivist in nature. These ideas were exported to the Commonwealth.

However, this system increasingly failed to meet its competitive targets as the world changed under the impact of new technology and with the advance of powerful new economic competition as globalisation speeded up. Western industrial societies have consequently become increasingly influenced by the idea that markets are better at allocating and generating resources than governments, and that increase in government authority leads to socialism, totalitarianism and loss of freedom. This idea was exported to the Commonwealth under the aegis of aid, accompanied by the threat of structural adjustment. It has massively affected human values and behaviour in Britain and in parts of the Commonwealth.

Margaret Thatcher (Prime Minister of the UK from 1979 to 1990), once stated: 'There is no such thing as society. Only men and women and families.' This was an attempt to legitimate individualism against collectivism. It undoubtedly reflected massive changes in social behaviour. Some of the consequences can be seen now in the weakening of civil society in some deprived UK inner-city areas. This is expressed powerfully in Noel Clarke's film, *Kidulthood* (released in February 2006). A gifted actor and writer, Clarke grew up in a deprived suburb in London. The film is his attempt to show clearly the degree of violence and promiscuity that some young people are experiencing as they negotiate the new identities they feel they need to take on in order to deal with deprivation and individualism.

These free market ideas argue for minimum government control of economic and social activity: no tariffs or control of trade, no control of wages or work conditions, no preference to local industry or the labour market. If you grow bananas on a small farm in the Windward Islands, you may question the ethics of this, but not if you manage a rich multinational. Interestingly, the USA, the home of free market capitalism, is very careful to protect its agriculture and certain key industries.

You may live in a Commonwealth country where your village, tribe or clan (these are English words for structures that may be a significant part of your culture) still operates on a communal or

collective basis, perhaps with a paternalistic rural elite (as in Bangladesh, for example). If so, you will find this embedded in people's values, assumptions and behaviour. You may be helping people to set up individual small businesses, but you will have to construct your ideas around the paternalist, collectivist attitudes and skills that the young people have.

Even if in the end you ask young people to embrace free market values, it is important to recognise that ideas of market economics are theories constructed by people, not fixed scientific laws (though some people argue that they are). Today, metropolitan countries and international companies are putting more and more pressure on collectively organised societies to become more individualistic. (Marginson, 1993).

This section has illustrated the way economic changes affect society, culture and identity. The next self-help question will help you bring together the main points from the unit so far.



### Self-help question 1.1

(about 5 minutes)

Read the following statements and decide whether they are true or false.

	True	False
1 Human beings are the only social creatures.		
2 People inherit their culture from their parents.		
3 The members of a society share some common patterns of behaviour.		
4 The members of a society must be in agreement all the time if the society is to survive.		
5 Cultures are the same the world over.		
6 People develop many social relationships throughout their lifetimes.		
7 Societies are organised systems of social relationships between individuals and groups.		
8 Economic conditions do not affect people's identity.		

*Compare your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.*



## Theoretical approaches to society

In this section, we will be discussing three approaches to the study of society:

- the functionalist perspective
- the conflict perspective, which includes such variations as Marxism and radical feminism
- the interactionist perspective.

We also look at the concept of social exclusion and the idea of the underclass.

Each perspective is a coherent system of ideas, beliefs and values, by which we can try and understand society. The approaches are sometimes employed uncritically, as an ideology (unquestioned belief system), but that is not the intention here.

If we understand the way a particular perspective explains things, it often gives us some insight into what is happening in society. Then, as we understand the next perspective, it enables us to see other things going on, or to see the same things in a quite different way. As a learner on this programme, you are not expected to take on any of these perspectives and use them as a personal approach. The aim is to help you examine how your society works.

### Functionalist perspective

The functionalist (or structural-functionalist) perspective is one of the oldest sociological theoretical frameworks. Functionalism is based on the work of thinkers such as Emile Durkheim (1858–1917). The major assumption is that a society is like a biological organism. Just as an organism is composed of many parts, each with its own functions, so too a society has many parts, each with its own function.

In a biological organism such as a human being, the heart has a particular function to perform: it pumps blood throughout the body. Similarly, the lungs, the feet, the digestive system: each performs a specific function or functions, to maintain the working of the whole body. According to the functionalist view, society too has various parts, which perform specific but interrelated functions, which help to maintain the social order.

Functionalists consider the parts of a society to be institutions. In this context, institutions are organised patterns of behaviour relating to major areas of life, such as the family, politics, education, religion and the economy. A functionalist would argue, for example, that the main function of the institution of the family is to reproduce and train new members of society. Functionalists make certain other assumptions about the way societies are organised.

They assume that:

- societies are structured with members relating to each other in an orderly manner and acting according to norms or expected patterns of behaviour
- societies tend to be stable and orderly because parts of society are constructed to perform functions that help to maintain it, for example the police. Change may come about, but to the functionalist it has to be gradual if the whole society is to maintain orderliness.

However, not all patterns of behaviour, nor all institutions, function for the good of the society. For example, the established behaviours and institutions relating to the buying, selling and use of illegal drugs are harmful to society. The functionalist describes these as dysfunctional. Functionalists maintain that society has to try to eliminate dysfunctional behaviour patterns. Society will use its various tools to try to restore 'equilibrium' – an evenly balanced order where all the parts of society are in harmony.

You can see immediately how the functionalist view is likely to affect youth workers. As you will see later in this module, the majority of youth policies and practices focus on attitude and behaviour change. In your society, there is likely to be a dominant view about which norms and values young people ought to conform to.

Do you think that part of your role as a youth development worker is to use the youth service to help young people acquire the behaviours of the established order, so that the stability of society can be maintained? Is this the view of young people in your society? Does this view underpin youth policy? If so, then recognise that these views would be described as functionalist.



## Self-help question 1.2

(about 10 minutes)

Fill in the spaces in the following statements, which are based on the functionalist perspective.

A functionalist would say:

- 1 Social systems tend to be relatively stable and persistent. \_\_\_\_\_ is usually gradual.
- 2 Patterns of established behaviour are called \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 The members of a society must have a minimum level of \_\_\_\_\_ about values and norms or the society ceases to exist.
- 4 If a part of society is not performing its function well or is bringing harm to the society, it is said to be \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 When the members of society act according to norms, the society is said to be \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6 When parts of society become disruptive, the society tries to \_\_\_\_\_ the unwanted behaviour patterns.

*Compare your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.*

## Conflict perspective: Marxist and radical feminist dimensions

There are various social conflict theories, ranging from the structural conflict theories of Max Weber, to radical feminism. However, all have their roots in the philosophical writing of Karl Marx (1818–1883).

The conflict perspective is a radical alternative to that of the functionalists:

- Functionalists stress that the basic nature of society is that of organisation, order and stability.
- Conflict theorists stress that social order is only on the surface, that underneath there are deep conflicts of interest among the various social groups, and this suppressed conflict is what leads to social change and development.

## Marxism

According to Marx, economic relationships are the basis of human existence. In order to survive, human beings must produce food and shelter. It is primarily for this reason that we enter into social relations with each other to satisfy our economic needs. Fundamentally, we measure our relationship with one another as social groups, in terms of the differences of wealth that we have got as a result of these relations.

Marx said that the means of production (land, factories, money for investment, raw materials and machines) as well as the social relations of production, form the basis of society. All other aspects of society (its values, ideas, beliefs, politics, law, education and so on) are largely shaped by economic forces and the social relations of production. These other aspects Marx called the 'superstructure'.

Marx further maintained that every society contains basic contradictions, which involve the exploitation of one social group by another. Groups within a society are in constant underlying conflict with each other. For example, in a capitalist society, the capitalists (the owners of the means of producing wealth) have a major interest in maximising their profits in order to manage and develop their businesses. This is in direct conflict with the immediate interests of those who work for them, whose motivation is to secure the best wages they can for their labour. That contradiction spreads out into the struggle for what share each class gets of the best housing, health, education. Although it is not usually visible as a class struggle, the major social classes are always engaged in struggle.

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Let's take two examples of class struggle, from Bolivia and the UK.

Sometimes the working classes win a battle, as when the Bolivian Workers' Party won their first democratic election in 1952. When this party failed to keep the original wealth and power balance in Bolivia, the landowning and business elite used the army to remove them from power.

In the UK, the struggle between the middle classes and working classes used to be quite open and confrontational. For example, when new working-class housing estates were built next to middle-class suburbs, sometimes the middle classes tried to prevent this. In several cases they insisted that walls and fences be erected to prevent working-class people from easily walking past middle-class houses to get home. In African cities too, middle- and upper-class homes are often protected by huge chain-link fences, savage dogs and guards, and are very separate areas from the township areas of poorer people.

In the UK after the Second World War, the semi-collectivist social democratic government, by instituting free secondary education for all, displaced the class struggle from the suburban housing estates to a more silent struggle in the classroom. Here, the curriculum for

working-class pupils was at a much lower level than for middle-class pupils, their teachers were not as qualified, and spending on them was significantly less than on most middle-class pupils. The pupils' performance results reflected this. By the 1970s, the chance of a child from an unskilled manual working-class UK family of getting to university was less than it had been before and just after the First World War.

Whatever version of conflict theory is espoused, conflict theorists disagree strongly with the functionalist position that societies are essentially stable. On the contrary, they argue that societies are in a state of constant underlying struggle, with no real consensus about values and norms, only periods of temporary peace between the conflicting groups who are in competition over resources.

For example, the influence of feminism has forced changes in the law in many countries to make unequal pay for the same work illegal. That was a bitter struggle between men and women in parliaments and in civil society, and the results have been very uneven, but it has theoretically changed the employment position of women permanently. The war against apartheid in South Africa was to some extent a class struggle as well as a racial struggle, and it made possible the very slow raising of the social position and wealth of poor black workers.

## Radical feminism

Radical feminists do not see the basic struggle in society as the struggle between capitalists and workers, but between men and women. They argue that the control of society by men – patriarchy – is the root of all the other social inequalities, oppressions and injustices. There are, of course, several softer versions of this position, from liberal feminism to Marxist feminism. There is certainly evidence world-wide to support this position. It has been estimated that women do 65 per cent of the world's work, and own only 10 per cent of the world's wealth.

No matter what Commonwealth country you come from, you may recognise similar patterns in your society, of struggle between social classes and between men and women. If you work for a multinational company, you are likely to be part of a trade union or professional association in order to protect your conditions of employment, or even to prevent the firm going to another country where conditions are better, because of management's need to maximise profits. And you will almost certainly be part of a growing struggle concerning the relative position between men and women.

The ideas and actions of groups within society can contribute to change. Various groups have different goals, and individuals and groups are always introducing new ideas, and new ways of doing things that impinge on the old ways. There are also individual people

and groups who do not conform to the accepted patterns of behaviour. Conflict theorists say that a lack of general agreement is always present in every social system.

In addition, conflict theorists emphasise that coercion (the use of force based on power) is found in all societies. They argue that in every society some people or groups have more power than others. Their power is mainly derived from their control of economic resources. These groups usually constitute a minority of the population. They use their power to persuade others to conform to their ideas, beliefs and values. Thus, a minority of the 'haves' control, oppress and coerce the 'have-nots'. This can be done in a civilised way, but sometimes is not. This has been very evident in the power struggles in Latin America and Central America, for example in Chile and Nicaragua, where the elites have been supported by their own armies.

A person's class position or gender will largely influence their behaviour, their ideas, their values, and indeed their whole outlook on life.

We can summarise the assumptions of conflict theory as:

- conflict and change are inevitable in society
- individuals and groups struggle over scarce economic resources in society
- there is an underlying lack of consensus about values and norms
- power is unevenly distributed in society. It is generally in the hands of a minority who control the economic resources.

Think about how this perspective would affect youth workers and their view of their role. For example, do you think part of your role is to help young people to struggle against dominant interests or to gain a larger economic share? Do these views underpin youth policies? If so, then recognise that these views represent a conflict perspective.



### Self-help question 1.3

(about 5 minutes)

Tick whether the following statements are true or false, according to conflict theories.

	True	False
1 Society is stable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Change is normal in societies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Everyone in society has equal access to power.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 The members of a society share a common value system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Various groups in society have conflicting interests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Compare your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.*

## Interactionist perspective

What functionalists and conflict theorists have in common is that they both look at society as a whole. They study society in terms of the large structures and forces that shape it. However, this macro (broad) view of society is criticised as inadequate by some of those who call themselves social interactionists.

Interactionists attempt to arrive at an understanding of how society works and how it develops the larger structures, by examining the processes by which small groups of people interact with each other. They examine the way people use symbol systems (such as those we find in language) to communicate and to build up patterns of behaviour that turn into social roles and eventually into the large social structures. Interactionists express strong disapproval about the fact that small groups of individuals, who are really the actors who construct society, have been left out of the picture by the functionalists and conflict theorists. This model of society is particularly relevant to youth work.

A basic assumption of the interactionist viewpoint is that social actors like you and I attach symbolic meaning and significance to our actions and our language. Thus, in order to understand social action, we must be able to interpret the symbolic meanings that individuals give to their activities. To interactionists, meaning depends partly on the *context* of the interaction.

Let's take the following scenario as an illustration of this. Picture a large, healthy-looking cow standing in a pasture. In different societies or cultures (different contexts) the picture of a cow may evoke various



reactions. The cow may symbolise different things to different people. To an American tourist, the picture of the cow may evoke reactions about the possibility of a high quality meal: a nice, juicy steak they can afford to buy. To a Hindu, the picture of the cow may evoke strong feelings of reverence, as the cow is a sacred being to Hindus. To a subsistence farmer in the Caribbean, the cow symbolises hope and survival for the family.

For these three people, the cow means something different, and they may act very differently. For example, feeding huge amounts of good vegetable feedstuffs to the cow in order to turn it into steak meals lasting a few days, when it could sustain a family for many years with its milk and manure for crops, would either horrify subsistence farmers or cause them to accord high status to someone who can afford to behave like this.

Interactionists maintain that, within a particular society or culture, the members always share a common set of symbols so that they can communicate the same meanings to each other. Language embodies these sets of shared symbols. So do the popular icons of our culture, such as the quality of the motor car we drive, the media celebrities our journalists celebrate, the houses we live in. These have great meaning for us and considerable cultural power.

Through our agreement in a cultural form of life, we can then use our ordinary language as a system of symbols that allow us to share our understanding of the meanings we appear to have given to these symbols. However, when we examine these symbols carefully, we soon realise that they often influence us to accept the social structure as the elite have formulated it. For example, some people travel to foreign countries on aeroplanes and this may give their family superior status, but this behaviour ignores the fact that every time we fly we help to pollute the environment (which has consequences for everyone, particularly for the poor). We need to be aware that language and icons may be crucial to elites aiming to maintain their power invisibly through social interaction.

It is through interaction with others that we develop social awareness and build a concept of ourselves. Our self-concept is largely determined by how we think others see us. This is conveyed in the language people use about us. It can also be conveyed through the symbolic tests we are set, for example intelligence tests. Indeed this is the theoretical underpinning of what is called 'labelling' theory in education, or the 'self-fulfilling prophecy', where if someone is strongly aware of how they are viewed, they will act in ways that support that view.

How does the social interactionist perspective affect youth workers and their view of their role? Take the example of 'labelling theory'. If a youth or community worker keeps telling a young person that they are nothing but a troublemaker, then that young person will tend to become the troublemaker they have been labelled. Another example is when schools label pupils as unintelligent, based on their failure to



learn something. This will usually have a depressing effect on pupils' willingness to learn and on their self-confidence, even though the failure is the fault of the teaching system, not of the pupil.

It is for this reason that we stress the need for youth development workers to try to help young people build positive images of themselves as far as possible through the way we talk with them, and encourage them to talk themselves.



### Self-help question 1.4

(about 10 minutes)

Fill in the spaces in the following statements, based on the interactionist perspective.

- 1 Explanations of social life are to be found at the \_\_\_\_\_ level.
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ is the basis of communication between individuals and groups.
- 3 The meanings people give to social action vary with the \_\_\_\_\_ in which the action takes place.
- 4 Interactionists tend to focus on \_\_\_\_\_ groups rather than society as a whole.
- 5 Through \_\_\_\_\_ with others, we develop our self-concept.

*Compare your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.*

## Social exclusion

Social exclusion has been defined as being 'a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. It can also have a wider meaning which encompasses the exclusion of people from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of society.' (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2007.)

The concept can be interpreted in a variety of ways, reflecting different social approaches and perspectives. Here we consider it in relation to structural adjustment policies.

Structural adjustment is a process though it is often assumed to be just an economic policy. It is becoming an increasingly necessary response to the requirements of market economics. This means that governments can no longer afford to use public money to create jobs or boost education enough to lift generations of poor families out of poverty. Instead, everything is becoming funded by what the market

in human labour requires. Where it requires only low skills or creates generational unemployment, then funding on education and the community falls. With the growth and acceleration of the global market, the effect on schools and communities has become severe. Large pockets of unemployed or semi-employed people form who are unable to keep up their educational and skill development under the new regimen. This means that they cannot compete for jobs in the new industries. In some communities, even in metropolitan countries, there are now many families where several generations have never worked and have to exist on benefits and on what they can make in the 'grey economy'. These communities or individuals may be described as socially excluded.

Problems for young American people in transition from school to work were described by free market theorists of the radical right, such as Charles Murray. He argued these problems were the result of the emergence of a deviant, welfare-dependent and dangerous underclass. Murray's work in the USA identified particular groups (usually African and Hispanic Americans) who, he claimed, espoused values outside of, and in conflict with, mainstream society. According to Murray, they didn't want to join mainstream society, didn't want to work and intended to live off welfare benefits all their lives.

Extending his work to the UK in the 1980s and 1990s, Murray focused on areas of generational unemployment and economic depression, such as the north east of England. He argued that young people in places in the north east constituted an underclass, where crime, unemployment and single motherhood were typical. He argued that these people were poor through their own actions and values and that their anti-social and anti-work cultures threatened the moral and social health of society. (MacDonald, 1997 and 1998).

This argument was favourably received by right-wing governments (such as those headed by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s) which were eager to cut welfare benefits and other programmes which might not have any immediate economic benefit.

The essential point of Murray's argument is that young people's attitudes and values had led to them being poor and unemployed. Many left-wing commentators agreed that many young people were excluded from mainstream society, but argued that this was a result of social and economic policy and that the values and behaviour of the 'underclass' were a survival strategy for poor people. Howard Williamson, a British youth worker, coined the term 'status zero' for young people aged 16 to 27 who were not in education, training or employment. While their position seemed hopeless, he argued that most subscribed to mainstream society's goals (for example, they wanted jobs, and they wanted to own houses and support families by their efforts). He wrote:

"The 'underclass' is a convenient ideological tool for either abandoning any commitment to the poor and disadvantaged, or cultivating popular support for more coercive measures. The

irony, in our view, is that either of these measures is in fact likely to create and solidify an underclass. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.”

(Williamson, 1995)

The underclass debate is largely conducted in urban industrialised societies. It is an example of labelling. (Another example is the frequent use of the term ‘hoodies’ in the UK media to lump together young people (mainly young men) who wear hooded sweatshirts as a threatening, possibly criminal subgroup.) There are groups of young people who are excluded from mainstream society in other countries, for example the ‘rascals’ (criminal gangs) in Papua New Guinea.



Turn now to the extract in Reading 3: ‘Structural adjustment and education’, by Lynn Ilon. As you read, think about whether or not you can recognise the impact of structural adjustment and other economic processes on your own society and community. If possible, discuss these questions with colleagues. Then do Activity 1.5.



### Activity 1.5

(about 15 minutes, not including the discussion)

Drawing on Reading 3 and your own observations, answer the following questions. Note your responses in your learning journal.

- 1 Are there groups of young people in your community who are excluded from the mainstream?
- 2 How are they described?
- 3 What are their values and actions?
- 4 Do you think that they have brought about their own exclusion, or is it a result of social and economic policies?
- 5 If you see no such excluded group, are there dangers of some young people being excluded in future?

How you answer these questions will depend on your own context and experiences. If you have the time, discuss your thoughts with others - co-workers, family, friends, tutors or supervisors. Consider how the concept of social exclusion and labelling of youth as an underclass affect youth workers and their view of their role.

In this section we have looked at theoretical approaches to the study of society and how these may affect youth development work. Next, we go on to look at different ways of perceiving young people.

## Defining youth

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In this section of the unit, we analyse three ways of looking at the concept of young people.

We shall be looking at youth as:

- an age category;
- a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood (including here a discussion of some gender issues)
- a social construct.

### An age category

Youth as an age category is the most conventional, popular and common-sense way in which youth has been defined.

Those who think about youth principally in terms of an age category argue that this defines youth best. They point to the similarity of experiences that young people of the same age tend to have. These common experiences are what make young people define themselves as sharing the same position. For example, they may all feel themselves to be powerless in a world where adults have the power.

The main problem with using an age definition is that it is difficult to reach a reliable consensus as to where youth begins and ends. An example of this difficulty is shown in the two different age bands adopted by the leading international organisations concerned with youth. The United Nations' age band is 14–24 years, while the Commonwealth Youth Programme uses 15–29 years. The elastic concept of youth is illustrated in Malaysia, which has an age band stretching from 15–40 years old. It is significant to note also that the Malawian National Youth Policy agreed to an age band of 14–25, but points out the difficulties in accepting this range:

“It is recognised that youth is not only a chronological definition, but also a term commonly used to describe roles in society ascribed to the young. This policy, therefore, will be flexible to accommodate young people under 14 years and over 25 years depending on their social and economic circumstances.”

“The age definition, despite its limitation, offers a certain statistical utility as well as the practical convenience of a definitive social group, which has its own specific problems and needs.”

Age may be a necessary characteristic of any definition of youth, but it can never be an adequate definition on its own. Some social factors will always have to be added. In the quotation above, it is social and economic circumstances as well as age that define whether a person comes under the Malawian National Youth Policy.

There has been further criticism of the practice of using only the age criterion to define youth. State officials tend to favour the exclusive use of the age criterion because this allows them to ignore the problems of class and gender inequality among young people. For instance, they may define the social unrest that is caused by poverty as something that *young* people do. By doing this, they are able to ignore the fact that it tends to occur among *poor* young people.



### Activity 1.6

(about 1 hour)

If you can, try to find a copy of your country's national youth policy. Your tutor should be able to assist with this. If this isn't possible, you can call the relevant department or ask someone who might know the answers to the following questions:

- 1 What is the agreed age band used to define youth in your community?
- 2 What are the reasons given for using this particular age band?
- 3 Do you think this age band is appropriate for youth in your society? Explain why, or why not.
- 4 What aspects of the position of young men and women in your society does the use of this age band reflect?

Write your answers to these questions in your learning journal.

### A transitional stage

Four significant happenings mark the transition from childhood to adulthood, according to Mitterauer (1993), a social scientist who has researched how the conceptualisation of youth has changed over time in Europe. He maintains that these transitional markers have remained fairly stable over time. They are:

- leaving home
- finding employment
- setting up home
- marriage.

However, Mitterauer points out that these transitional markers have limitations in helping us to define who young people are. Not only do their meanings and the order in which they occur differ from region to region, but they might also differ significantly for men and women.

As he puts it:

“Youth, as a period of transition to adulthood, is not usefully categorised in this way, because the timing of these aspects of transition, their meaning and their order of occurrence differ for young men and young women, and from one region to another, reflecting urban-rural differences as well as regional economic differences.”

(Quoted in Wyn and White, 1997:14)

Of course, they also differ from society to society or from culture to culture.

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## Gender and transitional markers

For many societies or cultures the four traditional markers described above would seem to be applicable to both male and female. But other transitional markers are traditionally applicable only to young men. For example, until recently, in many societies or cultures, recruitment into the army was for males only. This transitional marker, which is a sign of achievement of adult status, was applicable only to males.

In addition, the point has to be made that the very concept of youth is deeply embedded in the practices of patriarchy – male domination and control of society. It should not be a surprise, then, that when we use or hear the term ‘youth’, we usually have a mental image of a young male.

This point can be emphasised by the fact that in the UK in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a lot of work was done on spectacular youth sub-cultures such as hippies, mods and rockers. Later, the spotlight was turned on the punk rockers, and on hip-hop and rap. The one thing they had in common was their almost exclusive focus on the activities of young men. When young women did appear in the results of the research, it was merely as an appendage to the activities of young males.

The invisibility of girls raises interesting and relevant questions:

- Were young women really absent from those youth sub-cultures?
- Or were they there but simply rendered invisible because of the gender bias of sociological research?

It appears that many of the researchers who studied these youth sub-cultures were men who started from the premise that the sub-cultures were predominantly male.

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So far in our analysis of youth as a transitional stage, we have implied that there is a distinction between youth status and adulthood. Adulthood is assumed to be the end or destination of youth. One of



Mitterauer's transitional markers to adulthood is having a job. But is this a reasonable marker?

The impact of world economics, and in particular the effects of structural adjustment programmes being implemented by many developing countries, have meant that youth unemployment has been extremely high. Does this mean that young unemployed persons, particularly males, cannot make the transition to adulthood? And what about those older persons who have been structurally adjusted out of a job? Do they lose the status of adulthood? These kinds of concerns show that there are further limitations to the concept of youth as a transitional stage.

Finally, we have to ask the question: Does youth exist as a stage at all? Mitterauer's research was done in Europe. His concept of youth, therefore, is Eurocentric, that is, based on European culture and seen through European eyes. In some other countries, it would appear that even the stage which is supposed to precede youth, namely, childhood, does not clearly exist. A glance at the data for child labour raises questions about this stage. According to the International Labour Organisation in 2002 worldwide some 211 million children aged 5–14 could be found at work, the vast majority in developing countries.

It is the existence of data such as these that compels another researcher, Boyden, to conclude that the conceptualisation of childhood and youth as an ideal period, characterised by innocence, safety and happiness, is nothing more than a myth. This myth he claims is:

“... built around the social preoccupations and priorities of the capitalist countries of Europe and the United States.”

(Quoted in Wyn and White, 1997: 10)

Boyden (1990) produces powerful evidence from his own research to support this conclusion. He shows, for example, that in India, children are expected to work. They work not only for economic reasons, but also because of the belief that they should engage with adult life as early as possible.

As we have seen, there are limitations on the use of age-related criteria and transitional markers to define youth as the stage between childhood and adulthood. This view implies that becoming a youth is mainly a matter of growing older, leaving childhood behind and preparing to move on to adulthood. It emphasises the biological factors that determine the stage of being a youth, since we know that every individual grows older biologically.

However, it is difficult to define exactly where the biological processes that define youth begin and end. Thus, we cannot say that youth is a natural category. Similarly, we know that youth is not the same the world over. Therefore, youth cannot be a universal concept. Finally, we know that the social meaning of youth one hundred years ago was not the same as it is today. The concept of youth changes over time.

Therefore, the concept is not ahistorical (independent of its place in history).

In summary, if we conceptualise youth purely as an age category or as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood it will be inadequate. This is because:

- it fails to take into account the specific race, gender, class or cultural context in which a young person actually negotiates his or her life
- it ignores the problems raised by the assumption that there are clear and absolute differences between childhood, youth and adulthood
- it encourages the view that youth is a biologically determined process that is natural, universal and ahistorical.

## **A social construct**

Our common-sense theories tell us that we know what youth is. After all, we have all been young and we see young people around us all the time. We can generally tell what people's ages are by looking at them and we have a concept of what people are like at those ages. But our views are strongly influenced by the views our society holds.

Every society creates ways of seeing youth. To put it another way, every society constructs views of youth. These social constructs of youth are not necessarily biologically or socially true, nor do they always show youth the way they really are psychologically. So, social constructs are not always based on objective reality – the way things really are.

For instance, in some societies, the past is seen as a golden age and the present a sad departure from the glories that once were. Adults often see young people as more rebellious, ruder and more disobedient to their parents than they were themselves when young. Is this view likely to be true? Young people certainly do not see themselves in this way. Nevertheless, if we are to work with young people towards constructive change, we have to get as close as possible to an objective understanding of what 'youth' really means in the situations we will work in.

One of the best ways of understanding the social construction of youth is to study how other societies construct views of young people. These views differ from society to society. A comparison of different views can help us to understand our own views.

Youth can be an astonishingly brief period in some societies, such as those where the people live by hunting and gathering. There, the skills required for survival are usually acquired in childhood. These skills are usually needed as early as possible in adult roles.

In other societies, particularly late capitalist economies such as those of present-day Europe and the USA, the concept of youth, or at least



of young people, is being stretched further and further. As structural adjustment continues to create extended periods of unemployment, especially for school leavers, people tend to remain longer in the category of youth. Today, in many western countries, the category of youth even seems to include people in their early thirties.

The following case study is an anthropological account of a dramatically marked process of transition from that of warrior youth to junior elder among the Ilparakuyo Maasai of Tanzania. It shows how in this society, cultural patterns of behaviour are incorporated in the social construct of youth.

This case study has been adapted from the book *Persistent Pastoralists* by Peter Rigby (1985). The Ilparakuyo Maasai are pastoralist – cattle herders. Although to many of us, the events in the passage may seem strange and exotic, they took place in Tanzania at a time when that country was under the leadership of Nyerere's TANU party, when Tanzania was already a highly sophisticated society. Note that the passage speaks of watches, radios, bicycles – all modern articles.



### Case Study 1.3

#### Transition from youth among the Ilparakuyo Maasai of Tanzania

The term *olpul* means both a meat-feast and the place at which it occurs. No beast may be slaughtered inside the homestead or anywhere within eye range of it.

No men of the *ilmurran* age grade (warriors), particularly junior *ilmurran*, may eat meat that has even been looked upon by a mature married woman; therefore no *ilmurran* may eat meat within the homestead. In proper (full-scale) *olpuli*, *ilmurran*, unmarried girls and lovers, as well as some uninitiated youths and servants, may attend. They are often accompanied by senior elders who act as ritual advisers and tutors during the sometimes extended stay (between two and three months) at *olpuli*.

Great quantities of meat, fat, soups and medicines are consumed at *olpuli*, which are carried out in remote, thickly forested areas where strangers, or persons in the categories not allowed to attend, are unlikely to stumble upon the feast. Shelters are constructed both for the meat and the participants by the *ilmurran* and the young girls, and the order of slaughter of the beasts is decided upon. As the meat is consumed in ever greater quantities, mixed with a wide range of medicines, the *ilmurran* begin to sing songs of *olpul*, especially the *enkipolosa*, which induce trance and shaking, and violent behaviour, a desirable state to be in before battle.

But *olpuli* in themselves are, and always have been, essential for the following reasons: before a circumcised youth becomes a full warrior, he must contribute a first beast at *olpul*, which gives him *entoroj* (special status). Until he does so, he cannot attain *entoroj* and

therefore cannot transfer fully from the status of circumcised initiate to that of *olmurrani* (full warrior).

Once a youth has qualified by contributing to an *olpul*, the full force of sanctions concerning meat eating apply to him: he has now achieved *entoroj*. This means that he must never eat alone, or drink milk alone – he must be with at least one other age-mate. He cannot eat meat anywhere near or in the homestead; and he is free to claim full rights of hospitality from every member of his age-set. He must share everything, including his most prized possessions, including watches, radios, bicycles, etc. with his age-set and never deny them anything within the normal bounds of reason, no matter where they come from. Most of the positive injunctions of *entoroj* last a lifetime, even when the individual reaches senior elderhood; but the negative prohibitions fall away gradually. Thus, throughout the extended period of *olpul*, the theme is the separation from the community of the main participants. They are, in a sense, wild, associated with nature, danger, bravery and death.

Before *olpul* is closed, word is sent to the homesteads of all those concerned to prepare the *mutai* feasts with which they are welcomed back. *Mutai* is composed of normal food, of milk, maize, *ugali* and vegetables. The *olpul* is finally over, the participants reabsorbed, some of them in their full new status, into the community.



### Activity 1.7

(about 20 minutes)

After reading this case study, analyse how this society defines youth.

- What are the key features that indicate to the Ilparakuyo Maasai what the term ‘youth’ means in their society?
- How does this differ from your country? What are the key features there than indicate what the term youth means to your society.

Write your answers in your learning journal.

With this activity, which ends the section on defining youth, you may have been able to bring together aspects of age, transition and social views of youth as well as ideas about society and culture from earlier in the unit.

To end the unit, we will examine the nature of youth work in relation to ways of seeing young people.

## The nature of youth work

As you continue to read this module and do the activities, you need to bear in mind that in your work you will be dealing with real young people in a real world. The experiences you have had personally, your background, your age and your gender will all affect how you relate to the young people with whom you work.

The following case study gives one person's reflective views about the nature of youth work.



### Case Study 1.4

#### A view of youth work

'I am an educator, an academic and a somewhat older person who is still involved in youth work. However, I feel some ambivalence and anxiety about intervening in the lives of young people.

When I was a youth worker out in the field, I always thought that youth work was not a lifelong career in the traditional sense. I thought that it was a job that I should only do while I was still young and energetic, and while I felt that I was still in touch with young people. I figured that once I lost that feeling and my youthful energy, then young people would begin to see me as just another brick in the wall – and an old one at that! That would be the time to get out! Yet, today, I am still in youth work and I still have the same ideals I had when I started out.

When I moved into management and administration, I felt somewhat uneasy about old (or should I say older?) people making and implementing policy for younger people.

This could only be a good thing if, by being older, youth workers can help young people because they have more knowledge about the social structure than young people do. But do we?

Some of these thoughts come from my own experience of parenthood. I have one son who has just turned twenty-one, and another who is about to enter the period commonly known as adolescence. I am therefore firmly on the far side of the generation gap.

I am at once too close to young people for comfort and too far from them to find the easy solutions to their problems that I would like. I am too close in terms of dealing with the fears (and joys) of parenting in a context where the threat of AIDS, violence and unemployment, are all too real. I am too far in the sense that I no longer live in their reality. I am in fact an outsider, so I have to intervene in their world from a distance. So when I say to my younger son, 'I was young once you know', he simply replies, 'Yes, but that was a long time ago, Dad.'

I sometimes wonder whether the experience of youth in the 1960s is similar enough to the experience of youth in the second millennium to enable me to bridge the so-called generation gap. The answer is probably 'Yes, to some extent', but some similarity is not enough. What we need is an ability to get inside the minds of the young people we work with, so we can fully empathise with them. But we need also to have a scientific understanding of what is happening in the social world in which they have to make the journey to adulthood.'

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There are two aspects to working with young people that we have to take into account:

- what young people feel and think
- what their place in the society really is or might be.

One anxiety you may feel is that you are out of touch with young people. For example, in a society where there are street gangs, young people may congregate on street corners. Many of the members of these gangs are likely to be male. If you are female you may find it very difficult to interact with these young people. This is a problem that is difficult to overcome. In such a situation, you may have to work alongside a male colleague or find a creative way of getting these young men to interact with you in a neutral place. But we recognise also that in some cultures, it may not be possible at all for a female youth worker to work with young men.

Possibly, you are worried about your ability to get close to the current thinking of young people. But remember that, if the police learned the lesson about insensitive policing in the Notting Hill Carnival, so can you.

This module and some of the others will give you the chance to do some action research – research that is quick and simple and close to the action. Action research will give you the chance to:

- find out what's going on by talking to and observing young people and reading about the situations young people find themselves in
- formulate a theory about what it means and what to do about it
- do some investigation
- evaluate the results.

Action research can become a standard technique in your youth in development work practice.

You may also be concerned that your own interpretations (theories) about what is going on in the society around you are inadequate. That is a problem for all of us. But one of the major purposes of this Diploma is to give you a better understanding of the social world and how to deal with it.

Action research should become a basic technique used in the planning and design process of project work, and in solving problems.



### Activity 1.8

(about 20 minutes)

Now look back at the work you did in Activities 1.1 and 1.3.

Review your definitions of society and culture and your notes about how you see the role of the youth worker. Add to them in the light of what you have learned in this unit. You may find it useful to discuss your ideas with others - co-workers or a tutorial group.

Write your responses in your learning journal.

The final activity in this unit is an activity which you will continue throughout the module.



### Activity 1.9

(on-going)

As a continuing activity throughout this module (and indeed throughout the Diploma), listen to the voices of young people themselves.

Hear their opinions about the issues that affect them. Discuss with them your own views and aim to present the ideas you learn from the module in a way which they can understand. You could also collect material from newspapers, magazines or other media that express young people's voices.

Reflect on what you hear. How does it relate to the ideas you learn in the module? How may it affect the way you work with young people?

Keep a record of these young people's voices, your discussions and your reflections in your learning journal.

This on-going activity will help you connect your learning to real life. It will also feed into your assignment at the end of this module.

## Unit summary

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In this unit, you have considered:

- what is meant by the concepts of society and culture and how to define them.
- three main approaches to the study of society – the functionalist approach, the conflict theory approach (looking specifically at Marxism and at radical feminism) and the interactionist approach. You saw that each approach makes basic assumptions about how society is organised and approaches it from a different perspective, and that no single approach is necessarily right or wrong.

You also looked at:

- social exclusion and the theory of an ‘underclass’
- different ways of defining youth: as an age category, as a transitional stage, and as a social construct.

Finally, you reflected further on the nature of youth work and your role as a youth worker.

In Unit 2, we will examine the concept of adolescence.

To check how you have got on, look back at the learning outcomes for this unit and see if you can now do them. When you have done this, look through your learning journal to remind yourself of what you have learned and the ideas you have generated.

## Answers to self-help questions

### Self-help question 1.1

- 1 False – there are many other animals and insects that are social creatures e.g. wasps and monkeys.
- 2 False – young people tend to LEARN (not inherit) their culture from adults.
- 3 True – members of a society share patterns of behaviour, such as dress code and attitudes to music and dancing, and beliefs such as religion.
- 4 False – individuals and groups are often in conflict with each other. However, if the members of a society do not have a minimum level of solidarity and some measure of consensus of values and goals, the society will cease to exist.
- 5 False – cultures vary from society to society, country to country.
- 6 True – people develop many relationships throughout a lifetime; the first is usually with the mother or mother substitute.
- 7 True – societies are organised systems of social relationships between individuals and groups.
- 8 False – society and culture change with economic conditions and these in turn affect the way people's identities are constructed.

### Self-help question 1.2

According to the functionalist perspective:

- 1 Social systems tend to be relatively stable and persistent. *Change* is usually gradual.
- 2 Rules or patterns of established behaviour are called *norms*.
- 3 The members of a society must have a minimal level of *consensus* of values and norms or the society ceases to exist.
- 4 If a part of society is not performing its function well or is bringing harm to the society, it is said to be *dysfunctional*.
- 5 When the members of a society act according to the norms, the society is said to be *structured*.
- 6 When parts of a society become disruptive, the society tries to *eliminate* the unwanted behaviour patterns.

### Self-help question 1.3

According to the conflict theory or Marxist perspective:

- 1 False – individuals and groups struggle over scarce economic resources in society.

- 2 True – conflict and change are normal in societies.
- 3 False – power is generally in the hands of a minority who control the economic resources.
- 4 False – a person's class will influence their behaviour, ideas and values.
- 5 True – the owners of production (the haves) want to maximise profit while the workers (the have-nots) want to secure adequate wages for their labour. This is a conflict of interest.

### **Self-help question 1.4**

According to the interactionist perspective:

- 1 Explanations of social life are to be found at the *micro* level.
- 2 *Language* is the basis of communication between individuals and groups.
- 3 The meanings people give to social action vary with the *context* in which the action takes place.
- 4 Interactionists tend to focus on *small* groups rather than society as a whole.
- 5 Through *interaction* with others, we develop our self-concepts.



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# Unit 2: Adolescence

Unit introduction .....	61
Unit learning outcomes .....	61
Describing and defining adolescence.....	62
Psychoanalytic theories of adolescence .....	75
Sociological theories of adolescence .....	87
Unit summary .....	92
Answers to self-help questions .....	93
References .....	95



## Unit introduction

Welcome to Unit 2 *Adolescence*. In Unit 1, we discussed youth as a transition stage. We indicated that youth is often perceived as a clear-cut stage between childhood and adulthood. We showed, however, that this view has serious limitations.

In this unit, we will be looking at another concept that is critical to an understanding of how young people are perceived. We will discuss the concept of adolescence, which is generally held to be a stage through which all young people must pass. You will discover that this concept, too, means different things in different societies and cultures.

We then examine critically psychoanalytic and sociological theories of adolescence.

## Unit learning outcomes

When you have worked through this unit, you should be able to:

- compare different experiences of adolescence in different cultures
- relate these accounts to ways of defining adolescence and to the perspectives you studied in Unit 1
- summarise and critique different theories of adolescence (the 'nature/nurture' debate and psychoanalytic and sociological theories)
- use your own evidence to analyse experiences of adolescence in your society, including the ideas of the generation gap and identity crisis.

## Describing and defining adolescence

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You need to be aware that understanding society and what happens in it has three dimensions:

- First, to understand what is happening socially around you, you need to know what people think is happening around you. This is because people act on the basis of the way they see things, and in doing so, they influence what happens.
- Second, you need to understand the various underlying social forces that create and influence the situations you are trying to understand. These forces may be economic or political or cultural, for example.
- Third, you need to grasp the social processes through which things are made to happen. These processes include: human interaction, the effect of the value system on people's behaviour and the way language and other symbols (such as dress, cars and animals) are used as tokens of wealth or power.

In this unit, we will be focusing on all three dimensions in an effort to understand the concept of adolescence. You should note that Unit 4 of this module addresses adolescence issues related to drug abuse, among other things. However, for more details on such issues you should consult Module 12 *Youth and Health*.

In this section, we explore how the term 'adolescence' describes a process.

We start with a general discussion of the idea of adolescence as a process, then compare two case studies that describe how adolescence is seen, the first in the Bemba culture in Zambia and the second in an urban culture. We then examine other ways of describing and defining adolescence in terms of age, development and life stages. Finally, we look at whether nature (biology) or nurture (environment) has more impact on the process of adolescence.

The term 'adolescence' describes a process of maturation or growth, rather than a category of youth. The term is applied to quite a short period of time in an individual's life. It is regarded as starting with puberty, the biological stage when girls and boys begin to develop secondary sexual characteristics, such as body hair on sexual organs, menstruation in girls and the ability to ejaculate in boys. It ends when the basic maturation process (at the physical, psychological and social levels) has been completed.

Before we look at this process, let us look at some common notions about adolescence.



## Adolescence in the Bemba culture

What follows is an account of female adolescence as a transition from girlhood to womanhood. The ceremony described is practised by some (though not all) members of the Bemba people in Zambia.



### Case Study 2.1

#### The Bemba Chisunga ceremony

In the Bemba tradition generally, the Chisunga ceremony secures the transition from a calm but unproductive girlhood to a more challenging and fertile womanhood.

The ceremony takes place after a girl has had her first period and after this event has itself been marked by a separate puberty rite. The puberty rite may involve ceremonial washing of the girl and isolation indoors before her return to the community. The girl then waits until it is convenient for her Chisunga ceremony to begin.

This ceremony is composed of many individual rituals, including the physical testing of the girl through various ordeals, her social isolation as a form of ritual separation and the singing of ritual songs.

The ceremony lasts for over a month and ends with the girl's change of status being marked by the end of her social isolation.

The girl is bathed, dressed in new clothes, brought out of the hut, and placed on a new mat outside the door. The girl sits in silence in front of the villagers, who throw small presents onto the mat. The Chisunga prepares girls for marriage, by teaching them the secrets of Bemba women, by making them grow, and by making them women. At the end of the ceremony, girls are considered ready for marriage, and often, a marriage ceremony immediately follows.

Richards, cited in Pilcher (1982), p. 66.



## Activity 2.1

(about 15 minutes, not counting discussion)

Try to imagine what it is like to be a Bemba girl during the Chisunga ceremony. This exercise in empathy is difficult but worth doing as it is a technique you can use when working with young people who have undergone very different experiences from yourself.

Think about the questions below. If you can, discuss this case study with others (friends, peers, family, tutors). Write your responses in your learning journal.

- Why do you think the girl's social isolation is one month?
- What do you think is the significance of the rituals of bathing and dressing the girl in new clothes and then having her brought out of the hut?
- What positive functions do you think are fulfilled by this ceremony?
- How are these functions fulfilled in your society or community?

We can guess that up to this point the young girl has lived as a girl-child, having fun with her peers, but obedient and hard-working around the home. She must have been looking towards her future role as a wife and mother and acquiring many of the techniques, attitudes and values of that role. But the process of transition has to be symbolically marked, so that grasping the meaning of being a woman takes her across a mental and cultural boundary.

For some young girls, having a first period may be a shock, but in some cultures, it may be socially constructed as being an everyday matter. For example, there is some evidence to show that women and young girls fighting in liberation struggles have, of necessity, to treat the onset of menstruation without much attention or any markers.



However, it seems important for the Bemba to use it as a symbolic marker of transition to womanhood, because it powerfully strengthens that sense of a climactic change taking place. Some call this a rite of passage to a new phase in a woman's life. This transition is managed through the initial ritual washing of her body to remove the sense of identification with childhood, and through the (perhaps traumatic) isolation and the testing ordeals. A Bemba girl may be a little afraid as she anticipates being married to a man. The ritualistic experiences, many of them very new experiences to the individual, must make her realise how challenging her new role will be, and how strong she will have to be to deal with it. In short, the Chisunga ceremony forces her to change the way she structures her perception of herself.

This process of transition is effectively managed in a few weeks. They will be weeks of intensely heightened psychological and spiritual sensitivity, of turbulence, of uncertainty, of self-doubt, as the young woman internalises the new conceptual structure. Her new awareness of herself as woman, of leaving childhood behind, must be accomplished in this very short time.

The function that the Chisunga ceremony most likely has in Bemba tradition is to ensure that key adult roles are filled without too much disruption in a subsistence farming community where roles are very clear.

If similar ceremonies persist today in areas where there is a cash-crop economy or an urban industrial economy, it would be interesting to find out why. One possible reason why they may still take place is that ideas, beliefs and symbolic systems like the Chisunga ceremony tend to change more slowly than socio-economic conditions. Also, despite the emergence of new power groupings based on new ways of acquiring wealth, the links to the traditional power groupings based on subsistence farming may still be strong. Extended family structures, which embrace the older relatives as well as the younger, more modern members, are likely to still exist.

From this discussion on the Bemba people, it is clear that the process of transition from child to adult takes just a few weeks in that society. Many of us would not normally think of adolescence in terms of such a short period. But really, what we mean by adolescence is a process of transition, whether this process takes a few weeks or all of the teen years.

## **Adolescence in metropolitan and urban cultures**

In the next case study, we present a view of adolescence in the UK, which has a mainly urban, metropolitan culture. This passage illustrates another perception of adolescence and the way the process of transition takes place.



## Case Study 2.2

### Youth transitions

Rather than seek a complex and often unsatisfactory age definition for youth, many academic writers have defined it as a series of transitions. Achieving the status of adulthood is thus dependent upon successfully making at least some of these transitions, rather than reaching some arbitrary chronological age.

The main transitions of youth which are of critical importance are as follows:

- the transition from full-time education and training to a job in the labour market (the school-to-work transition)
- the transition from family of origin (mainly the biological family) to family of destination (the domestic transition)
- the transition from residence with parents (or surrogate parents) to living away from them (the housing transition).

One of the main concepts to theorise transitions is the concept of 'career'. By career is meant the sequence of statuses through which young people pass as they move from childhood dependency to adulthood. Some of these statuses may be prescribed by law, some will be the result of the intervention of an 'agency' of the state, such as doing compulsory military service, while others will be 'chosen' by young people themselves, although often under the strong influence of their parents. But whatever the basis on which a particular status is allocated, this status sets in train a series of social processes which has the potentiality to 'determine' the likely course of a young person's future status sequence.

For example, under the age of 16, all young people within the UK are required to be in full-time education. The three main transition lines listed above contain status opportunities for young people. So far, before the age of 16, there have been only a series of structured choices which are made either by young people and their parents, or by other agencies responsible for young people's welfare. At the age of 16, a person may 'choose' whether to stay on at school, go on to sixth-form studies or take courses in colleges of further education and in youth training, or seek employment. Yet these main structures of choice are themselves determined by social and economic conditions, and these, in turn, are largely shaped by social and economic policies.

Well-qualified 16- or 18- year-olds may formally have the opportunity to continue with their education, but their real opportunities to do so may depend on the number of places available at college or university and the willingness and capabilities of either the state or their parents to meet the costs of supporting them when they are there. Both the education policy and resources of the parents' generation can therefore influence the real nature of opportunity structures. Educational and labour careers are thus influenced not only by the

qualifications attained by young people, or by their individual career choices alone, but also by state policies. Public expenditure on such things as education and training, and the buoyancy of the economy, all affect the choice process. Young people may have the legal right to leave education at the age of 16 and enter the labour market, but the chances of gaining employment are dependent upon employers having jobs they are willing to offer them. Thus labour market conditions, too, fundamentally affect choice patterns. If there are few jobs available in the local labour market, or if they are perceived by young people as being of limited long-term value to their career development, they may 'choose' not to enter the labour market and continue with their education.

Similarly, moving into independent accommodation is dependent not only on choice, preference and access to resources, but also upon the state of the housing market, including the provision of accommodation for students, trainees and workers wishing to study, train and work away from home. Youth transitions must therefore be examined from the point of view of both the choice patterns of young people and the ways in which economic and social policies help to shape opportunity structures.

From Coles (1995) Chapter 1.



## Activity 2.2

(about 20 minutes, not counting discussion)

If possible, discuss this case study with others (friends, peers, family, tutors, etc.). Then re-read Case study 2.1 and write your responses to the following questions in your learning journal.

- How do the experiences of transition differ between the Bemba girls and the young people discussed in Case study 2.2?
- Are there any similarities between the Bemba girls and the young people discussed in Case study 2.2?
- Give one reason why there are significant differences between the two sets of transitions.

## Similarities

Superficially, the two sets of experiences in the two cultures are quite different.

However, perhaps one way of looking at the two case studies is to ask whether or not the behaviours and experiences of metropolitan adolescents are simply compressed in the case of the Bemba girls. In

other words, for a short period including some weeks before the Chisunga ceremony and during the ceremony itself, Bemba girls go through quite a few changes. They possibly experience all the difficulties, uncertainties, self-doubts and search for identity that mark metropolitan youth, compressed and intense, in those few weeks.

If this were the case, then the goals of both groups would be the same. They are simply attempting to find a place in adult society, rather than rebelling against it. In the case of the Bemba, they are supported through this by the adult women and by the structures of ritual. In contrast, for metropolitan young people, difficulties may be caused by state policy or the labour market, and the effect of mass culture.

As you will see later, what evidence there is suggests that adolescents in metropolitan societies really do want what their parents have. But there is cultural pressure, such as the cult of individualism, which makes them appear to pursue an adult role by individual routes. However, as we will point out in Unit 3, the family tends to have a lasting influence on the lives of individuals. From the sociological literature, the evidence is clear that family of origin largely determines the lifestyles of individuals and how they perform their adult roles. Generally, adolescents, on reaching adulthood, tend to follow the paths laid out by parents.

## Differences

One reason for the differences described in the two case studies could be the fact that for many metropolitan youth, there is a delay in entering employment. This is partly due to the broad learning base that is thought necessary for flexible employment, although for many poorer adolescents this is not true in practice.

Delaying entry to employment is certainly a way to prevent swamping labour markets with excess unskilled labour, as most of the unskilled and much of the semi-skilled work is today rapidly disappearing. The trend of delaying the entry of adolescents into the labour market in western countries began with the development of the factory system. Its dangerous machinery and appalling working conditions forced children and adolescents out of work and into education.

The consequences for metropolitan youth are, of course, that the turbulent and creative energies released by the transitional period of adolescence now grow in strength, because there is time and space for them. They can turn in any direction: towards dangerous, anti-social and disruptive behaviour, and/or towards self and community development. They can also be harnessed and exploited by ruthless individuals and commerce, or they can be integrated with mainstream adult goals and forged into a force to transform society.

Let's look at how the ideas we discussed in Unit 1 can be applied here.

- The functionalist perspective would suggest that we should work with dysfunctional groups to support them until they become more amenable to a functional role.
- The conflict perspective would suggest that the social conflict experienced by most anti-social groups is a realistic response to their social conditions. They are likely to be the losing groups in the conflict over resources. What we should do is work with their creative energies so that they are no longer destructive energies, and use them to improve the unequal social structures that have made them anti-social.
- The interactionists would suggest that, since social reality can be made and remade in different ways by the quality of the social interactions, then we should work to raise the consciousness and social and communicative skills of an anti-social group. Then they can learn how to deal creatively with their circumstances.

As a youth development worker, you will meet situations where you may have to consider one or more of these three theoretical perspectives in your attempt to deal with specific problems affecting youth. As you will see, the three perspectives are not mutually exclusive: more than one may apply to any case.

## Is adolescence an age group?

In the literature on adolescence, some writers use chronological or age criteria to describe or define adolescence. From what has been said so far, it should be apparent that the use of chronological criteria is inadequate to describe or define adolescence. We can summarise the limitations of the use of age criteria as follows:

- There is usually wide variation between individuals in the relationship of age to other criteria, such as biological, psychological and social factors. This is true even among individuals in the same society or culture. For example, not all 15-year-olds are at the same level of social maturity measured in terms of independence, poise, self-confidence and so on.
- There is wide variation between cultures in the general pattern of relationships between age and the other criteria mentioned above. From Case study 2.1 on the Chisunga ceremony, you can see that at the end of the ceremony, a Bemba girl is ready for marriage. In contrast, girls in European societies are not considered ready for marriage simply because they have started to menstruate.
- The age at which a cohort (a group of individuals who share some common characteristics) of young people experience biological processes tends to vary according to the norms of the culture. We know, for example, that young women are beginning puberty at a much younger age in developed societies than they used to in the past. This may be diet-related and possibly also related to the way girls are socialised.

- Usually, some socially or institutionally marked criteria have to be added to chronological and biological criteria to define the concept of adolescence fully. For instance, in many western societies, being given the right to vote (usually at the age of 18) is one criterion that marks the upper limit of adolescence. Similarly, graduation from secondary school may be another. We may guess that for some Bemba girls, it is the completion of the Chisunga ceremony – a socially important event – that marks the end of her adolescence.

## **Is adolescence a developmental stage?**

Even when stages of development are used instead of simple chronological criteria it is difficult to give a precise definition of the term 'adolescence'. For instance, in contrasting adolescence with adulthood and childhood, Richard Jessor (1991a, p.11) offers the following definition:

“If childhood is the time to master basic human functions such as motor skills and language, and adulthood is the time to consolidate personal and social identity, then adolescence is the time of exploration and opportunity, when most young people lay down the foundations for physical, psychological and social maturity.”

However, we must remember that for Bemba girls, puberty marks the onset of near adulthood. They are ready to assume adult roles of marriage and childbearing. Even in countries as modern as Kenya, Nigeria and India, many girls at puberty are treated as adult women. They are often married or betrothed soon after their first menses.

## **Is adolescence a life stage?**

When describing and defining adolescence as a developmental stage, we can consider it as a life stage. This way of conceptualising adolescence requires us to define (socially construct) it as one of a number of stages. For instance, we can consider the following stages as being typical of many, but not all, societies: birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, death.

We have to realise, however, that not all societies recognise all these stages: some societies may recognise only two or three stages. The transition from childhood to adolescence is usually held to occur at puberty, and is often marked by the rituals generally referred to as puberty rites. We have shown that the stage of adolescence can be very short: a mere few weeks for some. For others, it may not be recognised as a separate stage at all. The transition may simply be from childhood to adulthood, the transition marker being the onset of puberty.

Where adolescence is recognised as a stage in life, it can seem to be a period which establishes and consolidates patterns for living. Many of the behavioural patterns, beliefs, values and attitudes of adult life



are learned and reinforced there. What happens in adolescence can therefore have long-term implications for the individual and society.

For example, in societies where the onset of puberty signals the time for marriage, the problem of adolescent, unmarried mothers is not critical. However, in developed societies, where marriage is often delayed until many years after puberty, sexual education for adolescents is crucial. It is important because many young people begin experimenting with sex during adolescence. Today, the possibility of contracting HIV is ever present. It is unlikely that two young people experimenting with unprotected sex for the first time will contract HIV. However, there is a potential danger in establishing the behavioural pattern of sex as a risk-free activity. The more often this experience is reinforced in early adolescence, the more difficult it will become to develop safe sex habits in later life.

## The nature/nurture debate

Is the experience of adolescence more a result of biological change (nature) or of the culture and environment in which the young person has grown up (nurture)? This controversial question has been debated for over 100 years.

The nature argument was based on the idea that adolescence is a period characterised by high anxiety. This idea was promoted in Hall's book *Adolescence* (1904) which influenced psychology for decades after. For Hall, the 'storm and stress' of adolescence is due to the inevitable hormonal upheaval associated with puberty. Hall saw adolescence as a time of sexual confusion, of great emotional stress and self-doubt. He argued that even when adolescents appeared to be calm and confident on the outside, they were experiencing considerable turmoil on the inside. Hall's model had a profound influence on the development of social institutions and movements, especially those for young working-class males.

Hall was concerned with the adolescent process in white, middle-class males. In fact, he based his theory on this group of young people regarding them as the model of normality. He proceeded to make statements about youth in general and considered his generalisations valid because he believed that the whole process of adolescence was determined by human biology. Because of this, he believed his model would be applicable to all human beings.

On the side of the nurture argument, anthropologists considered that there was no scientific evidence for Hall's theories. Franz Boas was a founder of the discipline of anthropology in the USA and believed strongly in the influence of culture on adolescence. He was a teacher and mentor for the anthropologist Margaret Mead, who was sceptical of the 'storm and stress' position. The following case study illustrates how the debate was pursued to support different views of adolescence.



## Case Study 2.3

### The Mead-Freeman controversy

Margaret Mead felt that the difficulties affecting adolescents in the USA in the 1920s were caused by conflicting standards and the American ideological belief that every individual should make his or her own choices. She believed that if she showed, from anthropological research, that different cultures produced different experiences, it could be concluded that 'storm and stress' could not be considered a biological inevitability. In 1925, Margaret Mead travelled to American Samoa and lived for a while on the remote island of Ta'u, where she studied fifty girls in three neighbouring villages. She concluded that adolescence was not generally stressful for young women in Samoa and that masturbation and casual heterosexual affairs were common. Mead's work was published in a popular version as *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), and for many years was required reading for student teachers, youth workers and others.

A New Zealand-born anthropologist, Derek Freeman, argued that Mead's account was 'fundamentally in error'. In a major book (*Margaret Mead and Samoa: The making and unmaking of an anthropological myth*, 1983) and several articles, TV broadcasts and a documentary film, Freeman claimed that Mead's conclusion was 'preposterous'. His argument took three main forms:

- that Mead contradicted herself and actually described a society with more storm and stress than in western countries
- that crime and delinquency were rampant in all parts of Samoa
- that the argument was refuted by 'highly educated Samoans'.

A further issue that was the accusation by a Samoan woman, Fa'apua'a Fa'amu, that she had gained amusement by telling Mead lies and tall stories about sexual behaviour. This 'evidence' was made much of in film and TV accounts.

Freeman's argument is too detailed to examine here. Mead could not offer any significant defence, as the major accusations were published after her death in 1978. However, the evidence has been carefully analysed by James E. Cote, a Canadian sociologist. In his book *Adolescent Storm and Stress. An evaluation of the Mead-Freeman Controversy* (1994) he concludes that there is little in Freeman's critique to constitute a refutation. He also points out that Mead sensationalised part of her account to make her book more marketable, and engaged in some unsubstantiated speculation about why coming of age was relatively easy in Samoa. Nevertheless, Cote concluded, 'her main thesis appears to be supported by the evidence'.

Freeman had a strong association with Western Samoa, originating in the 1940s. During his first stay, he was adopted by a Samoan *matai* (chief) and granted a symbolic chiefly title. There is evidence that his identification with the Samoan chiefly class led him into a mission to



correct the 'wrong done by Mead to the Samoan people' in relation to her portrayal of sexuality and virginity. Freeman's evidence of contradictions is based on the report of some delinquency among Mead's group. However, the deviance appears to have been a factor since early childhood and not a result of adolescence. His arguments for high rates of crime and violence are based on figures for Western Samoa in the 1960s rather than for American Samoa in the 1920s. His experts were likewise drawn from 1960s Western Samoa and there is some doubt if their views were accurately analysed. Finally, it appears that Fa'apua'a Fa'amu, who claimed to have deceived Margaret Mead, did not actually live in the three villages of Mead's study and had little contact with Mead, to the extent that she was unaware that Mead was an anthropologist. The chances of her stories, true or false, being part of Mead's data appear to be very small.

The debate still continues and reflects opposing positions and interests. Why is this academic controversy important?

Cote and Allahar (1994) argue that the dominant view of youth in industrial western society has been biological. Adolescence has been seen as a biological affliction, which for many will pass with the passage of time. This view, they argue, serves the interests of those in power, as well as the functionalist psychological and psychiatric professionals who have a vested interest in adjusting young people, rather than criticising society. Cote and Allahar discuss postmodern views which portray youth as:

- alienated through technology spread by global capitalism, emphasising individualism
- a period during which the state regulates how they spend time and classifies normality and success.

Cote and Allahar see young people as a kind of social class without power, disenfranchised economically, socially and politically. In order to mask this disempowerment, the state imposes a long period of indoctrination into acquiescence and acceptance of existing power structures as natural, good and benign. In late twentieth-century Canada and the USA, they defined youth as 'a generation on hold' with no clear social or economic role in society, often relegated to part-time employment or jobs below the expectation of their educational level. They argue for a society with full employment and distribution of wealth where there are strategies to involve young people increasingly in all levels of social, economic and political life. The best available model, they conclude, is Sweden.

Many of you will work with young people in former colonial societies, in developing economies. Consider how the experience of adolescence has changed since the arrival of western traders and missionaries. Traditional youth roles as warriors are no longer required and young people have an extended experience of school.

Many of your countries may have mining and manufacturing industries with an interest in disempowering young people.

The self-help activity that follows will help you bring together what you have learned so far in this unit about ways of describing and defining adolescence.



### Self-help question 2.1

(about 10 minutes)

Indicate whether the following statements are true or false.

	True	False
1. Adolescence is best described in terms of an age span.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Adolescents generally reject parental standards and values.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The idea that adolescence is a social construct means that a society creates the way adolescence is viewed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Each culture socially constructs adolescents differently.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Adolescence is just one of a number of life stages.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. In western societies, the upper limit of the period of adolescence is usually marked by some social and/or institutional event.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Many of the behaviour patterns of adult life are learned and reinforced in adolescence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The onset of puberty is often regarded as the beginning of the period of adolescence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Compare your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.*

The following activity considers the nature/nurture debate.



### Activity 2.3

(about 10 minutes)

This activity asks you to relate the nature/nurture debate to your own observations and experience.

From your observation of young people, which do you think has more effect on their behaviour: a person's nature (biological development, heredity) or their nurture (the environment and culture in which they grow up)? Give examples of young people you know to provide evidence to support your views.

Write your response in your learning journal.

The next section may help to throw further light on your observations about nature and nurture. We will look briefly at some of the main theories that seek to describe and explain the adolescent stage of development. These theories can be broadly classified into two main approaches: the psychoanalytic and the sociological.

## Psychoanalytic theories of adolescence

The theories of adolescence, both psychoanalytic and sociological, have been developed mainly through observation, experimentation and investigation in modern western societies.

They are based on theories largely started in Europe, so they are not unbiased and value-free. Be careful in applying these ideas to the young people you work with. Use them to throw light on problems, not to explain problems away. Remember that there are other valid accounts of this life stage that may derive from the religious views of your community or simply from years of observation and testing in the practices of family and community life. Always test these theories against what you know to be real, to see if they work in the process of helping people grow.

The common feature of psychoanalytical theories of adolescence is that they share the analytical framework of Freud's psychology, which has at its core three concepts: the *id*, the *ego* and the *super-ego*.

Other theorists operating within the psychoanalytic framework draw our attention to psychological processes taking place during adolescence. We shall deal briefly with the key points put forward by three of these theorists under the following headings:

- Erikson's psycho-social theory of development
- Blos' theory of the process of disengagement by adolescents
- Richard Jessor's problem-behaviour theory.

## Freud

Space does not allow for a detailed discussion of Freud's theory, except to point out that it has come under serious attack, in particular from many radical feminist theorists. They have argued that Freudian psychology apologises for patriarchy and the rule of men.

We should treat Freud's theory critically, like all theories, and use it for illumination rather than treat it as absolute truth. In this way, his theory, like others, is an approach or perspective that we can use to gain understanding of young people.

Freud can help us come to terms with the concept of adolescence and this will help us to work effectively with young men and women. Let us look at each of the three concepts: the *id*, the *ego* and the *super-ego*. Freud saw these as forces or energies (drives) which become organised and structured as we grow.

### The *id*

This describes that part of our personality that underlies our instinctive needs and drives: for example, our biological needs for food, warmth and sexual gratification. According to Freud:

“The *id* contains everything that is inherited, that is present at birth, that is laid down in the constitution – above all, therefore, the instincts.”

(Freud, 1964, quoted in Gross, 1992: 591)

### The *ego*

Freud described this as the ‘executive of the personality’ because this is the part of our personality that deals with the outside world and enables us to distinguish reality from a dream. It is for this reason that Freud argued that the *ego* is governed by the ‘reality principle’. Freud contrasts the *id* and the *ego* in the following way:

“The *ego* represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the *id*, which contains the passions.”

(Freud, 1923, quoted in Gross, 1992: 592)

### The *super-ego*

If the *ego* is the executive of the personality, then the *super-ego* is the ‘judge’ of the personality. It is the part of the personality that passes judgement on our thoughts and actions. This judicial branch of the personality has two aspects to it:

- conscience – this uses guilt to punish us for bad thoughts and deeds.
- *ego-ideal* – this uses pride and high self-esteem to reward us for good thoughts and deeds.

Freud sees adolescence as the time when the struggle between the desires of the *id* and requirements of the *super-ego* reappears in the

form of a struggle between the young person seeking independence and the parents. Until it is resolved, this struggle can lead to unbalanced development of the *ego* and an unrealistic relationship with the everyday world. Sometimes we meet young people who may well have genuine ethical standards but lack a sense of reality, so that they will engage in risk-taking behaviour because they are unable to see the long-term problems for them in the real world. Their egos are deficient in some way, and they desperately need training to understand the relationships between what they do and the effects on them and others. Again, the issue is psychological balance.

Though Freud doesn't concentrate on adolescence, his ideas can throw light on some of the problems in human development that we see exaggerated in adolescence. For example, we may often meet young people who allow their moral values to dictate totally their responses to the ordinary human dilemmas they face. It's clear that they have not achieved a harmonic balance between for example their sexual needs, the requirement to live ethically and the realities of having to live in an often sordid everyday world. The youth worker has a very important counselling and educational role with them, helping them to understand the need for that Freudian balance of energies and drives.



### Self-help question 2.2

To help you check the meaning of Freud's terms, answer the following multiple-choice questions by circling or ticking the answer that you think is correct.

- 1 Freud's concept of the *id* includes:
  - a) our instincts
  - b) our conscience
  - c) our powers of reasoning.
- 2 The *super-ego* may be regarded as:
  - a) a superhuman being
  - b) the part of the personality that assesses our actions and thoughts
  - c) the controller of our passions.
- 3 The *ego* may be regarded as:
  - a) out of touch with the real world
  - b) useless during childhood
  - c) the sensible part of the personality, balancing desire and conscience.

*Compare your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.*

## Erikson

Erikson's theory of adolescence has to be discussed in the context of his overall psycho-social theory of human development. In his book *Childhood and Society* (1950), in the chapter entitled 'Eight Ages of Man', he argued that all human beings pass through eight stages of development which are determined by our genes. For Erikson, each of these stages of development must be resolved successfully before the individual can move to the next higher stage of development.

The following table contains a comparison between Erikson's and Freud's stages of development. You should note that the heading 'Stage of development' refers to Erikson's model.

Stage of development	Name of stage (Psycho-social crisis)	Psycho-social modalities (Dominant modes of being & acting)	Radius of significant relationships	Human virtues (Qualities of strength)	Freud's psycho-sexual stages	Approximate ages
1	Basic trust versus basic mistrust	To get, to give in return	Mother or mother-figure	Hope	Oral Respiratory Sensory-Kinaesthetic	0-1
2	Autonomy versus shame and doubt	To hold on, to let go	Parents	Willpower	Anal-urethral, muscular	1-3
3	Initiative versus guilt	To make (going after) To 'make like' (playing)	Basic family	Purpose	Phallic, locomotor	3-6
4	Industry versus inferiority	To make things (completing) To make things together	Neighbourhood and school	Competence	Latency	7-12
5	Identity versus inferiority	To be oneself (or not to be) To share being oneself	Peer groups and outgroups, models of leadership	Fidelity	Genital	12-18
6	Intimacy versus isolation	To lose and find oneself in another	Partners in friendship, sex, competition, co-operation	Love		20s

Stage of development	Name of stage (Psycho-social crisis)	Psycho-social modalities (Dominant modes of being & acting)	Radius of significant relationships	Human virtues (Qualities of strength)	Freud's psycho-sexual stages	Approximate ages
7	Generativity versus stagnation	To make be, To take care of	Divided labour and share household	Care		20s-50s
8	Ego integrity versus despair	To be, through having been To face not being	'Humankind' 'my kind'	Wisdom		50s and beyond

(From Gross (1992), p.627)

Stage 5 represents the stage of adolescence. Erikson characterised the identity crisis that occurs at this stage as one which revolves around 'personal identity' versus 'role confusion'. The critical task for an adolescent at this stage of his or her life is to establish a secure identity. As Erikson himself puts it (as quoted in Gross, 1992: 633):

"... at no other phase of the life cycle are the pressures of finding oneself and the threat of losing oneself so closely allied."

By self or personal identity, Erikson means that adolescents must reach the point where:

- they feel at home in their bodies
- the know where they are going
- they have an inner assurance that they will gain recognition from those who count.

In Erikson's model, development takes place simultaneously on three fronts:

- biological (or physical)
- social
- psychological.

## Biological

The adolescent may experience a sudden spurt of growth and become a bit clumsy and awkward. Sexuality is aroused and this may be accompanied by sexual fantasies that can never be totally fulfilled. Socially and psychologically, the adolescent has to come to terms with his or her sexuality and sexual preferences. The table which follows sets out the main stages in biological development.



Maturation in boys	Maturation in girls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● testes and scrotum increase in size</li> <li>● pubic hair begins to appear</li> <li>● adolescent growth spurt starts</li> <li>● the penis begins to enlarge</li> <li>● voice deepens as larynx grows</li> <li>● hair appears under arms, on upper lip</li> <li>● sperm production increases</li> <li>● growth rate reaches peak</li> <li>● prostate gland increases</li> <li>● sperm production sufficient for fertility</li> <li>● physical strength reaches a peak.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● adolescent growth spurt starts</li> <li>● pubic hair begins to appear</li> <li>● breast development begins, hips round, axillary hair develops</li> <li>● uterus, vagina, clitoris, labia increase in size</li> <li>● breasts develop further</li> <li>● growth spurt reaches peak, then declines</li> <li>● onset of menstruation - almost always after peak rate of growth in height</li> <li>● pubic hair development complete, followed by mature breast development and axillary hair</li> <li>● period of adolescent sterility ends at the onset of menstruation.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from Conger and Petersen (1984) pp. 106–107.)

## Social

It is generally accepted that in modern western societies, adolescence is a kind of moratorium – a socially recognised period of temporary delay in the process of entering the labour market. Extended education and laws which establish minimum ages for marriage, voting and driving, support this moratorium. Some of these social restrictions can be psychologically problematic for some adolescents and can possibly add to their confusion. We may ask the question here: What are the social and psychological consequences for adolescents who may remain unemployed for a very long time?

## Psychological

At this level, Erikson argues that adolescents re-experience some of the early conflict with parents, particularly the early encounter with parents as authority figures around such processes as toilet training. He argues that even though adolescents can think abstractly and do realise that their views are not the only valid views of the world, they continue to assume that everyone is as obsessed with their behaviour as they are. It is this assumption that accounts for their ego-centrism – their self-centeredness. The table below sets out the stages in the psychological development of adolescents.



Stage	Early adolescence (ages 12-14)	Middle adolescence (ages 15-17)	Late adolescence (ages 18 and up)
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● less interest in parental activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● peaks of parental conflicts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● reacceptance of parental advice and values</li> </ul>
Body image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● preoccupation with self and pubertal changes</li> <li>● uncertainty about appearance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● general acceptance of body</li> <li>● concern over making body more attractive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● acceptance of pubertal changes</li> </ul>
Peer relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● intense relationships with same sex friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● peak of peer involvement</li> <li>● conformity with peer values</li> <li>● increased sexual activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● peer group less important</li> <li>● more time spent in intimate relationships</li> </ul>
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● increased cognition</li> <li>● increased fantasy world</li> <li>● idealistic vocational goals</li> <li>● increased need for privacy</li> <li>● lack of impulse control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● increased scope of feelings</li> <li>● increased intellectual powers</li> <li>● feelings of omnipotence</li> <li>● risk-taking behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● practical, realistic vocational goals</li> <li>● refinement of values</li> <li>● ability to compromise and to set limits</li> </ul>

(Adapted from Neinstein and Stewart (1984), p. 40.)

Elkind (1970), as quoted in Gross (1992: 631), also points out that on this level, adolescents constantly play to an imaginary audience; they think they are very special and have a 'personal fable' which they tell to themselves, which is a fantasised construction helping them to deal with their psychological needs. They also have a strong sense of immortality. This point is of particular importance when we try to analyse why adolescents engage in 'risk behaviour'.

Erikson also draws our attention to the fact that this period is characterised by mood swings and ambivalence, where the latter means some uncertainty in making choices. These characteristics usually manifest themselves in co-operative behaviour at one minute and unco-operative behaviour the next. These behaviour patterns are irritating for adults interacting with an adolescent, but it is vital that such adults remain stable, firm and predictable.



## Activity 2.4

(about 15 minutes, not counting discussion)

Again, for this activity, draw on your experience and observation of your own society and culture.

Do you think that adolescents in your society experience an identity crisis as Erikson has suggested? Give reasons and examples to provide evidence for your view.

If possible, talk to others about this question. Write your responses in your learning journal.

One of the major difficulties with Erikson's theory of an identity crisis is how to measure identity. It is also difficult to know when a person is having an identity crisis. It is possible for researchers like Erikson to theorise about the concept of identity, but how can we go out into the real world and measure it? What does self-identity look like, and how do we know when we have found it?

It should be noted that researchers often use low self-esteem as an indicator of identity crisis. Much of the data, for example that of Coleman and Hendry, suggests that low self-esteem is more prevalent in early adolescence than before or in late adolescence. Coleman and Hendry sum up their research in the following way:

“... only a relatively small proportion of the total adolescent population is likely to have a negative self-image or to have very low self-esteem.”

(Coleman and Hendry (1990), as quoted in Gross (1992) p.639).

## Blos

The Blos theory of the process of disengagement by adolescents (1967) emphasises the process of the adolescent seeking to separate him or herself from the parent. Blos points out that the adolescent is undergoing a second individuation process (i.e. the process of becoming a separate person). The first individuation is said to take place just after the age of three. Part of individuation is the process of 'disengagement'. This term is used to describe the process by which adolescents seek to establish independence from the immediate family which has been their main source of emotional stability during childhood.

Blos argues that adolescent disengagement offers the opportunity to revisit unresolved crises in emotional and object relations in the family, with the purpose of resolving them. This process leads to the development of an 'affect and object hunger' that has to be satisfied if the adolescent is to cope with the 'inner emptiness' which comes from the breaking of childhood ties. The adolescent then seeks to satisfy

this hunger for emotional attachments and things to go for, in order to fill this emptiness, by one or more of the following strategies:

- commitment to peer group experiences
- doing exciting and dangerous things
- making frequent and abrupt changes in relationships
- indulging in drug-induced and mystical experiences.

Group experiences act as a kind of emotional and social family substitute. This can mean that some adolescents are especially vulnerable to cults or fringe political movements which offer this type of emotional satisfaction.

Doing exciting and dangerous things just for the hell of it is a particular aspect of adolescent behaviour which we will look at in greater detail later, when we look at the work of Jessor.

Like Erikson, Blos also sees the process of disengagement from the family as entailing a certain degree of regression in behaviour and double-think. He maintains that these characteristics often manifest themselves in rebellious behaviour. He views such behaviour as a good strategy on the part of adolescents to stop themselves from succumbing to the temptation of staying in the comfort zone of being dependent on their parents.

## Jessor

Jessor (1991b) constructed a model based on the psychoanalytic approach. We discuss it here in some detail, as it may be of some help to youth development workers. Jessor is particularly interested in developing a problem-behaviour theory that can assist in the prediction of which adolescents are most likely to take part in high health-risk behaviour, such as drug abuse and drink-driving.

He argues that adolescence is a critical period in which young people are particularly vulnerable to high-risk behaviour, which can cause serious damage to their health. According to Jessor (1991b, p.21):

“What singles out adolescence as a time of relatively high risk is that it is a key stage in which risk-related learning takes place – learning of new risk behaviours, of risk-prone personality disposition and of risk-enhancing opportunities in the environment.”

Jessor argues that there are a number of factors at work that make a significant number of adolescents disposed to engage in such high risk behaviour, namely:

- Peer-group pressure. Here, Jessor argues that the influence of peer-group pressure increases significantly during adolescence with a corresponding decrease in parental influence. This increases the opportunity for young people to be exposed to non-

conventional life styles and the high-risk behaviour that usually accompanies such life styles.

- Greater availability of material that can compromise health. This is particularly the case in developed countries where young people have greater access to such things as cars, motorcycles and certain kinds of pharmaceutical drugs. Globally, the access to illegal drugs and alcohol has increased considerably.
- Continuous change in what it is to be young. Young people are in the forefront of the production of new cultural forms which carry with them new life styles and ways of behaving. The choices open to young people increase the uncertainty as to what is appropriate behaviour.
- Greater stress. Greater choice of life styles and the increase in peer pressure (particularly expectations from the peer group to wear the latest designer clothes, for example) can lead to feelings of inadequacy and a greater fear of failure.

It is for these reasons that Jessor (1991b: p.8) argues that a significant developmental task for adolescents of today is:

“The assumption and management of personal responsibility for their own health and social responsibility for the health of others.”

For Jessor, engagement in high-risk behaviour is a crucial part of the adolescent transitional process. It is important here to note another significant point that Jessor makes. He argues that adolescents who engage in high-risk behaviour do not engage in isolated risk behaviour. Rather, they exhibit a pattern of high-risk behaviours which he describes as a ‘syndrome’. For example, adolescents who begin to practise truancy from school are also more likely to begin smoking and to be sexually active at an earlier age.

### Functions of high-risk behaviour

Jessor argues that if we want to understand why adolescents engage in high-risk behaviour, then we need to appreciate the:

“... personal meanings, symbolic significance and psychological functions that such behaviours can serve adolescents ...”

He reminds us that such behaviour should not be seen as perverse or irrational. He notes that risk behaviour, like all learned behaviours, is:

“... purposive, goal directed, and capable of fulfilling multiple goals that are central to adolescent life.”

The list below sets out some of the possible functions that risk-taking behaviour serves in adolescence:

- 1 An instrumental effort to attain goals that are blocked or seem otherwise unattainable. Thus, engaging in early sexual intercourse and becoming pregnant can be a way of attaining

- independence from parental control and regulation. It may also serve as a means of taking personal control of one's life.
- 2 A means of expressing opposition to adult authority and the conventional society whose norms and values are not shared by the younger generation. Much of young people's drug use during the Vietnam era in America was a symbolic way of showing their opposition to the war. They engaged in precisely the behaviour that the larger society was trying to proscribe.
  - 3 A coping mechanism for dealing with anxiety, frustration, inadequacy, failure or the fear of failure – whether in relation to school performance, the expectations of peers, or the high standards of parents. Heavy involvement with alcohol, for example, or even overeating, can be a way of dealing with poor academic achievement, with a sense of social rejection, or with the perception of parental disappointment.
  - 4 A way of gaining admission to the peer group, of expressing solidarity with peers, or of demonstrating identification with the youth subculture. Cigarette smoking, or the sharing of a marijuana 'spliff', are well-established and widely recognised marks of membership in the peer group of young males in Jamaica.
  - 5 A confirmation of important attributes of personal identity. Drinking, smoking and driving after drinking are readily learned as ways of showing that one is 'macho', 'cool', or experienced, or has some other characteristic that is valued in adolescent culture.
  - 6 A transition marker, a symbol of a developmental transition, from a less mature to a more mature status. This function of risk behaviour is an especially important one for adolescents. It derives from the fact that certain behaviours tend to be age-graded – that is, considered by society as appropriate only for those who have reached a certain age or age-related status. The use of alcohol is a good example. It is proscribed for those below the legal age but permitted for those above it. When behaviours are age-graded, engaging in them earlier than is defined as appropriate can be a way of affirming maturity – a way of attempting to show that one has indeed passed from adolescence to young adulthood.
  - 7 Fun and excitement. Jessor reminds us that young people engaging in risk behaviour frequently stress the fun and excitement they derive from these types of behaviours. They see them as ways of warding off the boredom and routine that ensue when you have not yet established a clear direction to your life.



### Self-help question 2.3

To help you check your understanding of the ideas of Blos and Jessor, fill in the spaces in the following sentences with appropriate words or phrases. Try to do the exercise from memory before you check back to the text for the answers.

- 1 The term \_\_\_\_\_ is used by Blos to describe the process by which adolescents seek to establish independence from the immediate family.
- 2 According to Blos, group experiences for adolescents can act as a kind of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 3 Blos sees \_\_\_\_\_ as a good strategy by adolescents to reduce their dependency on their parents.
- 4 Jessor developed a problem-behaviour theory which can help us to predict which adolescents are likely to engage in \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 5 Jessor argues that peer group pressure increases significantly during \_\_\_\_\_ with a corresponding decrease in \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 6 Jessor describes a pattern of high risk behaviours as a \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 7 To Jessor, high risk behaviour may be a means of expressing opposition to \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 8 The authors state that in Jamaica, cigarette smoking is a well-established and widely recognised mark of membership in the \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 9 Engaging in age-graded behaviour earlier than is defined as appropriate can be a way for adolescents to \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 10 Engaging in high-risk behaviour for fun and excitement may be a way of warding off \_\_\_\_\_ .

*Compare your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.*

### Critique of psychoanalytic theories

To summarise what we consider to be the main points of the psychoanalytic models of adolescence:

- Youth is a unitary category, with certain psychological characteristics and social needs common to the age group.

- Youth is an especially formative stage of development where the foundations for attitudes and values are laid down for adult life.
- The transition from childhood dependence to adult autonomy usually involves a rebellious phase and this is seen as normal.
- Young people in modern society sometimes experience difficulty in making a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. They may, therefore, require professional help, advice and support, for example, not only from psychiatrists, but from youth development workers.

However, we also outline here several key criticisms that could be levelled at the psychoanalytic theories.

Psychoanalytic theories or models, especially Erikson's, assume that adolescent conflict necessarily focuses on family relations. But this need not be the case. Many of these conflicts may get displaced and worked out in the peer group. They may be conflicts involved in having to adapt to living among your peers, as so many films have explored.

In these theories, heterosexuality is set up as one of the most important development goals for the adolescent. Thus, all other forms of sexuality are deemed to either be abnormal or infantile.

The markers of maturity from a psychoanalytic perspective reflect those found in middle-class men in western societies. These models could then be described as being very ethno- and gender-centric. The last point links into the feminist critique of psychoanalysis. A feminist viewpoint is that Freud and Erikson did not transcend patriarchy – a male-dominated social system. Rather, they took it for granted and reinforced it by making it seem legitimate or right.

## Sociological theories of adolescence

Now we look at sociological theories. First, a reminder of the warning we gave before introducing psychoanalytic theories. These theories have been developed mainly through observation, experimentation and investigation in modern western societies, so they are not unbiased and value-free. Always test the theories against what you know to be real, to see if they work in the process of helping people grow.

Sociological theories tend to see the process of adolescence as being influenced mainly by environmental factors. This means factors originating in the social world surrounding the individual adolescent.

Here, we focus on just three of the key concepts that have emerged out of sociological theories on adolescence. The three concepts are:

- socialisation



- role assumption
- the generation gap.

## **Socialisation**

Socialisation means all the processes by which individuals learn the norms (the accepted standards of behaviour) and values of their society. Individuals also have to internalise the norms and values. That is, they have to make them a part of their personalities so that they act on them without reflection. In Unit 3, we discuss the very important role the family plays in the socialisation process.

It is argued that as individual adolescents leave childhood, they are exposed to a much wider array of socialising agents, such as peer groups and the mass media. These may convey different values from those encountered in the family. This may lead to stress because adolescents now have to exercise their own judgement in situations where there are not always clear guidelines. Furthermore, they may not have the experience or the knowledge they need to cope with the situations they now encounter.

## **Role assumption**

Role assumption refers to the expected behaviour that is associated with the particular status or position an individual occupies in society. Every individual in society occupies many different statuses and thus has many different roles to perform. Sometimes the performance of one role interferes or conflicts with the performance of another. When this happens, we say that role conflict has occurred. In addition, individuals may also experience role discontinuity. This occurs where there is no ordered sequence between one status and the next. Individuals may have to unlearn some, or all, of a previous role before they are able to assume the next one.

It is argued that the processes of socialisation and role assumption are more problematical during the transitional period of adolescence. Role conflict and role discontinuity can cause acute distress during the adolescent years. It is accepted that role change is an integral part of the transition process, but this can lead to role confusion and conflict.

For example, a young male may try to portray a 'cool' or 'macho' image to his peer group, whereas his parents may continue to treat him like a child in front of his peers.

Similarly, some young male adolescents may experience (as many adult males do) some confusion as to how to behave towards their girlfriends. The role models their parents present are likely to be somewhat out of step with the expectations young women have of young men today.



## The generation gap

The idea of conflict between adults and adolescents has a long history. The Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that the cause of political struggle could be found in the conflict between fathers and sons. Developing this point, many classical political writers saw this conflict in very positive terms. Many argued that this conflict between generations provided the catalyst for change in society. Auguste Comte, one of the founders of the discipline of sociology, believed that the pressure of one generation upon the other was one of the most important phenomena in social life.

Another writer, Davis (1940) put forward that conflict between different age groups is inevitable, because such conflicts are due to three universal factors in human development. He argued further that these three universals were modified or affected by four variables related to modern conditions.

According to Davis, the three universal factors leading to parent-child conflict are:

- 1 the basic birth cycle difference between parent and child
- 2 the decreasing rate of socialisation with the coming of maturity i.e. young people change rapidly in personal orientation, while their parents change more slowly in response to social interaction
- 3 the intrinsic differences between parents and children in the physiological, sociological and psychosocial planes of behaviour.

Whether these universals in human development actually result in generational conflict depends, he argued, on the four variables of:

- 1 the rate of social change (the greater the rate of change, the higher the probability of parent-child conflict)
- 2 the extent of the complexity of the social structure (the more complex, the higher the chances of parent-child conflict)
- 3 the degree of integration of the culture (the more fragmented the culture, the greater the likelihood of parent-child conflict)
- 4 the velocity of movement within the culture.



## Activity 2.5

(about 15 minutes, not counting discussion)

Again, for this activity, draw on your own experience and observation.

Do you agree with Davis' theory that there are universals in human development that lead inevitably to conflict between generations? Do the processes of socialisation and role assumption contribute? Give reasons and examples as evidence for your view.

If possible, talk with others about this. Write your responses in your learning journal.

There is very little empirical evidence (evidence based on detailed research) to support the view that a generation gap exists, or that it is inevitable in human societies. Indeed, the concept of a generation gap may well be one of the myths surrounding the whole concept of adolescence.

The psychologist Albert Bandura found no evidence to support the view that a generation gap exists. He found that the values of adolescents were very similar to those of their parents and that peer-group values were similar to those of parents, too. This could be explained by the fact that adolescents tend to choose friends from within their own social class.

Also, it has been argued by Danns that the main source of tension between parents and adolescents has to do with appearance and how late they can stay out at nights. The conflict here, however, is not sufficient to cause an unbridgeable gap between them. (Quoted in Gross, 1992: 640)

Similarly, in a recent study entitled 'Situational Analysis of Youth in the Caribbean', Danns *et al* (1997: 146) found that the values of youth were not significantly different from those of adults. They found that:

“When the values of respondents are ranked in order of priority, family and education are placed equally as the top values ...”

We can probably safely assert that these values are the ones that most adults in the Caribbean cherish most.

So, at the end of this unit, how do you now see the concept of adolescence, which is generally held to be a stage through which all young people must pass? The final activity asks you to reflect on what you have learned about adolescence in this unit.



## Activity 2.6

(about 10 minutes)

Looking back over the unit, note down in your learning journal the main point you will take away from this unit which has changed or added to your view of adolescence and adolescents.

In this unit we have seen that adolescence is mainly a social construct, and that different societies and cultures have different ideas of what it is. We pointed out that theories of adolescence tend to have cultural biases. They were developed mainly by European scholars examining the youth in their societies. Thus, many of the experiences and characteristics that they believed were universal (i.e. applicable to all adolescents) are not necessarily so.

In conclusion, there seem to be some significant differences between the theories of adolescence put forward by some scholars and what actually happens in reality. What is probably needed is a more rigorous theoretical analysis, supported by thorough and sustained investigation, of the whole process of adolescence.

## Unit summary

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In this unit you have considered:

- ways of describing and defining the concept of adolescence, with examples from the Bemba culture and metropolitan or urban culture
- different ideas in different societies and cultures of what adolescence is. In some societies, the period of adolescence is very short. In industrial societies it has been extended by longer education, and lack of job opportunities. In particular, you considered whether adolescence can be defined as an age group, a development stage or a life stage.
- the nature/nurture debate, which explores whether biological factors (nature) or culture and environment (nurture) are more important in describing and defining adolescence
- psychoanalytic theories of adolescence, including:
  - Freud's concepts of the *id*, *ego* and *superego*,
  - Erikson's psycho-social theory of development
  - Bos' theory of the process of disengagement by adolescents
  - Jessor's problem-behaviour theory.

Finally, you looked at sociological theories, specifically the ideas of

- socialisation
- role assumption
- the generation gap.

In Unit 3, we will discuss various types of families and how the three main sociological models (functionalist, conflict and interactionist) can be used to analyse the family.

To check how you have got on, look back at the learning outcomes for this unit and see if you can now do them. When you have done this, look through your learning journal to remind yourself of what you have learned and the ideas you have generated.

## Answers to self-help questions

### Self-help question 2.1

- 1 False – although there does seem to be some agreement that the lower limit is marked by puberty, the upper limit varies dramatically from society to society.
- 2 False – this is a myth. Adolescents are generally trying to find out how they fit into the role of an adult, rather than simply rebelling against adults.
- 3 True – this is a valid way to define adolescence since what is understood by ‘adolescence’ varies from society to society.
- 4 True – different societies construct adolescence differently, for example: as a brief transition period of only a few weeks, or as one that extends for several years. Some societies don’t consider adolescence as a concept at all.
- 5 True – this is a valid way to define adolescence in those societies that consider there is a stage between childhood and adulthood. However, as mentioned before, in some societies the concept doesn’t exist.
- 6 True – in many western societies the beginning of adulthood and the end of adolescence may be marked by gaining the right to vote, usually at the age of 18, or by completing high school. Rituals such as the Chisunga ceremony – a social event – also mark the end of adolescence in other societies.
- 7 True – adolescence is a critical time in a person’s life. What happens during this time may affect a person for the rest of their life.
- 8 True – biological signs of maturation often mark the end of childhood and the beginning of adolescence – although this too can vary from society to society.

### Self-help question 2.2

- 1 a
- 2 b
- 3 c

### Self-help question 2.3

- 1 The term ‘disengagement’ is used by Blos to describe the process by which adolescents seek to establish independence from the immediate family.
- 2 According to Blos, group experiences for adolescents can act as a kind of family substitute.

- 3   Blos sees rebellious behaviour as a good strategy by adolescents to reduce their dependency on their parents.
- 4   Jessor developed a problem-behaviour theory which can help us to predict which adolescents are likely to engage in high risk behaviour.
- 5   Jessor argues that peer group pressure increases significantly during adolescence with a corresponding decrease in parental influence.
- 6   Jessor describes a constellation of high risk behaviour as a syndrome.
- 7   To Jessor, high risk behaviour may be a means of expressing opposition to adult authority.
- 8   The authors state that in Jamaica, cigarette smoking is a well-established and widely recognised mark of membership in the peer group of young males.
- 9   Engaging in age-graded behaviour earlier than is defined as appropriate can be a way for adolescents to affirm their maturity.
- 10  Engaging in high-risk behaviour for fun and excitement may be a way of warding off boredom and routine.

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# Unit 3: Young people and the family

Unit introduction .....	99
Unit learning outcomes .....	99
Family types.....	100
Approaches to the study of the family .....	109
Issues facing families today .....	124
The concept of community.....	130
Unit summary .....	133
Answers to self-help questions .....	134
References.....	135



## Unit introduction

Welcome to Unit 3 *Young people and the family*. In Units 1 and 2, we explored theories about youth and the process of adolescence. Young people belong to families, so it is important that we explore family backgrounds and their influence on how young people are perceived, and on how young people perceive themselves, and how they behave in consequence.

We begin with a discussion of various types of families. We look briefly at the roles and responsibilities of family members, including young members. The type of family experiences that young people have affect how they react to opportunities and services. It will also influence how they relate to youth development workers like yourself. In turn, your experiences will have implications for how you approach your work in youth development.

After our discussion of types of families, we look at how functionalist, conflict and interactionist approaches (which you met in Unit 1 and applied to the study of adolescence in Unit 2) can be applied to the study of the family.

## Unit learning outcomes

When you have worked through this unit, you should be able to:

- describe and define different types of families
- summarise and critique three approaches to the study of the family
- outline some important issues facing families and young people today
- discuss the relationship between young people and their community
- apply evidence from your own observations and experiences to the discussion of families and young people
- recognise situations in which your youth work practice needs to take account of family types and communities.

## Family types

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Families are likely to play a large part in your youth development work. Other than groups of young people themselves, the social group that you are likely to have most contact with is the family. You may have to negotiate with the family to release their young people for work with you. You may need their support to run and fund programmes for young people. You may be working with them to help solve some of their problems.

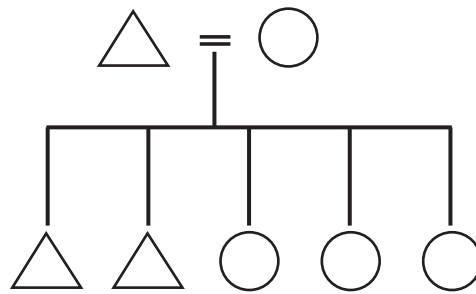
In all cases, you will need to understand their social dynamics, the part they play in the local culture and economy and the nature of their relationship with their young people. When you encounter young people in the community, you are also encountering the dynamics of their families, embodied in their attitudes and behaviour. Your interaction with them has to be sensitive to all that, if you are to do your best for them. In what follows we explore some of the basic ideas that sociology and social psychology can tell us about the influence of families on young people.

First, let's look at what the term 'the family' means. We start by defining and describing different types of families. After you have read this section on family types you will be asked to relate it to your own experience and to that of the families of the young people you work with.

### **The nuclear family**

The functionalist position is that the nuclear family is the basic unit of all types of family, around which other types of extended family are constructed. (You may want to look back at Unit 1 to remind yourself about the basis of the functionalist perspective. The functionalist approach to the study of the family is discussed more fully later in this unit.) This position is logical, given the need for a period of intimate rearing to protect and nurture the young. This seems to require a small nucleus of socially intimate members.

However, the term 'nuclear family', as it is used today, describes a type of family unit that is of fairly recent origin and related to the advanced stages of industrialised societies. The nuclear family is a unit consisting of a husband/father, a wife/mother and their child or children (biological or adopted).



Key:    △ male    ○ female    = is married to

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In this diagram, a man is married to one woman and the couple has five children, two males and three females.

The view that the nuclear family is the basic, universal family type was advanced by Murdock, in his book *Social Structure* (1949). He argued that all other types of family are variants of the nuclear family or additions to the nuclear family.

## The extended family

The extended family is the most common form of family all over the world. There is a range of extended family types, the variations being rooted in economic roles, history and cultural patterns.

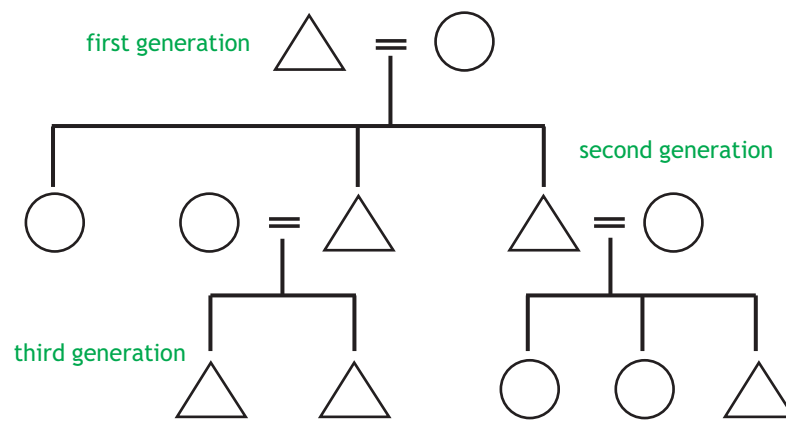
According to Murdock, extended families are extensions of the nuclear family. They may include grandparents and/or aunts and uncles and cousins. However, this model does not cover the diversity of extended family types. For example, in rural Pakistan, the family can define itself to include numerous caste/clan aligned members, depending on the situation, particularly if these people live locally in the same town or group of villages. A family wedding may have over 2000 family guests.

There are two types of extended family:

- vertically extended
- horizontally extended.

### The vertically extended family

When relatives from at least three generations live together in the same house or compound, the family is said to be vertically extended. A vertically extended family may consist of a married couple, one or more of their married children and their children. In this case, there is a linking of three generations through the parent/child bond.



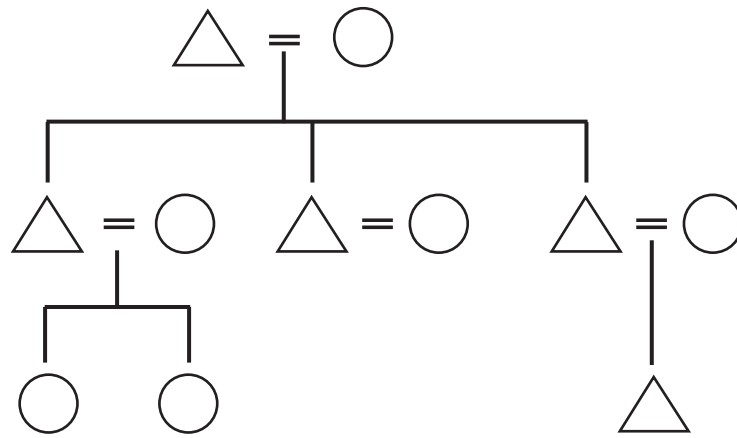
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Vertically extended families were, and still are, common in many regions of Asia and Africa where agriculture is the main form of livelihood. The family tends to live together on the land in a compound of several houses linked together. The roots of this may lie in the problem of succession: families often do not wish to fragment their family land by sharing it with children and breaking it up into small plots that are not economically viable. At the same time, they will want to make use of whatever family labour is available for periods like harvesting. The structure also safeguards the welfare of elders as they age beyond working life.

Among migrant families in metropolitan countries, the vertical extended family survives because of the power of cultural norms and economic and social pressures. However, this is not the case when the economic situation changes significantly – for example, if the family becomes wealthier, if there is pension and welfare provision and if the young people buy their own homes. Even so, they will tend to live near the older members, so that the mutual system of support survives.

### The horizontally extended family

Sometimes families are joined together through the sibling tie – the tie between sets of brothers and sisters. A horizontally extended family tends to occur when two or more married brothers live together with their wives and children. The family is extended across the same generation: that of the brothers.



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In vertically and horizontally extended families socialisation is markedly different from that in nuclear families. Psychological and personality traits, as well as social values, may be very different.

For example, in Pakistan many marriages based on these two patterns are between first cousins. That may strengthen links between the two families who share their children, even when they do not live in the same compound. But it may do the opposite when there is a crisis. If, for example, the two related families have a falling out over rights to a corner of land, a footpath or a family buffalo, the emotions raised are intensified, as emotions always are among closely related family members. This can become a serious source of problems within each family unit. The young women who have married into the family units may suffer from being forced to over-fulfil their normal domestic obligations. There may be struggles over control of the children. Divorces may ensue and there may be pressure for bride money to be returned.

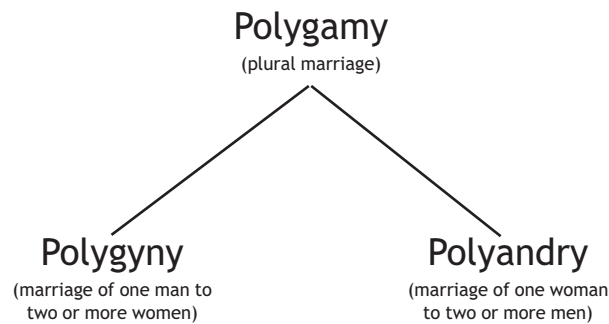
In many instances, families may be extended both horizontally and vertically, giving rise to large groups of related kin. For example, among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, an important kin grouping is the *idile*, which consists of all those who trace their descent through males from a common male ancestor. In the past, the members of an *idile* often lived together in the same compound called an *agboole*. The members of an *idile* form a corporate group who own land, titles and other property in common.

## Families based on polygamous unions

The term 'polygamy' refers to any type of plural union or marriage. There are two types of polygamy: polygyny and polyandry.

- Polygyny is the marriage of a man to two or more women at the same time. Polygynous marriages are quite common in many African societies and among Muslims.
- Polyandry is the marriage of a woman to two or more husbands at the same time. Polyandry is rare. It is known only among a few

social groups throughout the world. For example, the Toda, a people in India, practice polyandry, as do some tribes in Tibet.

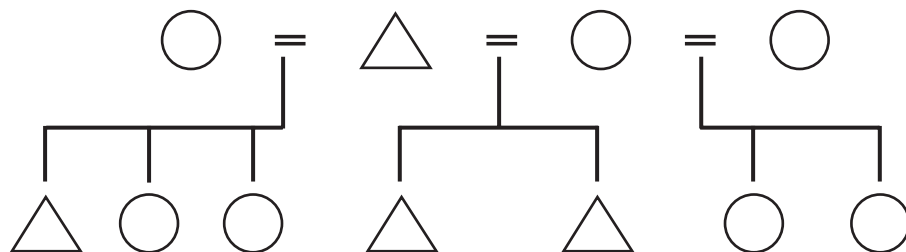


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Some writers argue that when families are formed as a result of polygamous marriages, they are quite different from nuclear families. Thus, they disagree with Murdock that the nuclear family is a basic universal family type.

### The polygynous family

In a polygynous family (a family based on the marriage of a man to two or more women at the same time) the basic unit appears to be that of a woman and her child or children. Very often in a polygynous household the husband/father has a separate room or house for himself. The various units of wives/mothers and their children live apart from him. Each wife and her children usually have a separate room or house to themselves.



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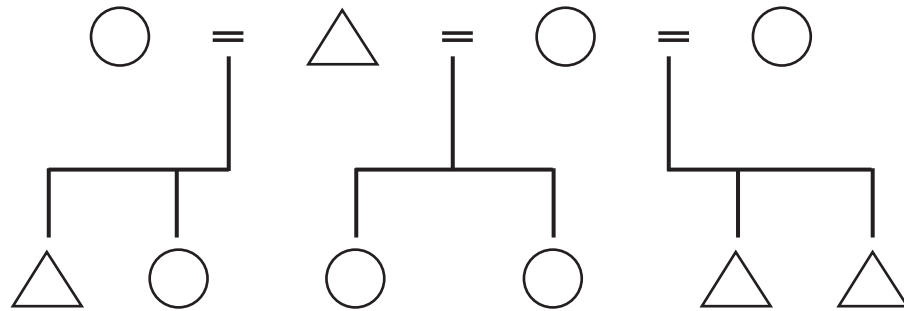
The diagram above shows one man married to three wives. The wife on the left has three children, two daughters and a son; the wife in the middle has two sons and the wife on the right, two daughters.

### The polyandrous family

Polyandry is rare. When it occurs, it is often based on the marriage of a woman to two or more brothers. In some societies, men have to give gifts to the families of their prospective brides, or actually purchase their wives. They pay what is called a 'bride price'. In societies where the bride price may be high, some men cannot afford to get married. Thus, in order to alleviate this problem, societies such as the Toda allow two or more brothers to marry the same woman.



The woman lives in the same house or compound with her husbands and bears children for them. It is not important in such societies to determine just who is the biological father of the children born in the family. The brothers do not have disputes about the paternity of the children. The children belong to the family collectively.



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## Variations

There are other variations in family type that are not nuclear or extended. Some examples are described below.

### A single-parent family

This describes a family where only one adult is present. In most cases, this type of family consists of a woman and her children.

### A sibling family

This is a family in which the siblings (a group of brothers and sisters) live together without any adult being present. This type of family may occur through the death of both parents. It is becoming frighteningly common among families afflicted by HIV/AIDS in Africa.

### A foster family

This type of family may consist of a man and a woman who are raising children other than their own. The children may or may not be related to the man or woman. The children may also not be biologically related to each other. Often, children are put in foster care (allocated to a couple or even to a single person by the state, or a non-governmental agency) so that they can be taken care of for various lengths of time.

### A family based on a visiting union

A woman may be living by herself with her child or children and is visited frequently by a man. She is usually not married to the man. The male visitor may or may not be the father of her children. Even though he does not live with the woman and her children, he may nevertheless contribute financially to the household. He may also help to make important decisions in the family.

### **The matrifocal family**

This family type is prevalent in the Caribbean among poorer families of African descent. In this family, women in their roles as mothers have a great deal of authority over the members of the family. A woman is usually the head of the family which often consists of a woman, her daughter (or daughters) and their children. A significant feature of such families is generally the absence of a resident male adult. A similar situation is found in South Africa and neighbouring countries, such as Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, where men have left home to work in the mining industry. This employment causes them to be absent for many months on end.

### **Families headed by same-sex couples**

With recent changes in the law in countries such as Britain and America, homosexual relationships are not only recognised as socially acceptable, but it has become possible for homosexual couples to marry and have all the rights of heterosexual couples. In principle therefore, homosexual couples can form nuclear and, where desired, extended families. They may adopt children, keep children from a previous heterosexual relationship or have a fertilised egg implanted in one of the couple.

### **Community families**

Some of the young people you work with may live or have lived in a home such as an orphanage run by the state or by a non-governmental agency. Many of these community homes are run by religious or humanitarian organisations, and aim to provide children with similar advantages to those of a large extended family, though they have a more formalised structure.

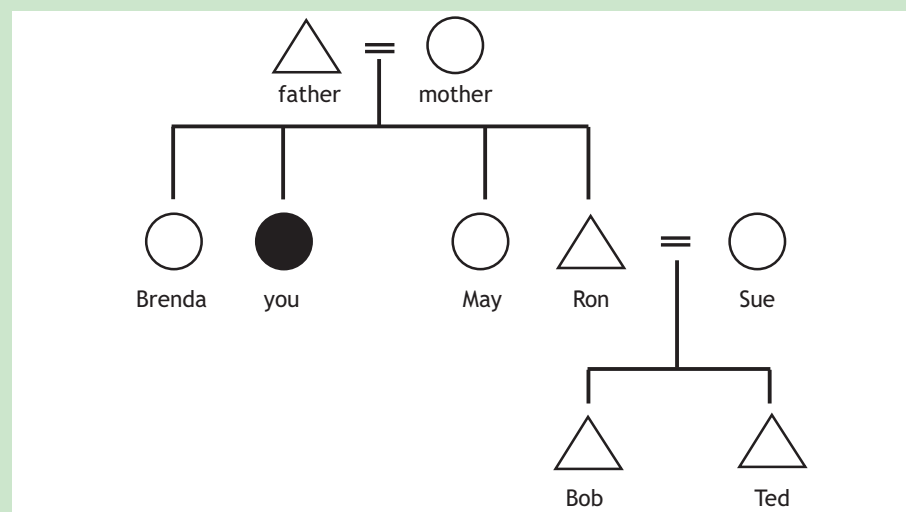


### Activity 3.1

(about 10 minutes)

Using the information discussed so far in this unit, draw a diagram in your learning journal showing the type of family to which you belong at present. In a few words, describe the type of family.

An example is given here as a guide. Add a shaded symbol to represents yourself, as shown in the example. Here, the family consists of a father, a mother and their four children (three daughters and a son). In addition, there is the wife of the son and the children of that couple. Your family diagram may look very different from this one, of course.



### More than one family type

A significant point to note is that individuals may pass through more than one of these family types during their lifetime. For example, a young person may have the experience of moving from a nuclear family to a single-parent family or to a community family such as an orphanage. This could occur on the divorce of their parents or the death of either parent: either way, the change is likely to be traumatic. The devastation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic has caused many young people to experience this. In such instances, the young person or people concerned might benefit from the training and economic support, and professional counselling skills, of a youth development worker.

In reality, no matter how the family is defined or what form it takes, it is generally agreed that it is an important institution in society. It is usually responsible for the care, protection and upbringing of the young members of society. In summary, the family has the responsibility for training young people in the ways of the society. It

is also a critical factor in moulding the personality of the individual young person.



### Self-help question 3.1

(about 10 minutes)

This self-help question will help you check your understanding of types of families.

Answer the following multiple-choice questions by circling or ticking the answer that you think is correct.

- 1 The claim that the nuclear family is universal means:
  - a it is a basic fact of life
  - b it is found in all societies
  - c it is the nucleus of the universe
  - d none of the above.
- 2 In the nuclear family:
  - a the husband/father is often absent
  - b there are no children
  - c the husband/father and wife/mother are present
  - d there is only one child.
- 3 The type of marriage in which a man is married to two or more women at the same time is called:
  - a polyandry
  - b group marriage
  - c polygyny
  - d monogamy.
- 4 Extended families are common in:
  - a agricultural societies
  - b modern, complex societies
  - c industrialised societies
  - d simple societies.
- 5 In matrifocal families:
  - a women play a subordinate role
  - b there are only women

- c a woman is usually the head
- d men are not wanted or needed.

*Compare your answers with those suggested at the end of the unit.*



### Activity 3.2

Think about the family types of young people with whom you work and make notes in your learning journal.

For example:

- Do they come from the same kind of family as you, as you described in Activity 3.1?
- Do they all come from the same kind of family as each other?
- How would you describe their families in terms of the types described above?
- If they do not fit any of the types, briefly describe their circumstances.

Make any notes relating to family types that you may need to take into account in your youth work practice.

## Approaches to the study of the family

There are several theoretical approaches to the study of the family. We are going to focus here on the three theoretical approaches that we used in the analysis of society in Unit 1, and again when looking at adolescence in Unit 2. These are:

- functionalist
- conflict, particularly Marxist and radical feminist
- interactionist.

All three approaches to the study of the family tend to base their research and arguments on the nuclear family. This is mainly because the majority of the researchers come from the industrialised world where the nuclear family is the dominant type of family. It is generally agreed, however, that, as industrialisation spreads, it tends to undermine the extended family and the polygamous family.

The discussion is followed by a critique of the three approaches, comparing their strengths and weaknesses.



### Activity 3.3

(about one hour, spread throughout this section)

As you work through this section 'Approaches to the study of the family', make quick notes about whether you agree or disagree with the approaches, based on your own observations and experiences of your family and other families in your society.

We will come back to this activity at the end of the section.

## The functionalist approach

Functionalists assume that the different forms of the family have evolved in response to the requirements of their situations, the tasks they have to fulfil. In other words their forms and practices are functional for the roles that they play. The questions that then arise are:

- How functional are particular family structures for this purpose?
- What are the sources of any dysfunctions?

By this account the large rural extended families of pre-capitalist societies would become, to an extent, dysfunctional as capitalism developed, so would be forced or persuaded into changing their structures and functions over time.

The functionalists then, in studying the family, are mainly interested in discovering what roles or functions the family has in society. They ask questions such as:

- How does the family help society to continue to exist?
- How does the family train the new members of a society?

They argue that the family has (among others) four particularly important functions to perform in society:

- economic
- reproductive
- socialisation
- stabilisation of adult personalities.

### The economic function

The family as a unit looks after the welfare of its members, who are fed, clothed, housed and protected. The family group is therefore functional for the reproduction of society. In some families, the father alone goes out to work, in others both parents work. Yet in many families, the children, too, have to contribute to the upkeep of the family. They may, for example, perform domestic tasks such as

washing dishes and cleaning the house, or working on the farm or small business. These chores may have an economic cost (an opportunity cost) to the family, in that the children could possibly earn more in wages by doing these chores for people outside of the family than their worth is to the family at that time.



## Case Study 3.1

### Child labour

In some societies (for example in Pakistan and India), children under the age of 15 are engaged in earning wages, which are an important part of their family's income. You can find them serving in roadside restaurants, looking after small tyre repair and petrol stations, and often doing quite challenging manual work. Such child labour is deplored by the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other international bodies and also, in countries like Pakistan, increasingly by the state and religious organisations.

The functionalist policy-maker asks such questions as: Would it be better functionally for the state to spend its resources on educating these children so that they would be easy to train for modern sector industries? In the rapid development trajectories of most countries today, that probably makes more sense than having a policy supporting child labour. This is what economists call an analysis of the 'opportunity cost' of child labour: the loss of value by employing the labour at too low a level of economic return. However, for many families, the labour of such children is crucial to the survival of the family. Families usually have a very realistic sense of what works for them, and therefore are the ultimate functionalists.

Extreme care must be taken, however, that young children who work are not abused, exploited or robbed of their physical and moral resources through begging, child prostitution and working in contaminated conditions. The governments and NGOs of many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where child labour is common, are taking firm steps to reduce child labour. One policy that is proving effective is the introduction of compulsory education up to the age of 15, forcing families to bear part of the cost of development. In addition, poor parents in rural areas are being counselled about the value of education for the future of their children: persuading them that there is an opportunity cost to the family of putting their children into work at too low a level. In Bangladesh, the government has business training schemes for young people in the rural areas, lending them a small amount of capital at reasonable rates after training, so that they can set up small rural businesses.

## The reproductive function

Some of the questions for society in this area include:

- Are enough families producing enough healthy children to make the economy and the society and culture work as it should work?
- Are they producing too many?
- Is the health status of these children good enough, or is it putting pressure on society's resources?

When there are huge population losses after a war or a disease such as HIV/AIDS, then it may well be impossible to staff industries, farms, public institutions and so on. Governments will then do whatever they can to boost the fertility rate or attack the sources of disease. They may suddenly develop a new warmth towards the wishes of migrants and refugees. Universities will investigate why families are limiting their reproductive capacity, in order to advise the government how it can make an appropriate functional response to the problem.

The process of mating and reproduction is an intimate and private matter, but its functions are profoundly social. This contradiction is very important for young people to grasp.

All societies have rules and regulations governing reproduction. The rules governing reproduction vary from society to society. For example, in some societies, females, through early marriage, may become mothers at an early age. In others, marriage and reproduction usually take place much later. Whatever the society or culture, most children in the world are born into particular families, to particular parents. The family is usually very important for establishing children in the social context of the village, the community or the wider society. Children are often identified by the name of one parent or the other, or by their family name if one exists. In this way they establish their initial identity.

## The socialisation function

To a functionalist, the family performs a critical social function in passing on the norms of the culture of the society from one generation to the next. The culture, which is the way of life of a society, has to be taught to its new members. This is managed mainly through socialisation – by observation and interaction with other family members, acquiring social rules and social roles. Socialisation consists of the intricate and numberless processes whereby the new members are taught the values and behaviour patterns of their society. They develop that society's model of right and wrong, of acceptable behaviour and what is unacceptable, of what are valuable or desirable goals and what are not.

The majority of new members in a society are the children of families that make up the social formation of that society. The adult members of the family, the parents or guardians of children, have the central



function of inducting them and establishing them through the socialisation process. Because societies and cultures differ, what is taught through socialisation can vary significantly from one society to another.

An example of acceptable or polite behaviour that children may be taught in some cultures is to say 'Good morning' to family members when they awake. A rule might be: Always speak the truth. A desirable goal might be to get an education by attending school.

As part of the socialisation process, all over the world young people have to learn to value independence. They have to be prepared for a time when they will need to leave the parental home. The goal of eventual independence from family members has to be taught. The value of independence, like other central values of the culture, not only has to be learned, it has to be internalised. By this is meant that it has to become a part of the individual personality. The child or young person has to learn to act on it automatically. It must not be seen as a problem.

Young people are taught to value independence most effectively through their interactions with other members of their family. Parents, in particular, generally have the responsibility of enabling their children to become independent of them. In addition, young people have to be motivated to achieve the desirable goals of the society: the family plays a critical role in motivating young people.

### The stabilisation of adult personalities

Even though the personalities of individuals are mainly formed during childhood, adults still need support that strengthens and protects them from the stresses and strains of life. The family is normally the main agency to provide this support, which stabilises adult personalities. Couples usually give such support to each other; other adult family members may also offer each other support. This need for support may be particularly important for adult members of the nuclear family who tend to be more isolated than members of extended families.

Some functionalists also claim that, within the family, adults can act out any childish elements of behaviour they may still have. For example, a father, through playing a sport with his children, can safely act out any lingering childish elements of behaviour.

The next activity asks you to give examples from your society and personal experience to show the different functions of the family according to the functionalist approach.



### Activity 3.4

(about 15 minutes)

In your learning journal, give examples under each of the headings below. If you prefer, you can give examples from your own family.

#### Economic

List five things that younger members of a family in your society are likely to do to help the family as a whole (e.g. domestic tasks, helping in a family business). Put an E beside those chores which have some economic value.

#### Reproductive

To help you identify the reproductive function of the family in your society, note whether:

- there is social pressure for large or small families
- there is social pressure for children to belong to a particular family type.

List two ways in which the social pressure is apparent.

#### Socialisation

List examples of social values and behaviour which children learn in their family:

- 1 Two examples of acceptable behaviour that children are taught by age six or so.
- 2 Two examples of rules that should not be broken.
- 3 Two examples of desirable or valuable goals.

#### Stabilisation of adult personalities

List two ways in which the family supports its adult members.

This activity should have helped you think about your own experience of families, and relate the functionalist approach to real life.

### The conflict approach

As you saw in Unit 1, there are various social conflict theories which have their roots in the writings of Karl Marx. Here we examine how Marxist thinkers and radical feminists approach the study of the family.

Marxists point out that the bourgeois family structure reflects and supports the inequalities in capitalist society. Some family members exploit others, usually men exploiting the labour of women – in this

way, the family mirrors and supports capitalist values. Marxists argue that the family also has an ideological function which it carries out while socialising the young, in that it conveys the value that social control by the people with the most resources is natural and acceptable.

They may also argue that the family is an institution that is designed to facilitate the inheritance of private property. Property is generally owned by males, who pass it on to their own offspring. To facilitate this, the family in modern capitalist states is usually based on monogamous marriage (the marriage of one man to one woman). Through monogamous marriage and the taboo on sexual affairs outside marriage, the paternity of children is as assured as it can be. In other words, there should be no doubt as to who is the father of children born in a particular family, and only his children are likely to be the inheritors of the family property.

Thus, according to Marxists and also to radical feminists, through monogamous marriage men have a large measure of control over women's sexuality in order to assure their property rights. The family as an institution therefore tends to oppress women and also makes the control of resources by one person or a small group a central ethical principle.

Marxists also hold that, in capitalist societies, the need to reproduce an appropriate labour force for the capitalist system becomes the main role of the family. Young people must have the right balance of consumerist and individualistic attitudes and values so that they can fit into the labour force and will consume whatever the capitalist production system delivers. The labour force must be one that obeys orders and gives respect to private property. According to Marxists, the family is the key institution that teaches these values and attitudes. Parents condition their children to be obedient to authority and to respect property. These children are thus turned into appropriate future workers for the labour force.

Radical feminists say that children learn, particularly in the nuclear family, to accept patriarchy as normal and good, and will therefore reproduce male exploitation of and dominance over women when they grow up. Marxist-feminist writers accept the existence of patriarchy in the family but see the cause in the social and economic structure of capitalism. Since capitalism needs cheap and exploitable sources of labour, women bear and rear the children who will become that labour force; they teach them to accept authority and to be competitive. They service their husbands' needs so that the men can be put back to work each day in an exploitative system. Today, they do this to themselves as well.

In addition, Marxists see the family as a major unit of consumption. They argue that, before industrialisation, a lot of production took place in the family. However, with the development of the factory system in capitalist societies, the family was less and less of a production unit. It became increasingly a consumption unit, as well

as being a reproductive unit for the labour force. This means that the family members have to purchase goods and services produced outside the family, and children have to be socialised into the consumption patterns appropriate to the society.

Marxists also claim that the family is ideologically stereotyped by capitalist advertising as a happy nuclear family unit of father, mother and their child or children. In reality, this ideal family often does not exist. Late capitalism has led to the breakdown of family structures and to the development of all sorts of family groupings, some of which are severely disadvantaged structurally. There are also many tensions and conflicts in the family between the parents, between the children themselves and between parents and children. The family has to practise its functions in a system where individual self-interest is the main value that has to be inculcated. Feminists point to women's disproportionately heavy labour compared with males, and the disproportionate distribution of the resources of the family which, until the postmodern era, was particularly heavily biased against all females.

The conflict sociology perspective helps us to understand how central structural conflict is to all societies. You will meet clear evidence among young people of the power of socialisation and the existence of structural conflict in what they may be prepared to do with you. This may be an issue deriving from a pre-capitalist social formation such as the caste system, rather than a particularly temporary source of conflict.

Consider the following case study example of a deep-level structural conflict.



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## Case Study 3.2

### Structural conflict and caste

This example from contemporary rural Pakistan involved the death of a Qureishi. The old man was highly respected. He had lived in the village all his life and had built the houses of many of the village Choudharys (the landowning families). He had always been known as a skilled and honest builder and repairer.

On the day after his death, he was due to be buried, as is the custom in Islamic societies. However there were no young Qureishis in the village at the time. The young Choudharys, genuine in their grief for the dead man, were not prepared to dig his grave because he was of a lower caste – an interdict acquired within the family from childhood.

This was a taboo that must have cut across a great deal of genuine affection for him, and a collective sense of guilt. But it indicates a deep structural conflict of ancient standing between the two caste groups. Their structural conflict had somewhere in the past been resolved by the caste/clan system of prohibitions. In contemporary Pakistan, normally this conflict is submerged in the day-to-day

interactions of the people living in the village. A functionalist investigator would probably remark on the essential harmony and give-and-take of village life.

In the end, it took the intervention of Matloob, a highly intelligent and flexible Choudhary, who had come into the village some years ago, from the mountains, and therefore was considered a relatively poor man, to resolve the very serious problem of the burial. He dug a magnificent grave, straight and level and exactly the right depth.



### Self-help question 3.2

(about 5 minutes)

Use this self-help question to check your understanding of the conflict approach to the study of the family.

Indicate whether the following statements are true or false.

	True	False
1 According to Marxists, monogamous marriage helps to determine who has the right to inherit private property.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Women in monogamous unions, from the Marxist point of view, are the oppressors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Parents tend to condition their children to be obedient workers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Today, the family tends to be a unit that consumes rather than produces its own food and services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 According to Marxists and radical feminists, the members of a family are not necessarily one happy unit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Compare your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.*

## The interactionist approach

When theorising about the family, interactionists emphasise how the non-conscious processes of interaction among family members predispose them to construct self concepts and concepts of others in ways that are acceptable in that society. This is how their future family roles are constructed for them, and to an extent their future occupational roles. Because the processes seem natural and are never reflected on, this makes it difficult for them to see what is happening and therefore to escape the stereotypes that the family constructs them into. That is unless the quality of the linguistic and symbolic interaction is unusually open and critical.

Interactionists focus mainly on the nuclear family. (However, there are exceptions. The anthropological studies of extended families and communities in Algeria in the 1960s by Pierre Bourdieu come close to the detailed accounts of symbolic interaction of the interactionists. Some of the work of anthropologists like Margaret Mead was influenced by interactionist thinking.)

The anthropologist, Edmund Leach, in his book *A Runaway World* (1967), advances the view that families are under great internal pressure. He claims that the isolation of the nuclear family causes the family members to place too many demands on each other. As Leach puts it:

“In the past kinfolk and neighbours gave the individual continuous moral support throughout his life. Today the domestic household is isolated. The family looks inward upon itself, there is an intensification of emotional stress between husband and wife and parents and children. The strain is greater than most of us can bear.”

The idea that the nuclear family is a source of stress and strain for its members is epitomised in its extreme form by the work of psychiatrist, R.D. Laing, who had encountered the results of this process among his damaged patients. In his book *The Divided Self* (1965), Laing illustrates how the processes within the family, under the pressure of preparing its members to live in the social world, can sometimes be a destructive and exploitative force. His most powerful theory was that the very serious psychotic illness, schizophrenia, was a logical way for some family members to deal with the contradictions they faced in their family experience. Unfortunately, this can lead to the disintegration of the whole personality under the strain of reconciling the two irreconcilable selves that the individual develops to deal with the problems. There can be intensely harmful but submerged competition and stress within families: unspoken perhaps but carried powerfully at the symbolic level in the social interaction. Laing points out that family members can carry the scars of conflicts and hurts throughout their lives.

These problems are not just part of the nuclear family structure that Laing investigated, but can be found in extended families. You can find some of the most illuminating accounts of this in novels and plays and films, as the following example shows.



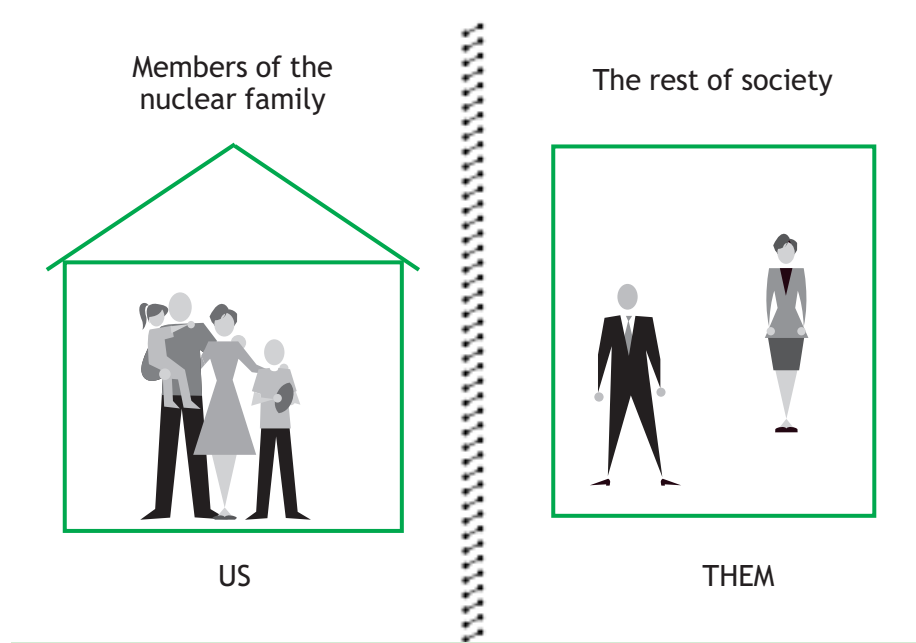


### Case Study 3.3

#### Things fall apart

Chinua Achebe's story *Things Fall Apart* describes a polygamous nineteenth century Ibo village society (Umuofia, which still exists in Nigeria) and its reactions to the coming of white colonialists. In it there is an account of the protagonist Okonkwo, who is an ostentatiously brave and macho warrior and father, precisely because his father was a weak, artistic man who failed to achieve any of the titles he should have done. Okonkwo tries to give his personal style and his view of what a man should be to his son Ikemefuna, to help him rise in status within the tribe, like himself. But Ikemefuna is gentle and thoughtful and is terribly oppressed by this sort of love. This draws him away from his father and into the arms of the white missionaries. In this intricate, moving account there is a powerful study of how the details of the social interaction between Okonkwo and his son carry the structural conflict that eventually destroys Okonkwo and the family.

Laing argues, like Leach, that, because the nuclear family is so isolated, it tends to create a barrier between the individual and the wider society. It is in the family that people first learn to categorise the world into 'them' and 'us'.



This division, Laing argues, lays the foundation for later division such as 'people like us' and 'people like them'. These attitudes tend to foster and reinforce the deep divisions in society that can occur, based on class, racism, sexism and homophobia (hatred or fear of homosexuals).

In agreement with Marxists and radical feminists, Laing also argues that the family is the place where we are first taught the value of obedience and not to question authority. We take these attitudes and values with us into the wider society.

Obedience and respect for authority greatly help the smooth running of society's institutions, but they can have a profoundly negative effect. There is a series of classic studies by the psychologist Stanley Milgram, from experiments carried out during the 1960s and described at length in many standard school and university psychology text books. Milgram succeeded in persuading a high percentage of research subjects to administer dangerous, high voltage, electric shocks to supposed victims (really actors). He was able to do this because he told people that it was in the context of a scientific research project. This revealed that decent, normal, educated people were willing to accept the requirements of what appears to be legitimate authority, even when required to do things that are known to be evil and dangerous in nature. This kind of obedience to legitimate authority is learned in the family. The kinds of ethnic cleansing atrocities, such as those that took place in Rwanda and in Bosnia, are horrifying and inexplicable unless one can understand the power of social influence to inculcate the habit of obedience developed over childhood within family structures.





### Self-help question 3.3

(about 5 minutes)

Use this self-help question to check your understanding of the interactionist approach to the study of the family.

Indicate whether the following statements are true or false.

	True	False
1 Like functionalists and Marxists, interactionists focus on the nuclear family in particular.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Interactionists claim that relationships within the nuclear family are always close and intimate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Leach and Laing argue that the nuclear family is to some extent isolated from the rest of society.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The notion of 'us' and 'them', which is first learned within the family, helps to unite members of a society.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. From society's point of view, it is usually a good thing to teach the values of obedience and respect for authority.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Compare your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.*

The following activity asks you to reflect on the three approaches to the study of the family.



### Activity 3.5

(about 10 minutes)

Look back at the notes you have made during your study of this section, in response to Activity 3.3, about whether you agree or disagree with the three approaches to the study of the family.

Now note answers to the following questions in your learning journal.

What do you think are the main strengths and weaknesses of each approach, particularly as they apply (or don't apply) to your own society?

What, if anything, do they have in common?

The next section will help you think further about these questions.

## Critique of approaches

This table compares the strengths and weaknesses of each of the three sociological approaches to the family.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>The functionalist approach</b>	
<p>It was the first sociological approach to explain scientifically the nature of the family as a social structure.</p> <p>It was the first to point out the crucial part the family plays in the socialisation of new members of society.</p> <p>It is a useful approach to the study of the family in that it examines the contributions made by the family to the maintenance of society.</p>	<p>It tends to focus on the nuclear family in modern, western societies. When applied to extended families and polygamous families, it tends to import findings that are only really secure in relation to nuclear families.</p> <p>It assumes family life is essentially functional, and generally paints a picture of order and stability in the family. This is often only superficially true, and many families experience great strain and conflict.</p> <p>The family is part of a wider fabric of training and support. Other agencies, such as education and social services, carry out many of the functions of the family. Many families in metropolitan countries are supported financially by the state for at least part of the time, particularly in child-rearing.</p>
<b>The conflict approach</b>	
<p>It has exposed the contradictions in the functionalist approach, with its image of a happy, stable family as the centrepiece of the developed world. It points out that behaviour in the family is influenced by the underlying processes of conflict-driven capitalist social formations and carries the marks of pre-capitalist social conflicts. The family contains individuals of different gender and age categories, with conflicting interests, engaged in an often silent struggle over resources.</p> <p>The Marxist and radical feminist approaches have focused public attention on the exploitation of the</p>	<p>It is too prescriptive, and ignores the agency of the individuals in the family. They have values and skills of their own and use them to construct family life in the light of their ideas.</p> <p>Marxism's emphasis on the importance of the family in the inheritance of private property is not relevant for all families, in all societies. Societies can vary a great deal. In some, property such as land, houses, titles are held in common for all members of the extended family. Some extended families can be very large, the assets, such as land, being held in common by a small clan.</p> <p>The Marxist approach, like the</p>

Strengths	Weaknesses
labour of women in the family, particularly in modern industrialised societies.	<p>functionalist approach, tends to focus on the nuclear family in modern, western societies. Its analysis of pre-capitalist forms of the family is limited.</p> <p>The radical feminist approach oversimplifies in claiming patriarchy is the main purpose of family structure.</p>
The interactionist approach	
<p>It focuses on the mediating processes of family life, which is how the family continually reconstitutes itself. This reminds us that families are composed of individuals who interact and communicate and that these processes are constructive. Sometimes, when we analyse groups such as families, we forget that we are dealing with social agents actually involved in the process of constructing the social world.</p> <p>The interactionist approach, like the conflict approach, draws attention to the fact that these processes are full of complex tensions and forces.</p>	<p>It focus largely on the nuclear family in modern, western societies.</p> <p>Leach's and Laing's views of the nuclear family as being cut off from the wider society are exaggerated. Many nuclear families today, even in western societies, still maintain close ties with relatives such as grandparents, aunts and uncles.</p> <p>Laing was a psychiatrist who tended to deal with mentally disturbed individuals. His negative views of the harm members of the nuclear family can inflict on each other are skewed. Not all nuclear families give their members lifelong emotional scars. In any case, emotional hurts can be healed; people do not have to carry the scars all their lives.</p>

Finally, a self-help question to bring together the ideas in this section.



### Self-help question 3.4

(about 5 minutes)

Answer the following question in four or five sentences.

What is the major criticism that is levelled at all three approaches, the functionalist, the conflict and the interactionist, in the study of the family?

*Compare your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.*

## Issues facing families today

So far in this unit we have looked at ways of defining and describing types of families and sociological approaches to the study of the family. Throughout we have asked you to test the ideas explored against real life as you know it.

In the next section we look at a number of issues that face families today, especially those which affect young people and your work as a youth development worker. These are:

- gender inequalities
- the rise in unmarried adolescent pregnancies
- the impact of new technologies
- HIV/AIDS and the threat to families.

### Gender inequalities

The United Nations State of the World Population report for 2005 highlights the central problem for families, of gender inequality and problems of reproductive health for women. It points out that the losers are not just women, but everyone, since women play so pivotal a role in families.

“The costs of gender-discrimination are highest for low-income countries, and within countries, for the poor. Women constitute a large share of the labour force and play a central role in rural

economies and food production. They are also primary guardians of the next generation. Gender discrimination squanders human capital by making inefficient use of individual abilities, thus limiting the contribution of women. It also undermines the effectiveness of development policies. When discriminatory burdens are removed, the capacity and earning power of women increase. Furthermore, women tend to reinvest these gains in the welfare of their children and families, multiplying their contributions to national development. Empowering women propels countries towards the Millennium Development Goals and improves the lives of all.”

The report argues for three urgent policies to begin to remedy the problems faced by families:

- improving girls’ and women’s education (twice as many women as men are illiterate, and there is a huge gender gap in secondary and higher education)
- improving reproductive health information and services
- improving women’s economic rights.

Despite greatly increasing numbers of women in the paid work-force they face a lot of forms of discrimination – particularly a restricted range of occupations, lower wages and lack of access to credit and ownership of capital. They tend to work more in the informal sector which commands poor pay, conditions and security.

In many countries, more and more women are entering the labour force to work for wages, but this tends to leave them with less time to spend with their children. This is particularly acute in a nuclear or matrifocal family, as children may suffer from lack of adequate supervision and socialisation. It should be noted that fathers and older brothers and sisters often help in socialising children. However, it is generally recognised that in the early years, mothers play a crucial role in the socialisation process. (Module 5 *Gender and Development* looks in more detail at gender issues.)

## The rise in unmarried adolescent pregnancies

The rise in unmarried adolescent pregnancies does appear to be an issue of concern for both developed and developing countries.

For example:

- In Jamaica in 1993, 30 per cent of all live births were to young mothers between the ages of 15 and 19, although young women in this age group comprised only 16 per cent of the population.
- In Africa, the Population Council’s data show that the proportion of premarital births to adolescents is increasing in Botswana, Ghana and Zimbabwe.

- The UN Fund for Population Activities found high rates of teenage pregnancy in Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Marshall Islands.

The consequences for unmarried adolescent girls who become pregnant can be severe, for the following reasons:

- Pregnancy can halt or severely curtail education. In many countries, there are limited provisions for pregnant adolescents to continue their education.
- Many young girls are forced to leave school because of pregnancy. In instances where they can stay in school or return to school, the majority choose not to because of embarrassment.
- Bonds between unmarried adolescents and their partners are usually weak. The reality of this is that more often than not the teenage mother is left with the total responsibility of caring for the child, economically and emotionally. It could be argued here that there is a critical need for youth development workers to work with young men in a way that will encourage them to assume their share of parenting. Although contributing financially is a start, the responsibility of parenting goes much further than this.
- Neither parent is economically secure. This is why it is so critical to ensure that adolescent mothers are able to continue their education. Hopefully, this will increase their earning potential and thereby reduce their dependency on the fathers of their babies for their survival.
- Girls' families may reject them, or provide only temporary support. It is often the case that the time that young people most need support from their family coincides with the time when the family finds it most difficult to provide it. This may occur because of financial pressure (particularly in poor households) or because of the breakdown in relationships. Parents often feel let down and ashamed, and exposed to gossip and ridicule by neighbours. Many teenage mothers point out that it is the reaction of family and people in the community, along with economic problems, that often makes life difficult for them. Quite often, they are not sure if it is being a teenage mother, or the fact that they are not married, that causes the problem.

The consequences for the children of young, unmarried mothers, can be also critical, as they may be growing up:

- within a cycle of poverty, especially if the young mother has no or few marketable skills, and/or no financial support from family or the father of the child
- with a parent who lacks personal maturity, education and/or parenting skills (especially if the single mother lacks help from her family)
- without adequate male role models.

What are the reasons for teenage pregnancies? There are many common assumptions. They may not seem relevant if you live in a society where girls get married young and where unmarried teenage pregnancy is not a problem. However, if you live a society where it is a problem, you should look critically at some of the reasons that are given, as there may be a tendency to blame the victim. Read the following case study, which sets out some of the assumptions.



### Case Study 3.4

#### Common beliefs about teenage pregnancies

Many of the moral guardians who cite teenage pregnancies as one of the major causes of social decay, usually cite their reason as a lack of moral fortitude. Other common reasons that are given are:

- the teenage mother herself received bad parenting
- the girl came from a 'broken home'
- the girl was the daughter of an adolescent mother herself.

In countries with a relatively wide social security system, like the UK for example, it is often argued that a large number of young women get pregnant as a means of securing rights to rent a house owned by the local state or other state benefits. These explanations either seem to blame the girl or over-simplify what is often a quite complex set of circumstances.

You might find it interesting to compare these views with the views of a group of young people who were interviewed in a regional survey about Caribbean youth. Here, the results are compiled as a percentage of given answers.

Reasons for unmarried teenage pregnancy		
Priority	%	Reasons
1	21.0	parental neglect
2	19.7	lack of sexual education.
3	18.2	low moral standards
4	12.6	failure to use contraceptives
5	9.8	peer pressure
6	8.2	influence of the media
7	7.0	economic problems
8	2.8	casual sex
9	2.8	the needs of those teenagers who were looking for love

(Taken from Danns, G., Henry, B. I. and LaFleur, P. *Situational Analysis of Youth in the Caribbean*, CYP, London, 1997)



It is interesting to consider the last reason given because it is reinforced in a large, ethnographic study across six countries in the Caribbean. The researchers (Brown and Chevannes, 1995) found that a significant number of teenage mothers reported that they became involved in an early sexual relationship because it was the first time that they felt loved and wanted by someone – a feeling they had not experienced at home.

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Could it be then that the family, contrary to functionalist theory, is often a place where many young people fail to experience love, warmth and emotional security? Perhaps the findings of the conflict theorists and the interactionists are closer to what it's actually like in families for many people?

## **The impact of new technologies**

In many countries, new technologies such as televisions, computers, the internet and even mobile phones make demands on the time of members of the family, and may serve to reduce communication within a family.

For example, watching television and using the internet are activities that people tend to do on their own. By engaging in such solitary activities, the members of families spend less time talking, playing or doing chores with each other. Lack of adequate communication between family members can lead to misunderstandings, tension and selfish behaviour.

## **HIV/AIDS and the threat to families**

In many countries in Africa and Asia particularly, deaths from AIDS have had a devastating effect on both nuclear and extended families. Bhagban Prakash (2000) estimates that 10,000 people die from AIDS each day in India, Thailand, Uganda and Zimbabwe. (Information about education for the prevention of HIV/AIDS and support for those with the disease will be given in Module 12 *Youth and Health*.)

The issue here is that many parents are now dead before their children become fully independent. Traditionally, in many developing societies, relatives and other members of the clan, tribe or village took over responsibility. However, the extent of AIDS deaths is often so great that there are not enough members of the extended family surviving to cope with these responsibilities. Many African countries are now forced to consider strategies used in developed countries where extended families were weaker: orphanages run by state or non-government agencies, or other programmes operating beyond village and family level. Inevitably, with limited resources, it is often impossible to provide substitutes for family care for many children orphaned by AIDS.





### Activity 3.6

(about 20 minutes, not counting discussions)

This activity asks you to think more deeply about the issue of unmarried adolescent pregnancy in your society, and to analyse it in terms of the theoretical approaches this unit has covered.

Start by talking to others about the issue of unmarried adolescent pregnancy. Is it a common situation in your country? You could talk to family, friends, tutors and peers, but you could also seek the views of young people themselves.

Next, in your learning journal, list three reasons for this phenomenon that you think could be made from each of the sociological perspectives on family that have been discussed in this unit:

- functionalist
- conflict
- interactionist.

What, in your view, is the youth worker's responsibility (if any) concerning adolescent pregnancy?

Record your opinions in your learning journal.

You may also wish to discuss with other people (especially young people) the other issues from this section – gender inequalities, the impact of new technologies, and HIV/AIDS and the threat to families – and to think about them in relation to the three perspectives.

Your views and your answers will depend on your society and your experiences. They may relate to wider community issues, beyond the family, which are introduced in the next section.

## The concept of community

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In this section we introduce the concept of community and how it relates to the concepts of youth and adolescence and the approaches to the study of the family you have already explored.

The concept of community is just as complex as those of youth, adolescence and family. It has to be unpacked very carefully before youth and educational policy can be developed. What follows is just a brief introduction to the concept. You will find more detailed discussion about definitions of community and changing ideas about its meaning and functions in Module 4 *Working with people in their communities*.

Communities have interwoven bonds but those bonds are not always constructive. There is a complex power structure in any small community, which may be held together as much by hostility and mistrust as by co-operative activity and affection. The social relationships are fundamentally economic and status relationships. The resources are food, land, property, culture and knowledge. It is hardly surprising that community leaders may block the ascent to authority of high achievers when they are rivals; even the elders of their own families may do so at times. Nor is the role of young people a simple one. Like any group they may, if so motivated, use their education to seize control of the community's resources, or to exploit gaps in the system.

Although many of the problems that young people experience originate from factors operating at the broader societal level, the impact of those experiences are felt at the level of the local community. The community acts as a kind of filter that makes these experiences specific and unique.

The term 'community' has many definitions. It is a slippery and elastic term, yet this does not prevent policy makers and politicians from using the term for social control. Talking about something that is 'for the good of the community' or something else that is 'harmful to the community' elicits strong responses.

You will recall that, for the interactionist, how we define ourselves is very much bound up with our interaction with others and how they see us. The community, however it is defined, provides an important context in which interaction takes place and is therefore critical in the development of identity for the young person.

From the functionalist perspective, the prerequisite function of the community is to support and reinforce the socialisation role of the family: the values and attitudes taught in the home should be reflected in the agencies and institutions of the local community and vice versa. The community, in this perspective, also performs the function of serving as the link between the family and society at large.

It is this potential of the community to influence young people's values, attitudes and behaviour that has led Richard Carter, using Barbadian society as his case study, to argue that there is indeed a 'causal relationship between the decline of community and the decline of youth behaviour.' (Lewis and Carter, 1995)

American researchers, such as Resnick *et al* (1993) looked at young people from backgrounds that might lead to predictions of delinquent or anti-social behaviour. They concluded that if community 'connectedness' was strong (that is when the young person had good connections with school, community organisations or extended family) such predictions were not fulfilled.

Many societies are experiencing a decline in community structure, and in those institutions (family, schools and church) which facilitate face-to-face interaction and the passing on of core values from one generation to the next. Along with this, Carter says, goes a decline in the behaviour of young people. Where HIV infections are high, this also has a significant effect on communities and some may seek to segregate those who are infected from those who are not.

A significant factor that Carter cites in his study was the rapid pace of social and economic change, coupled with the increased geographical social mobility entailed in such changes. This led to a breakdown in agreement as to what society's core values should be, and this breakdown showed itself most markedly in the different value systems developed by the different generations.

As we come to the end of this unit, there is a final activity to help you think about the concept of community and how it relates to young people and their families.

Before you start it, look again at Reading 1: 'The Global Economy', Reading 2: 'The Threat of Globalization' and Reading 3: 'Structural Adjustment and Education', for background understanding of the broad societal changes taking place because of globalisation.



### Activity 3.7

(about 10 minutes)

Consider the following questions and your responses. Write your views in your learning journal.

- Are changes in a community's institutions responsible for the supposed decline in young people's behaviour?
- Or has the decline in young people's behaviour led to a decline in the effectiveness of community organisations?
- Or has a third variable caused the decline in both community institutions and young people's behaviour - for example, a decline in the behaviour of adults?
- Or has the underlying economic structure robbed people of any sense of empowerment, so that a decline in core values is a logical response?
- Or could it be the result of a combination of issues?

This activity, with its focus on the wider changes taking place in society, is a reminder of the broader context in which families and communities have to operate. This is the background to your work as a youth development worker.

## Unit summary

In this unit you have considered:

- the main types of families
- how the three main sociological models analyse the family
  - the functionalist approach, which says that the family serves four basic functions: economic, reproductive, socialisation and stabilising of adult personalities. These functions contribute to the maintenance of the community, and society as a whole.
  - the Marxist conflict approach, which says that the family is essentially an institution which ensures the effective inheritance of private property. Marxists and radical feminists also say the family conditions its young members to obey orders, accept patriarchy and respect private property. It also argues that the family is a consumption unit for the goods and services of capitalist societies.
  - the interactionist approach, which says that the modern, nuclear family may put great strains on its members and that the conflicts between the members of the family may spill over into the general society.
- some of the issues that families face today, including gender inequalities, unmarried teenage pregnancies, the impact of new technologies, and HIV/AIDS.

Finally, the unit introduced the concept of community and, in some cases, its decline.

In Unit 4, we will analyse some of the social issues that face young people.

To check how you have got on, look back at the learning outcomes for this unit and see if you can now do them. When you have done this, look through your learning journal to remind yourself of what you have learned and the ideas you have generated.

## Answers to self-help questions

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### Self-help question 3.1

- 1 b
- 2 c
- 3 c
- 4 a
- 5 c

### Self-help question 3.2

- 1 True
- 2 False
- 3 True
- 4 True
- 5 True.

### Self-help question 3.3

- 1 True
- 2 False
- 3 True
- 4 False
- 5 True.

### Self-help question 3.4

The major criticism is that all three approaches tend to concentrate on the nuclear family. They tend to ignore other types of families, if indeed they recognise that other types exist. It must be pointed out that the nuclear family is the dominant family type in western societies. However, other types of families exist elsewhere and must be acknowledged. Other cultural differences must also be taken into account.

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# Unit 4: Young people and social issues

Unit introduction .....	139
Unit learning outcomes .....	139
Images of young people .....	140
Young people and unemployment.....	147
Young people and crime .....	157
The implications for youth development workers .....	165
Unit summary .....	167
References .....	168



## Unit introduction

Welcome to Unit 4 *Young people and social issues*. In this final unit of Module 2, we discuss three important issues that affect youth:

- society's images of young people
- young people and unemployment
- young people and crime

As in Units 1–3, you will note that some of the generalisations about youth that you can read in the literature are not universal: they do not necessarily hold true for all young people in all societies. You will have to consider whether the viewpoints expressed apply to young people in your culture and society. By taking a critical look at the issues presented in this unit, we hope that you will better understand your own position as a youth development worker.

## Unit learning outcomes

When you have worked through this unit, you should be able to:

- analyse ways, both positive and negative, in which young people are perceived
- describe the impact of unemployment on young people, and their experiences
- outline different theories of crime and approaches to crime, and relate them to young people
- relate what you learn to your work as a youth development worker.

## Images of young people

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To start this unit we will take a closer look at the ways in which society expresses its relationship with young people. One common image of youth views them as a metaphor of hope, change and regeneration. Another contradictory image is of problems and instability.

Irving *et al* (1995) presented a model that connects the functions of the state to young people, and the faces that they present to the state.

“The model has three levels.”

“First, the state is concerned with youth as future citizens. Here it plays a constitutive role in the age order; it creates the future through young people, ensuring that age gives way to youth. There are implications in such discrete policy areas as education and training, and more specifically, in what used to be called ‘character formation’ – the training of young people to be tomorrow’s leaders.”

“Secondly, young people present themselves to the state as actual or potential problem individuals, as ‘delinquents’ as young people who are homeless, unemployed or ‘at risk’ in other ways. Here the state’s role is integrative, avoiding disruption to the social order as a whole. Using familiar techniques of persuasion or coercion, the state becomes active in such areas as policing and welfare.”

“Thirdly, young people present themselves to the state in generational terms, as people united by common experiences. This face of young people came into focus in Australia during the 1950s, and was most marked during the youth movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s (protests against the war in Vietnam and in support of civil rights). In the sense that youth have a different outlook on life, this is still present among young people today, although without the definition and depth of a social movement. The state’s role in this relationship with young people is to maintain the age order, or rather the dominance of the older generation, by judicious concession, by granting access and participation or, as a last resort, by repression. Thus, the state not only constitutes the age order by seeing that age gives way to youth, but also ensures, in the meantime, that youths know their place. We can observe how the state has lowered the voting age, established places for young people on advisory boards, made bureaucratic arrangements for youth affairs, and at times used the police to suppress alternative lifestyles and cultures.”

## Youth as a positive concept

Youth brings hope and change. The idea of youth being ‘a regenerative force’ in society is expressed in Ortega y Gasset’s 1931 theory of history (as described in Murdoch and McCron, 1975: 195).

In this theory, the stages of development for a society are represented as the age-stages of an individual. Like a person, they say, society develops from its childhood, youth or primitive stage to its adult or civilised stage. Ortega y Gasset’s theory proposes that it is in the youth stage that the foundations for taking society to a higher stage of development are laid. Failure to teach correct values and knowledge to the young means they cannot undertake their historic task of transforming society, and this in turn leads to the degeneration of society.

You may hear politicians, senior policy makers in youth affairs’ departments, and youth development workers expounding a modern day version of this thesis when they point out that ‘youth is the future’.

For example, the Commonwealth Youth Charter (1996) states:

“In many ways, the future of each country and the Commonwealth rests with young women and men and their vision, commitment, enthusiasm, skills and ability to manage change and grasp opportunities to fulfil their potential.”

Similarly, we see this position expressed in *Time for Action* (report of the West Indian Commission):

“To say that the youth are the future of the Caribbean is an assertion, which goes beyond the clichéd expression. For the Caribbean is, in developmental terms, much like the youth which is the focus of this paper. From a history of intense colonialism, most Caribbean societies are now in their second or third decade of independence.” (1993: 380).

However metaphors can be misleading. Here, colonialism is depicted as childhood, whereas the decades after independence are seen as equivalent to the period of youth. Eventually the Caribbean will attain, if the youth of today play the roles expected of them, mature adult status. Presumably we are meant to assume that this is the stage where the developed countries are today. From what has been said earlier in this unit, it should already be obvious that this is a naive view. It is potentially dangerous unless it is carefully unpacked and developed. Such metaphors are poor substitutes for proper social analysis.

## Youth as a negative concept

The most prevalent image of young people is one of problems and instability. It is an image that youth development workers often read and hear through the media, usually from the mouths of defenders of the established order.

The continuity of this attitude towards young people can be seen in the following quote from Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*:

"I would there was no age between sixteen and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting."

Shakespeare puts this complaint into the mouth of an old shepherd, much as a soap opera writer of today might put it into the mouth of a pensioner. So this way of talking about youth was already well-established in the 1600s when Shakespeare was writing.

This point is reinforced by Pearson (1983, as quoted in McRobbie, 1994: 205) who argues that for more than a century in Britain, recorded complaints about young people have involved one or more of the following issues:

- the immorality of young people
- the absence of parental control
- the way in which having too much free time leads to crime
- the threat which deviant behaviour poses to national identity and to labour discipline.



### Activity 4.1

(about 10 minutes)

Write in your learning journal your responses to the following questions.

- What are the dominant images of young people held in your community? If you can, give two or three examples from recent media coverage.
- Are they mainly negative or positive?

If negative, note down your thoughts on why your society has this negative image of their young people. Do you think this image is universal (if so, why?) or might it be particular to western industrialised societies (if so, why)?

If positive, note down your thoughts on why this may be so.

A number of authors (Cohen, 1980, Pearson, 1983, Hall *et al*, 1978) argue that when a society faces deep structural problems, which usually entail fundamental changes in the economic system, there is a tendency for that society to find ways of not dealing directly with the problem. The problem is displaced from the economic sphere to the cultural sphere.

In this sphere a group is found, usually a group that is considered to be marginal, and one to which blame can be attached for the

problems being experienced by the wider society. This process is often referred to as 'finding a scapegoat'. Young people are always prime candidates, as they are usually already seen as a problem group.

If this group engages in the most minor anti-social behaviour, it is picked up by the media and blown out of all proportion. This amplification begins to feed on itself, either when other parts of the media jump on to the bandwagon, or when the forces of law and order devote more time and energy to finding these so-called 'enemies of decent society'.

Sometimes, because of the high profile given to a particular group of young people, others rush to join them and the whole process spirals into what Stan Cohen called a 'moral panic'.

## Moral panics

A moral panic means the whole process of finding scapegoats rather than dealing with fundamental socio-economic problems, and the spiralling over-reactions that occur in response. This, in turn, has a number of effects on society. This section examines some of the characteristics and the effects of a moral panic.

### Heightening fear and anxiety

Heightened levels of fear and anxiety encourage people not to face the complexity of real problems. They may retreat into feelings of powerlessness and paralysis that 'nothing can be done' or they may adopt a 'something must be done now' mode (McRobbie 1994: 199). Communities relinquish power, which leaves a clear space for anyone sharp enough to exploit the situation.

### Attempting discipline

Frightened parents of young people may attempt to take action to ensure that their sons and daughters do not take part in what is considered anti-social behaviour, for example going to rave parties or dressing in an unconventional manner. (McRobbie 1994: 199).

### Criticising the family

Moral panics usually entail looking back to a supposed golden age where there was social stability and strong moral discipline. It is not surprising therefore, that moral panics usually entail some criticism of the family, because the family is regarded as the primary agency of socialisation (Pearson, 1983).

### Securing hegemony

The twentieth-century political theorist Antonio Gramsci introduced the concept of 'hegemony' to describe the dominance which the members of the ruling group in a society gain and maintain over other groups within that society. He argued that a ruling group would achieve hegemony by two things: coercion and persuasion.

In terms of persuasion, the state, which represents the interests of the ruling group, will attempt to manipulate people's common-sense view of things to support the policies that suit them. This is done partly by the careful use of positive and negative images, and by language. Gramsci argued that the state attempts to manipulate people's common-sense understanding of things, because in this way it can persuade people that its policies are good for them. The state is often the beneficiary of moral panics because moral panics provide justification for the state to introduce policies and legislation that control peoples' lives more closely.

Gramsci, and other Marxists (for example, Althusser, 1971) argued that, if the capitalist system is to survive for any length of time, it must, like any other system, be able to reproduce itself as a social system. Marxists use the phrase 'social reproduction' to describe this process. The essential relationship of power between those people that own and control the wealth of society and those that do not must be maintained over succeeding generations. Preferably, this should be achieved by everyone thinking that this is naturally how things are. Using persuasion and moral panics is an integral part of this overall strategy, and it helps to keep things as they are.

### Exercising power

The writings of Foucault (1979) suggest why moral panics are such an integral part of modern society. In his analysis of power, Foucault reminds us that it is no longer helpful to think of power as a centralised system of domination imposed on people.

He argues that power is exercised through the creation of ways of talking and thinking (discourses) that can be used to control people's ideas about the various aspects of social life. A discourse sets out the framework and the ground rules for discussing and thinking about any area of social life; it controls invisibly what can be said and how it is said.

According to this analysis, the rich and powerful are always aware that there are alternative ways of organising society and people's knowledge. These alternatives threaten their view of the world. So, the forces of law and order police the borders of acceptable behaviour carefully, jumping on anything that steps over the line. They always have an underlying fear of potential chaos. They are aware that there can be a diversity of common-sense views and that people's common-sense views can be transformed. To take a historical example, this happened in the USA, in the youthful marches and demonstrations against the Vietnam War in the 1970s, which contributed to the American state eventually having to pull out of the war.

The way society is currently organised systematically advantages some groups and disadvantages others. For example, people are disadvantaged on the grounds of social class, race, gender, age and geographical location. There is always an incentive for members of a disadvantaged group to challenge inequities and to disagree with



what the majority think is natural and normal. This may take the form of student or worker demonstrations, leading to further mass action. To take another historical example, this happened in France in 1968, when mass demonstrations by students helped to bring workers out of 'Sud Aviation', then other industries, until a state of general strike and student/police riots occurred.

This type of analysis helps us to understand why young people who create or participate in alternative youth cultures scare society so much. They are feared because they often challenge what most people conventionally define as 'normal' and 'decent', in the way they behave and dress. Furthermore, they usually do so in settings that are not under the immediate control of adults. For example, in the UK, rave parties are usually organised secretly in large barns on the outskirts of towns or in rural areas. Similarly, the language used in these sub-cultures is designed to exclude adults; as soon as terms in their language are decoded by the general adult population, they are changed.

Yet the analysis of writers like Phil Cohen, Stan Cohen, Geoffry Pearson, Mike Brake (and others), shows that these youthful cultures do not fundamentally challenge the structures of power in society. In fact, commercial interests quickly pick up their experiments in clothing and self-adornment, to sell to the general public. And the people who run the new night clubs and rave parties quickly become normal entrepreneurs of the entertainment industry.

In this scenario then, young people who transgress the borders rarely challenge the powerful. But they do provide those in power with an excellent opportunity for labelling them as 'deviants' or 'folk devils' and thereby create opportunities to strengthen the boundaries of normality and decency. This may make such events as the French *evenements* of 1968 and the anti-Vietnam troubles of the 1970s a lot less likely to happen.

The final point to note in this analysis is that young people may be both marginalised in society and yet central to its development. In being branded as 'other', they are excluded from mainstream society, yet they are critical in maintaining the current social structure. It is mainly their potential labour, at profit-generating prices, which provides the means for the rich and powerful to invest in that structure.

### Identifying reference groups

Functionalism assumes that there is a social consensus on what are acceptable roles and values. Within this framework, the existence of deviant values can be accounted for through the existence of sub-cultures or counter-cultures. The term 'reference group' has been used for groups of 'significant others' from whom we learn values and opinions and on whom we model our behaviour.

A cause of considerable concern to the state is that, in times of electronic and visual communications, people can identify with groups with which they have little or no direct contact, especially via the internet. Those who surf the internet are usually aware of such international reference groups – for example, the anti-globalisation movements and the anti-poverty movements. Of course, the internet has also been used by terrorist groups.

The following case study takes an example of how young people's behaviour can challenge accepted norms. It is followed by an activity which asks you to analyse the case study and also to relate the example to your own experiences.



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## Case Study 4.1

### Challenging norms

In a village on the island of Malaita in the Solomon Islands, many of the teenage young women often wore jeans instead of the traditional long and loose dresses. These young women were attracted to the life style of western young women that they saw in films and video and some of them had friends who moved to Australia and New Zealand and wrote to them about life in those countries.

Occasionally, the village was visited by a woman who was the daughter of a former chief. She had left to study at university and had high qualifications and now worked for an international organisation based in New Zealand. On her visits, this woman often wore jeans.

The young village women saved money they earned by trading handicrafts and food, which they had grown in gardens. They used this to buy western-style clothes.

The elders of the village were approached by the pastor to take action against this. The pastor argued that jeans were tight fitting and showed the shape of women's legs and thighs. This was likely to provoke rape and assault, or at least to encourage fornication. Furthermore, jeans were, in fact, men's clothes, and the wearing of men's clothing by women was condemned by the Bible.

The elders decided to impose a \$50 fine on women who wore jeans.

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## Activity 4.2

(about 15 minutes)

Write your responses to these questions in your learning journal.

- Who were the cultural models for the young village women in the case study?
- How might the young village women respond to the elders' ruling?
- How could a youth development worker mediate in this situation?

Think of an equivalent example in your society (for example about dress or lifestyle). Describe the efforts on the part of society (for example elders, other authorities, the media) to control the situation. How would you as a youth development worker mediate in the situation you describe?

## Young people and unemployment

In this section, we look at some aspects of the situation in the early twenty-first century. We look at the nature of youth unemployment and its possible effects on young people. Then we discuss gender and the labour market. Following this we look at two strategies often proposed to tackle youth unemployment (vocational training and self-employment). We finish by discussing a case study about youth unemployment.

In 2001, the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan noted that there were approximately 66 million unemployed youth in the world today, an increase of nearly 10 million since 1965 (Commonwealth Secretariat, May 2004).

The UNFPA *State of the World Population 2005* report says that nearly half the world's population (about 3 billion) are under the age of 25; over 500 million youths (people aged 15–24) live on less than \$2 a day; those at work are mainly trapped in low-wage, low-skill sectors with little chance of anything better or any way out of poverty, and are often abused and badly exploited. Young people are half the world's unemployed.

- Since the 1970s, young people have become increasingly over-represented among the unemployed in developed and developing nations.
- A Commonwealth Youth Programme report (1996: 10) summarised the situation when it pointed out that:

“Young people are too frequently subject to a disproportionate burden of unemployment, with young women and school leavers especially vulnerable. Across the Commonwealth, youth accounts for approximately one-third of the total labour force, with youth unemployment rates around 30–50 per cent or more of the total unemployed.”

- Cote and Allaher (1994) argue that in industrial countries such as Canada, adolescence has been extended through longer education, and child labour laws. Further, the labour of young people is not needed except in service industries and that young people have to wait longer to be fully recognised as adults.
- However, Curtain (2000) points out that young people in the North are benefiting from economic growth. As they now only represent one fifth of the population because of falling birth rates, this means that fewer young people are chasing the new jobs now being created.
- In the least developed economies, the proportion of young people in the population is over one-third to a half, and they are facing increased competition for the few jobs available.
- Unemployment and serious social problems such as drug abuse, crime and vandalism, are likely to be connected and it is often argued that high levels of unemployment may lead to serious social unrest.
- Urban youth, with little schooling and few job opportunities, have played a part in conflicts in Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Sierra Leone.
- A study of civil wars in 161 countries in the latter half of the twentieth century concluded that the average country experiencing civil conflict had only 45 per cent of the males in the relevant age groups in secondary education (Curtain, 2000).

## **The nature of youth unemployment**

However, the nature of youth unemployment needs to be seen against the background of the economies in each country.

How young people experience unemployment will depend on the interaction of many factors, for example:

- race – the unemployment rate for ethnic minority youth in the UK is far higher than that for their white peers. In developing countries, cultural and family connections (*wantoks* in Melanesia) may assist or create barriers in gaining employment.
- gender – women tend to experience discrimination in applying for jobs that are traditionally thought of as men's. However, in some situations, traditional roles may assist in finding some form of employment. Women may be preferred in textile factories

(such as are developing in the Pacific and are common in Asia) or in domestic situations.

- class – an unskilled young person from a lower socio-economic group is far more likely to be unemployed than a graduate from a higher socio-economic group. However, countries with a highly developed education system (such as India) may not be able to provide enough suitable jobs for university graduates. Many other countries may not have enough jobs for school leavers.
- the community in which the young people live – they may not be lucky enough to live near employment opportunities.
- skills – ‘there is a notable widening gap between the skills demand in a wage economy and the skills level of young people, due largely to the failure of the education system to prepare youth appropriately for the wage economy’ (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2004).

Where opportunities arise, many people migrate from developing countries to industrialised ones. Migration is tightly controlled to restrict those coming without authority, even though they may be refugees or asylum seekers. For example, Australia has instituted a policy of mandatory detention for those deemed ‘illegal’ arrivals, and restrictions have been enforced by the UK.

Even for those who have attained legal residence, employment is not always easily gained. For example, data from the Runnymede Trust (1994) in the UK showed that the unemployment rate for Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations was 30.9 per cent, for the African/Caribbean population it was 46.6 per cent and for the Indian population it was 23.3 per cent. All these were high compared to 15.4 per cent for their white peers. This difference could not be explained by differences in higher educational qualifications, since there was no significant difference in the level of higher qualification between all ethnic minorities and the white population.

In an article in *The Times* (UK), March 9 2006, economist Camilla Cavendish writes about ‘Potholes in the global road’. Here she describes how the passion for the free global market is very sensible for the international elite that benefit from it, but not for the displaced, educated middle classes in the metropolitan countries, nor for the non-elite in the rapidly developing countries.

“For now India has more people with the requisite skills and sensibilities to work across borders at the very top level. Those people are joining the highly educated global elite that moves seamlessly between countries. An elite that has studied at the same business schools, worked for the same consultancy firms and even skied the same glaciers. They speak a language of tolerance, opportunity and performance indicators. For them, globalisation offers tremendous career possibilities – and for scientific and business advances that could benefit all nations. Yet they have more in common with each other than with most

of the people in their country of origin. As this group continues to accelerate away from the rest, their less fortunate peers may find it hard to swallow. The stage is set for an ugly clash within countries, as well as between them.”



### Activity 4.3

(about 15 minutes)

Before reading further, write your responses to the following in your learning journal.

- What is the extent of youth unemployment in your country? (If you do not know this, think about how to find out.)
- What impact do you think unemployment is likely to have on young people in your country?
- How does it differ for young men and young women?
- What is the impact of the other factors mentioned - race, class, location, skills?
- Given the ideas discussed in this unit, is it right to talk about young people as a single homogeneous group?

You may have identified some of the effects described in the next section.

## Possible effects of unemployment

Unemployment can have serious economic, social and psychological effects, especially on the young. Leaving full-time education and moving into employment is usually seen by society as a significant transition marker. Being unable to get paid work could therefore be seen in this context as inhibiting the transition to adult status.

Unemployment may force young people to stay at home longer than they or their parents may wish. This may lead to increased conflict, and mental and financial stress within the family. Unemployment may mean that young women are forced to leave school early, stay at home and provide domestic services for the rest of the family. In a bid to secure an income, a young person may be tempted to turn to a career in crime, for example prostitution or selling drugs. The boredom and depression associated with unemployment may lead a young person to substance abuse.

In an effort to regain their manhood, young males may join gangs that fight other gangs or attack other ethnic groups who they think are the cause of their unemployment (for example, German youths attacking Turkish workers).

On a more positive note, young people may seek to take advantage of vocational training or educational programmes to acquire the skills



that are necessary to get a job, or they may start up their own business. There is more about these strategies later in this unit.

## Gender and the labour market

Next, we discuss whether the effects of unemployment are different for young men and young women. One might expect women to be more disadvantaged in a competitive labour market, but that may not always be the case.

In societies such as those found in Africa and the Pacific, traditional roles (those that prevailed before colonial domination or white settlement) had little to do with present-day work roles. As well as farming and fishing, men were often warriors, herdsman and hunters and/or engaged in rituals to maintain culture and traditions. War was a frequent occurrence, against neighbouring tribes, for economic gain, slaves or women. Women traditionally grew or gathered food, made clothing, looked after children and had charge of their early education.

Traditional women's roles are still the base of all societies and are easily modified to suit a modern economy. Particularly in tourist contexts, jobs in cooking, cleaning and handicrafts may be available. In many countries, such as Kenya, men do take the relatively few higher-status jobs as hotel servants and cooks, but the vast bulk of male work is still subsistence farming and fishing, with limited opportunities for young men.

In the following case study, you will read an analysis of the situation in the Caribbean region which shows the complexities.



### Case Study 4.2

#### Gender and the labour market in Jamaica

The relationship between gender, education and the labour market is not at all straightforward in Jamaica. When the data is broken down along gender lines, it is seen that:

- employed females are much better qualified than unemployed females. Indeed, the employed females were the best qualified school-leavers and the unemployed females were the worst qualified school-leavers.
- among male school-leavers, the unemployed males were better qualified than the employed males.

Trevor Hamilton and Associates, *Baseline Project for Uplifting Adolescents* 1995: 11)

If the above data were correct then it would appear that the market rewards females for having better education credentials while it rewards males for having poorer credentials.

This leads us to another important issue, which seems to be a regional phenomenon, that is that girls are out-performing boys in schools and

significantly out-performing them at tertiary level educational institutions (Danns *et al* 1997: 81). For example, at the University of the West Indies, which is a regional university, females constitute 70 per cent of the undergraduate students. This is now reflected in the rise of women in the upper echelons of major private and public institutions. The most senior positions are still occupied by men, but increasingly women are filling the positions just below them.

There is a vigorous debate as to why this is so.

The most controversial attempted explanation is that offered by Professor Errol Miller in his two books *Men at Risk* and *The Marginalisation of the Black Male*. Miller argues that elite males, in the bid to maintain their power, offer more upward mobility to the females of the subordinate group and less to the males of the same group. In this scenario, the young males at risk are largely the children of the uneducated young women of the subordinate groups who have children by men who cannot afford to support them, usually because they are more likely to be among the unemployed. One of the interesting features of Miller's argument is that he thinks this is a world-wide phenomenon that is being played out first in the Caribbean.

The second explanation offered is that by Mark Figueroa (1997). He uses a key term 'gender privileging', by which he means: the advantages, rights, exemptions or impunities enjoyed by one gender but not the other. His main thesis is that boys have been privileged to be outside the home where they learn to be men. For this, they have to learn to be tough and active. This is in contrast to girls who have been privileged in the home, where they learn to be responsible and generally receive more care and protection. Girls and their mothers see a good education as an investment because it assures them of some independence when they grow up and acts as some safeguard against early pregnancy, and because girls are more likely to look after their mothers when they are old. Mothers do not have the same faith in their sons.

Boys are also taught from an early age, particularly in the harsher areas of the inner city, to reject the authority of females; they feel they should be the superior in any relationships with women. Due to the feminisation of the teaching profession, when boys go to school they find women in authority. They are expected to be passive, disciplined and spend a lot of time at home studying: all traits which they see as being part of feminine behaviour.

Thus, as Figueroa puts it:

“Over the past few decades, socio-economic and political changes in Jamaican society have left us with a harsher, more urban, more violent and less caring environment. All of which have worked along with gender privileging to make boys less prepared to perform in school.”

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## Activity 4.4

(about 15 minutes)

Are there similar trends in your society? In your learning journal, make notes on the following questions.

- 1 Which group (females or males):
  - perform better in school?
  - perform better at tertiary level?
  - is more likely to occupy senior positions in major private and public institutions?
- 2 Which group is more likely to be unemployed - well-qualified women/ poorly-qualified women/ well-qualified men/ poorly-qualified men?

If you do not know the answers, think about how you could find out.

Look again at the two explanations given in the case study (put forward by Miller and by Figueroa) to explain the relationship between gender, education and the labour market. Is either of the explanations relevant to trends in your country? If so, why? If not, why not?

Finally, what implications do the issues of gender and the labour market in your society have for your work with young people?

Your responses to this activity will depend on the situation in your society. However, they should have helped you see the importance of considering gender issues and their complex relationship with the labour market when dealing with employment and unemployment issues in your work.

## Tackling youth unemployment

Two more positive strategies that may be adopted in order to tackle youth unemployment are vocational training and self-employment.

### Vocational training

Vocational training is often seen as a key element in any strategy to tackle youth unemployment. However, existing data tend to show that such schemes have little impact in the short term. It generally takes a long time before they begin to make a significant impact on the supply of skilled labour. A major problem is that such schemes are often out of step with the skills needed in the economy.

Also, such programmes may reinforce the traditional gender divisions by training young men for jobs seen as men's jobs and young women

for the caring or service industries; for example, mainly boys do carpentry and mechanics, while girls do secretarial studies and home economics.

Furthermore, vocational courses do not create jobs; they simply allocate existing jobs to those with training. There is a strong possibility that increasingly, young people will be faced with 'credential inflation', because as more people become qualified, the value of those qualifications declines and so more qualifications are needed for any given job.

It is important that young people are aware of where job opportunities are, and that they do not undertake training in an area that offers little chance of employment. It is also true to say that in the future the vast majority of young people will not be entering the full-time labour market until their early 20s. In some countries, young people may never enter the full-time labour market, either with or without an education.

### Self-employment

Self-employment is often seen as the solution for young people trapped in long-term unemployment. They often have few, if any, formal qualifications or training. They are frequently referred to as unemployable. The reality, particularly in the inner cities of developing countries, is that self-employment initiatives will most likely have to take place in the informal economy.

Young people may seek to start up their own businesses by taking small loans. They might do this by opening a stall in a market or on the street. But self-employment initiatives tend to lack the capital needed to bring them up to required legal standards and there is a reluctance to follow the rules and pay the necessary taxes. Without access to reputable credit agencies, this can lead to debt and further entrench them in the poverty cycle.

Yet this is where one often sees the enterprise culture in full swing; it can be breath-taking to see the ingenuity and hard work put into such projects by young people. For example, in Jamaica, which has had a long tradition of 'higgling' since the time of slavery, many women now head up substantial businesses, which started on the sidewalks. Higglers in the Caribbean are usually women who travel abroad to purchase goods that people cannot buy at home. They import them for sale on the pavements and in the street markets.

There is a case for the state to encourage the growth of the informal sector if it is serious about reducing the poverty brought about by the lack of investment in the formal economy. It could be argued that the loss in tax revenue is but a small price to pay.

Module 11 *Promoting Enterprise and Economic Development* will provide you with some of the knowledge and practical skills needed to grapple with the problem of unemployment.

The next reading looks at the unemployment situation in a small Pacific country. It does not focus specifically on youth unemployment, but it highlights issues which will have an impact on youth unemployment, not only in Vanuatu, but more generally. For example, the problems of defining 'unemployment' (and 'employment'), the difficulties of collecting data, and the wider development issues around employment.

Three readings in this unit (Readings 4, 5, and 6) focus on the South Pacific region. They describe experiences specific to that region, but also raise issues which – as your work on this unit will show you – apply more widely.



Now turn to Reading 4: 'Unemployment in Vanuatu', by Anita Jowitt. It discusses the unemployment situation in Vanuatu, a small Pacific country.

As you read, highlight or underline the points which reflect experiences in your country.

## The need for careful analysis

To end this section on young people and unemployment, we look at a case study that indicates the need for careful research, consultation, analysis and planning before undertaking new initiatives.



### Case Study 4.3

#### Young people and employment in Papua New Guinea

##### **Background**

Because of the changes in the global economy and the resulting increase in unemployment, Papua New Guinea had, over the 1980s, experienced increasing problems with the absorption of young people into the world of work.

The education system had originally been designed to cause young people to break from their village roots so that they might become sources of labour power for the urban and modern areas. This system had to be hastily modified by officials so that instead the young people were educated to return to their villages and rejoin their communities.

The modified idea was to enable many young people to return to village life and, hopefully, to use their educational knowledge to bring about an improved quality of life.

This seems to have worked in some areas, which may indicate expert local management. However, as Maev O'Collins describes below, the general picture was rather different, in that it is clear that those wishing to change the situation had simply not analysed the issues at all clearly.

## Community perspectives

“Jealousy of those who have achieved economic success and the desire to cut down the ‘tall poppies’ is a feature of community life, which also makes it difficult for new ideas, and social as well as economic projects to be accepted by others and to receive support and encouragement from community leaders. Carrier, in his consideration of the use of new knowledge in a Manus island community (1984), points to the problems experienced by those who return to a small community with skills which have an economic value but which other members of the community expect to obtain freely or as part of an unequal exchange relationship.”

“There are other ways in which jealousy can evidence itself with sorcery or through fear that sorcery may be used, either against the individual or more commonly against a member of his or her family. This may be a serious or limiting factor in the development of small business ventures or other rural economic projects. Until formal education is linked more to other social values and beliefs in society, it is likely to be difficult or even impossible for many young people to make full use of knowledge and skills for local development.”

“Attempts to develop a more community-based approach to primary school education have met with mixed success. Parents often see the school as ‘the road out of the village’, particularly as the language of instruction is a major factor isolating the school from the community. Parents have little real understanding of the type of education that their children are receiving, except that it will get them jobs in town. They are disappointed when children fail to gain places in high schools or return home after failing to obtain wage employment, and may blame the child for not working hard enough or the teachers for favouring other children.”

(From: M. O’Collins, 1986.)



### Activity 4.5

(about 10 minutes)

Make notes in your learning journal about what you see as the main underlying problems for young people in the case study.

- Is there a similar problem in your community?
- What strategies might you as a youth development worker use to combat the main problem described in the case study?

The case study raises the issues of understanding how a local community works, the hopes and expectations of its members, and their attitudes to change. It shows the need for sensitive and aware planning of new initiatives.

We have only looked briefly here at these aspects of youth development work. You will learn more about them in other CYP Diploma modules, including:

- Module 4 Working with People in their Communities
- Module 5 Gender and Development
- Module 8 Project Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
- Module 11 Promoting Enterprise and Economic Development.

## Young people and crime

Negative views of young people have often led them to be labelled as criminals or potential criminals. This unit ends with a discussion of the issue of crime and how it affects young people.

There is debate and a variety of policies in different countries about the age at which young people can be held responsible for their own actions. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires governments to set a minimum age below which children shall be presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the penal law (Section 40). In Australia, for example, the age is 10, but up to the age of 14 the prosecution must prove that the young person knows that his or her conduct is wrong.

This section looks at:

- perspectives of juvenile delinquency
- types of crime, with a more detailed look at drug-related crime
- responses to delinquency.

### Perspectives

Crime and other forms of anti-social behaviour have been generally defined as juvenile delinquency and this has been the subject of considerable research and theory development. Coventry and Polk (1985) suggest three perspectives of juvenile delinquency:

- individual
- group
- structural.

<b>Individual</b>	Individual-centred theories tend to be functionalist and to focus on poor socialisation and lack of appropriate controls. This is the basis for treatment strategies in dealing with delinquency. In Module 3 <i>Principles and Practice of Youth Development Work</i> , you will learn about a treatment model of youth work, which stems from this perspective. These strategies also have some connection with the psychological theories outlined in Unit 2 of this module.
<b>Group</b>	Group perspectives stem from the observation that delinquent activities often occur in groups. Interactionist theories argue that human nature emerges from interactions with others. Labelling theory (see earlier in this unit) argues that defining young people as troublemakers is a factor in them becoming so.
<b>Structural</b>	<p>Structural perspectives include a range of theories and traditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strain theory argues that delinquency results when young people have aspirations which are not achievable, because legitimate means for success are not available. For example, if school leavers are unable to get jobs which they have been led to expect, they might strike back at the system, which they view as responsible for their failure. This may also take the form of an attack on another group (for example Indo-Fijians, Asians in Africa) whose members may be used as scapegoats.</li> <li>● Cultural deviance perspectives argue that there is a distinct set of values which characterise a particular group and which are different from those of the mainstream community. This relates to the 'under-class' ideas outlined in Unit 1. An example of this is in workplaces where there is a culture of small-scale stealing (materials from building companies, pens from offices).</li> <li>● Control theory analyses the factors that increase the bonds or commitments that tie young people to the social order. These links to school, family, community and peers have been described as connectedness (Resnick <i>et al</i>, 1993). You may wish to revise the community section of Unit 3.</li> <li>● Conflict theory views delinquent behaviour as the outcome of structural social conflict - class conflict, age group conflict, gender conflict, caste conflict. This is essentially a Marxist-influenced framework. Conflict theorists are less interested in patterns of delinquency than in an analysis of the law and how its workings relate to the social structures in a society.</li> </ul>

## Types of crime

The three categories of crime discussed here – crimes against property, crimes against people, and crimes related to drugs – are frequently combined, but often one of them may be dominant.

### Crimes against property

Crimes against property frequently include all forms of stealing (burglary, street mugging, car theft) as well as damage to property (vandalism). Vandalism often involves damage to public property such as street lights, gardens and public telephones. It can also include graffiti where young people paint slogans or signatures on walls, public transport vehicles, or any other surface. Vandalism is usually considered as a type of protest and can be analysed from a conflict theory or cultural deviance perspective.

### Crimes against people

While people may be assaulted or even killed in the course of burglary, car high-jacking or other theft, some crimes against people are committed without these motives. Young people under the influence of alcohol frequently become violent and aggressive, and some are unable to control anger even without the influence of substances. Domestic violence, often (but not invariably) assault by a man on a woman or children, is also a crime against the person. Arguments that this behaviour is sometimes acceptable and a necessary form of discipline are no longer valid.

### Crimes related to drugs

While in many countries the possession and use of certain drugs is a crime, possibly even more crime is committed in order to be able to buy drugs. Many drugs are addictive and dealers often encourage young people to use drugs by providing them cheaply until they are addicted. The craving for heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine can be unbearable. Addicts discard all values of right and wrong in order to end their cravings.

Not all drugs are illegal and countries may differ in determining legality. Some countries have 'decriminalised' soft drugs (i.e. those that are less addictive, such as cannabis) in that the possession of small quantities is ignored, but dealing any amount is not. Many young people experiment with drugs without becoming addicted or heavily involved. Drug-taking is part of their risk-taking behaviour, and a heavy-handed response by the authorities may reinforce rather than discourage their behaviour. Drug use will be covered in more detail in Module 12 *Youth and Health*.

Here is a list of the major types of drug that may be used by young people.



## Drugs that are usually legal:

- **Alcohol.** Most countries have an age restriction on the purchase of alcohol, prohibiting it to those under 18 or 21. In some Muslim countries, it is not legal, and is considered to be *haram* (forbidden) in Islam. Home-produced alcohol, especially if it is distilled, may be illegal and dangerous. Alcohol is not harmful in moderate quantities, but young people may engage in 'binge drinking' where they consume a large amount over a period of time (for example, over a weekend) and this can contribute to violent behaviour and have harmful effects on health.
- **Tobacco.** Tobacco has little effect in the very short term, though use over a longer period can be extremely harmful to health for some people, leading to lung cancer and heart disease.
- **Chroming.** This is a term given to inhaling the fumes of substances such as glue (which may need to be heated), petrol or paint. A paper bag is used to concentrate the fumes. This produces a psychoactive effect and sometimes hallucinations, and can be very harmful to the body. It is used by young people in poor communities, where other options are not easily afforded.
- **Kava or Yaqona.** This is part of the customs of Pacific peoples and is made from the pulp of a root (sometimes sold dried) which is watered and drunk. This forms part of traditional ceremonies of greeting and business in village communities but more recently has been drunk at parties, possibly as a substitute for alcohol. It has no short-term harmful effect, though long-term use can affect skin and nails.

## Drugs that are usually illegal:

- **Marijuana**, also known as cannabis, may also be referred to as 'hash', 'ganja', 'dagga' and by other local names. The drug is produced from the leaves of the plant, dried like tobacco or compressed into a resin. It forms part of the normal culture of some countries. It is fairly easy to grow and proliferates in warm climates. It is normally smoked or occasionally eaten in scones or biscuits. Experts suggest that it can have a harmful effect on the brain, contributing to schizophrenia in susceptible people, though it has little short-term harmful effect.
- **Heroin and other opium derivatives.** This is produced from the seedpods of the poppy plant and forms a major international illegal trade. Legally produced derivatives, such as morphine, provide strong painkillers that are used in medical treatment. Heroin is highly addictive but is often diluted, sometimes with dangerous substances such as detergent. It is sometimes difficult to predict the strength and overdoses may be fatal. It is normally injected or smoked. It produces good feelings and is not significantly harmful if it is pure and doses are controlled.



Addiction induces cravings, which can dominate behaviour and often lead users to involvement with crime.

- **Amphetamines.** Normally in the form of pills, including the popular 'ecstasy', amphetamines are used by young people in developed societies to keep awake and prolong enjoyment at dances and discos.
- **Cocaine.** Cocaine is made from *coca*, a leaf grown mainly by small farmers in South America. It appears as a white powder and is often inhaled through the nose. Like heroin, it can be mixed with harmful substances and this increases the danger of using it.



### Activity 4.6

(about 10 minutes, not counting the further research)

In your learning journal, summarise what you already know about drug use and drug-related crime in your country. For example:

- What drugs are available to young people in your country?
- Which are widely used?
- Which are seen as a serious problem?
- What are the likely penalties?
- What are the wider effects on society?

If possible do some further research. Ask young people in your community about what they know of the use of drugs. Try to find out about the effects of these drugs, for example by talking to your local doctor, by consulting a medical dictionary or by accessing information on the website, using a search engine such as Google.

## Responses to delinquency

Here, we consider different responses to delinquency and at ways of dealing with juvenile crime. As you read, compare the responses described with processes in your country.

We look at:

- juvenile courts
- family conferences
- imprisonment
- community based programmes

- restorative justice
- traditional justice.

### Juvenile courts

In developed countries such as the USA, Britain, Australia and Canada, special juvenile or children's courts emerged at the end of the nineteenth century or beginning of the twentieth century. These courts dealt with young people, usually to the age of 17, and were concerned not only with those who had broken the law but also those who were neglected or abused. Thus the courts became more concerned with finding the best solution for young people's problems and less concerned with issues of guilt or innocence. They were also concerned to separate young people from the adult justice system, where they might come into contact with inappropriate role models. Therefore, young people were frequently removed from family care for very minor offences if the family was judged as neglectful. Young women were often removed into state care if they were sexually active or likely to become so. Reforms of the 1980s separated criminal from family issues (care and protection) and brought the treatment of young women closer to that of young men.

### Family conferences

A family group conference is intended to be a relatively informal, loosely structured meeting, in which the offender and her or his extended family (and a legal advocate in some systems) are brought together with the victim, her/his supporters, and any other relevant parties to discuss the offending, and to negotiate appropriate responses. Clearly, there is an overlap between these conferences and alternative dispute resolution programs.

There is also some overlap with earlier ideas, with a major objective being to divert young people from the formal court process and to make the hearing less formal. However, one of the objectives of family conferences is generally to make young people accountable for their offences by encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions, to make good the damage done, or to accept a penalty.

Involving victims directly in decision-making is an important aspect of this process of accountability. Through direct confrontation with the offender, it is argued that victims are able to express their anger and frustration, and have their needs taken into account. It also enables victims to participate in the process of restitution and reparation.

Another feature of the conferences, which is stressed in each of the settings, is the involvement of parents. It is argued that by making the extended family central to the decision-making process, family group conferences empower families. At the same time, the conferences are considered a way of ensuring that families take more responsibility,

and are held accountable for their children's behaviour (Alder and Wundersitz, 1994).

## Imprisonment

In developed countries, custodial sentences for young people are often served in special institutions (youth training centres, reformatories, etc.) The objective is to separate young offenders from older offenders. Generally, custodial sentences are only given for serious crimes or repeated offences.

## Community-based programmes

Community-based programmes are alternative sentences to imprisonment. They include probation, where offenders must meet regularly with a trained probation officer who will help them find work and accommodation, and give general advice. These programmes include forms of community service, specific educational programmes and programmes designed to rehabilitate.

## Restorative justice

Restorative justice involves offenders facing those they have harmed and accepting responsibility for their actions. It has been used with serious offenders serving prison sentences, but may also be a part of a conferencing process, which may be an alternative to a court appearance. The aim of conferencing is to divert offenders from the justice system by offering them the opportunity to attend a conference to discuss and resolve the offence, instead of being charged and appearing in court. Conferencing is not offered where offenders wish to contest their guilt.

The conference, which normally lasts between 1 and 2 hours, is attended by the victims and their supporters, the offenders and their supporters, and other relevant parties. The conference co-ordinator focuses the discussion on condemning the act, without condemning the character of the person who performed the act. Offenders are asked to explain what happened, how they have felt about the crime, and what they think should be done. The victims and others are asked to describe the physical, financial and emotional consequences of the crime. This discussion may lead the offenders, their families and friends to experience the shame of the act, prompting an apology to the victim. A plan of action is developed and signed by key participants. The plan may include the offender paying compensation to the victim, doing work for the victim or the community, or any other undertaking the participants may agree upon.

## Traditional justice

In many societies, indigenous populations have had their traditional forms of dealing with crime and punishment replaced by a system of law and courts based on metropolitan countries' practice and developed as part of a complex modern state. In some societies, such

as those in New Zealand and Australia, indigenous populations have become minorities because of migration from Europe and elsewhere over a very long period.

In some countries, less serious offences by young people have been dealt with by traditional practice. This has been tried on occasions in Australia with Aboriginal young people. Readings 5 and 6 which you will look at next, show the use of customary processes (*kastom*) in Vanuatu. Minor offences (breaking-and-entering, shoplifting, drinking) were dealt with by chiefs who were familiar with offenders and victims. Chiefs undertook pastoral care and reconciliation, and repatriated offenders to their home islands when other deterrents were ineffective. Research in Vanuatu indicated that young people felt they had been fairly treated under *kastom* law.

Such an approach is useful for a country such as Vanuatu, which has little institutional capacity for dealing with juvenile offenders. However, a number of questions have arisen. The first is the possibility of inadvertently counteracting obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A further issue is the lack of appeal from *kastom* decisions. Finally, concern has been expressed that offences such as rape might be treated trivially, as women's rights have not been well protected by *kastom*.



Now turn to Reading 5: 'Young people in conflict with the law in the South Pacific region', by Tess Newton Cain, and Reading 6: 'Disentangling juvenile justice and *kastom* law in Vanuatu', by Michael Morgan.

Both describe approaches to juvenile crime in the South Pacific region and how the criminal justice system and traditional practices deal with it. As you read, note aspects which are similar or different to experiences and approaches in your country.

The next activity asks you to describe and critique responses to delinquency in your country.



### Activity 4.7

(about 15 minutes)

In your learning journal, write short responses to the following questions.

- What is the process for dealing with juvenile offenders in your country? (If you do not know, think about how you will find out.)
- Do you think that it is adequate?
- If not, in what specific way(s) should it be improved? Consider the options outlined in this section.

## The implications for youth development workers

To end this unit on young people and social issues, we ask you to think about the implications for youth development workers. How will the way young people are seen by society, their experiences of unemployment (or employment) and the problems of crime affect your work with them?

The principal implication for youth development workers is that their work with individuals or groups of young people cannot be developed in isolation. Young people cannot be separated from the problems and issues confronting their communities. The problems will affect them and because they are often powerless, this may mean that they can only deal with these problems in a symbolic way. Nor can we only confine our work to the individual and community level.

“The basic causes of poverty do not lie within poor communities, and consequently planning must be at both the community and the national level. If action is taken only within the communities, it will be ineffective, since it would not address the structural aspects of the current economic system, which is the dominant cause of the inter-generational reproduction of deprivation among the poorest people, excluding them from poverty-reducing job opportunities.”

(The Economics of Child Poverty in Jamaica, UNICEF Caribbean Office, 1995)

The crisis we face in both developed and developing countries is that the economic policies based on freeing up the processes of globalisation and the imposition of structural adjustment, have trapped many communities in poverty. Young people have been disproportionately affected by these policies. Youth development workers therefore must seek to intervene, at least at the level of the national state, if they are to be more than merely first-aid workers. But given that the problems stem from the workings of international markets, then the real intervention should be at the international level, perhaps through the Commonwealth as a political body.

This is a dangerous, complex and difficult task. Maybe it can only be tackled at a collective level through professional associations of youth development workers or by youth development workers using their networking skills, joining other pressure groups and advocating on behalf of young people.

Of course, the ideal is for youth development workers to create the conditions for young people to act as their own advocates. If so, then they have to be integrated into the power structures of the national community, at least.

Whichever method we choose, we must ensure that we do not just use young people's voices to achieve our objectives, but that they are genuinely integrated into the national decision-making process. Linden Lewis reminds us that:

“It is at the level of the state that the broad political and social parameters are laid down which defines some of the terms of the social reproduction of youth.”

(Lewis and Carter, 1995: 25)



### Activity 4.8

A final reflective activity.

In your learning journal, reflect on what you have learned during this module.

Aim to write down at least:

- two ways your thinking has changed or developed since the start of the module - for example, changes in your understanding of young people's experiences of growing up in your society, and the problems they face.
- two ways you might change the way you work - for example, to take account of what you have learned about different social and cultural traditions or family systems.

For this activity you may want to draw on the young people's voices you have been collecting since the first activity in this module (Activity 1.1 from Unit 1).

We hope this activity has helped you to bring together your learning from the module and that it will help you prepare for the assignment. Good luck with your assignment, which follows the module summary.

## Unit summary

In this unit you have considered:

- how young people are seen, with both positive and negative images of youth in society
- youth unemployment and its effects on young people
- young people and crime, including theories of juvenile delinquency, types of crime, especially drug-related crime, and different responses to delinquency
- the implications for youth development workers' practice, both as individuals and collectively.

This module on young people and society has also introduced many ideas and issues which will be developed more fully in later modules.

To check how you have got on, look back at the learning outcomes for this unit and see if you can now do them. When you have done this, look through your learning journal to remind yourself of what you have learned and the ideas you have generated.



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# Summary

Module summary .....	173
Glossary .....	174
Further reading .....	177



## Module summary

In this module *Young People and Society* you have learned about the sociological theories that have influenced youth development work. You have also examined key concepts, and analysed the issues that young people and their families face.

In the module you have studied:

- how young people are perceived in different societies and from different sociological perspectives
- a range of definitions of youth and adolescence
- different types of family structures, the principal roles of the family in society and the problems they face
- the social issues facing young people and the communities in which they live.

If you have successfully completed this module, you should now be able to:

- describe the experience of growing up as a young woman or young man, and different perceptions held by young people and adults
- outline and critique different theories of adolescence
- analyse the position of young people in your society
- discuss the influence of family, peers and community on individuals and groups
- discuss the range of social contexts as they relate to young people in your region
- compare different social and cultural traditions in the way in which they treat young people
- work in a way that is sensitive to social and cultural traditions
- identify situations in which you need to adapt your practice to take account of different social and cultural traditions
- communicate your knowledge to young people and adults in an accessible manner.

Your work on this module and on Module 1 will give you a firm basis for your study of Module 3 *Principles and Practice of Youth Development Work*. We wish you good luck with your studies as you move on the next module.

## Glossary

conflict theory	An approach to the study of society or social phenomena that holds that conflict between individuals and groups in a society is inevitable.
culture	The total way of life of a people in a society.
dysfunctional	Functionalists use this term to describe a part or parts of a society that are acting against its proper functioning.
<i>ego</i>	A term used by the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud to describe that part of an individual's personality that deals with the outside world and enables a person to distinguish reality from wishful thinking. The <i>ego</i> represents reason and common sense.
functionalism	An approach to the study of society that compares society to a biological organism. Just as the body, for example, has several parts which have specific functions, so, too, does society. The parts of a society function to maintain the whole. A functionalist or structural-functionalist is one who takes this approach.
<i>id</i>	A term used by the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud to describe that part of an individual's personality that powers instinctive needs and drives. The <i>id</i> contains everything that is present at birth, most of all our instincts.
interactionism	Sometimes called 'symbolic interactionism', this is an approach to the study of society that holds that in order to understand social behaviour, you have to interpret the meanings social action has for the individual actors involved.
monogamy	The state of having only one husband, wife or sexual partner at any one time.

norms	The normal standards and patterns of behaviour which the members of a society are expected to follow. They can be treated as the rules and regulations governing behaviour.
patriarchal	Some feminists see society as being patriarchal: that is, dominated and ruled by men, where men have power and control over resources and tend to dominate women.
peer group	A group of individuals who are equal or nearly equal in age and status. A peer group may consist of one's classmates in school.
polyandry	The marriage of a woman to two or more husbands at the same time. It is very rare.
polygamy	Any form of plural marriage - polygamy is of two types: polygyny and polyandry.
polygyny	The marriage of a man to two or more wives at the same time.
puberty	The biological stage of development when individuals begin to develop their secondary sexual characteristics such as hair on their sexual organs, and when their sexual organs develop so that sexual reproduction is possible.
role	The expected behaviour of a person occupying a particular position in society. For example, a person who is a doctor performs the role of a doctor. He is expected to behave in ways appropriate to his position as a doctor.
social construct	This is a definition of a social phenomenon that is constructed by society, based on that society's assumptions about the nature of social life. For example, every society has a definition of 'deviant behaviour' which is constructed as the opposite of what is supposed to be normal behaviour. However, what is deviant in one society may not be at all deviant in another society.

socialisation	All the means and processes whereby the new members of a society are taught the norms and values of the society.
society	A system of social relationships between individuals and groups. On a concrete level, it also describes a population occupying a particular territory, having some form of government and sharing a common culture.
status	The social value of a position an individual occupies in the society. Everyone has some sort of status, even a newborn.
super-ego	A term used by the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud to describe that part of an individual's personality that passes judgement on our thoughts and actions.
syndrome	A cluster of traits, symptoms or characteristics.
values	Beliefs that certain things are good, desirable or worthwhile. They define those things that are worth striving for in society.



## Further reading

This is a list of books and articles referred to in the module and suggestions for exploring topics further. You are encouraged to read as widely as possible during and after the course.

We suggest you discuss further reading with your tutor. What is available to you in libraries? Are there other books of particular interest to you or your region? Can you use alternative resources, such as newspapers and the internet?

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# Assignments

A final reminder about the assessment requirements for this module. Your work in this module will be assessed in the following three ways:

- 1 a written report of 2000–2,500 words (worth 50 per cent of the final mark)
- 2 a review of the learning journal you keep (worth 20 per cent of the final mark)
- 3 a written examination set by the institution in which you are enrolled for this Diploma (worth 30 per cent of the final mark).  
As an alternative to the examination, you may be given the opportunity to complete a second written report of 1,000 words.

Note: make sure you discuss the assessment requirements with your tutor so that you are clear about what you are expected to do and when, and any particular requirements in your institution.

## Assignment 1

This assignment counts towards your final assessment in this module and is worth 50 per cent of the final mark.

How are the young people in your society acting in relation to social and economic change, including such issues as unemployment and crime? What are the implications for your work practice?

To write this report you will need to:

- analyse how young people are seen in your society
- find out what the issues are for young people in your society
- describe how young people deal with these issues
- gather local statistics, and investigate one or more existing youth work initiatives that relate to these issues
- analyse the implications of what you find for your work practice.

## Assignment 2

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This assignment counts towards your final assessment in this module and is worth 20 per cent of the final mark. You should discuss with your tutor the exact requirements for your institution.

The assignment takes the form of your learning journal which contains the notes and records from the activities included in each unit.

## Assignment 3

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This assignment counts towards your final assessment in this module and is worth 30 per cent of the final mark. You should discuss with your tutor the exact requirement for your institution.

Assignment 3 may take the form of a written examination of up to 2 hours, worth 30 per cent of the final mark. The examination will test your understanding, not your memory. You may be asked to explain certain ideas and to relate them to work with young people.

If the university or college at which you are enrolled does not set an examination, a further assignment will be required in the form of a second written report, of 1000 words.

### Second report

What is the process for dealing with young offenders in your country? (Note: for this report you may draw on your notes for Activity 4.7.)

To research this report you should pay a visit to a court where young people appear. If you are unable to do this, read newspapers or approach police in your area. You will need answers to the following questions:

- What crimes are young people accused of?
- What are the apparently typical characteristics of the young people that appear (e.g. gender, level of education, employed or unemployed, nature of family)?
- Have they offended before?
- What sentences are given?
- Do you think these sentences are appropriate?
- Are there better ways of dealing with young offenders?
- What can a youth development worker do?

# Readings

The reading in this section will help you develop your understanding of Module 2 *Young People and Society*. The reading numbers, their titles and the unit in which they appear are listed below.

- 1 'The global economy' by Pam Woodall  
(Units 1 and 3) ..... 184
- 2 'The Threat of Globalisation' by Edward S. Herman  
(Units 1 and 3) ..... 189
- 3 'Structural Adjustment and Education'  
by Lynn Ilon (Units 1 and 3)..... 197
- 4 'Unemployment in Vanuatu' by Anita Jowitt  
(Unit 4)..... 207
- 5 'Young people in conflict with the law in  
the South Pacific region' by Tess Newton Cain (Unit 4)..... 214
- 6 'Disentangling juvenile justice and kastom law in Vanuatu'  
by Michael Morgan (Unit 4)..... 220

## Reading 1: The global economy

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by Pam Woodall (Economics editor)

Extract © *The Economist*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994 – used with permission.

### War of the worlds

Over the next 25 years, the world will see the biggest shift in economic strength for more than a century. Today the so called industrial economies dominate the globe, as they have for the past 150 years or so. Yet within a generation several are likely to be dwarfed by newly emerging economic giants. History suggests, alas, that such shifts in economic power are rarely smooth. A growing number of people in the rich industrial world are already urging their governments to prepare for battle against the upstarts.

The upstarts are heart warmingly many. Scores of countries in the third world and the former Soviet block have embraced market friendly economic reforms and opened their borders to trade and investment. These policies promise rapid growth in more economies than ever before. The four Asian tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan) that have pushed aggressively into western markets in the past three decades have a combined population of only 73m; even adding in Japan, the original Asian tiger, the total is less than 200m. Now, however, more than 3 billion people in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe are joining the rich world's 1 billion or so in the market economy club.

This survey examines the implications for today's rich countries of this extraordinary prospect. It asks what the pressures on the west may be, and how they can best be coped with. It argues, despite the scale of the coming changes and despite the difficulties they will cause, that there is little reason for alarm. For the rich world, almost as much as for today's poor countries, the next 25 years will be a time of unprecedented opportunity.

### Southern discomfort

How big will the change be? Some developing countries are bound to stumble on the road to reform. The economic prospects of Brazil and Russia, for example, are fragile; and the outlook for most of Africa remains grim. But so long as most developing countries stick to their reforms and avoid political upheavals, much of the third world stands its best chance for decades of achieving sustained expansion. The World Bank forecasts that over the next ten years, developing countries (including the former Soviet block) will grow by nearly 5% a year, compared with a rate of 2.7% in the rich industrial world. A gap as big as that, the biggest since before the second world war, will perceptibly alter the world economy.



The rich industrial economies' dominance over the world economy is already smaller than is generally recognised. If output is measured on the basis of purchasing power parities, then the developing countries and former Soviet block already account for 44% of world output. At current growth rates, the industrial economies will account for less than half of world output by the end of the decade. And if developed and developing countries continue to grow at the pace forecast by the World Bank for this next decade, by 2020 the rich world's share of global output could shrink to less than two fifths.

Applying the World Bank's regional forecasts to individual countries changes the world GDP league table radically too. Big economies are not necessarily rich economies: compare India and Italy today. Nonetheless, it is striking that, if those forecasts are right, within a generation China will overtake America as the world's biggest economy; and that by 2020 as many as nine of the top 15 economies will be from today's third world. Britain might scrape in at only 14th place, compared to eighth today, having been overtaken by such countries as Taiwan and Thailand.

Crude extrapolation is, of course, bad forecasting; Asian economies' growth rates will surely slow as they become richer and come to resemble today's rich economies; trend busting events may well occur. It is, for example, extremely unlikely that Taiwan's income per head in 2020 would be almost double America's, as these projections imply. Yet history is full of episodes of economic leapfrogging, some of which took place surprisingly fast.

The West's anxieties about all this are as much to do with changes in the structure of the developing economies as with mere size. The old notion of developing countries as exporters of raw materials from which they earned the revenue to pay for imports of manufactured goods from the West has long been out of place. So indeed has the old nomenclature. In this survey third world, developing, poor and emerging economies will be used interchangeably to refer to developing countries, even though many may soon belong to the developed world. Manufactured goods now account for almost 60% of their exports, up from 5% in 1955. The third world's share of world exports of manufactures jumped from 5% in 1970 to 22% in 1993.

As emerging economies' exports, boosted by the lowering of trade barriers agreed under the GATT's Uruguay round, continue to grow, so will the resentment of many people in today's rich nations. Many politicians, businessmen and even economists in America and Europe fear that the success of these new competitors will come at the expense of the first world. They allege, for instance, that the rich world's workers will be ruthlessly undercut if its markets remain open to goods from developing countries. Chinese and Indian workers are willing to accept an average wage of little more than 50 cents an hour, compared with average hourly labour costs of around \$18 in developed countries. Fierce competition from low wage countries, it is claimed, will steal 'our' jobs, thanks to their 'unfair' advantage of

cheap labour, poor working conditions and lax environmental controls.

Worries about competition from low wage countries are as old as trade itself. What is different this time is the sheer weight of new competition; the new mobility of capital and technology; and the fact that more third world workers are educated and so capable of operating even complex machinery. The emergence of a pool of cheap, educated labour in the third world with access to first world technology, it is argued, means that workers in rich countries will be forced to settle for third world wages and labour standards. Such claims were paraded by American opponents of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) remember Ross Perot's 'giant sucking sound' as jobs crossed the border from the United States to Mexico and more recently by critics of the GATT.

Europe, especially France, is even more awash with pessimists. One of the most vocal is Sir James Goldsmith, an Anglo French tycoon turned politician who has frequently argued that free trade is acceptable only between countries at similar levels of economic development. Another is Maurice Allais, the French Nobel prize winner for Economics in 1988, who has published a series of articles in *Le Figaro* over the past year on the 'insidious' effects of free trade. He claims that free trade with developing countries will lead to mass unemployment and huge wage inequalities, as production and jobs shift to low wage countries, thanks either to a surge in imports or to a massive migration of firms to low wage countries. The result, he says, will be a social explosion in Europe. And the way to avoid it, he suggests, is to erect import controls to keep out third world competition.

## **Role reversal**

One irony in all these worries about the 'threat from the third world' is that in the 1950s and 1960s developing countries regarded trade with the West as a threat to their own industrial development. Western socialists similarly argued that the third world was being exploited by multinational companies. Now the third world is perceived as villain, not victim. The fact that people in rich countries now fret about developing countries' success, not their poverty, is itself a remarkable tribute to those countries' economic reforms.

For faster growth in the third world ought to be welcomed by everyone. Not only will it relieve poverty in developing countries, it will also provide outside traders with marvellous new business opportunities. True, rich country producers will face a vast number of new competitors; but as these competitors become richer, they will also provide the West with a vast number of new customers. Developing countries are likely to account for around two thirds of the increase in world imports over the next 25 years.

Fears that the third world will steal output and jobs are based on the mistaken belief that any increase in one country's output must be at

the expense of another's. A second's thought should show that this is a fallacy. Increased exports give developing countries more money to spend on imports. Most developing countries spend all the foreign exchange they can lay their hands on, to buy imports of capital equipment and branded consumer goods mainly from developed economies. An increase in output in a poor country is more likely to increase than to reduce output in rich countries.

Trade is never a zero sum game. A bond dealer, for example, is quite happy to pay a low wage laundry worker rather than wash his own clothes; he can earn more money trading bonds than being elbow-deep in soap suds. Specialisation increases the living standards of both parties to the transaction. The case for free trade with China is no different. If China makes shoes more cheaply, then it makes sense for America to buy them with the money it earns selling sophisticated consumer goods to the Chinese. American consumers will benefit from cheaper shoes.

A common objection to this is: what if, because of its low wages and access to first world technology, China can make almost everything more cheaply than America; does that not mean America could end up importing everything from China, putting all its jobs at risk? No. Because of the skill composition of its labour force, China will enjoy a bigger cost advantage in low skill labour intensive industries than in others. In the economic jargon, this is its 'comparative advantage', a concept put forward by David Ricardo in the early 19th century. It is a basic principle of economics that all countries are better off if they specialise in industries in which they possess a comparative advantage. America and other rich economies must, by definition, always have a comparative advantage too.

Overall, the rich industrial economies will gain from the enrichment of poor countries. Faster growth in emerging economies is already providing a powerful stimulus to growth in the rich world. That is convenient, for it comes just when it seemed likely (mainly for demographic reasons) that rich countries would be entering a period of slower growth. Indeed, thanks to the boom in the third world, the world economy could in the second half of the 1990s experience its fastest growth since before the 1973 oil price shock. Global growth might nudge 4% a year.

That does not mean that everybody will be a winner. Today's rich economies face some painful adjustments in the years ahead. This survey will focus on four particular concerns: the likely decline in the jobs and real wages of low skilled manufacturing workers; the risk that heavy investment demands of developing countries will drive up interest rates; the risk that a worldwide boom will push up the price of oil and other commodities igniting inflation; and the pressure on the environment arising from high speed growth in energy thirsty third world economies.

Within countries there will be losers, even if these are outweighed by the winners. Low skilled workers, in particular, are right to be

worried. There is a risk, as Mr Allais has argued, that widening inequalities between winners and losers could create social and political tensions. And this is likely to put pressure on governments to protect industries and jobs that come under attack. It would be a bitter irony indeed if the success of market economics in the third world proved to be the biggest threat to its survival in the rich industrial world.

## Reading 2: The Threat of Globalization

By Edward S. Herman\*

New Politics vol. 7, no. 2 (new series), whole no. 26, Winter 1999

Globalization is both an active process of corporate expansion across borders and a structure of cross-border facilities and economic linkages that has been steadily growing and changing as the process gathers steam. Like its conceptual partner “free trade,” globalization is also an ideology, whose function is to reduce any resistance to the process by making it seem both highly beneficent and unstoppable.

And as with free trade, while globalization may sometimes yield economic benefits, both the process and economic-political regime it is helping bring about threaten progressive ends, and should be recognized as such and fought at every level. Admittedly this is a formidable task, as the economic and political power of its beneficiaries, and its momentum, are great and contesting it seems an almost utopian undertaking. But globalization has its vulnerabilities, and attacking it intellectually, at the local level of plant abandonments and relocations, as well as at the national political level can help build understanding and support for a larger oppositional movement.

### Globalization as ideology

Globalization is just one of an array of concepts and arguing points that have been mobilized to advance the corporate agenda. Others have been deregulation and getting government off our backs, balancing the budget, cutting back entitlements (non-corporate), and free trade.

Like free trade, globalization has an aura of virtue. Just as “freedom” must be good, so globalization hints at internationalism and solidarity between countries, as opposed to nationalism and protectionism, which have negative connotations. The possibility that cross-border trade and investment might be economically damaging to the weaker party, or that they might erode democratic controls in both the stronger and weaker countries, is excluded from consideration by mainstream economists and pundits.<sup>1</sup> It is also unthinkable in the mainstream that the contest between free trade and globalization, on the one hand, and “protectionism,” on the other, might be reworded as a struggle between “protection” – of transnational corporate (TNC) rights – versus the “freedom” of democratic governments to regulate in the interests of domestic non-corporate constituencies.

As an ideology, globalization connotes not only freedom and internationalism, but, as it helps realize the benefits of free trade, and thus comparative advantage and the division of labor, it also supposedly enhances efficiency and productivity. Because of these

virtues, and the alleged inability of governments to halt “progress,” globalization is widely perceived as beyond human control, which further weakens resistance.

## **The economic failure of globalization**

As the globalization process has been engineered by corporate elites, and serves their interests, they have successfully conveyed the impression that globalization is not only inevitable but has been a great success. This is fallacious. Even ignoring for the moment its distributional effects, globalization has been marked by substantial declines in rates of output, productivity, and investment growth. Under the new regime of enhanced financial mobility and power, with greater volatility of financial markets and increased risk, real interest rates have risen substantially. The average rate of the G-7 countries (U.S., Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Canada and Japan) has gone from 0.4 percent, 1971–82, to 4.6 percent, 1983–94.<sup>2</sup> This has discouraged long term investment in new plant and equipment and stimulated spending on the re-equipment of old facilities along with a large volume of essentially financial transactions – mergers, buybacks of stock, financial manoeuvres, and speculative activities. This may help explain why overall productivity growth<sup>3</sup> in the countries that are members of the OECD fell from 3.3%, 1960–73 to 0.8%, 1973–95, or by some 75 percent. Gross fixed investment fell from 6.1%, 1959–1970, to roughly 3.1% thereafter, or by half. OECD country annual rates of growth of real GDP fell from 4.8%, 1959–1970 to 2.8%, 1971–94, or by 42 percent.

But the elites have done well despite the slackened productivity growth. Because globalization has helped keep wages down, while increasing real interest rates, the upper 5 percent of households have been able to skim off a large fraction of the reduced productivity gains, thereby permitting elite incomes and stock market values to rise rapidly. But it was a different story for the global majority. Income inequality rose markedly both within and between countries. In the United States, despite a 35 percent increase in productivity between 1973 and 1995, the median real wage rate was lower in the latter year. Inequality rose to levels of 70 years earlier, and underemployment, job insecurity, benefit loss, and worker speedup under “lean” production systems all increased.<sup>4</sup> Insecurity is functional. As Alan Greenspan complacently explained to Congress in 1997, wage rates were stagnant in this country because worker insecurity was high.<sup>5</sup> That this high insecurity level reduced the well-being of the affected workers did not bother Greenspan, or Congress and the mainstream media.

The gap in incomes between the 20 percent of the world’s population in the richest and poorest countries has grown from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 82 to 1 in 1995, and Third World conditions have in many respects worsened. Per capita incomes have fallen in more than 70 countries over the past 20 years; some 3 billion people – half the world’s population, live on under two dollars a day; and 800 million suffer



from malnutrition.<sup>6</sup> In the Third World unemployment and underemployment are rampant, massive poverty exists side-by-side with growing elite affluence, and 75 million people a year or more seeking asylum or employment in the North, as Third World governments allow virtually unrestricted capital flight and have no option but to attract foreign investment.<sup>7</sup>

The new global order has also been characterized by increased financial volatility, and from the Third World debt crisis of the early 1980s to the Mexican breakdown of 1994–95 to the current Asian debacle, financial crises have become more and more threatening. With increasing privatization and deregulation, the discrepancy between the power of unregulated financial forces and that of governments and regulatory bodies increases and the potential for a global breakdown steadily enlarges.

Only an elite perspective permits this record to be regarded as an economic success.

## Globalization as an attack on democracy

The globalization of recent decades was never a democratic choice by the peoples of the world – the process has been business driven, by business strategies and tactics, for business ends. Governments have helped, by incremental policy actions, and by larger actions that were often taken in secret, without national debate and discussion of where the entire process was taking the community. In the case of some major actions advancing the globalization process, like passing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or joining the European Monetary Union (EMU), publics have been subjected to massive propaganda campaigns by the interested business-media elites. In the United States, public opinion polls showed the general public against NAFTA even after incessant propaganda, but the mass media supported it<sup>8</sup>, and it was passed. In Europe as well, polls have shown persistent majorities opposed to the introduction of the Euro, but a powerful elite supports it, so that it moves forward.

This undemocratic process, carried out within a democratic facade, is consistent with the distribution of benefits and costs of globalization, and the fact that globalization has been a tool serving elite interests. Globalization has also steadily weakened democracy, partly as a result of unplanned effects, but also because the containment of labor costs and scaling down of the welfare state has required the business minority to establish firm control of the state and remove its capacity to respond to the demands of the majority. The mix of deliberate and unplanned elements in globalization's antidemocratic thrust can be seen in each aspect of the attack process.

The assault on labor. One of the main objectives of TNC movement abroad has been to tap cheaper labor sources. Labor is often cheapest, and least prone to cause employer problems, in authoritarian states that curb unions and enter into virtual joint venture arrangements with foreign capital, as in Suharto's Indonesia and PRI's Mexico.

Capital moves to such friendly investment climates in an arbitrage process, shifting resources from the more expensive to the less costly locale, in a process that penalizes and thereby weakens democracy.

The actual shift of capital abroad, and the use of the external option to drive hard bargains at home, has weakened labor. Labor has also been weakened by deliberate government policies of tight money and restrictive budget policies to contain inflation, at the expense of high unemployment. These policies, and the incessant focus on labor market “flexibility” as the solution to the unemployment problem, reflect a corporate and antilabor policy agenda, fully institutionalized. There have even been more open and direct attacks on organized labor – both Reagan and Thatcher engaged in union busting, and the latter was quite explicit in her aim to weaken labor as a political force.<sup>9</sup> Democracy, according to pluralistic theory, is said to rest on the existence of intermediate groups, like labor organizations, that can bargain and work on behalf of an otherwise atomized population. The deliberate weakening of such groups is thus an attack on democracy.

The ideological campaign. In the United States, Britain, Canada, and other countries, the business community has also mounted a sustained ideological campaign to make their preferred policies part of common understanding. These campaigns have proceeded in parallel with globalization and have been remarkably similar, reflecting the global flow of ideology and overlapping sources of funding. The favoured neo-liberal ideology pushes the idea that the market can do it all, that government is a burden and threat, and that deregulation and privatization are inherently good and inevitable. It presses an extreme individualism and the value of “personal responsibility,” which is highly advantageous to corporate power, leaving bargaining between large firms and isolated individuals. Collective and community values, the threat of externalities and ecological damage from unconstrained business growth, free market instability – all are shunted aside in this ideological system. This ideological campaign has been highly successful, because vast sums of business money fed to intellectuals and think-tanks, and business domination of the mass media, has allowed their views to prevail. Heritage Foundation leader Edwin Feulner has described the strategy of his corporate-funded and globally linked think-tank as analogous to Procter & Gamble’s in selling soap – saturate the market with messages that overwhelm any that are less well funded.<sup>10</sup> But this is a corruption of democracy; it is a bought market of ideas, not a free market of ideas.

Capturing or immobilizing governments. The business community has also mounted a powerful effort to dominate governments – either by capture or by limiting their ability to serve ordinary citizens. Globalization has contributed to this effort, partly by the arbitraging process mentioned earlier, which favors authoritarian rule. Apart from this, by enlarging business profits and weakening labor it has shifted the balance of power further toward business, so that political



parties have been even more decisively influenced by business money in elections. In the United States, it is notorious that Mr. Clinton has sought and received enormous sums from business and serves their interests almost exclusively, with only token efforts on behalf of the major non-business constituencies of the Democratic Party. The globalizing corporate media have added their growing strength to the advance of neo-liberal ideology and opposition to any vestiges of social democracy, making social democratic policies difficult to implement. The Murdoch effect on British elections, and the current Murdoch-Blair connection illustrates the point.<sup>11</sup>

Another well-known and important antidemocratic force is the power of global financial markets to limit political options. Social democratic policies make for an unfavourable investment climate. Businesses will therefore respond to politicians and acts serving ordinary citizens with threatened or actual exit. Financial market effects on exchange and interest rates can be extremely rapid and damaging to the economy. Spokespersons for the new global economy actually brag about the ability of capital to penalize “unsound” policies, and the fact that money capital now rules.<sup>12</sup>

These business efforts, aided and validated by the IMF and by media support, regularly cause social democrats to retreat to policies acceptable to the rulers. Thus, in country after country social democratic parties have accepted neo-liberalism, despite the contrary preferences of great majorities of their voting constituencies.<sup>13</sup> But this means that nominal democracy is no longer able to serve ordinary citizens, making elections meaningless and democracy empty of substance. This helps explain why half or more of eligible U.S. voters no longer participate in national elections.

Supra-national limits on democracy – the New (TNC) Protectionism. Not satisfied with this level of political control, the business community has pushed for international agreements, and policy actions by the IMF and World Bank, that further encroach on the ability of democratic polities to act on behalf of their constituencies.

These agreements and the demands of the international financial institutions invariably call for precisely the policies desired by the TNC community. The EMU conditions give primacy to budget constraints and inflation control, in accord with the neo-liberal and corporate agenda. GATT, the WTO, and the NAFTA agreement also give top priority to corporate investor and intellectual property rights, to which all other considerations must give way. In the early 1980s, the IMF and World Bank took advantage of the Third World debt crisis and used their leverage with numerous distressed Third World borrowers to force their acceptance of Structural Adjustment Programs. These forced the borrowing countries to agree to give first priority to external debt repayment, private as well as government; it compelled them to adapt austerity programs of tight money and budget cutbacks focusing heavily on social expenditures affecting the poor and ordinary citizens; it forced a stress on exports, which help generate foreign exchange to allow debt repayment and that more

closely integrate the borrower's economy into the global system; and it stressed privatization, allegedly in the interest of efficiency, but serving both to help balance the budget without tax increases and to provide openings for TNC investment in the troubled economy. The IMF is doing the same in Asia today.

A second characteristic of the new agreements and IMF-World Bank actions is their denial of democratic rights to non-corporate citizens and elected governments. These are subordinated to the rights of corporate investors, the superior class of global citizens with priority over all others and beneficiaries of the New TNC Protectionism. In the NAFTA agreement, governments are denied in advance the right to take on new functions; any not asserted now are left to the private sector and to the superior class of citizens. In these agreements, also, and even more aggressively in the Multilateral Agreement on Investment now under consideration, the global TNCs have no responsibilities and none can be imposed on them. They can fire people, abandon communities, fatally damage the environment, push local companies out of business, and purvey cultural trash at their full discretion. They can or will be able to sue governments, and disagreements are to be settled by unelected panels outside the control of democratic governments.

A third characteristic of the new agreements and IMF-World Bank actions is that they rest not only on neo-liberal theory but on a false reading of recent experience and economic history. As noted earlier, globalization so far has been a productivity failure, a social disaster, and a threat to stability. The claim of its proponents that free trade is the route to economic growth is also confuted by longer historic experience: no country, past or present, has taken off into sustained economic growth and moved from economic backwardness to modernity without large-scale government protection and subsidization of infant industries and other modes of insulation from domination by powerful outsiders. This includes Great Britain, the United States, Japan, Germany, South Korea and Taiwan, all highly protectionist in the earlier take-off phases of their growth process.<sup>14</sup> The governments and institutions bargaining on behalf of the TNCs today, through the IMF, World Bank, WTO and NAFTA, have been able to remove these modes of protection from less developed countries. This threatens them with extensive takeovers from abroad, thoroughgoing integration into foreign economic systems as "branch plant economies," preservation in a state of dependence and underdevelopment, and most particularly, an inability to protect their majorities from the ravages of neo-liberal top-down development priorities.

## Concluding Note

In sum, we are in the midst of an anti-democratic counterrevolution, in which globalization and its imperatives are being used to weaken popular and elected authority in favour of a system of domination by super-citizens, the TNCs. This process sows the seeds of its own

destruction, as it serves a small global minority, damages the majority, breeds financial instability, and exacerbates the environmental crisis. Its destructive tendencies are likely to produce an explosion if the process is not contained and democracy is not rehabilitated.

Halting this antidemocratic juggernaut will be difficult, not only because of the power of its beneficiaries, but also because it operates within the framework of nominally democratic structures and musters plausible arguments. But these arguments are self-serving and wrong, and should be vigorously contested. An agenda should be advanced that serves ordinary citizens rather than the TNCs and financial institutions. Negatively, this agenda will include strenuous opposition to all supranational arrangements that take power out of the hands of democratic governments to serve some alleged economic need. Positively, the agenda requires support for the imposition of serious limits and responsibilities on TNCs, including capital controls and other deterrents to financial speculation. Pursuit of this agenda is going to require a combination of understanding and effective organization of the large majority who are the victims of globalization.

## Notes

- 1 Many leftists also strenuously deny that globalization is having a damaging effect on the power of the state. This denial seems to be based mainly on fears that a pessimistic analysis will render workers apathetic and destroy the socialist project. The deniers stress that the state still works well in serving the transnational corporate community; they ignore the possibility that such efficient service is quite compatible with globalization weakening the power of the state to do things that TNCs and the financial community oppose. For statements of the denial school, see Ellen Wood, 'Globalization' or 'Globaloney?', *Monthly Review*, Feb. 1997; William Tabb, 'Globalization is An Issue, the Power of Capital is The Issue,' *Monthly Review*, June 1997; Linda Weiss, *The Myth of the Powerless State* (Cornell, 1998). For a rebuttal, see Richard DuBoff and Edward Herman, 'A Critique of Tabb on Globalization', *Monthly Review*, Nov. 1997.
- 2 The data in this paragraph is taken from David Felix, 'Asia and the Crisis of Financial Globalization', in Dean Baker et al., *Globalization and Economic Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 3 More precisely, total factor productivity growth, which is the weighted average of growth in labour and capital productivity.
- 4 See Kim Moody, *Workers In A Lean World* (Verso, 1997), esp. chap. 5.
- 5 In his testimony on monetary policy before congress on July 22, 1997, Greenspan noted that the proportion of workers in large

- companies fearful of layoffs rose from 25% to 46% between 1991 and 1996.
- 6 Ignacio Ramonet, "'The Politics of Hunger,' *Le Monde Diplomatique*", Nov. 1998; UN Development Program, Human Development Report 1998 (New York, Sept. 1998).
  - 7 On the underrated problem of uncontrolled capital flight in Latin America, see David Felix, 'Debt Crisis Adjustment in Latin America: Have the Hardships Been Necessary?' Washington University, St. Louis, Working Paper 170, Sept. 1992.
  - 8 Edward Herman, "Mexican Meltdown," *Z Magazine*, Sept. 1995.
  - 9 See Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (Harper/Collins, 1993), p. 676 and passim.
  - 10 Alex Carey, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy* (University of New South Wales, 1995), pp. 106–7.
  - 11 Rupert Murdoch, who controls a third of the print media circulation in Britain, was widely credited with the Tory election triumph over Labour in 1990, by virtue of his papers' frenzied attacks on the latter. Tony Blair, the new head of the Labour party, travelled to Australia to visit with Murdoch, persuaded him to reconsider his support, and succeeded in getting Murdoch's papers to support Labour in the 1997 election campaign. Blair unilaterally repudiated the Labour pledge to seek a decentralization of the media, and his policies have received accolades from the right: Margaret Thatcher's favourite think-tank, the Adam Smith Institute, described Blair's as a "remarkably promising start." (Daily Mail, Dec. 10, 1997). Canadian business columnist Peter Cook refers to Blair as "the man who made the country safe for Thatcherism" (*Globe and Mail*, May 15, 1998).
  - 12 Walter Wriston, former CEO of Citicorp, has repeatedly stressed that 200,000 financial market monitors in trading rooms control national monetary and fiscal policies "through a kind of global plebiscite." 'Decline of the Central Bankers', *New York Times*, Sept. 20, 1992.
  - 13 William Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention and Hegemony*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Jochen Hippler, ed., *The Democratisation of Disempowerment*, London: Pluto, 1995; Edward Herman, 'The End of Democracy?', *Z Magazine*, Sept. 1993.
  - 14 Alice Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant* (Oxford, 1989); Robert Wade, *Governing the Market* (Princeton, 1990).

\*Edward S. Herman, Professor Emeritus of Finance, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, is the author of a number of books, including *Manufacturing Consent* (1988, with Noam Chomsky), *Triumph of the Market* (1996), and *The Global Media* (1997, with Robert McChesney).

## Reading 3: Structural adjustment and education: adapting to a growing global market

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### Abstract

Structural adjustment effects on education have largely been viewed as policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This view overlooks the larger process of structural adjustment in a rapidly growing global economy. This article seeks to locate the structural adjustment implications for education within a global framework. Education's systemic dependence and system influence are identified. Specific educational effects of structural adjustment are discussed, addressing both short-term implications and long-term responses. Educational policy implications and research trends are addressed in the light of the evolving world system of education.

### Introduction

For most scholars of education and development, structural adjustment brings to mind World Bank and IMF loans to poor countries and the conditionalities that accompany them. The package of changes that go with such loans often means fundamental changes in the educational programs for the country—budget cuts, increased user fees, structural changes in educational institutions. While this notion of structural adjustment is not inaccurate, it is limited. Structural adjustment occurs in all countries, permeates much more than public finance and structures and becomes increasingly important as a global economy evolves. The reasons why structural adjustment occurs lie largely outside the walls of multilateral development agencies, and the educational changes they engender are more widespread than budgetary constraints in poor countries.

The implications of this distinction are not trivial for education. If structural adjustment is simply a bad policy promulgated by misinformed bureaucrats or high-powered experts promoting a global agenda of domination, then the appropriate education response is to identify these forces and attempt to change or neutralize them. If, however, structural adjustment is a process that grows out of a large global system of economic exchange, albeit advantaging groups differentially, then the appropriate education response must be systemic as well. Educational policy must, at once, maximize its possibilities within this system and use its unique place within the system to modify it. In either case, the problems wrought by



structural adjustment must be addressed. The real issue is how this can effectively be accomplished.

Education policy makers are not traditionally schooled in the knowledge bases that empower them to deal with this new logic – those of international economics and system analysis. Yet the evidence that a global system of economics is establishing a new set of rules and that public policy is, often de facto, being set by such rules is growing. Vast changes are occurring in the educational policy field and these changes can often be traced to the forces of global structural adjustment. This issue of the International Journal of Educational Development is devoted to exposing some of these forces. This piece will explore the linkage between structural adjustment, globalization of the world economy and global trends in education.

## **Structural adjustment in a global context**

Structural adjustment is, in fact, not a policy – it is a process. The structure being adjusted is the structure of the economy. Many factors make up this structure – fiscal policies, capital flows, balance of trade, immigration and migration, public spending, exchange rates, and interest rates are among the most obvious. Changes in these parameters comprise a strategy which favors alignment with international trade forces. These policies center around four primary structural shifts: liberalization, deregulation, privatization and stabilization. Together they comprise critical elements of the ‘structure’ of the economy which affects its external relationship. As external trade and capital flows take on increasing significance for most of the world’s economies, the need to adjust the structure of the economy to these forces becomes increasingly hard to resist.

Adjustment refers to changes in the economic structure. What makes it adjustment in the ‘structural adjustment’ sense is that the process is one whereby the national economy is adjusting to a global market. Just as a merchant cannot stay in business when the price (marketing, display, employment) of her business veers too far from the balance established by competitive forces, so a country cannot afford to veer too far from an equilibrium established by the global capital and trade markets. The choice not to participate in such a global market appears less viable as time passes. The experiments by Tanzania and Nicaragua to emphasize self-sufficiency over participation in the growing global economy stand as reminders that global participation, at some minimal level, is no longer an option. The days when countries could survive on a largely internal market appear to have disappeared. To the extent that national economic factors are out of sync with those established by the international market, structural adjustment will inevitably occur.

The response to structural adjustment pressures, although global in nature, are country specific in their impact. They are neither equitable nor inclusive. In large economies, international factors are heavily

influenced by the national economy. Internationally established factors are rarely substantially out-of-line with national parameters. Given the dominance of these economies, it is prudent to employ policies of regulated but automatic adjustments. This allows internally derived changes to be passed on to the larger global economy, diluting, to some extent, any negative effects and reaping the benefits that positive changes mean for participation and dominance in the global economy. Economies such as the U.S., the European Economic Community and Japan, allow, in large part, primary economic structures to be market determined – exchange rates, prices of imports and exports, terms of trade. These factors are monitored and may have limits established but are, in large part, subject to the vicissitudes of the global market.

For smaller economies, the choice of policy controlled or global market determined parameters is not so clear-cut (Summers and Pritchett, 1993). As participants in the larger global economy, they, essentially, have little input. Internal imbalances cannot be ‘passed’ to the larger world as the global economy clearly sets the parameters. Domestic inflation, for example, cannot be moderated by raising export prices, for the global market will simply turn to other suppliers (and may never return). The decision to open internal markets to global forces means loss of ability to protect internal markets (employment, production and service markets, for example). Yet world trade cannot be foregone forever and the structural adjustment required to bring internal domestic markets in line with global factors is inevitable.

The differential impact of structural adjustment on various countries makes for different responses to adjustment. For larger countries where adjustments are less disruptive and trade relationships are largely beneficial, structural adjustment is usually pursued through self-regulating mechanisms, often moving toward market-determined parameters. For smaller countries where choices are harder, structural adjustment may be market-determined, but is often policy-determined by way of conditionalities for lending. In the field of development education, the focus on structural adjustment has been largely on this ‘adjustment lending’ and, indeed, the term ‘structural adjustment’ is often confused with the specific case of ‘adjustment lending’.

‘Structural adjustment lending’ most often occurs in smaller economies although other distinctions are possible. Summers and Pritchett observe:

“Perusing the list of (World Bank imposed) adjusting and non adjusting countries, it is obvious that non adjusting countries are those that did not need official external support to adjust (e.g. Botswana, Malaysia) and those that needed to adjust but did not (e.g. Myanmar, Peru)”

(Summers and Pritchett, 1993).

The issue, increasingly, is not one of whether a country will choose to structurally adjust but when and how.

If structural adjustment is something all countries face, is indicative of a growing trend, and, like the larger process of globalization, impacts on various people differentially, the questions surrounding structural adjustment and education become process focused rather than evaluative:

- How does structural adjustment affect education?
- What educational policies will result from the new dynamic of education and structural adjustment?
- How can education be used to change or mitigate the effects of structural adjustment?

Whether one is an observer of American education, education in the Middle East or education in Botswana, the most obvious change wrought by structural adjustment is a decrease in funds available for education as a component of the social sector. Public monies, generally, are decreasing and the amounts needed to maintain real per-pupil expenditures are not available. But, in fact, public budgetary adjustments are only the most obvious of the changes brought about by the forces behind structural adjustment. Whether policy-imposed by adjustment lending or market-imposed by shifts in the global market, structural adjustment has far-reaching consequences for education and the peoples, institutions and governments it serves.

## Governments

The stability of any government depends, in large part, on its perceived legitimacy. When the governed see their government as an entity disembodied from their wishes and interests, the longevity of that government is at risk. As the global economy grows in importance, governments must learn not just how to 'handle' their interactions with the large world, but how to 'manage' them. Adjusting the structure of the economy to facilitate international commerce is an increasing pressure. Even if the government is not contemplating a loan from the IMF or World Bank, it may be under intense pressure to employ adjustment policies as a means of pursuing economic growth – or a means of mitigating economic decline.

The forces of structural adjustment necessarily facilitate external investment in the country. The opportunities for employment in international businesses opens for the few who have had the best education. These few jobs will mean pay levels not generally available in local industries and a chance for advancement or travel outside one's country. For many, however, the employment opportunities are a mixed blessing. International competition for jobs means that the wages of the common workers must be kept to a minimum. Equally, worker safety and health considerations as well as benefits, all of which cost the employer money, must be kept minimal. Any attempt by the government to introduce safety, health or benefits for workers will be fought not only by the industries, but, ironically, eventually by



the working class. These people will face the possibility that increased benefits mean that the business must relocate to stay competitive.

Opening a national economy to international investment and trade means having to balance government programs which target social needs with private market forces which result in increased flow of capital and resources in and out of the country. Raising taxes on industries may raise tax revenues needed for public services, but it may also discourage investment by companies in the country and encourage existing businesses to relocate. Putting additional resources into education may mean a higher average level of education for the populace, but it also implies higher taxes. If taxes come out of the pockets of employees, the base wage level rises (the lowest wage level that can be paid and still get people to work). Industry is again discouraged.

The close linkages between education, government legitimacy and social welfare are delinking. When education led to employment by local enterprises that produced in and for the nation, productivity gains from education could be counted as net gains for the society. When the productivity gains of education accrue to external enterprises and to private individuals, both the rationale and the impetus for government to fund education erodes. This is not to say that education, broadly conceived, could not and should not benefit social welfare, only that the linkages between investment and benefits will tend to move education into the private sphere and away from the public.

In response to this delinking, governments are under pressure from two forces. From the poorer segments of society there is pressure to provide access to quality education that leads to high paying, high mobility jobs. Satisfying this demand becomes increasingly difficult given pressures to decrease public spending so the realities of shrinking educational investment bring governments into increasing conflict with poorer groups. The second force is to limit government expenditures on education. Not only do higher taxes mean a less conducive environment for attracting and keeping external investments, but the wealthier segments of society are becoming less willing to fund public education as its quality deteriorates and their children are moved toward private schools. Given that wealthier citizens combined with private economic interests have more political influence than do the poor, governments are likely to give in to the forces wrought by structural adjustment and to disinvest in education.

## Community

The notion of 'community' also changes as a result of structural adjustment. As stated above, liberalization, deregulation, privatization and stabilization all move a country toward global integration. This global integration means that national boundaries and governments have less meaning and control. Although policies and citizenship are still derived from the government, the meaning of

both are diluted as countries adjust their economies to that of the larger world.

‘Building nations’ was once thought to be a primary goal of education. The process of nation building meant educating citizens such that they could actively participate in their government, so that they would form a national identity, so that their welfare would be jointly linked and so that their notion of society included a national focus. Yet, as national boundaries give way to the pressures of the global economy, notions of citizenship also give way. Whereas once one’s citizenship largely defined one’s job prospects, for the elite citizenship is no more than a minor annoyance for employment. For those who are globally employable, nearly any country will open its doors – temporarily or permanently.

As discussed above in the ‘government’ section, even national policies are now linked internationally. In fact, the very notion that governments must respond to the pressures of structural adjustment speaks to the fact that national policies are increasingly determined by international forces. A government may decide on a different structure of budget for education but the forces which caused this rethinking are likely to be global in nature.

As structural adjustment breaks down the definitions and functions of the nation-state so too does it cause us to rethink ‘community’. In many countries, the community is integrally linked to the school. In the U.S. for example most schools derive substantial funds from local property taxes. When one’s community included the people one would work with, raise children together and grow old with, similar values for schooling could be assumed. The community school, whether in suburban U.S. or in rural Tanzania, was a symbol of a community whose welfare was tied together. But, as adjustments occur to bring nations more in line with global forces, ‘community’ slowly gives way. This is true more for the elite (and thus, influential) families than for the poor. More and more families find that their children go to schools outside their communities (private schools, magnet schools, or highly-ranked public schools), that their work is not bound to their community (perhaps their employer is in an entirely different community) and future is not tied to the community (perhaps a spouse, for example, lives elsewhere).

If these people were asked to define the people whose sphere of influence impacts on them the most, they would most likely be defined on a social scale rather than a geographic one. The relative health, stability and happiness of one’s work colleagues, one’s social network (perhaps globally defined) and one’s linkages to spheres of power and influence, while traditionally important, no longer necessarily lie within a geographic community. The wealthier and more educated one is, the less likely a geographic linkage is to predominate over a class linkage.

This has profound implications for education. Formal education was nearly always defined in terms of one’s geographic community.

Linking one's welfare with those who live close by meant that there was a reason to see that resources got to most people in the 'community'. When the structure of one's life changes such that community now means a world of resources, friends and colleagues perhaps globally scattered, investing in one's community seems to have less value. Services can be obtained anywhere through rapid transportation and communication.

The poor are equally tied although these linkages are much less apparent and bring little power. As the poor have little access to modern transportation and communication facilities and mobility is a problem, 'community' still means a geographic space, but the shared resources will shrink. Government funds for welfare and safety net programs will decrease as a result of structural adjustment. Also, as discussed above, community access to moderate paying jobs will decline and the community's own resources will shrink. The phenomenon, ironically, ties the poor together globally. Their problems, concerns and responses are global in nature. The decline in public educational quality impacts on the poor in similar ways by marginalizing them further, by creating increasing dependencies, decreasing chances for advancement. By increasing responses to poverty without hope – drug use, spread of disease, environmental degradation, increasing unrest.

This realignment of communities means that education must address itself to differential needs of a newly defined 'community'. As national gives way to global, so needs become more differentiated and heterogeneous. A national system of schooling is likely to give way to local systems for the poor and global systems for the wealthy.

## Schools

Changes wrought by structural adjustment and felt at the national and community levels permeate directly to the school. The same forces that engender a movement toward privatization of schooling will cause large-scale public systems to stratify – offering differential types and qualities of education. The same forces that cause governments to think globally will cause curricula to accommodate global demands. And the forces that cause reductions in public expenditures will mean a fundamental shift in how schools spend resources.

Communities largely defined by consisting of professional classes are mobile and geographically dispersed. It is likely that these communities will be increasingly served by dispersed schools. Schools may be located within commuting distance but parents will find themselves getting their children to and from such schools. Private schools which require daily, weekly or sporadic commutes will be utilized by such parents. Many elite parents already send their children to boarding schools abroad – even elite parents living in otherwise poor countries. Globally, the poor will continue to be served by public schools of decreasing quality. Public funds which

once served the widest range of student clientele will decrease as governments come under increasing pressure to spend less and as parents who can afford to do so, send their children to private schools. The nature of public schooling will be to serve poorer students who are more homogeneous in terms of family resources.

As the notion that public schools serve a broadly defined national population of students gives way to the reality that students come from discrete backgrounds and face differential opportunities and problems, a structuring of school curriculum and learning strategies aimed at specific populations will occur. The ideology that all faced largely 'equal' opportunities through schooling will inevitably give way to a teaching of strategies aimed at survival within different communities and circumstances.

The global forces that impose structural adjustment will also affect the curriculum. For the few that will be educationally equipped for employment at a global level, school curricula will become similar worldwide. Emphasis on globally demanded skills will mean a curriculum emphasizing information gathering, manipulation, management and creation. Basic requirements will include information sciences, logic, computer usage and theory. The middle class, while still large, will slowly give way. Professions will be divided between those that are globally competitive but where mastery and competence are highly valued, and jobs where global competition means that people with limited and low-level skills are competing on a world market of others with similar backgrounds. In order to attract businesses which need these types of workers, nations will still have to provide a minimum level of public education, but that education need not go much further than literacy, numeracy and the discipline and tolerance that comes with being in a structured environment. Ironically, curricula for the poor will also take on a global flavour as job skills become similar and basic needs and problems become globalized.

Reductions in government budgets for public schooling will mean pressure on school budgets. Teacher salaries are a major expenditure item (sometimes as much as 98 percent of a budget). For systems that had adequate resources directed toward learning and support materials and equipment, budget decreases will usually mean a reduction in these supplies. Teachers will put pressure on systems to maintain their wages (or to have them decrease at slower rates) and it will be easiest to respond to these pressures by cutting materials and supplies rather than salaries. For larger systems, new teachers may not be hired, causing class sizes to rise. For systems where the purchasing power of teacher salaries does decrease, teachers will become disenfranchised from the larger meaning of teaching and they will spend more of their time and effort in attempting to retain wages, resources and benefits.

## Individuals

Individuals pursue education when benefits outweigh costs. Both costs and benefits are affected by structural adjustment. As the world becomes linked, countries, communities and individuals compete for the jobs that are available. As more countries link into the global economy (through structural adjustment) and as more people become educated and able to work within a structured formal environment, the competition for business and jobs becomes more fierce and more widespread. At the same time, for the individual, the opportunities may become more varied. Increasingly, the job market for highly educated individuals is becoming global. Where benefits are concerned, the value of education will depend, increasingly, on one's access to stratified educational opportunities.

These employment options impact on decisions in education in fundamental ways. For the wealthier segments of the population, private investment in education carries the possibility of tremendous pay-offs. In order to optimize a child's chances at employment in internationally competitive firms, parents are increasingly willing to put private funds into education. When employment possibilities were internally (nationally) defined, local public education sorted people along SES grounds and students from wealthier families had the best chance of getting the good jobs. But, when competition is worldwide, a different type of education is needed – and the pay-offs are potentially higher. If private schooling is needed, it will be pursued. Along with this, however, will come increasing disenfranchisement with using public monies to fund public schools. Parents are unlikely to want to support a public system when they utilize a private system.

The situation is very much different for the poorer families. Even when parents are employed, they are unable to 'sell' their skills to industries which must keep wages at their lowest levels – often just above or at the poverty level. These parents, along with their unemployed neighbours, have little choice but to send their children to public schools – schools with decreasing revenues. The quality of education for these schools is deteriorating, but so are the benefits. When employment opportunities are limited and the wages for existing jobs are set at an internationally competitive low scale, there is little incentive to stay in school past some basic level. Returns to education are low and access to the type of education that could have high pay-offs is limited because of high private costs.

## The short-term policy response to structural adjustment

Clearly, educational systems must adjust to the new global environment. The environment is so radically different from the environment dictated by local needs and responses that the appropriate response is a complete restructuring of the policy changes that attend such structural changes. The damage to be had by not

responding to these new forces is enormous. During the transitional phase, however, educational systems can respond to changed circumstances so as to minimize negative effects and acquire time for more fundamental changes.



## Reading 4: Unemployment in Vanuatu

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The problem of unemployment is increasingly becoming an issue of concern for Vanuatu. As the cash economy becomes more central to people's lives, so too are more people wishing to engage in paid labour instead of, or in addition to, engaging in traditional subsistence agriculture. It has been difficult to comment on this issue because of the paucity of reliable and comprehensive data on the labour market. In recent years, however, there have been several surveys or censuses that have collected data on employment. Of particular note are the 2000 Labour Market Survey (LMS), the 1999 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census ('the census'), and the 1998 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) (NSO 1999a, 1999b, 2000). In 2001 the National Office of Statistics will also be releasing the 2000 informal sector survey report. This article draws on recent census and labour market survey reports in order to give an overview of labour and the growing problem of unemployment in Vanuatu.

It should be noted that, while these reports are the best sources on the Vanuatu labour force, their data are not entirely reliable. The census draws the labour force only from the pool of people aged 15–64 and, given the number of people who leave school before the age of 15, there is likely to be some participation in the labour force by those younger than 15. Further, the census categorisation of economically active and not economically active is problematic, as is the definition of unemployment. 'Unemployed' in the 1999 census means actively looking for work as a primary activity. If someone was engaged in subsistence farming and also looking for work, they would not fall into this category, which results in under-representation of unemployment in the census data. Because of the irregular or seasonal nature of some wage labour in Vanuatu, census data gathered in the period of a single week are unlikely to be entirely accurate.

The LMS records only data from a small sector of the labour market. The questionnaire also only asks employers to record employment on a single day, so is unlikely to accurately record irregular or seasonal workers in businesses that have a fluctuating labour supply. The HIES does not clearly define what is meant by employment but appears to be based on subjective assessments of employment status that do not coincide with definitions in other data sources and may not be consistent from respondent to respondent. Because of this methodological point, the HIES data are controversial.

Despite these weaknesses in the data sources, they still reveal trends and are useful for providing a general overview of the labour market and unemployment in Vanuatu. As unemployment as a concept is

linked to the cash economy and paid labour, this article provides only a brief discussion of the total labour force, including subsistence labour, before turning to examine wage labour in more detail. It concludes with some comments on how it may be possible to generate more opportunities for employment in Vanuatu.

## **The labour force and subsistence agriculture**

Vanuatu census reports define the labour force as being people between the ages of 15 and 64 who are working for money, engaged in subsistence farming, helping in family businesses, doing voluntary community work, or actively seeking work. Using this definition, the 1999 census placed the labour force at 76,370, up from 66,597 in the 1989 census and 51,109 in the 1979 census.

This labour force is usually thought of as falling into three sectors: the subsistence sector; the formal sector, which comprises paid labour in the public service and in medium-to-large private sector enterprises; and the informal sector, which includes activities such as taxi driving, market gardening, handicrafts manufacture and other cottage industry, paid domestic labour, and employment within small private sector enterprises. Population censuses show that the vast majority of the labour force aged 15–64 is involved in subsistence agriculture, with the 1999 census placing 67 per cent in the category of subsistence farmers. It should be noted that about a quarter of these farmers maintain a garden for both subsistence and sale and thereby participate in the cash economy through the informal sector.

## **Wage labour in the formal and informal sectors**

While the census, the LMS and the HIES have added to the statistics on paid employment in Vanuatu, they still do not allow for easy analysis, as each has produced different figures on the same topic, as Table 1 shows. Indeed, the data within the census and the HIES vary internally.

The variation between the LMS and the other data sources can be explained by differences in the surveys' sample frames. The LMS was a census of all businesses that are registered for the purposes of value added tax (VAT), as well as government, education and finance industry units that are not liable to pay VAT. Only businesses that earn 4 million vatu or more need to register, so the labour market survey excluded smaller enterprises and businesses that have failed to register for VAT. The smaller enterprises were, however, included in the data collection of the other two surveys.

The last reported survey on activity within smaller enterprises, in 1995, estimated that there were 8,820 workers engaged in work for smaller enterprises. These enterprises included trade, restaurants, kava selling, and taxis, buses and other public transport activities, but did not include paid agricultural work. Of these workers 5,404 were estimated to be paid employees. The remaining workers were either unpaid family members who engaged in at least two hours of work



per day in the enterprise, or owner/operators. These figures, as well as excluding paid agricultural work, exclude people employed in small-scale manufacturing enterprises. It would appear, then, that employment within such enterprises largely accounts for the difference between the data from the LMS and the 1999 census figures as reported in the LMS.

**Table 1: Paid employment by occupation**

	1999 census: number employed aged 15- 64(a)	1999 census: number employed aged 15+(b)	1999 census: total number working for pay (c)	LMS 2000	HIES 1998: number employed	HIES 1998: total number working for pay as main activity
Legislators, senior officials, managers	678	842		1,315	1,768	
Professionals, technicians, associated professionals	3,944	4,961		3,532	7,705	
Clerks	1,674	1,739		1,753	2,885	
Service and sales workers	3,495	4,186		2,583	4,082	
Skilled agriculture, forestry, fisheries workers	1,255	1,881		460	2,848	
Craft and related trades workers	2,979	3,486		1,495	2,667	
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	1,485	1,770		865	2,140	
Elementary occupations	2,893	3,486		2,269	4,912	
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,403</b>	<b>22,351</b>	<b>19,448</b>	<b>14,272</b>	<b>29,007</b>	<b>48,007</b>

(a) As reported in census tables

(b) As reported in LMS

(c) As reported in census summary

Questions still remain, however. First, the 1999 census data give three different reports as to the number of people engaged in paid labour. In the census summary, the number is 19,448, whereas the data tables indicate 18,403 people, and the LMS total is different again. There are no clear explanations for these variations. Given these discrepancies, the data in the census can only be treated as an approximate indicator of the number of people engaged in paid labour as their primary activity.

Second, there is the discrepancy between the 1999 census and the HIES figures. One difference is that the HIES does not have any age

limitation, so it is gathering data on a wider pool of people. Another difference is that the 1999 census examined people's current work status and the economic activity that they had undertaken in the previous seven days. It does not appear that the HIES took such a restrictive view. In this survey, household income and expenditure diaries were kept for a period of a month, and it seems that the questionnaires that were distributed took a more expansive, and possibly more subjective, view of people's average monthly economic activity.

In terms of the HIES finding that the main daily activity of 48,007 people was a paid job, a possible explanation is that respondents judged their main daily activity in terms of source of money, as opposed to main daily activity in terms of hours spent. This explanation is tenable, given that the survey was emphasising the importance of household incomes and identifying the different sources of these incomes, and given the survey's finding that salaries and wages make up 54 per cent of the national household income. In comparison, the production of fruits and vegetables, the next most significant income-generating activity, accounts for about 19 per cent of national household income.

These data, when read with the LMS and census data, suggest that while there are about 22,000 people who are engaged in wage labour on a regular, more or less full-time basis, there is a large pool of people who engage in part-time or irregular paid labour but who self-identify as employed. While they may be registered as engaged in subsistence agriculture for the purposes of the census, they are also engaged in paid work when possible.

With such tenuous data, it is impossible to draw firm conclusions, but a possible one is that there are a significant number of underemployed people in Vanuatu and/or a significant amount of hidden unemployment that is not identified within the existing data.

## **The growth of the labour force and of wage labour**

It must be remembered that Vanuatu's population is increasing very rapidly, with around 43 per cent of the current population under the age of 15. About 3,500 young people nationally are joining the labour force each year. If the labour market does not expand, both unemployment and underemployment are going to grow very fast. However, there have been few signs of expansion of demand for labour within the formal sector since independence. There is an increasing imbalance, therefore, between the number of regular paid jobs and population. As there is no current indication that either trend is likely to change in the near future, it would appear that the problem is rapidly going to grow worse unless action is taken to address this issue.

## Future directions: generating employment

The first point to remember in considering how to generate jobs is that employment does not only include wage or salaried labour in the formal private or public sector. Opportunities for developing informal sector activities through micro-enterprises must also be considered. However, engagement in subsistence agriculture should not be treated as an employment opportunity.

The subsistence sector is the base of Vanuatu, on which people are reliant. However, as education and exposure are changing aspirations, employment policy that relies on subsistence agriculture to 'employ' youth who are entering the labour force is both unrealistic and dangerous. While the subsistence sector can expand (although land-use pressure limits this) and absorb more of the labour force, it is becoming increasingly unlikely that people will be happy to remain in this sector, particularly in urban areas where there is greater exposure to Westernised lifestyles. Employment policies, then, should focus on creating opportunities to engage in legitimate cash-earning enterprises, whether as an employee or self employed. It should also be remembered that in order to minimise the possibility of underemployment, there must be opportunities for more than just piecemeal work.

The current focus of the government's economic policy is the concept of private sector led development. This has been closely tied to the goal of attracting direct foreign investment (DFI). In relation to employment, it is hoped that an influx of DFI will create demand for labour within the formal sector. In order to do this, a competitive incentive structure needs to be established. Policies affecting the costs of land, capital, telecommunications, power and labour need to be considered, as do policies relating to the creation and maintenance of infrastructure and the strengthening of the legal system so that it can protect investors' rights and property. Most importantly, investor confidence relies upon sound (uncorrupt) macroeconomic management and political stability.

Whatever the merits of generating demand for labour through the attraction of DFI, because of the fundamental nature and wide-reaching scope of the policy initiatives required, developing the informal sector through local micro-enterprises seems to be a more readily achievable path to generating employment. The generation of labour through development of the local informal sector has other attractions as well. It is supply-led in the sense that it takes the existing supply of labour and resources and gradually transforms it into cash-earning employment. It is less likely to lead to a situation of cost-push inflation. It ensures that profits from enterprise remain with ni-Vanuatu, rather than being taken by foreign investors. Such an approach also requires the development of skills among ni-Vanuatu, whereas there is the danger that foreign investors may largely require unskilled labour and therefore will have no incentive to develop people's skills through workplace training.

To this end, training and support in operating small business enterprises needs to be provided. The responsible provision of credit is also important. As well as providing seed capital, credit providers can play an important role in assisting enterprises in developing and managing business plans. Although the Vanuatu Women's Development or Vanwods scheme has provided some access to credit and business assistance, it is restricted to women and has fairly low membership. Similarly, credit unions are limited in their ability to provide credit for the establishment of micro-enterprises. These initiatives need to be supported and expanded in order to ensure that access to money to support such enterprises is available.

Most important, though, is ensuring that a market for goods and services exists and/or is accessible and regularly supplied. Currently, there is a large imbalance of trade. Local enterprise, in part, could supply the local market that is currently being supplied by imports. Export cooperatives, in which individual small enterprises produce goods that are then exported by a central body, allow small enterprises to reach international markets. Such an approach to export is being used in Samoa with considerable success, and the usefulness of the model for Vanuatu should be explored. Such a model is particularly useful because both urban and rural people can participate in such cooperatives (depending on the nature of the export good), thereby ensuring that urban areas do not become the sole focus or location of cash-earning enterprises.

## Conclusion

From recent statistical data, it appears that unemployment is going to grow rapidly in Vanuatu in the near future. This poses a significant development problem, not least because the social unrest and law and order problems experienced in neighbouring Melanesian countries have been linked, in part, to unemployment. Policies for generating employment that do not solely focus on developing demand within the formal sector, but also consider how to generate opportunities within the informal sector, must become an immediate priority if Vanuatu is to succeed in its development goals.

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## Reading 5: Young people in conflict with the law in the South Pacific region

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Issues of crime and community safety are of continuing and possibly increasing importance in the South Pacific island states. Within the more general concern about perceived increases in crime, there are particular concerns associated with the involvement of young people in crime and with the ability and appropriateness of the formal criminal justice system to deal effectively with the 'problem' of juvenile crime.

### The significance of the CRC

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is one of the most widely accepted UN treaties. As of 22 August 2001, it had been ratified to some degree or another by 191 countries.<sup>1</sup> It has been widely accepted by the small island states of the South Pacific region. The first jurisdictions to sign were Vanuatu, Federated States of Micronesia, and Tokelau (by virtue of New Zealand's ratification) in 1993. The most recent signatories were Cook Islands in 1997.

The CRC establishes the 'best interests of the child' as a principle to guide states in all dealings with children and young people. Ratification creates obligations on ratifying parties to amend national laws and policies so that they comply with the standards contained in the convention. The convention is wide-ranging but some of its articles are of particular significance where young people come into conflict with the criminal law:

- 3 State Parties shall seek to promote the establishment of laws, procedures, authorities and institutions specifically applicable to children alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law, and, in particular:
  - (a) The establishment of a minimum age below which children shall be presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the penal law;
  - (b) Whenever appropriate and desirable, measures for dealing with such children without resorting to judicial proceedings, providing human rights and legal safeguards are fully respected.
4. A variety of dispositions, such as care, guidance and supervision orders; counselling; probation; foster care; educational and vocational training programmes and other alternatives to institutional care shall be available to ensure that children are dealt with in a manner appropriate to their wellbeing and

proportionate both to their circumstances and the offence. (Art. 40(3) and (4))

This provides an appropriate benchmark against which to examine both the legal provisions and other systems and processes that purport to deal with young people who come into conflict with the criminal law in the South Pacific region.

## Legal provisions relating to juvenile crime

The statutory law of the countries in the South Pacific island region usually makes very little provision specifically for how young persons who come into conflict with the law should be dealt with by the criminal justice system. Fiji is something of an exception in this regard, as it does have a piece of legislation that is particularly concerned with dealing with juvenile criminal offenders: the Juveniles Act.<sup>2</sup>

The law of Vanuatu is much more typical of the region and is examined here as a basis for considering the state of the law more generally. In the Penal Code, the age of legal capacity is set at 10 and there is a rebuttable presumption of incapacity in relation to children aged 10–14. This twofold formulation as to the age of legal incapacity is common throughout the region, although the actual age ranges vary slightly between jurisdictions. It is also the case that certain offences, most notably rape, cannot be committed by (male) persons under a certain age as a result of the presumption that such persons are incapable of completing the actus reus of the offence. Recently, in Fiji, it has been suggested that this ‘restriction’ should be lifted; the Fiji Law Reform Commission has recommended abolishing the presumption that a male person under the age of 12 cannot be capable of having carnal knowledge (FLRC 1999:para 1.4; see also Jowitt and Newton Cain 2001).

In Vanuatu, the Penal Code states that convicted persons who are under the age of 16 should not be imprisoned unless there is no other form of punishment available to the court; that is, imprisonment should only be utilised as a measure of last resort. It also states that where a person under 16 is imprisoned, such person shall serve their sentence in a special establishment or, if none exists, shall be kept separate from older offenders. There is no special detention facility in Vanuatu for young offenders and the resources available within the correctional services are so limited that it would be very difficult for this stipulation to be complied with. This position is common throughout the region, although in Fiji there is a facility specifically for juvenile offenders who have been sentenced to a period of imprisonment by the courts.

The Criminal Procedure Code of Vanuatu makes no reference to any special procedures relating to when young people come into contact with the criminal justice system, whether as offenders or in some other capacity. This means that how young people are treated at such



times is left up to the discretion of the courts or other actors in the system, rather than being circumscribed by the law.

The paucity of the legal provisions mentioned here is reflected elsewhere in terms of policy and practice. In Vanuatu, for example, police officers do not receive any specific training in dealing with young people who are or are alleged to be involved in criminal activity. Also, there are no social workers or other professionals available to support young people who come into conflict with the law, as is the case elsewhere. The situation is very similar in other parts of the region and also in relation to other 'vulnerable' groups (such as those with learning disabilities or those who are hearing-impaired) who are equally poorly serviced.

The resources of the developing South Pacific countries are insufficient to meet the demands that the 'mainstream' criminal justice system places on them, without attempting to make special provision for 'minority' groups such as young people. Therefore, it may be necessary to look to the 'informal justice sector' for assistance or even as the basis for policy and practice in relation to young people in conflict with the law. This is not to make some value judgement as to one system being better or worse than the other. Whichever sector it is, there must be due consideration given to the issue of justice – young people must be treated justly and must be seen to be treated justly.

## **Alternative approaches**

Some approaches to justice are not sited within the mainstream criminal justice systems of the region, but they may provide some alternative or additional resources for dealing with young people in conflict with the law. This is not to say that changes to law and/or rules of procedure are not appropriate or significant in this area. Rather, it is a recognition of the difficulties associated with reforming law and procedure. It is also an acknowledgement that, even where legislative or procedural changes are effected, these are not necessarily the most significant changes in terms of practical effects on a day-to-day basis.

Elsewhere in the world, restorative justice practices have been widely advocated and adopted as particularly appropriate for dealing with young people who come into conflict with the law. In New Zealand, a system of family conferencing has been in existence for some years in relation to juvenile offenders and is now being extended to take in adult offenders as well, in certain circumstances. Advocates of restorative justice techniques point to the adoption of 'traditional' dispute resolution methods (such as the use of formal apologies, reparation, compensation and mediation) as a key strength of this approach to dealing with criminal justice issues. It is considered particularly appropriate in relation to young people because it goes a long way to keeping them out of prison or other detention facilities, often considered to be more harmful than curative both to the



individuals incarcerated and the communities from whence they come. This has been recognised in relation to Indigenous communities in Australia:

“Indigenous communities see prison as part of the cycle of violence – stripping communities of their young men and returning them more damaged than when they left. They want interventions that stop violence but leave families intact and promote family and community ‘healing’.”

(Blagg; 2001:16)

It is not always clear where the imperative for a movement towards (or back) to the use of restorative justice techniques in the Pacific Island region has come from. There is a general perception that crime is increasing as a result of a combination of urban drift, a movement towards market economies and a lack of employment in urban areas.<sup>3</sup> And there is a particular concern about young people committing crime and behaving in other anti-social ways.

In Vanuatu recently, the Juvenile Justice Project (JJP) examined the possibility of using customary law and practice as the basis for dealing with young people in conflict with the law, in preference to ‘state’ law and its agencies, namely the police and the courts. The impetus for this research was one of the findings of a previous Young People’s Project:

“The importance of *kastom* in resolving problems and settling disputes was mentioned many times by young people in the research. Young people frequently mentioned that they would prefer to pass through traditional channels to resolve their problems with family or with the law when they are involved in some kind of trouble. One reason for this is that when they pass through *kastom* channels they are not left with a police record that will ruin their chances for future employment. Another reason young people gave for favoring the *kastom* or island court system is that they don’t always understand the white man’s court system and they find that the police are often brutal in their dealings with them. In *kastom* the chiefs try to ‘straighten’ young people by bringing them back to the notion of respect, instead of just punishing them.”

(Mitchell 1998:21)

In the 2000–01 period, the JJP undertook preliminary research to examine further the best way to deal with young people who come into conflict with law and authority within the particular context of Vanuatu society. The material that was collected was presented at a national summit in March 2001. There are several problems associated with this material that highlight some of the challenges that are presented by projects to develop alternative systems for dealing with young people in conflict with the law, particularly where they seek to draw on ‘custom’ or ‘tradition’.

A significant issue is that the research (and the ensuing recommendations made by the summit) do not make clear what was/is envisaged by the term 'juvenile justice'. This in turn leads to a lack of distinction between young people who are involved in crime and young people who are involved in behaviour which is not approved of by other people in the community (parents, teachers, chiefs, church leaders). This latter behaviour may be disruptive, immoral and possibly anti-social but it is not necessarily criminal. When examining alternatives to the 'formal' criminal justice process, it is important to ensure that this does not lead to young people becoming subject to a regime that is more coercive or repressive than if they were dealt with by the police and the courts. In particular, care needs to be taken to avoid breaches of the constitutional rights of young people (such as their freedom of movement) that cannot be lawfully substantiated.

From the results of a questionnaire circulated by the JJP to chiefs on a number of islands in Vanuatu, two points can be noted. The first is that 79.4 per cent of the respondents indicated that their custom courts had dealt with cases involving young people (either as 'offender' or 'victim') during 'this year'. However, no further information was provided as to the number of cases involved or the sorts of offences that came before these courts. Second, 15.3 per cent stated that they thought that the police and chiefs should cooperate to make both systems – customary and state law – work together. It is likely that this sort of partnership is a possible way forward.

The role of the community and community elders in establishing and maintaining community security and safety continues to be recognised and reiterated. The role of the community in the particular issue of 'juvenile justice' is hard to overstate. Caution must be exercised, however, so that, in the spirit of the CRC, any actions or interventions are indeed in the 'best interests' of the young people concerned.

## Notes

- 1 See <http://www.unhchr.ch/pdf/report.pdf> (accessed 27 August 2001).
- 2 Papua New Guinea also has specific legislation relating to juvenile criminal offenders but it will not be considered here.
- 3 See Jowitt in this Development Bulletin issue for a consideration of the Vanuatu situation.

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## Reading 6: Disentangling juvenile justice and kastom law in Vanuatu: issues arising from the Governing for the Future workshop

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As Vanuatu undergoes structural reform under the ambit of the Comprehensive Reform Programme, sponsored by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the pressing need to address issues relating to juvenile offenders has focused attention on the ambiguous role of customary practices and leadership in contemporary Vanuatu. The plight of juvenile offenders has highlighted the practical inadequacies of Vanuatu's legal system and brought into question the legitimacy of the state courts, the police and the government.

The public discourse has concentrated on giving greater powers to customary leaders, who in certain cases might be a better practical option for defaulting youngsters. Ironically, young people have voiced cogent reservations regarding the ability of chiefs to deliver justice better and ensure peaceful social relations. Tension is evident between nostalgic notions of *kastom* (customary practices, tradition) and the practical considerations of disparity between the priorities of customary leaders and those of young people, especially young women.

### Customary law and youth preferences

Research carried out by the Vanuatu Young People's Project (Mitchell 1998) and the Juvenile Justice Project of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (2000) suggested that young ni-Vanuatu prefer to face customary courts overseen by chiefs from their own community. Young people, especially young men, are most commonly arrested on minor charges, such as breaking-and-entering, shoplifting or drinking (Super 2000:26). The research documented their concern 'regarding the treatment they had received from police and the penalising rather than reconciliatory outcomes of the Western court system'. Moreover, it indicated that they were reluctant to utilise state law offices, had generally poor relations with the police and felt that state courts did not serve their interests.

The preliminary findings of the Juvenile Justice Project showed that most of those interviewed felt that young people should be dealt with through *kastom* law, although in what manner was not specified. They were echoed in comments made by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court that he would rather see young offenders placed under the care of a local chief than imprisoned (Super 2000:39).

The Juvenile Justice Project had investigated the main principles of *kastom* law in the islands of Tanna, Malakula, Ambrym and Ambae, how these practices were deployed in dealing with crimes committed by young people, and what areas of commonality existed between these practices and Western law. The research was consistent with the growing interest in restorative justice – a process aimed at achieving more effective resolutions to crime and conflict through reconciliation, probation and mediation – in Vanuatu and more broadly throughout the Pacific region, including Australia (see Braithwaite and Strang 2000, Dinnen 1998).

One of the main objectives of the National Summit on Juvenile Justice (in March 2001) was to come up with a system whereby *‘ideas on governance from chiefs and the state law can be integrated in order to expose certain characteristics and ideas that would be useful to deal with juveniles who have breached the law’*.

## Background to the workshop

Certain key stakeholders viewed the summit as counterproductive to the various projects of advocating for and empowering young people. Several NGO representatives voiced their concern that recommendations focusing on the role of chiefs in the justice system might inadvertently counteract Vanuatu’s obligations as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and undermine the social justice initiatives currently being undertaken to empower young people. The most contentious recommendation stated: *‘Only the chief should decide which cases are referred to the state courts’* (Vanuatu Cultural Centre 2001:2–3).

At the Governing for the Future workshop in April 2001, 20 young people (including eight women) made forceful and articulate presentations (Morgan 2001). The majority emphasised experience, rather than universalist theories of governance, and focused on where and when young people’s interests had been properly served, where they had not, and what options were available in light of that failure. While the workshop was not specifically designed around issues of juvenile justice, the fact that it was convened only a month after the National Summit meant that participants used the forum to question aspects of *kastom* law and the judicial system.

The workshop was unprecedented and especially timely, given that chiefs had dominated the Summit and the voice of youth had hardly been heard. Young people are generally not privileged participants in public forums in Vanuatu, much less those relating to governance. Although 60 per cent of Vanuatu’s population is under 25 and the mean age is 17.5 (NSO 2000:17–18), young people are consistently marginalised. National leaders rarely consult them, even on youth-specific issues. While local and international NGOs have placed increased importance on young people as a programming area, the Vanuatu Government has been slower to address issues affecting youth.

## Capacity to deal with juvenile offenders

Vanuatu currently has little institutional capacity to deal with juvenile offenders. With the exception of an agreement between the courts, the Public Prosecutors' Office and the Municipality of Port Vila and some provisions in island courts, there is little capacity for community service sentences to be handed down. Even these provisions are not formulated with juvenile offenders in mind and are unduly harsh in catering for young people (Super 2000:34).

This limitation is symptomatic of wider problems within the legal system. There is a shortage of lawyers, especially in rural areas, and of the six island courts convened by chiefs none is working as planned (Super 2000:30–1). Little formal monitoring takes place regarding conflicts with the law generally. AusAID and the ADB have both targeted the legal sector for complementary strengthening projects. The ADB has prioritised awareness-heightening for public sector officials, adherence to international standards on money laundering and international fiscal policy, capacity-building and training, and assistance to improve the quality of the legal system and to establish a public law information centre (Port Vila Presse 2 June 2001:1). Former Ombudsman Marie-Noelle Ferrieux Patterson, who is now the secretary of the Vanuatu National Council of Women, blamed the 'lack of financial and human resources support . . . including the public prosecutor, public solicitor and the courts' for rising crime rates (Trading Post 22 February 2001:1). She also stated that the police are ineffective in major investigations.

The police force and the paramilitary Vanuatu Mobile Force have come under increased scrutiny because of recent charges of institutionalised brutality. Young People's Project Research stated that it is an ongoing concern for young people (Mitchell 1998; see Super 2000:27). The Ombudsman Hannington Alatoa has noted that 60 per cent of claims filed in his office are against police (Super 2000:37). On the two occasions the police and the mobile force have mounted punitive raids after civil disturbances, charges of 'intentional assault' have been brought against officers.

Legal reform in general is a key priority, but juvenile justice in particular is a less visible issue for governments in the overall project of institutional reform.

## Legal literacy

Under the existing judicial system, young people are isolated by poor legal literacy. Most young people are cognisant of 'the basic law' and know that criminal prosecution limits their employment prospects. Yet few young people have a solid understanding of their basic rights and most are unaware that a relationship of confidentiality exists between lawyer and client or do not trust that relationship (Morgan 2001). Many young people therefore do not provide relevant information to their legal counsel.



In other parts of the Pacific, state courts are defined as ‘superfluous and sometimes unwelcome’ because trial occurs after customary reconciliation has been enacted (Newton Cain 2001:59). In the case of Vanuatu, workshop participants noted that juvenile offenders prefer *kastom* court because they feel less intimidated. The chief is often known to the offender and having gone through an informal *kastom* court does not jeopardise future employment prospects.

Workshop participants affirmed many of the research findings on which the summit had been premised. Like most ni-Vanuatu, they appreciated the value of *kastom* and considered an ongoing role for *kastom* law appropriate. *Kastom* is considered stronger in rural areas because the influences of urbanisation and Westernisation are less pronounced there. Although reliable statistics are unavailable, rural areas appear to have lower crime rates than urban ones.

## Relevance of customary law

The relevance of *kastom* in urban areas was questioned, however. Community dispersal in urban areas diluted the influence of chiefs. While *kastom* was the basis of identity for most ni-Vanuatu and therefore something to be cherished, many of its elements were contrary to contemporary notions of human rights. Tolerance of violence towards women and children, opposition to women in decision-making roles, arranged marriages and chiefs’ control of young people’s mobility are all elements of *kastom* that are no longer acceptable.

Several forms of crime, including murder, aggravated assault, sexual assault, and crimes against non-indigenous residents, were considered to be not within the competence of *kastom* courts to consider. Chiefs were most able to address minor crimes arising in their own communities, where they were familiar with the offenders and victims (Morgan 2001). This complements the initial premise of the Juvenile Justice Project: that to deal more effectively with young offenders under the current legal system, chiefs should undertake pastoral care or implement *kastom* reconciliation, thereby sparing juveniles costly and shameful court cases and potential imprisonment.

A recent UNICEF report (Super 2000:39–40) noted with concern that, in practice, there is often no right of appeal in *kastom* courts, and raised serious questions regarding the processes and practices of punishment. For example, despite freedom of movement being enshrined as a fundamental right of all ni-Vanuatu, chiefs claim the right to repatriate young offenders forcibly to their home islands in serious cases or where other deterrents have failed. This practice also raises questions for second-and third-generation Vila residents, who may not have a clearly defined home island, who may lack vernacular expertise and who may never have lived in the islands. Increasing numbers of urban young people are from mixed marriages, between ni-Vanuatu from different regions or between ni-Vanuatu and other Pacific Islanders, Asians or Europeans.



Punishment meted out by chiefs is often for transgressions against undocumented moral assertions, formulated without widespread consultation. In customary courts, little distinction is made between civil and criminal 'wrongs' (Newton Cain 2001:67). While initiatives to improve the capacity of the legal system to handle young offenders are broadly supported, 'informal systems are not necessarily better than formal ones unless human rights are properly safeguarded and there are adequate monitoring mechanisms in place' (Super 2000:40).

According to Juvenile Justice Project research, most young people interviewed felt that young women were fairly treated by *kastom* law. Yet it noted that significant differences existed between the experiences of young men and young women, and a great deal more investigation of the issue needed to be undertaken, particularly for 13–18-year-old women. 'In some Pacific islands societies rape is not considered serious enough to merit referral to the police' and is considered something that should be dealt with by the community, without reference to the relevant legislation (Newton Cain 2001:63). It was felt that chiefs trivialise the interests of individual wronged women and give priority to community cohesion and reconciliation. Reconciliation, in this instance, entails the subversion of the human rights of the women involved. Chiefs have proved incapable of protecting young women when men consistently 'make trouble' towards them. There are valid concerns, therefore, that women's rights are curtailed by *kastom* arbitration.

There is a growing body of research in the Southwest Pacific documenting the failure of both state law and customary law to dispense peace and justice in cases of rape and serious sexual assault (Jolly 2000; see also Garap 2000, Mason 2000). Women's interests are best served under formal law because it offers recourse in the event that a victim is dissatisfied with an outcome, the legal system's practical inadequacies notwithstanding.

## Policy issues

The policy implications of these issues are transparent. The problems of dealing with juvenile offenders under the current system denote the institutional limitations of the legal system, a point supported by the fact that funding agencies have adopted legal sector strengthening as a key priority. The preponderance of young people facing court in the first instance, moreover, reflects the systemic limitations of national and provincial governments and the private sector in providing opportunities for young people.

Creeping urbanisation is recognised as a major factor. Crime has risen in urban areas because of increasing population and economic pressures. Young people throughout Vanuatu are trapped by the lack of opportunities. Family and community networks in urban areas are unable continually to absorb or support high numbers of under-skilled, unemployed island immigrants. National leaders are becoming more aware of the potential ramifications.

Young people are unable to access relevant information on a variety of key issues, including restorative justice and the law. More training opportunities for ni-Vanuatu and more effective dissemination of information regarding existing opportunities are needed. Despite their ability to organise in creative and effective ways, demonstrated particularly in the Vanuatu Young People's Project, young people feel disenfranchised by national leaders and under-served by state institutions. The growing number of young under-skilled ni-Vanuatu will place increasing pressures on a government already straining to provide basic services.

Perceived state weakness, the perception of politicians as opportunistic and self-serving and politics generally as foreign and unduly divisive have intensified claims that the particular brand of democracy extant in Vanuatu does not work because it is culturally alien. In its most extreme form, this argument suggests that Vanuatu should abandon democracy and the Constitution and allow chiefs to govern in 'the *kastom* way'. In light of concerns about *kastom* law, these sentiments are both potentially divisive and contrary to many of Vanuatu's human rights obligations.

Tension is mounting between notions of reinvigorated *kastom* to compensate for perceived state weakness and awareness that this may curtail the human rights of individual ni-Vanuatu. The recommendation of the National Summit that only chiefs should decide which cases are referred to the state courts amounts to a significant priority change from the initiative that produced the summit, which had as its premise the desire to make the legal system more effective in dealing with young offenders, especially young men. Considering the weaknesses in the existing legal system, the involvement of chiefs in restorative justice initiatives is both timely and warranted, but their future role must be questioned more thoroughly.

The major inference to be made in light of these issues is the need for ongoing research and advocacy for and by young people. Many community leaders have resisted the right of women to speak on certain issues, as they do young people's attempts. Self-advocacy is the first step to empowerment, but it is not the only one. The danger, that calls for appropriate and effective means of dealing with young offenders will be subsumed within a broader discourse of government reform or yoked to specific interests not directly related to issues of juvenile justice, remains salient.

## Note

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