

Youth Studies Australia

Media release: 15 Sept 2006

Just behaviour – or is it?

Times are a'changing for youth workers. In this issue of YSA, we hear why these days youth work in rural Australia can be rewarding not only for young clients, but also for the youth workers. On the other hand, we learn why conflicts between youth workers and teachers may mean problems for governments planning to place more youth workers in schools.

We also look at young people's behaviour. Is it fair? Is it responsible? Or doesn't it matter, after all 'they're only kids'. This edition looks at a range of aspects of young people's behaviour that are problematic for them, their peers and their fellow community members. Authors suggest educating young people about more responsible, positive ways of being, but it's not just about 'them', we adults need to hear that:

- we endanger and demean girls by encouraging boys to 'just be boys'.
- teachers may be able to stop other children being bullied, by identifying students who are unhappy in the classroom.
- we need to fill the considerable gaps in young people's knowledge in regard to responsible drinking.
- we need to emphasise that close contacts would disapprove of young people's inappropriate or problematic mobile phone use.

Going bush: Youth work in rural settings

Howard Sercombe

Living in the community in which you work, and where all your clients know where you live, raises some interesting issues of accountability, ethics and practice. The scarcity of specialised services also means that a youth worker has to be innovative and adaptive in the use of his or her own and the town's resources. But the existence of a real community, where people actually know each other, makes long-term change for young people a real possibility.

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VOLUME 25 NUMBER 3 SEPT 2006

Rural communities are, generally, a long way away from the centres of power where decisions are made. Paradoxically, that can often mean that it is easier to get things done.

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Youth work in schools: Should youth workers also be teachers?

Tim Corney

There are plans within the Australian Capital Territory to place a youth worker in every government high school, while Victoria is considering blending the roles of youth workers, teachers and welfare officers. Tim Corney considers the possible consequences of these changes for the roles of youth workers and teachers and the implications for the relationship between these professions. He also questions the outcomes of these changes for students and young people.

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'Just boys being boys'?

Leanne Dalley-Trim

The "doing" of gender and, more specifically, the performance of masculinity, is not necessarily a straightforward or simplistic endeavour – there is nothing "just" about boys being boys. Rather, "doing" masculinity and constructing for oneself a recognisable masculine identity is complex work. Further, research demonstrates that the performances played out within the classroom site by many boys have unjust consequences for girls.

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Bully/victim students and classroom climate

Shoko Yoneyama & Ken Rigby

The results of this study suggest a link between students' involvement with bully/victim problems and their perceptions of school/classroom climate. It is also possible that negative perceptions of school/classroom climate may hinder students' learning and disadvantage them academically. On the basis of their findings, the authors recommend that teachers pay particular attention to the behaviour of children who appear to be especially unhappy in the classroom.

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Responsible drinking knowledge: A comparison of Australian apprentices and university students

Nicki Dowling, David Clark & Tim Corney

Young adults are at the highest risk for alcohol-related harm; so what do they know about responsible drinking practices? This study compared the knowledge of apprentices and university students. The study revealed that both groups have relatively low levels of knowledge regarding some responsible drinking practices. It is apparent that these young people need increased alcohol awareness, particularly in relation to responsible drinking practices.

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Ring, ring, why did I make that call? Mobile phone beliefs and behaviour among Australian university students

Shari Walsh & Katherine White

In this study, the majority of respondents reported that they would regularly interrupt a conversation with other people to read an SMS or answer their phone. However, they were less likely to reply to a message when in the company of others. In addition, a small number of students reported regularly using their phone when driving or in the movies. The findings of this study will help researchers to design strategies to overcome problematic and unsafe mobile phone use.

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Teachers see youth workers as occupying a supportive but subservient role to that of teachers. That is, they provide or facilitate activities that are supplementary to those of the teacher in the classroom.

Educators need to be aware that it is possible for boys to perform as masculine subjects in ways that are more acceptable to teachers and less disenfranchising to their female peers.

Why boy bullies were also less positive about the school/classroom climate may in part be explained by factors not directly related to school, such as personality and/or family influence.

The low average scores for both groups of young people suggest that it may be important to implement alcohol education programs at the earliest feasible age, such as in primary or secondary school.

Participants reported spending between \$5 and \$200 per month on their mobile phone, with the majority of young mobile phone users spending more on their phone than was covered by their plan.