

This article was downloaded by: [The University of Western Australia]

On: 4 June 2010

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 907724187]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Australian Journal of Political Science

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713404457>

Mixed messages: youth participation and democratic practice

Judith Bessant^a

^a RMIT University,

To cite this Article Bessant, Judith(2004) 'Mixed messages: youth participation and democratic practice', Australian Journal of Political Science, 39: 2, 387 – 404

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/1036114042000238573

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1036114042000238573>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Mixed Messages: Youth Participation and Democratic Practice

JUDITH BESSANT

RMIT University

The article begins by observing that, over the last decade, the idea of youth participation has once more become a popular part of contemporary political talk both in Australia and in many Western societies. Indeed most Western governments now advocate enhanced youth participation as part of a discourse about modern citizenship, so much so that it has become a policy cliché to say ‘increased youth participation’ will ‘empower’ young people, help build community and remedy a range of social problems. It is also noted that, if the idea of participation itself is an old idea central to the liberal democratic tradition, the current ‘rediscovery’ of youth participation is arguably part of that political orthodoxy. Drawing on selected State, national and Commonwealth government youth documents, the question is asked whether the official enthusiasm for youth participation has much to do with democratic practice. It is argued that the recent government enthusiasm for youth participation is problematic for three reasons. First, it fails to recognise the significant obstacles that young people currently experience when trying to participate socially, economically and politically. Second, there is a failure to think through what democratic practice requires. Third, both the conceptualisation and operationalisation of official youth participation policies reveal an agenda that is seriously at odds with the rhetoric of democratic participation. This raises questions about whose voice is actually being heard and to what effect.

A litmus test of any government, however it may describe itself, is its treatment of children. (Yakovlev 2003, 33)

Over the last decade, the idea of youth participation has once more become a popular part of contemporary political talk both in Australia and in many Western societies. Most Western governments now advocate enhanced youth participation as part of a discourse about modern citizenship, so much so that it has become a policy cliché to say ‘increased youth participation’ will ‘empower’ young people. Governments routinely and publicly declare their commitment to consultation and improving young people’s opportunities to have a ‘real say’ and ‘real choices’ about policies and services generally and particularly those that directly affect them. In short, the official message is that youth participation ‘enhances citizenship’ while tackling a range of social problems.

Judith Bessant is a Professor in Sociology and Youth Studies at RMIT University. She has written extensively in the areas of social theory/sociology, youth studies and social policy.

What should we think about such claims?

If the idea of participation itself is an old idea central to the liberal-democratic tradition, the current 'rediscovery' of youth participation is arguably part of that emergent political orthodoxy. In its current form it is part of a 'Third Way' politics pioneered in Australia by the Hawke–Keating Labor government in the 1980s whose political style blended economic liberal fiscal policies with some regard for social equity. This blend, refined and adapted to local circumstances, was particularly fashionable in the United Kingdom, the United States and Europe through the 1990s and was promoted by a new generation of social-democratic parties and leaders like Blair's New Labour, Italy's Massimo D'Alema, Germany's Schroder and Clinton's New Democrats in the US.¹ Today governments of all persuasions find it convenient to blend together a fiscal policy approach reliant on neoliberal economics, while their social policy talks about social solidarity, citizenship, regeneration, 'inclusion', neighborhood renewal and 'building community'.²

Although this 'new' politics has received considerable critical attention (eg Silver 1994; Levitas 1998; Watts 2001), the notion of participation and its application to youth policy in Australia has not yet been critically appraised. This article provides such an appraisal by critiquing claims that youth participation as it is articulated in recent official documents actually enhances opportunities for young people democratic practice.

In this article, I ask whether the official enthusiasm for youth participation has much to do with democratic practice. My disposition is one of scepticism. I argue that the recent government enthusiasm for youth participation is problematic for three reasons. First, it fails to recognise the significant obstacles that young people currently experience when trying to participate socially, economically and politically. Second, there is a failure to think through what democratic practice requires. Third, both the conceptualisation and operationalisation of official youth participation policies reveal an agenda that is seriously at odds with the rhetoric of democratic participation. This raises questions about whose voice is actually being heard and to what effect.

I begin by considering what the policy documents say about youth participation.³

What the Papers Say

The recent Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting's *Youth For the Future Task Force Report* (CHOGM 2002) is exemplary in its identification of 'youth participation' as critical to democratic nation-building. The taskforce recommended

¹ The eclecticism of this political style is suggested by the intellectual antecedents which drew together communitarians such as Etzioni (1993) and Putman (1993 and 1995), conservatives like Coleman (1996) in the USA and Third Way-ists like Giddens (1998) in the UK.

² Australia's leading political exponents of 'Third Way-ism' is Labor's now-Leader of the Opposition, Mark Latham. According to Latham, the cause of poverty, rising street crime and the 'social exclusion' is an over-generous welfare state because excessive welfare prevents self-determination and personal responsibility. Given that a loss of individual independence is the cause of problems like poverty, the solution lies in 'the creation of strong lines and relationships between people' (Latham 1996, 3). This is achieved through increased participation and the growth of 'social capital'.

³ In this article, a selection of State, national and Commonwealth government youth documents are examined, namely CHOGM (2002), Government of Victoria (2002), PMYPAPTF (2001b) and Ausyouth (2001, 2002a, b,c).

that young people contribute to building democracy, and spoke in the glowing terms about their role:

The Commonwealth's future lies in the hands of its youth. They are the inheritors of fundamental values ... The challenge is to enlist the enthusiasm of youth for the Commonwealth in the new century. We recognize that youth can make a major contribution to the work of the Commonwealth and propose bringing together a range of separate strands into a coherent 'Youth for the Future' initiative. (CHOGM 2002, 10)

According to the GHOGM taskforce, youth participation is critical for maintaining democratic values such as freedom and justice (CHOGM 2002). In common with other youth initiatives, CHOGM adopted the 'Roundtable' approach to run a pan-Commonwealth 'Youth For the Future Program' (CHOGM 2002, 18).

Closer to home, various Australian governments have articulated the idea of participation in two, not necessarily well-integrated, ways. One way of talking about participation depends on an idea about 'participation' as paid employment and managing the transition from 'adolescent student' to 'adult worker'. The other focuses on what are said to be democratic practices embedded in devices like 'Youth Roundtables' and similar consultative mechanisms.

The current Australian government has pursued the first way of thinking about 'youth participation'. In 2001 it published a major report *Footprints to the Future* (PMYPAPTF 2001b).⁴ The Report points to a failure by too many young people to negotiate 'the passage to responsible adulthood'. Social integration, including the successful transition from school to independent *working* adult life, was identified as core challenges to Australia's claim to be democratic.

The Pathways Report focused on problems such as 'jobless families', youth homelessness, unemployment, health and crime (PMYPAPTF 2001b, 4–9). A primary aim of the document was to discover ways of securing the young person's passage to adult citizen. The 'challenge' is described in terms of young people's precarious attachment to 'society'. Tendencies towards disconnection are said to be evident in 'behavioral indicators' like substance abuse and declining school retention rates. The remedy, according to the Pathways Report, is to build 'secure pathways' for young people to prevent their disengagement from mainstream services and society, while reconnecting those who have already detached themselves.⁵

To secure their transition or 'pathway', more participation in education, training

⁴ The taskforce was established to examine young people's transition from school to work, further education and active participation in community life. This involved a gathering of representatives of non-government agencies, working young people, employers, researchers, the Indigenous community, Commonwealth and State government departments (PMYPAPTF 2001b, 1).

⁵ Representing youth problems in terms of disaffection, disconnection and marginalisation to which participation is the solution characterises a long line of youth official policy documents (see eg Wright and Headlam 1976; Australian Youth Service Consultation Team 1985, Finn 1991; Manly 2000). In the early 1990s, the Finn Report, commissioned by a Labor government, 'found' that young people's participation in post-compulsory education and training would secure the transition to adulthood for youth deemed to be at risk (Finn 1991). To solve the problem of 'social exclusion' in the 2000s, little has changed. A cursory survey of the twentieth century indicates a policy field littered with similar approaches—the push to encourage young people to join youth groups, national fitness programs, youth clubs, church groups, etc. (eg *Juvenile Delinquency Advisory Committee* 1956).

and labour market activities is needed. Here ‘youth participation’ in social, cultural, and leisure activities is read a clear indicator of a healthy transition towards independence and evidence of social integration, while leaving school before Year 12 becomes an indicator of high risk (PMYPAPTF 2001b). Thus youth participation becomes synonymous with enrolment in education or training, and/or voluntary work, or involvement in youth sports or church activities.

This account of the education–employment nexus relies on a classic liberal view of citizenship represented in a line of political theorising at work from Marshall (1950) and Pateman (1970) through to Pixley (1993). This is essentially the idea of the citizen-as-worker. It assumes that a condition of normal independent citizenship involves having the right and the obligation to participate fully in the life of a liberal society and that *paid employment* is the primary way of securing that citizenship. Critical to paid employment is a steady transition from education to the workforce. Citizenship is gained through employment, a living wage and an adequate standard of living while it also demonstrates the value of being moral, independent and able to meet one’s civic obligations. This position is also expressed as a defence of a ‘work ethic’ inculcated in ‘participatory’ programs like work-for-the-dole and school.

This civic view of education/work is supplemented by sociological and common sense accounts of the normative–integrative role played by employment. Paid work has traditionally been seen as having a two-fold role. Having a job is said to provide a source of income and productivity as well as play a moral–social integrative influence in the lives of young people. It is this ‘ethic of work’ which informs the justifications offered by the Federal government for its bid to increase education retention rates and ‘reforms’ such as work-for-the dole.

Again, old assumptions based on American 1940s-to-1960s sociological models of socialisation theory inform this emphasis on the problems of managing the transition from ‘youth’ to ‘adulthood’ (Jones and Wallace 1992). There has been a move in youth studies to return to the transitional model of ‘human development’ or the ‘sequences of statuses through which young people pass as they move from childhood to adult’ dove-tails with youth participation-as-extended training or schooling (Coles 1995, 20; Minzen nd). On this account, education and training can be represented as the means by which government supports young people’s ‘integration’ into adulthood. From this perspective, staying on in training–education helps manage the transition from childhood to adulthood’ (Coles 2000, 2). The Commonwealth government Report reiterates the virtues of *more opportunities for youth leadership and participation in decision-making*, arguing that it offers ‘a *solid transition*’ for young people (PMYPAPTF 2001b, 86; emphasis added). We are informed that how ‘young people *need to have a voice in community decisions and particularly in those decisions which affect them and their future*’ (PMYPAPTF 2001a, 86; emphasis added).

Alongside this model of participation that depends on the citizen-as-worker model is an idea about democratic practice. The idea of ‘youth development’ as a way of operationalising youth participation in ‘community building’ and other civic activities is another popular component of youth policy in Australia.⁶ In October

⁶ It is an American-sponsored approach that governments and many ‘youth experts’ use to inform approaches to securing young people’s ‘transition’ to responsible adulthood (Pittman and Wright 1991; Roehlkepartain 1995).

1999, the Australian Federal government announced its funding initiatives that drew on youth development literature and practice. The plan was to advance youth development to the point where it informed all youth policy in Australia.⁷ This involved the founding of an organisation called Ausyouth established to kick-start a process of having youth development inform Australia's youth policy (Ausyouth 2001, 1). The plan was that the preliminary work carried out by Ausyouth would inform government youth-related policies at Federal and State levels (Ausyouth 2001, 2002a,b,c).

Youth participation is fundamental to this project. According to the Ausyouth documents, youth participation entails offering young people as many opportunities as possible to be involved in a full range of social and democratic activities. Ausyouth material is reliant on social-capital arguments with a particular concern about building relevant 'competencies'. Young people are encouraged to participate in civic projects like volunteer environmental work, membership of the cadets, the Red Cross, St John Ambulance, Life Saving bodies, the young policy corps, Scouts, Guides, and youth corporate enterprises.

In Victoria, the Bracks Labor government recently released its framework for policy and program development: *Respect: The Government vision for young people* (Government of Victoria 2002). This document 'articulates the government's intention to improve the opportunities and well-being of all Victorians aged twelve to twenty-five'. This will be achieved by 'encouraging and enabling young people to *participate in the fullest possible range of activities and enhancing their interaction with Government*' (Government of Victoria 2002, iv; emphasis added). The document explains that government will provide '*a strong voice for young people in government policy and program development and ... [encourage] young people's input in this process*' (Government of Victoria 2002, iv, emphasis added). Moreover, the Victorian vision statement

recognizes that the *participation of a diverse range of young people encourages community connectedness and promotes the unique perspectives and needs of young people*. The Government also declares itself committed to valuing the contribution of young people, to *hearing their views* and providing them with 'genuine opportunities for involvement. (Government of Victoria 2002, 6; emphasis added)

'Youth Roundtables' also figure in this document as a 'key achievement' that will create opportunities for young people to '*communicate directly with government on issues of concern to them*' (Government of Victoria 2002, 6; emphasis added). The Victorian government praises itself for encouraging young people to *contribute the development of advice on youth policies*, programs and services through increased resources for a state-wide network of fifteen regional Youth Committees (Government of Victoria 2002, 8; emphasis added).

Participation according to the Victorian government entails the selection of young people in a series of 'Roundtables' and regional youth committees which

⁷ Youth development is promoted as having the capacity to address various problems including the growing incidence of high-profile violence and the 'unforgiving' nature of a global economy. It will help solve problems of violence involving young people; it will assist by building the 'capacities' of young people so they will be better able to negotiate the 'harsh environment' of 'the new global economy' (Ausyouth 2000).

perform a *consultative* function. Like the CHOGM approach, the Victorian government defines youth participation as involvement in activities like sports programs, environmental projects via agricultural and natural resources initiatives and by remaining in or returning to school or a form of training (Government of Victoria 2002, 8, 10–11). This *integration*, it is argued, is achievable through ‘*Managed Individual Pathways Plans*’ (Government of Victoria 2002, 11; emphasis added).

This initial survey of official youth participation documents indicates there are important political and social issues at stake. In this article, I focus only on the political aspects of participation talk by asking how the idea of youth participation connects to the politics of democratic practice. In particular, in what ways does the theme of youth participation as it is officially understood constitute a politics of democratic practice?

Ignoring the Obvious

All the policy documents are characterised by three key features. The first is that the policies and practices that constitute the policy theme of ‘youth participation’ fail to either acknowledge or address the daunting array of discriminatory practices that thwart or preempt the capacity of young people to act as citizens.

In 1989, the United Nations promulgated its Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC 1989). Australia is a signatory to this Convention.⁸ It clearly spells out the fundamental democratic and human rights that young people have, such as the right to engage in free speech, the right to petition, or the right to freedom of movement. Missing from all of the policy documents that I have surveyed is any acknowledgment of the various ways an array of social, legal and cultural practices prevent young people’s engagement in the civic, social and political life of the community, practices which in some cases State and Federal governments either connive at or fail to address.

Some of these practices are well known and acknowledged, others less so:

Young people under the age of 18 are denied the right to vote. Refusing young people’s political status raises substantive questions about equity and fairness (Schrag 1975; AYPAC 1995). The intentional exclusion of a section of the population from participation in public life, including the right to vote, undermines any claims to be a modern liberal democracy. This is so given the concern of the broad liberal tradition with enhancing distributive and communicative justice concern that is rendered redundant should political enfranchisement be denied to a significant section of the population (Mill 1957; Rawls 1971).

Schools offer young people many developmental rights, the value of which cannot be denied. Schools are also undemocratic institutions. The mandatory and prolonged nature of schooling comes with the denial of students’ rights to freedom of speech and movement. Students rarely have the right to say how the school is run or how teachers and others adults should conduct themselves. As

⁸ Of specific relevance are Article 12 (the right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting them), Article 13 (the right to freedom of expression), Article 14 (the right to freedom of thought), Article 15 (the right to association and assembly), Article 17 (the right to appropriate information), Article 29 (the right to an education which will encourage responsible citizenship) and Article 37(b) (no child shall be deprived if their liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily).

students, young people are routinely denied the right to participate in decision-making that directly affects them such as the curriculum to which they are exposed. Any rights to privacy are regularly undone by mandatory and surprise bag and locker inspections and most recently by placing surveillance cameras in student toilets. There is also an insistence on ready obedience, and a refusal to acknowledge most liberties that other citizens enjoy as a matter of course like choices about hairstyles, clothing and so forth. Many young people are regularly subject to various regimes of 'discipline' including corporal and other forms of punishment (Carson et al 2000, 86). Intimidation and detention are also techniques of control that are regularly used, yet they would not be tolerated if applied to any other age group (ALRC and HREOC 1997). Yet, as John Dewey (1916) argued long ago, there is no inherent reason why the development tasks schools assume cannot be realised in an institution that acknowledges young people as full citizens.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the governments of both the Northern Territory and Western Australia enacted sentencing legislation in response to populist law-and-order campaigns run to address 'rising crime rates'. This legislation has proved to be deeply inimical to the rights of young Indigenous people. The Western Australian government introduced the Crime (Serious and Repeat Offenders) Act (in force until June 1994) in 1992 and the Young Offenders Act in 1994 which provided for mandatory sentencing of juveniles (section 126). In 1996, the Criminal Code Amendment Act (No 2) provided for a mandatory sentence of 12 months detention or imprisonment for a third home burglary offence. Not only are mandatory sentencing laws harmful to young Indigenous people, they are also in breach of the United Nations Covenant on the Right of the Child (UNCROC) which Australia both signed and ratified in 1990. Ratification committed the Federal government to both observe the Convention's principles and requirements and to report to the UN on measures taken to give effect to the contained in the Convention.⁹ The Articles of UNCROC outline the rights of children and young people and should be regarded as the benchmark for treating young people as citizens with human rights. In spite of this impressive monument to international law, these mandatory sentencing laws acted to ensure that many young Australians have not enjoyed full citizenship and protection of their human rights.¹⁰

⁹ The ratification process is partially binding only on the Federal government and is not binding at all on the States and Territories.

¹⁰ Offences and sentences under mandatory sentencing have included the imprisonment for 28 days of a 15-year-old Aboriginal boy for taking pens and pencils, the 14-day imprisonment of a 24-year-old Aboriginal mother who received a stolen can of beer valued at \$2.50, the incarceration of a 21-year-old Aboriginal man for the theft of \$23 of biscuits and cordial drinks, the sentencing of an 18-year-old to 90 days for stealing 90 cents from a car, the imprisonment for a month of a 16-year-old mentally ill Aboriginal boy found in possession of an empty wallet valued at \$2 for which he was convicted for receiving stolen goods, and the sentencing for three months of a 17-year-old Aboriginal boy for stealing \$4 worth of petrol to sniff (Bessant 2001, 369–84). In 2001, Northern Territory voters went to the polls and elected their first Labor government. Almost immediately, the new Martin Labor government introduced the Juvenile Justice Amendment Act (No 2) 2001 which repealed mandatory sentencing for juvenile offenders, while their new Sentencing Amendment Act (No 3) 2001 repeals mandatory sentencing for property offences against adults. This means some justice was restored to the Northern Territory's legal system. Judges are no longer constrained to sentence Indigenous and other offenders who have committed petty property crime to lengthy terms of imprisonment without

The rights of young people to freedom of movement, speech and assembly are frequently and easily curtailed. Politicians, parents and teachers frequently act to deny students the right to participate in political activities like protest marches when those activities take place during class hours. In many cases, this involves invoking the truancy laws to prohibit young people's participation in these events. It needs to be acknowledged that there is not a consensus on this issue. Some parents, teachers and school principals have been supportive of young people's involvement in the peace marches, arguing that it offers important opportunities for students to learn directly about political processes and what it means to be 'active citizens'. Yet, as one 14-year-old participant in the protests explained, young people are more than capable of making well-informed and 'responsible' judgments (*Age 3 August 1998*).

Youth curfews continue to be used by local authorities to keep young people off the streets during certain hours. Police can lawfully apprehend and relocate a young person without that young person having committed an offence other than being out at night. These practices are 'justified' by claims they protect young people from becoming victims of assault and exposure to other 'risks' associated with the use of public space (ie traffic, illicit drugs, etc.). Other justifications for curfews refer to their ostensible crime prevention capacity, and perceived ability to secure a 'standards of decency' and safety for 'respectable citizens'. It is also argued they help safeguard shop-keepers' business by ensuring customers are not 'scared off' by 'rowdy and raucous youth' (White 1996, 29).

Such arguments do not address the problem constituted by the exclusion of one group from public space that other citizens are entitled to use, namely that this is intrusive and discriminatory (Matthews et al 1999: 1713–30).¹¹ The discriminatory nature of curfews is apparent when considering the likely reaction

Footnote continued

having regard to their circumstances. While this is a positive step for the Northern Territory, it needs to be noted that judicial discretion has not been restored in cases of aggravated property offences (ALRC and HREOC 1997; White 2000, 22–4; Cunneen 1997, 104–20.) The repeal of mandatory sentencing in Northern Territory means that Western Australia is the only Australian State that continues with laws that impose minimum mandatory terms of imprisonment for property offences.

¹¹ More generally, claims that curfews are justified by reference to arguments about the need to protect reflect a critical point of tension in youth rights debates. I refer to tensions between what can be called 'developmental rights' to certain things (ie education, nutrition, health-care, etc.) and the right to self-determination and choice. This ambiguity is further compounded by claims that 'allowing' young people to participate democratically places them beyond adult protection, thereby subjugating adults/parents rights over young peoples (Raynor 1994, 60–6). This is frequently linked to the special status of 'the child' or 'youth', and claims 'they' are not qualified to engage in decision making due to their deficient cognitive, social, and ethical abilities. Typically this argument follows claims that adults are in a stronger position to know what is in the best interest of 'their' child (Raynor 1994, 60–6; Thomson and Molloy 2001, 5–13). Thus guardianship arguments effectively deny young peoples' right to participate in various activities and to exercise self determination. Yet one salutary lesson to be learnt from recent revelations of child abuse by carers is that mistreatment was allowed to continue due to the prevalence of guardianship arguments. Public trust in moral experts and youth specialists meant that their authority took precedence over young peoples' rights. There is now sufficient evidence (eg repeated criminal activity against children) to refute claims that adults know what is in the best interest of young people, and that they can be relied on to act accordingly. In response to arguments that parents/adults can best represent the interests of 'their child', it is important to note that young people have experiences and insights that are frequently different to older peoples. The inclusion of young people in decision-making also leads to better policy outcomes, while failure to do so often results in practices that have a negative impact (Lansdown 2001). As Lansdown

if any other specific group were to be excluded from public space on the grounds they *may* commit crimes in the future, or because they *may* become victims of abuse.

The arguments about the value of curfews relies on popular prejudices that young people are naturally inherently delinquent. Yet, as White observes, 'There is nothing more intrinsically "criminal" about being young than there is about being an older person; teenagers do not constitute the largest category of serious offenders' (White 1996, 29). Moreover, curfews create new 'status offences' and criminalise behaviour that is otherwise lawful. It increases tensions between young people and law enforcement officials and brings some young people under the regular gaze of police. The evidence indicates that youth curfews have little effect on crime rates (White 1996, 28–30). Although there are many other reasons why curfews are problematic, given the space constraints of this article they cannot all be detailed. Enough has been said, however, to indicate why they are problematic and why the rationale for them is not compelling.

Police powers are routinely used against young people. In Victoria under the recent Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances (Volatile Substances) Act 2003, police now have the power to use force to search a young person under the age of 18 years of age if police suspect that person has in their possession a bottle, plastic bag or spray-can that can be used for chroming. And if police suspect the young person has been inhaling volatile substances, then he or she can be detained indefinitely. Strangely enough, while neither possession of nor inhaling volatile substances like nail polish, glue or spray-paint is a crime, police now have power to detain young people indefinitely (McSherry 2003). Article 37(b) of UNCROC stipulates that no child should be arbitrarily or lawfully stripped of his or her freedom. Laws that give police power to detain young people who have committed no offence for an indefinite period breaches this Convention. McSherry (2003) also points out that mechanisms already exist under the Children's and Young Persons Act 1989 (Vic.) to initiate official interventions for young people considered 'at risk' of volatile substance abuse. As she explains, although police argue these processes are ineffective and cumbersome, she argues that it makes better sense to concentrate on simplifying and streamlining these processes rather than using police detention powers to keep those young people off the streets and out of sight.

'Justifications' in defence of this practice are similar to those used for youth curfews, namely they protect young people from themselves and/or protect 'ordinary citizens' and social order. Yet the effectiveness of the law in terms of its capacity to discourage chroming and secure the well-being of young people is highly questionable. Rather than preventing chroming and helping to secure the health and well-being of young chromers, such a law is likely to exacerbate the problem by encouraging young people to 'go underground' and use places where they are less visible. This may mean being out of police sight, and less

Footnote continued

(2001, 7) observes, adults can only protect young people if they know what is happening in young peoples lives, and only young people can provide that information, by telling their stories with the authority to take appropriate action. According to Raynor (1994, 66), rather than talking about parental or adult rights, it may more useful to talk about the duties or obligations adults have to young people.

noticeable generally so public sensibilities are not offended, the down-side, however, is that being less visible means young chromers are less likely to get help from members of the public if it is needed. In addition, as with curfew policies, this new law is likely to exacerbate tensions between young people and policy while also bringing certain young people to the attention of police.

The 1997 Report by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) *Seen and Heard: priority for children in legal processes* (ALRC and HREOC 1997) found that children and young people are systematic excluded from legal processes. Amongst its many findings, the report established there is a 'consistent failure' by institutions of the legal system to consult with and listen to young people about matters that directly affected them. It also referred to the 'punitive approach' to young people in many juvenile justice systems, and court processes that active exclude young peoples participation (see also Carson et al 2000). Young people continue to be routinely subjected to various kinds of normal social and economic injustice. The 'youth wage' ensures that some young people do not receive equal pay for equal work. This age-based discrimination has been made lawful by explicit legislative means in 2001 by legislation exclusively applied to those under 21 years of age, while *all* other age groups are protected from such discriminatory practices. The 'youth wage' extends the dependency on parent/s and guardians in ways that sit oddly with official claims that governments want to enhance young people's active participation.

Arguments about the youth wage replicate the more general debates about rights, discriminatory practices and young people. It is argued, for example, that the removing the youth wage would increase youth unemployment, see some businesses go bankrupt, and increase the costs of certain goods and services. Moreover, the youth wage is 'justified' by claims that young people are 'less mature', less reliable than adult workers, less productive, and cost employers extra to train (ACCI 1998). There is a bevy of counter-arguments, including claims there is no definitive empirical evidence demonstrating that applying the equal work for equal pay principle to under 21-year-olds will have a major influence on unemployment. Indeed, in a 1998 Report on youth wages and employment, the Productivity Commission argued that full wages for young people produces less youth unemployment (Productivity Commission 1998). Others also challenge essentialist assumptions about the category of young workers. Not all under 21-year-olds have the same deficits; some for example have the same levels of competencies as older workers. In workplaces like fast-food outlets, for example, young workers can be as productive, reliable and competent as older employees (Bessant 2000, 235–50).

High levels of unemployment ensure that young people are located in the margins of economic activity and participation. Increasingly the jobs that do exist for young people are part-time and casual, offering little if any job security or stable income. If we are to understand employment as central to citizenship in the ways it has been argued by some (Pixley 1993), then the comparative absence of employment opportunities and security for young people is a significant barrier to their participation in the socio-economic and politic life of the community.

The growth of poverty amongst children and young people has ensured that many thousands of young people are routinely denied opportunities to participate (Harding et al 2001). Australia now has the highest rate of child poverty behind Russia, the USA and Italy (Bradbury and Jantti 2001; Neville 2002, 8). Finances—or the lack of them—can mean exclusion rather than participation occurs because young peoples' ability to engage freely in social, economic and political exchanges is impeded (Jones and Smyth 1999, 14).

Because children and young people do not enjoy the same civil rights as all other Australians, they are routinely subject to various forms of violence and exploitation (which if perpetrated against adults would invite criminal or civil legal action, yet such action is typically described as discipline).¹² The denial of rights that could otherwise be used by young people to protect themselves is not identified in the official documents. There is no consideration given to how refusing rights like the right to be free from assault or arbitrary detention might impact on official youth participation strategies.

The failure to recognise the very noticeable and real obstacles that most young people face in their bid to engage in democratic practices raises questions about the efficacy of the official youth participation agenda. Most State governments now have Ministers, advisors and agencies with responsibility for youth policy. Why is there so little activity or policy energy being devoted to this quite basic agenda? If policy-makers are serious about improving opportunities for young peoples' democratic practice, then why do they so easily ignore the barriers encountered? Why overlook the various ways those obstacles actively prohibit or inhibit their participation? Are those omissions more than innocent and embarrassing oversights? Do they reveal insights into the question about whether youth participation as it is officially conceived is intended to enhance young peoples' participation in democratic practices? Or does it indicate that youth participation has been defined in ways other than the enhancement of democratic practice?

The second basic point to be made concerns the failure to think through what democratic practice in relation to young people requires if it is to be taken seriously.

What Democratic Practice Requires

To establish whether the rhetoric of youth participation has anything to do with democratic practice, some clarity is needed about what democratic practice itself means or entails. It is important to note the difficulty of such a task simply because our ideas about 'democracy' are profoundly—and usefully—affected by the necessity of disagreement about this core idea. As Dewiel (2000, 149) argues, democracy 'is not a common philosophy but a system of ideas in permanent tension with each other. Democracy is not a single theory but a regular pattern of disagreement'. There is, for example, considerable disagreement among liberal democrats about the nature of rights, how to give effect to the idea of equity and the role that the

¹² Many young people are, for example, regularly subject to various regimes of 'discipline' including corporal and other forms of punishment in the home and in school. Intimidation and detention are also techniques of governance regularly used which would not be tolerated if applied to any other age group.

state might or should play (Hall 1986). Some liberal democrats, for example, see participation as a central component of liberal democracy needed to support and enhance the capabilities of citizens, while others argue that minimal state intervention is needed to secure liberty and democracy (Pateman 1970; von Hayek 1944). Likewise, there are significant debates about the complexities and grades or levels of citizenship (Hudson and Kane 2002). All this disagreement about what constitutes democratic practice makes it difficult to apply an overly concise and narrow definition of 'democratic practice'.¹³

Having said this, however, I doubt that there are any liberal democrats who would deny that democratic practice entails a commitment to those rules, practices and institutions that constitute a *representative democracy*. Democratic practice rests on the existence of certain institutions and a guarantee to observe basic human rights. If universal suffrage and democratic rights are central to modern representative democratic practice, such rights as freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom to petition, the right to form parties and other civic liberties are also fundamental to the architecture of a civil society. Fundamental to representative democracy is the practice of regular elections at which more than one party is on offer to the electorate and reliance on *universal suffrage* by free ballot to elect such a government.

Here is a further major problem with the current talk about youth participation, for it can be said confidently that if we wish to consider ourselves a democratic society, then there is an obligation to explain why a significant section of the population, ie our young people, does not enjoy full political participation including the suffrage.

An extended discussion on models of enfranchisement for people under 18 years of age is not appropriate here. Yet it is clear that the exclusion of a section of the population from participation in public life, including the right to vote, undermines a community's claims to be a liberal democracy.

The reasons why we do not allow under-18-year-olds to vote are rarely articulated and more usually simply assumed. I refer, for example, to the implicit idea that there are eligibility criteria for entry into the political process which crossing over from 17 years of age to 18 years presumably demonstrates. This argument presupposes the existence of specific criteria for determining when a person reaches the point when they have the competence to vote, and that those who are 18 and over have demonstrated they have. These arguments rely on essentialist assumptions that all under-18-year-olds possess the same characteristics and experience the same 'stages of development'. The discriminatory nature of this assumption becomes apparent if we were to argue, for example, that competency tests be implemented to determine the suitability of people over 18 years to vote. Such a test would be unthinkable. Yet presumably it is generally assumed that 16-year-olds could not pass some such test. This ignores the possibility that many people under 18 years are well-informed and are more politically astute than many older people.

¹³ Debates about young peoples' right to participate is complicated by the diversity of views about the nature, purpose and form that participation should take (Matthews et al 1998/99, 16–31). As Matthews and colleagues observe, if youth participation 'is to be truly effective, it should be carried out in such a way that the material influence of young people becomes progressively enlarged. Participation here is more broadly conceived to be the right to influence, in a democratic manner, processes bearing upon one's own life and the development of ... youth policy' (Matthews et al 1998/99, 19).

Refusing young people's political status raises substantive questions about the capacity of a political community to promote both fairness and liberty. Voting is also important because it helps to improve the quality and effectiveness of policies and decisions generally. Ensuring that the views of young people are considered means that information and ideas that otherwise would have been unheard are considered. Disregarding one section of the population can have negative outcomes. It can result, for example, in decisions that fail to address the problem because decision-makers cannot appreciate the nature or cause of the issues that they are trying to address.

Youth enfranchisement helps young protect themselves from exploitation and abuse. It also helps address widespread tendencies to stereotype and scapegoat young people for a range of social problems. Furthermore, it would redress power imbalances which make young people easy targets for politicians and others who want to make a name for themselves (Simpson, cited Sidoti in 1998, 33).

Addressing the question of participation and citizenship matters especially for that part of the population, namely young people, who by reason of explicit and implicit criteria are excluded from many political processes and are denied many rights most adults take for granted. Moreover, when making a legitimate claim to be democratic, it needs to be generally accepted that a reasonable basis exists for excluding particular groups from what is an otherwise widely available set of political and civil rights. Indeed the burden of proof for arguing why one group should be excluded rests with those advocating disenfranchisement. Refusing young people their citizenship rights raises questions about the grounds on which such exclusion is legitimate.¹⁴

The Politics of Youth Participation: Whose Voice?

It might be said, given that there is no 'realistic' likelihood that young people aged 12–17 years will be given the vote, that some other mechanism such as a Youth Roundtable will have to do until that more fundamental political right is implemented. 'Giving young people a voice' is a key feature of contemporary official talk about youth participation. Youth Roundtables and similar participatory devices, such as regional youth committees, are seen as important mechanisms for securing 'communication' between 'youth' and government. Roundtables are described as vehicles for facilitating participation at the State and Federal level by providing forums in which young people participate as important players with a capacity and the appropriate support needed to influence policy-making.

Can we believe this? I suggest not. A third, but no less salient, critique of the current 'youth participation' talk is the question of whose voice is being heard given that youth participation forums such as Roundtables provide a very restricted 'youth voice' in policy-making with participation confined to *communication* or *consultation*, rather than actual participation in decision-making processes that has a material effect.

The use of the 'Roundtable' metaphor function to communicate a message and

¹⁴ The principles and practices of representative democracy frequently are also applied to institutions other than the specifically political institutions that make up government. They can, for example, apply to schools, universities, local government, industry, workplace organisations, political parties, etc.

image of democratic participation in decision-making. As a figure of speech, the term 'Roundtable' works by extending the government's meaning of the word to roundtables in the celebrated medieval legend at which King Arthur and his knights sat in conference. The roundness of the table also suggests a style of furniture and design of the room that facilitates equality. Being seated around a table implies that there is no 'head of the table', nor does the seating order apparently imply a hierarchy of importance or status.

Yet, despite the official talk about participation and use of metaphors like Roundtable, no statutory commitment or legislative requirements are forthcoming as measure that ensure practical effect is given to the voice of youth participants.

English researchers Matthews and colleagues point to 'the lessons to be learnt' from their empirical investigations into young people's participation in school councils. They observed how

poor participatory mechanisms are very effective in training young people to become non-participants ... In many cases these operate as little more than ideas groups' ... used to disseminate information and to communicate ideas, rather than being concerned with the business of making decisions. (Matthews et al 1998/99, 24)

This research should give us reason to ask whether the participatory or consultative devices used in Australia provide experiences that encourage cynicism and distrust on the part of young people about participatory processes described as democratic. If we are to learn from the English experience, then participatory mechanisms that fail to give young people material effect to their voice encourage cynicism and teach young Australians to be non-participants. This in turn can have serious long-term consequences for Australia's democratic status. As Matthews et al (1998/99, 24) state, 'Unless young people are confident that their opinions will be treated with respect and seriousness, they will quickly become discouraged and dismiss the participation process as ineffective with all the implications this has for the confidence in democratic processes as they grow into adulthood'.

It is also worth noting that youth participatory devices are not initiated by young people. This is significant because as Matthews et al (1998/99, 24) note from their studies, the success of youth participation depends on the conditions in which it is initiated and the reasons for doing so (see also Matthews et al 2000, 135–44). Moreover, where adult-dominated agencies initiate participation, there may be ulterior motives such as risk management or crime control.

Furthermore, members of government youth roundtables are not elected representatives. Rather they are appointed by bureaucrats and policy-makers who not only instigate, but also organise and run these participatory forums. This raises questions about the politics inherent in managing the adult-initiated directed participatory processes and in whose interest the forum is operating. What is the primary purpose of youth participation; whose interests are advanced? Do young people or youth experts get to say what the concerns and needs of young people are? Do the experts determine what is in young peoples 'their best interest' rather than enabling them to decide for themselves? (Matthews et al 1998/99). The political influence of Youth Roundtable participants, for example, is evident in the fact they have minimal opportunities for agenda setting. Young participants respond to a set program or issues that they had little part in determining (VDEET 2004).

Limited tenure of the existing youth participatory processes are due the short-term nature of the contract or to the fact that the participatory mechanism results from the discovery of specific issues which have a limited life-span. Once the issue has been settled, the need for that forum no longer applies. This has implications for the capacity of young members to be effective in participants. Short fixed tenure gives participants few opportunities to familiarise themselves with the processes, with other members, or the group dynamics. It means members have insufficient time to develop a collective identity and sense of solidarity (VDEET 2004).

There are also equity issues concerning the resourcing of the young people selected as 'youth participants'. The capacity to influence policy often depends on whether young participants are fully equipped with the skills and knowledge and versed in the debates about which they are deliberating. It depends on the availability of information and one's ability to research issues thoroughly. The data and expertise available to young participants are typically not enough to support them in ways that facilitate full participation or a serious challenges to the official agenda. Inequalities between youth roundtable participants and older policy makers are not addressed (Lansdown 2001; VDEET 2004).

It is important to clarify that this article has focused on CHOGM, Commonwealth and State government policy documents. And although the official rhetoric about youth participation is seriously wanting, this does not mean that it is not possible, or that there are not very good examples of where it is operating. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and a number of Australian and English local governments indicate how it is possible (Matthews et al 1998/99, 16–31, 2000, 135–44; Lansdown 2000; Matthews and Tucker 2000, 299–310; Wierenga 2003).

Conclusion

In the 1970s, Chinese politician Chou En-Lai was asked to assess the significance of the French Revolution of 1789. Chou thought about this for a moment and then said, 'It's too soon to tell' (Han 1976). The French Revolution set in motion a great movement of democratic change and challenge which is still to be completed. The movement to extend and deepen the practices and institutions that make democracy possible are both fragile and incomplete. The current status of young people reminds us of this challenge. Just as older people have long had access to places in which to give voice to their experiences and needs, so it is now time to allow more young people access to those political spaces.

In this article, I have asked in what ways official talk about youth participation constitutes a politics of democratic practice. Recent talk of youth participation owes much of its persuasiveness to talk about reciprocity, fairness, obligation and social responsibility. This language is effective because it appeals to widely shared democratic sentiment. I have argued that, at a fundamental level, democratic practice requires a commitment to practices and conventions that constitute representative democracy including universal suffrage and rights such as freedom of speech.

I have argued that, whatever good intentions underlie the current vogue for youth participation, a limited concept of 'civic membership' informs this policy, one that excludes democratic participation while drawing a distinction between membership and inclusion. In other words, young people are understood to be members of

society in so far as they belong to it, but have that bare presence without inclusion or representation (Agamben 1998, 24–5).

An analysis of the official youth participation agenda reveals there is considerable talk about democratic practice, but a failure to acknowledge the existing barriers to young people. It also reveals a will to extend governance of young people under the guise of participation, as well as a failure to establish participatory mechanisms that give material effect to young peoples' voices.

In spite of official talk about the value of youth participation and its relationship to citizenship, the actual effect of having more young people involved in various community and educational activities cannot increase their political efficacy but instead will serve only to increase the regulation of young people.

We need to acknowledge that we have a significant problem when so many young people are effectively denied citizenship status. There is no reasonable basis for excluding young people from what is an otherwise widely available set of political and civil rights. Young people generally, and especially those under 18 years of age, have no effective entitlement to engage politically, to have a say about matters that effect them or to take part in decision making. Tackling this issue involves deepening and extending the current rhetoric about youth participation. As I argued in this article, the burden of proof for why certain groups of young people should be excluded rests with those who would sustain this disenfranchisement.

References

- ACCI [Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry]. 1998. *Youth Employment and Junior Rates*. Canberra: ACCI.
- Agamben, G. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- ALRC and HREOC [Australian Law Reform Commission and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission]. 1997. *Seen and Heard: Priority for Children in Legal Process*. ALRC and HREOC Report No 84. Canberra: AGPS.
- Australian Youth Service Consultation Team. 1985. *Report*. Canberra: Office of Youth Affairs, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- Ausyouth. 2001. *Good Practice in Youth Development: A Discussion Document*. Adelaide: Ausyouth.
- Ausyouth. 2002a. *Business Partnerships for Youth Development*. Adelaide: Ausyouth.
- Ausyouth. 2002b. *Better than fantastic: Young people talk about youth development*. Adelaide: Ausyouth.
- Ausyouth. 2002c. *Volunteering and Youth Development: Making a Positive Difference*. Adelaide: Ausyouth.
- AYPAC [Australian Youth Policy Action Coalition]. 1995. *Seen But Not Heard: Voting Rights for Young People*. Discussion Paper. Ainslie ACT: AYPAC.
- Bessant, J. 2000. 'The Youth Wage and Age Based Discrimination: Rights versus Jobs.' *Australian Journal of Social Issue* 35(3): 235–50.
- Bessant, J. 2001. 'Australia's Mandatory Sentencing Laws, Ethnicity and Human Rights.' *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 8(4): 369–84.
- Bradbury, B. and M. Jantti. 2001. 'Child Poverty Across 25 Countries.' In *The Dynamics of Child Poverty in Industrialised Countries*, ed. B. Bradbury, S. Jenkins and J. Mickelwright. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carson, E., P. Fitzgerald and S. Roche. 2000. *A New Social Contract: Changing Social and Legal Frameworks for Young Australians*. Report to the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme. Hobart: National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies.
- CHOGM [Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting]. 2002. *Report by the Commonwealth High Level Review Group to Commonwealth Heads of Government*. Commonwealth High Level Review Group. Coolum.
- Cole, M. 1997. 'Politics and youth.' *Politics Review* 6(3): 5–9.

- Coleman, J. 1996. *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Coles, B. 2000. *Joined-Up Youth Research, Policy and Practice: A New Agenda for Change?* Leicester: Youth Work Press.
- Coles, B. 1995. *Youth and Social Policy: Youth, Citizenship and Young Careers*. London: UCL Press.
- Cunneen, C. 1997. 'Indigenous Young People and Juvenile Crime.' In *Juvenile Crime and Justice Corrections*, ed. A. Borowski and I. O'Connor. Longman: Melbourne.
- Dewey, J. 1916. *Democracy in Education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Dewiel, B. 2000. *Democracy: A History of Ideas*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Dickerson, M. and T. Flanagan. 1982. *An Introduction to Government and Politics: A Conceptual Approach*. Toronto: Methuen.
- Etzioni, A. 1993. *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Finn, B. (chair). 1991. *Young People's Participation in Post-Compulsory Education and Training*. Report of the Australian Education Council Review Committee. Canberra: AGPS.
- Giddens, A. 1998. *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Energy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Government of Victoria. 2002. *Respect: The Government's Vision for Young People. A Framework for Policy and Program Development*. Melbourne: Department of Education and Training.
- Hall, S. 1986. 'Variants of Liberalism.' In *Politics and Ideology*, ed. J. Donald. London: Open University Press.
- Han, S. 1976. *Eldest Son: Zhou Enlai and the Making of Modern China*. New York: Kodansha America.
- Harding, A., R. Lloyd and H. Greenwell. 2001. *Financial Disadvantage in Australia*. Sydney: The Smith Family.
- Hudson W. and J. Kane. eds 2002. *Rethinking Australian Citizenship*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, A. and P. Smyth. 1999. 'Social Exclusion: A New Framework for Social Policy Analysis?' *Just Policy: A Journal of Australian Social Policy* 17: 11–20.
- Jones, G. and C. Wallace. 1992. *Youth, Family and Citizenship*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Juvenile Delinquency Advisory Committee. 1956. Report to Hon. A.G Rylah, Chief Secretary of Victoria. J. Barry (chair). Melbourne.
- Lansdown, G. 2001. *Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision Making*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.
- Latham, M. 1996. 'Making Welfare Work.' Paper presented to the Centre for Independent Studies. Sydney.
- Levitas, R. 1998. *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour*. London: Macmillan.
- Manly, J. 2000. 'The Participation of Young People in Public Community Activities: Literature and Data Survey.' Canberra: Youth Branch, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.
- Marshall, T.H. 1950. *Citizenship and Social Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Matthews, H. and F. Tucker. 2000. 'Consulting Children.' *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 24(2): 299–310.
- Matthews, H., M. Limb and M. Taylor. 2000. 'Young People's Participation and Representation in Society.' *Geoforum* 30: 135–44.
- Matthews, H., M. Limb, L. Harrison and M. Taylor. 1998/99. 'Local Places and the Political Engagement of Young People: Youth Councils as Participatory Structures.' *Youth and Policy: The Journal of Critical Analysis* 62: 16–31.
- Matthews, H., M. Limb and M. Taylor. 1999. 'Reclaiming the Street: The Discourse of Curfew.' *Environment and Planning A* 31: 1713–30.
- McSherry, B. 2003. 'A Volatile Act.' *Monash Newline* 7 July.
- Mill, J.S. 1957. *Utilitarianism*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Mizen, P. nd. 'Tomorrow's Future or Signs of a Misspent Youth? "Youth Policy" and the First Blair Government.' Unpublished paper.
- Neville, A. 2002. *State of the Family*. Melbourne: Anglicare Australia.
- Pateman, C. 1970. *Participation and Democratic Theory*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Pittman, K. and M. Wright, 1991. *Bridging the Gap: A Rationale for Enhancing the Role of Community Organisations in Promoting Youth Development*. New York: Carnegie Corporation.
- Pixley, J. 1993. *Citizenship and Employment: Investigating Post-Industrial Options*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

- PMYPAPTF [Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Task Force]. 2001a. *Footprints to the Future*. Draft version. Canberra.
- PMYPAPTF [Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Task Force]. 2001b. *Footprints to the Future*. Canberra: Ausinfo.
- Productivity Commission. 1998. *Youth Wage and Employment*. Research Paper. Canberra: AGPS.
- Putman, R. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Putman, R. 1995. 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital.' *Journal of Democracy* 6(1): 65–78.
- Rawls, J. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Raynor, M. 1994. 'Human Rights, Families and Community Interests.' *Family Matters* 37: 60–6.
- Roehlkepartain, J. 1995. *Building Assets Together: 101 Group Activities for Helping Youth Succeed*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.
- Schrag, F. 1975. 'The Child's Status in the Democratic State.' *Political Theory* 3(4): 441–57.
- Sidoti, C. 1998. 'Civil Rights and Young People: The Next Frontier.' *Just Policy* 13: 31–8.
- Silver, H. 1994. 'Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three Paradigms.' *International Labour Review* 133(6): 531–77.
- Thomson, M. and S. Molloy. 2001. 'Assessing the Best interest of the Child.' *The Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologists* 18(2): 5–13.
- UNCROC [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child]. 1989. Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. 20 November.
- VDEET [Victorian Department of Education and Training] 2004. Victorian Youth Round Tables Website. <<http://www.youth.vic.gov.au/youth/roundtables.htm>>. Melbourne.
- von Hayek, F. 1944. *The Road to Serfdom*. Sydney: Dymocks.
- Watts, R. 2001. 'Australia's Welfare Policy and Latham's Third Way: A Critical Commentary.' *Just Policy* 17: 21–31.
- White, R. 1996. 'Ten Arguments against Youth Curfews.' *Youth Studies Australia* 15(4): 28–9.
- White, R. 2000. '10 Arguments against Mandatory Sentencing.' *Youth Studies Australia* 19(2): 22–3.
- Wierenga, A. 2003. *Sharing a New Story: Young People in Decision Making*. Foundation for Young Australians. Melbourne: Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne.
- Wright, A. and F. Headlam. 1976. *Youth Needs and Public Policies*. Melbourne: ACER and Victorian Department of Youth Sport and Recreation.
- Yakovlev, A. 2003. *A Century of Violence in the Soviet Union*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.