

YOU CAN

Youth Leadership, Community Development



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ADDENDUM

Erratum – Front Cover – Liz McDonnell

Any Which Way You Can
Youth Livelihoods, Community Resources and Crime

The Australian Youth Foundation

In 1989 the Bicentennial Youth Foundation (BYF) was established with the budget surplus (\$12.4M) of the Australian Bicentennial Authority as an independent, incorporated, non-government organisation. The Foundation's mission is to assist young Australians who are socially, financially, physically or intellectually disadvantaged to reach their full potential.

Early in 1993 the Board of Governors resolved unanimously to change the BYF's name to the Australian Youth Foundation. This was to reflect the vision of the future as the Foundation moved towards 2000.

Since its inception, the Foundation has committed \$9 million to fund national and regional projects. The Foundation's strategy for the 1993 to 1996 triennium was to target areas identified by young Australians during national consultations in 1993. These areas included homelessness, unemployment, juvenile justice, education, health/mental health, social interaction, a national charter of rights for children and young people, and culture. The Foundation is currently consolidating and evaluating its past activities in order to formulate its strategy for the next triennium.

The Chairman of the Foundation, Mr Brian Burdekin AO is the Special Adviser to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human rights and former Federal Human Rights Commissioner. The Executive Director is Ms Ulrike Schuermann.

Dr. Rob White

Dr Rob White, an Associate Professor of Criminology at the University of Melbourne, has been actively involved in the area of youth studies for a number of years. He is the author and editor of several books on young people and has written extensively on issues such as young people and public space, ethnic minority youth, juvenile justice, youth unemployment and police-youth relations.

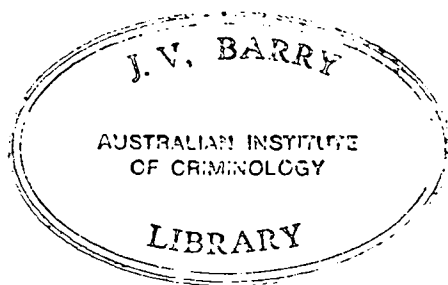
Megan Aumair, Anita Harris and Liz McDonnell have post-graduate degrees from the University of Melbourne and were the senior researchers with the *Young People and the Criminal Economy* project.

Any Which Way You Can

Youth Livelihoods, Community Resources and Crime

by
Rob White

with
Megan Aumair
Anita Harris
Liz McDonnell



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Foreword

In the last two decades, Australians have experienced a period of rapid economic and social change, accompanied by high youth unemployment and a growing disparity between the wealthy and poorer members of our community. In such a climate many young Australians are unable to achieve their potential and are vulnerable to feelings of alienation from our society and loss of self-esteem.

This book provides valuable information concerning the problems confronting many adolescents and young adults. The author raises a number of important questions that must be addressed if we are to understand the impact on young people of current economic and social conditions. What types of income or resources are available to them? By what formal and informal means is that income supplemented? What is the nature of crime committed by and against young people? In such circumstances, what are their basic rights?

The conclusions presented by Dr White are based on extensive interviews with two sectors of the community well placed to comment on youth concerns—young people themselves and community workers in direct contact with them.

As the author demonstrates, Australian young people are resourceful and engaged in diverse activities across a wide range of areas. However, where they are denied access to the formal economy and are dissatisfied with the community resources available as an alternative, some will seek to supplement their income “any which way” they can, sometimes by resorting to unlawful activities. This “criminalisation” may add to their feelings of powerlessness and alienation. In a number of cases it will mark the beginning of a life of marginalisation, lived outside the law.

Along with rapid economic change, rapid social change may contribute to the sense of isolation felt by many young Australians. The author presents evidence of a disturbing trend of social division, and of discrimination on the grounds of race or gender, that can

fracture the youth community and impair individual development.

All projects funded in whole or part, by the Australian Youth Foundation are designed to stimulate positive reforms for those of our young people who are socially, financially, physically or intellectually disadvantaged, to enable them to achieve their potential. Dr White, and the young researchers who contributed their skill and enthusiasm, have supported those aims by identifying social and economic change as a cause of the marginalisation of significant sections of the youth community.

Clearly there is no simple remedy to the problem of economic, institutional and personal pressures they confront, or to the widening gap between social classes that has increased these pressures. A successful approach will involve initiatives in social and economic policy, reforms in the administration of our criminal law and the provision of adequate community services.

The problems identified in this study are not new. In "Our Homeless Children", a report published in 1989:

The inquiry concluded that our communities have generally not responded to the needs of adolescents and their families in a supportive way. We have failed to provide the needed support, despite clear evidence that the families of adolescents have been under growing pressure from rising unemployment, reduced incomes and rising costs. Teenagers themselves...have faced the greatest pressures of this kind of any group in our community.

Notwithstanding the findings of that report, and many others, the pressure generated by financial hardship is still a very real issue for many young Australians, and there remains in this country a disturbing imbalance in the distribution of our national wealth. In my view, it is unnecessary to justify the allocation of adequate resources to address the urgent problems confronting Australian youth or the priority which should be accorded to appropriately meeting their needs. The experience of and income derived from meaningful work will determine the opportunity for young Australians to experience personal fulfilment in their adult life. The attitude, experiences and behaviour of young people will, in turn, determine the future of our multicultural society.

Finally, it should be quite clear that the purpose of publishing this research is not to condone unlawful behaviour—but to understand and address those factors which motivate it. Now is the critical time to respond to the concerns identified by the authors; to give reality to our vision for a society which values and includes all Australian young people.

Brian Burdekin AO
Chairman
The Australian Youth Foundation

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A large number of people provided assistance in the course of this study. We have been encouraged by, and are thankful for, the involvement and enthusiasm of the young people, and the youth and community workers, who took the time to participate, and to do so thoughtfully, in this project.

The community profiles were compiled by Phillip Hill and Megan Aumair. The interviews with the youth and community workers were carried out by Megan Aumair, Elizabeth Holden and Arthur Bolkus. For this stage of the project, the computer analysis was organised and managed by Wendy Stone.

The final stages of the project involved an extensive interview team comprised of Megan Aumair, Liz McDonnell, Anita Harris, Mark Halsey, Martin Radanov, Arthur Bolkus and Patrice McKeown. My thanks goes to everyone who contributed to the interviewing process and data input phase of the research.

Special acknowledgement goes to Megan Aumair, Liz McDonnell and Anita Harris who were actively involved in all aspects of the research and who provided significant intellectual and practical contributions throughout their involvement with the project. As the core research assistants to the overall project, each played an important and integral part in shaping the general contours of the study, for which I am especially grateful.

The project was funded by grants from the University of Melbourne, the Criminology Research Council, and the Australian Youth Foundation. Particular thanks is due to the administrative staff in the Department of Criminology and to my academic colleagues for their ongoing assistance and support in the course of the research.

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1. Introduction

The States Parties to the present Convention shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in this Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

Article 2
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

In the present economic climate, many young people have been deeply affected by unemployment, poverty and the social ills associated with identity crisis and marginalisation. This report presents findings from a major study which investigated the circumstances of young people who are experiencing problems in their communities due to economic difficulties and the lack of adequate social supports at the local level. The general research project involved discussions with a substantial number of young people about how they manage financially and socially, under adverse circumstances. The study focused on young people in municipalities which are undergoing rapid economic and social transformation.

The ways in which young people engage in activities (legal and illegal) within different

economic sectors (formal and informal) is of crucial importance when considering issues such as youth offending, life opportunities and livelihood. The types of income to which young people have access, the informal and formal means by which they supplement their general material resources and the nature of crimes by and against young people are central questions raised in this study.

The impetus for the research stemmed from the observation that, given the very large proportion of young people who are perceived by some to now be part of a 'lost generation' (see The Australian Youth Foundation, 1993), they are in fact relatively invisible on the social landscape. Many of these young people are at risk of being permanently unemployed and permanently marginalised from the major social institutions of our society. An important task, therefore, was to find out what these young people are actually doing with their time and how they are making ends meet on a day-to-day basis.

The present report deals with the perceptions of young people, and youth and community workers, regarding the issues and dilemmas facing many young people in Australia today. The occupational experience, professional training and personal profile of community workers means that very often they are in a position to meet and interact with young people from many different backgrounds; to have close contact with and involvement in local community events, groups and organisations; and to generalise across individual experiences and thus to discern wider social trends occurring at the local neighbourhood level. Ultimately, however, what young people themselves have to say about their livelihoods, and their work and social experiences, provides the most telling indication of what it is like on the frontlines of economic recession. And it is their opinions and their stories which are the main focus of this report.

Project Outline

The study was premised upon the idea that changing economic circumstances, especially high rates and long durations of unemployment, will have a significant impact on the life options and lifestyles of many young Australians (see Senate Standing Committee, 1992). The specific aim of the project was to examine the relative importance of the informal economy in the lives of young people (for example, petty crime through to employer exploitation of young people) from the point of view of economic, cultural and neighbourhood factors (for example, financial survival, peer group pressures, local resources). The objectives of the project included gaining information on the nature of activity associated with diverse economic spheres, and to provide some indication of the extent and place of these kinds of activities in the lives of young people.

The theoretical impetus for the research arose out of previous work on economic factors affecting youth offending, and the impact of low income on youth lifestyle and livelihood (White, 1989, 1990). This work provided a basic framework of analysis (particularly regarding different types of economic activity), and initial speculations regarding the financial dilemmas, and choices, facing many young people in a period when previously available social supports have been curtailed or removed altogether. The project was thus interested in building upon contemporary Australian studies which have examined the relationship between recession and criminal activity, particularly involving the young (Presdee, 1990; Wilson & Lincoln, 1992).

A key focus of the study was on the dynamics of the so-called 'informal' economy, and particularly the criminal economy. Very little has been written about illegal and criminal activities of this nature in the Australian context, although there has been some investigation in recent years in the United States and the United Kingdom (see Auld, Dorn & South, 1986; Henry, 1978; Mattera, 1985; Social Justice, 1988). Broad discussions have occurred regarding the impact of unemployment on young people (Polk & Tait, 1990; White, 1989; Senate Standing Committee, 1992), the difficulties experienced by young people in terms of incomes and living costs (Hartley, 1990; O'Connor, 1990; State Youth Affairs Councils and Networks, 1992), and the restructuring of work generally in modern society (Pahl, 1988; Sweet, 1987; Pixley, 1993). The question which this project addressed had to do with the nature of and changes in the relationship between different economic sectors (formal and informal) and activities (legal and illegal) as a consequence of declining economic fortunes and job opportunities.

A further aspect of the study was to explore the availability and type of community resources available to young people. These range from institutions such as schools and social security, through to commercial and non-commercial leisure and recreation outlets. Young people participate in society in a number of different ways; for example, as both 'producers' and 'consumers'. The study explored the manner in which young people use their time, and spaces, and how this was affected by financial and social considerations. Moreover, concern was directed at the ways in which young people's activity and behaviour is subject to varying kinds of regulation—whether this be in relation to the diverse economic spheres, or in relation to the use of public space.

A basic objective of the study was to identify those factors which lead to the victimisation of young people (for example, shop assistants paid 'off the books' at a lower rate and receiving fewer occupational benefits or job security), and which can lead to the engagement of young people in various types of crime (for example, from prostitution to organised stealing rings). In particular, it attempted to identify aspects of

local community life which foster or preclude such types of activities. By identifying the causes and circumstances of such activities, it was hoped that preventive measures—of a social policy and criminal justice nature—could eventually be designed which best suit the needs of young people in our community.

The project thus explored the social context of young people in terms of unemployment, neighbourhood resources, government policies and youth crime trends. Young people were analysed in relation to their position in and status as members of particular communities. 'Community' was defined in both geographical terms (for example, physical location and attributes of a local municipality) and social terms (for example, income background, gender, ethnicity).

The central questions that were to be the focus of the study included:

- What are the types of 'income' to which young people have access?
- What are the formal and informal means by which young people augment or supplement their incomes and general material resources?
- What are the nature and extent of crimes by and against young people (for example, drug use, drug dealing, prostitution, theft, arson, car theft, employer exploitation)?

The source material for the project consisted of policy documents (for example, level of youth benefits, social programmes); compilation of statistics (for example, unemployment, income levels, housing, crime); descriptive profiles of selected neighbourhoods (for example, histories, work opportunities, schools, public transport); interviews with community and youth workers; and interviews with young people from a wide variety of social backgrounds.

The Study

There were four main components to the study. These include 'community profiles', interviews with youth and community workers, and interviews with two categories of young people.

a. Extended social, economic and crime profiles of selected Melbourne municipalities.

These included information on social services, crime rates, population characteristics, and the physical layout and residential/business zones of the particular area. The targeted localities included Footscray, Dandenong, Knox, St Kilda, Collingwood and Coburg—all of which have experienced significant economic and/or demographic changes in

recent years, and which cover a number of different geographical points in the metropolitan area.

b. Interviews with community and youth workers in each of these localities.

In particular, local economic and social factors affecting youth livelihood and youth lifestyles were discussed with workers in the non-government sector (for example, welfare agencies, and community legal centres) and those working for local councils, state government and federal departments. The targeted workers included 50 people from agencies such as the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Salvation Army, Health and Community Services, and various legal and community development offices (see White, 1995 for full documentation of this part of the study).

c. In-depth interviews with 400 young people, between the ages of 14 and 17, and from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds.

This translated into roughly 65 to 70 young people from each of the six local areas. Here it was hoped to gain information about the patterns of social and economic activity pertaining to specific groups of young people, in specific localities within the metropolitan area.

d. In-depth interviews with 150 young people, between the ages of 18 and 25, and from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds.

The intention here was to compare the activities and experiences of the two different age cohorts, and to provide some initial indication of the patterns of movement as young people move beyond the high school years.

Methodology and Sample

Interviews were carried out with young people in the two age groups and with youth and community workers, across the six local council areas previously identified. In each case the project was explained fully to the interviewee and a consent form signed by the participants. Interviews were tape-recorded, were undertaken on a one-to-one basis and ranged in length from half an hour to almost two hours.

A standard interview schedule was used to guide each discussion, and to provide

continuity in the information provided. For the sake of confidentiality, anonymity and protection of geographical reputation, the names of interviewees are not used, and identification of specific local areas was omitted depending upon the type of information gained through the interviews (for an extended discussion of the research methods and data collection procedures, see White, McDonnell and Harris, 1996).

In social research of this nature it is inevitable that difficulties are encountered. Young people were interviewed in a variety of locations—including family homes, the street, parks, youth centres and at school. All care was taken to ensure as representative and meaningful sample as possible (for instance, with respect to ethnic background). However, the actual sample(s) of young people was to some extent dictated by the ability of the interview team to access certain groups of young people. This was contingent upon a number of factors, such as willingness of young people to be interviewed, cooperation from youth and community workers at the local area level, and ability to contact young people who might not normally be visible or present in the public domain.

The Under-18s

The study sample included 400 young people who were identified as being under 18 years of age (as demonstrated in Table 1.2 this was, strictly speaking, not the case insofar as a small number of interviewees at this stage were over 18, but recorded with the under-18 group: this was due to these young people associating with the under-18s at the time of interview).

As far as possible, attempts were made to keep the interviews within the confines of the six local areas previously identified. Table 1.1 shows the number of young people in each locality who were interviewed for the study.

Of the 400 young people interviewed in this phase of the project, 192 were female and 208 were male. That is, there was virtually an even split in the proportion of young men and young women interviewed.

The age of the young people varied, as indicated in Table 1.2.

Most of the young people were 15 or 16 years old. This was important in that we wanted to particularly target those young people in the post-compulsory schooling years, and also who would be most likely to be looking for work of some kind.

Australia is one of the most polyethnic countries in the world and this was reflected in the sample as well. Table 1.3 shows that one-quarter of the young people were born overseas. Australia was the country of origin of 47 per cent of the young people's mothers, and 43 per cent of their fathers. Most of those interviewed, therefore, were either first or

Table 1.1 Location of interviews of younger sample

Interview Location	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Coburg	68	17.0
Collingwood	38	9.5
Dandenong	64	16.0
Footscray	72	18.0
Knox	61	15.3
St Kilda	76	19.0
Other	21	5.3
Total	400	100.0

Table 1.2 Age of younger sample interviewed

Age	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Under 15 yrs	87	21.8
15-16 yrs	185	46.3
17-18 yrs	104	26.0
19-20 yrs	18	4.5
Over 20 yrs	4	1.0
Missing	3	0.5
Total	400	100.0

second generation immigrants. Nine of the respondents were indigenous young people (2.3% of the total sample).

The ethnic diversity of the sample population is further confirmed in Table 1.4 which indicates that almost one-third of the participants did not use English as the exclusive or primary language spoken at home.

Just under two-thirds of the sample lived with their parents, as shown in Table 1.5. Alternatively, one-third of the young people lived with one or other of their parents or shared accommodation with friends or partners.

Questions were asked about mother's and father's occupations. Just over half of the young people had mothers who were engaged in paid work (223 respondents). The main industries in which these mothers were employed were the 'clerical' (23.3%), the 'service'

Table 1.3 Country of birth of younger sample interviewed

Country of birth	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Australia	300	75.0
New Zealand	5	1.3
UK	7	1.8
Eastern European	17	4.3
Other European	14	3.5
South East Asian	25	6.3
Other Asian	9	2.3
Pacific	2	0.5
Africa	5	1.3
Middle East	5	1.3
Latin America	8	2.0
Other	2	0.5
Missing	1	0.3
Total	400	100.0

Table 1.4 Main language spoken at home of younger sample

Language	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
English	276	69.0
Vietnamese	15	3.8
Italian	1	0.3
Greek	4	1.0
Spanish	9	2.3
Turkish	6	1.5
Arabic	6	1.5
Lebanese	5	1.3
Serbian	5	1.3
Polish	2	0.5
Dual	45	11.3
Other	25	6.3
Missing	1	0.3
Total	400	100.0

Table 1.5 Who the young people live with

Type of person	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Mum	86	21.5
Dad	18	4.5
Parents	244	61.0
Partner	4	1.0
Friends	18	4.5
Alone	6	1.5
Other	24	6.0
Total	400	100.0

(19.2) and 'industry/manufacturing' (13.9%). Few were employed in professional or higher paying occupations. More fathers were employed (274 respondents said that their father was in paid work) than mothers. The main industries in which these fathers were employed included 'industry/manufacturing' (35.4%), 'trades' (16.7%) and 'service' (12%). By and large the social class background of the young people, as indicated by parent's occupation, was working class.

The Under-25s

The second sample of young people included those who were under the age of 25 but over 18 years old.

The geographical location of the interviews is shown in Table 1.6, and once again efforts were made to confine the sample as far as possible to the six selected local areas.

Table 1.7 provides a breakdown of the age composition of the older sample. There were 81 young women (54%) interviewed, and 69 young men (46% of sample).

It was felt important to talk to this category of young people insofar as the under-25s tend to be the 'forgotten people' of youth research. We were interested in finding out about their specific experiences of the labour market, and if or how these experiences differed from their younger counterparts.

Just under 20 per cent of the older sample were born overseas, as indicated in Table 1.8. As with the other age group, it was found that a minority of parents had Australia as their country of origin: only 41 per cent of mothers, and 40 per cent of fathers had been born in Australia.

Table 1.9 shows that a similar proportion of these young people as in the case of the younger group spoke languages other than English at home.

As demonstrated in Table 1.10, a greater proportion of the under-25 year olds did not live with their parents compared with the under-18 year olds. However, it is still notable

Table 1.6 Location of interviews of the older sample

Interview location	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Coburg	31	20.7
Collingwood	18	12.0
Dandenong	18	12.0
Footscray	32	21.3
Knox	28	18.7
St Kilda	16	10.7
Other	7	4.7
Total	150	100.0

Table 1.7 Age of older sample interviewed

Age	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
18-19 yrs	63	42.0
20-21 yrs	41	27.3
22-23 yrs	22	14.7
24-25 yrs	22	14.7
Over 25 yrs	1	0.7
Missing	1	0.7
Total	150	100.0

that almost two-thirds of this sample did reside in the parental home.

As with the first sample of young people, the older young people generally came from working class households and diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to introduce the research project, and in particular to describe the broad social characteristics of the young people who were interviewed.

As indicated in this chapter the research project was very large, and a considerable amount of data was obtained. The intention of this report is fairly modest—that is, to simply provide a descriptive analysis of the main findings of the overall research. More

Table 1.8 Country of birth of older sample interviewed

Country	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Australia	123	82.0
New Zealand	1	0.7
UK	5	3.3
Eastern European	3	2.0
Other European	3	2.0
South East Asian	3	2.0
Other Asian	1	0.7
Pacific	1	0.7
Middle East	3	2.0
Latin America	4	2.7
Other	2	1.3
Missing	1	0.7
Total	150	100.0

Table 1.9 Main language spoken at home of older sample

Language	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
English	121	80.7
Vietnamese	2	1.3
Italian	2	1.3
Greek	3	2.0
Spanish	5	3.3
Arabic	2	1.3
Serbian	2	1.3
Dual	7	4.7
Other	5	3.3
Missing	1	0.7
Total	150	100.0

Table 1.10 Who the older sample live with

Type of person	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Mum	16	10.7
Dad	3	2.0
Parents	76	50.7
Partner	9	6.0
Friends	34	22.7
Alone	6	4.0
Other	5	3.3
Missing	1	0.7
Total	150	100.0

fine-grained statistical and interpretive analysis will continue well into the future. For the moment, we feel that it is important to let the results 'speak for themselves' to the extent that they do show patterns and trends which require much more public discussion and debate.

The idea of highlighting issues of public concern also informs the use of quotations from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which are placed at the front of each chapter. For as the reader surveys the findings and discussions contained in this report we wish to remind them of the basic obligations of our governments, and our society, to children and young people. Youth issues are fundamentally social issues.

The young people who were interviewed were basically working class children, often living in working class neighbourhoods. They came from a wide diversity of ethnic backgrounds, and included a fairly equal representation of males and females. As the next chapter demonstrates, issues of economic security and job opportunities were felt acutely by most of the young people.

2. Making Ends Meet

States parties recognise the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

Article 27
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Young people today are in a particularly vulnerable economic and social position. For many young people the struggle to make ends meet is a daily struggle for themselves and their families. There are many difficulties associated with attaining the basic necessities of life, much less engaging in activities which enhance their overall wellbeing and future prospects. Many young people feel that they have been denied the basic *means of life*—the tools, skills, opportunities and rights essential to the fulfilment of their present and future needs.

The aim of this chapter is to outline the economic choices available to young people in the pursuit of the financial means of life. Specifically, it identifies in broad terms the different economic spheres within which young people are presently working and from which they are trying to sustain themselves. Discussion of this is followed by a review of the wider community context in which they are negotiating their economic and social activities. The chapter then examines what young people see as the main sources of income available to them, and how they use their existing economic resources.

The Idea of Multiple Economies

In developing the analysis of youth livelihood, the project team devised a model of different economic spheres which was seen to be relevant for understanding the activities of young people (see McDonnell, Harris and White, forthcoming). The economy can be seen as having five interrelated sectors of activity, each related to the income-generating activities of young people.

The five spheres of economic activity identified were:

- *the formal economy;*
- *the informal waged economy;*
- *the informal non-waged economy;*
- *the welfare economy* (which includes the education and training sector of the economy);
and
- *the criminal economy.*

The activity of individual young people is not bound to any one economic sphere, and it is possible to participate in a number of different spheres at the same time. Both the factors which determine the nature and type of activity in each sphere, and the qualitative differences between economic sectors, were major concerns of the research project. As indicated in later chapters, there can be simultaneous occupation of several economic spheres, as well as movement into some spheres (for example, criminal economy) due to pressures and limited opportunities in other spheres (for example, formal waged economy). The model was used to help identify and make sense of the variety of economic activities in which young people are engaged.

In Australian society the key mechanism for the distribution of economic resources is the market. The sale of labour in return for wages is the primary basis for economic wellbeing for the majority of people. The formal waged economy and the informal-waged economy (further described below) provide opportunities for the sale of labour. Activity in these two sectors are subject to variation according to the level of pay, hours of work, conditions of employment, control in the labour process and control over the labour process.

Alternatively, economic and other resources can also be transferred by way of informal community structures and networks. These transfers include both informal economic activities of an illegal nature (criminal economy) and the sharing of resources within a particular family, household or community (informal un-waged economy). For those whose capacity to sell labour is diminished by age, sickness, education and training commitments and/or background, and market defined employment opportunities, the welfare state

Table 2.1 Young people in different economic spheres

Sphere	Defining Characteristics	Issues
1. Formal waged	taxed state regulated measurable	low wages due to age related pay structures poor working conditions insecure tenure underemployment in full-time work health and safety harassment
2. Informal waged	untaxed not regulated by the state not measurable officially	low pay loss of award benefits insecurity and competition illegal open to exploitation and harassment without legal remedy
3. Informal non-waged	goods and services exchanged without monetary payment untaxed not regulated by the state not measurable officially	difficult to assign value to labour abusive over-work social isolation infantilisation
4. Welfare	income benefits received from the state to assist young people in education, training or whilst unemployed	poverty cost of study inadequate government assistance stringent rules for claiming assistance pressures to work in informal waged economy
5. Criminal	activities which cannot be undertaken legally in the economic sector forcible redistribution of existing wealth criminal activity can be unstructured or organised	tends to be irregular, sporadic and situational illegal activity predominantly low level drug dealing and theft supplements income rather than main source irregular income possibly dangerous open to exploitation criminal sanctions

Source: McDonnell, Harris and White, forthcoming.

offers compensation by way of minimal income support (welfare economy).

The Local Neighbourhood Context

How young people relate to each of these economic spheres depends to a certain extent upon local employment conditions and social factors such as the class and ethnic composition of the local community. A vital part of the context for understanding youth activities and attitudes, therefore, is to gain some insight into where they live and spend most of their time.

Comprehensive 'Community Profiles' were prepared for each of the six local

government areas. The separate reports included information on such things as demographic characteristics (for example, ethnicity, age profile), economic indicators (for example, employment, income, occupations), welfare and legal services (for example, social security recipients, legal services), community services (for example, number of schools and parks, public transport) and police statistics and crime prevention programmes (for example, offences committed). Methodologically there were difficulties collating information given the different geographical boundaries used by different agencies for the purposes of data collection. Nevertheless, each report provided a reasonably accurate picture of community life and local resources in each particular area.

For present purposes, selected background information on the communities will be conveyed in order to indicate the broad social and economic characteristics of the localities and neighbourhoods within which the young people lived. In an earlier survey, we were requested by some youth and community workers to not present the information in a way which could perhaps be seen as undermining the reputation of their local area. Hence, information on the different communities in this chapter is done in a manner which ensures anonymity, while nevertheless providing a general sense of the dynamics and composition of the local areas.

Table 2.2 shows the percentage of the population in each community who were born overseas. The number of people born overseas in each area increased between 1986 and 1991, although these increases varied from a low of 0.3 per cent in Area 1 to 5.8 per cent in Area 3. Area 1 in fact has the greatest number of people born overseas, and Area 2 has the greatest number born in a non-English speaking country. Area 6 has the fewest of each. After 'Australia', Department of Social Security recipients are most likely to have been born in 'Europe' except in Area 4 and Area 2 where, after Australia, the recipients were mostly from 'Asia'. Area 5 has a significant number of recipients born in the Middle East.

Table 2.2 Percentage of population born overseas/non-English speaking (NES) country, by area, 1991

	Per cent born:	
	Overseas	In NES country
Area 1	45.6	27.0
Area 2	44.3	39.3
Area 3	43.8	34.2
Area 4	37.4	35.3
Area 5	34.6	30.8
Area 6	25.6	14.0

Table 2.3 Unemployment statistics, by area, 1986 and 1991

	Per cent unemployed:	
	1986	1991
Area 1	12.4	17.0
Area 2	7.5	12.7
Area 3	5.0	11.0
Area 4	9.3	11.7
Area 5	4.2	8.3
Area 6	2.9	6.4

Table 2.4 Percentage of households within selected annual income categories, by area, 1991

	Areas						Melbourne Statistical Average (%)
	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	6 %	
\$0 - \$12,000	19.9	18.1	10.8	15.4	13.8	8.7	11.1
\$12,001 - \$30,000	32.4	33.5	30.1	28.2	32.0	26.8	26.5
\$30,001 - \$60,000	26.3	24.5	28.7	27.6	27.2	44.7	30.3
\$60,001 plus	10.4	6.6	8.0	13.4	8.4	19.8	14.2
Not stated	11.0	N/A	22.4	15.4	18.6	N/A	17.8

Unemployment is a major issue in each of the communities and as indicated in Table 2.3 has increased in each of the areas over the period 1986 to 1991.

Data was also collected on the number of people in each area receiving Newstart and Job Search Allowance payments. These data showed that men were at least twice as likely to be in receipt of unemployment payments than women in all areas. Recipients seemed to be either on benefits for a short time (one to 13 weeks) or a very long time (more than 18 months). All areas saw big clusters of people at both ends of this spectrum. The age group of most of the recipients was 25 to 34, although this was nearly matched by the 21 to 24 year old age group in Area 5 and Area 6, and 18 to 20 year olds in Area 3 (according to statistics on Newstart recipients in 1992). Jobsearch statistics showed the same trend in that most recipients were 21 to 24, except for Area 3 where the significant age group was the 18 to 20 year olds. Unemployment increased everywhere between 1986 and 1991, but the rate of change is particularly acute in Area 3 where unemployment had been relatively low in 1986 but had doubled by 1991.

An indication of the annual household income of each area is provided in Table 2.4. As can be seen, with the exception of Area 6, each of the areas had a proportionately lower household income average than the Melbourne statistical average.

Given that one of the aims of the research was to explore the nature of illegal activity and the dimensions of the 'underground' economy as these affect young people, we were interested in existing patterns of official offending rates. Table 2.5 shows the extent and nature of offences committed in each region as recorded officially by the police. The data show that total major crime has decreased everywhere except Area 3 where it has increased significantly. Area 3 shows an increase in all offences except for car theft and licensing, whereas the other areas have some significant decreases.

A closer look at the data reveals some interesting and significant patterns. For example, the figures for burglary are generally down everywhere (except Area 3), but theft figures have increased in all areas. Fraud figures show a decline, except Area 1 and Area 5, but drug offences figures have increased in all areas except Area 4. Prostitution figures

Table 2.5 Number of selected offences committed in each area, 1990-1991 and 1991-1992

	Area 1		Area 2		Area 3	
	1990-91	1991-92	1990-91	1991-92	1990-91	1991-92
Burglary	4578	4051	2520	2322	2166	2245
Theft	6104	6303	2929	3312	2504	2955
Fraud	1878	1996	877	511	594	852
Drug-related	994	1181	626	838	393	567
Prostitution	542	531	2	1	0	0
Good order	1318	1176	764	714	545	568
	Area 4		Area 5		Area 6	
	1990-91	1991-92	1990-91	1991-92	1990-91	1991-92
Burglary	7155	6081	2415	2157	1972	1732
Theft	13916	15418	2426	2507	2110	2297
Fraud	8886	5494	658	690	484	351
Drug-related	1699	1608	434	600	305	444
Prostitution	58	22	2	3	1	2
Good order	3839	2902	516	687	394	384

show a reduction in all areas except in Area 5 and Area 6. Good Order offences increased in Area 3 and Area 5 and decreased everywhere else. The most prevalent offence is *theft*, and it is the one most increasing, with *drug offences* running a close second. These trends will be discussed further when the findings relating to the 'criminal economy' are presented (see Chapter 7).

Generally, the community profiles revealed that significant proportions of the local populations are suffering great economic hardship. This is manifest in figures on unemployment and Department of Social Security payments, and average household income. Furthermore, the continued rise in figures relating to theft and drug offences appear to indicate a substantial element of subsistence level crime and the adoption of illegal substance use which is often associated with low income and job insecurity. How such trends and indicators impinge upon youth lifestyle and livelihood was a major concern of the research project.

Income Sources for Young People

The study involved asking young people about ways in which they get by economically in general and about their source of income specifically. The perceptions of the respondents regarding the sources of income for young people in the area were that most young people relied upon welfare/education payments, family allowances and paid work for their income (just under a third in each case identified these areas). This is indicated in Table 2.6, which shows Family (31.7%), Work (formal and informal) (28.3%), and

Table 2.6 Younger samples's perceptions of the sources of income for young people in the area

Sources of Income	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Social Security Payments	111	15.7
Educational Support/Austudy	94	13.3
Family	224	31.7
Work (formal)	177	25.0
Work (informal)	23	3.3
Illegal Activity	46	6.5
No Income	7	1.0
Don't Know	8	1.1
Other	17	2.4
Total	707	100.0

Table 2.7 Older sample's perceptions of the sources of income for people under 25 years in the area

Sources of Income	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Social Security Payments	74	28.4
Educational Support/Austudy	57	21.8
Work (formal)	71	27.2
Work (informal)	27	10.3
Illegal Activity	9	3.4
Don't Know	7	2.7
Other	16	6.1
Total	261	100

Government benefits (social security and educational support) (29%) as the main areas identified as sources of income.

When it came to specifying social security payments, almost all of the respondents referred to the income source as an unemployment benefit. A handful of young people also referred to the Youth Homeless Allowance as a source of youth income.

For the under-25 year old age group, perceptions regarding sources of income for their peers are presented in Table 2.7. Here the main sources were identified as Work (formal and informal) (37.5%) and Government benefits (social security and educational support) (50.2%). No reference was made to Family.

The main sources of income for the young people interviewed are summarised in Table 2.8. Interestingly, the figures show that, in fact, at least for most of the people interviewed, Family (45.7%) was the major source of income, followed by Work (formal and informal) (27.4%) and then Government benefits (social security and educational support) (21.5%). Discrepancies in the data were not uncommon. Indeed, it was found that often the respondents would see themselves and their activities in different ways depending upon the nature of the question asked. For example, while 27.4 per cent of the respondents initially said that work was a source of income, 37.3 per cent later said that they were working at the time of the interview. The nature of this work, and how they perceived it, are dealt with more fully in subsequent chapters.

It is important to highlight as well that these data refer to *main* sources of income for young people. One of the significant findings of this research is that young people draw upon many different sources of income, at the same time or at different times, in order to manage financially. A distinction can be drawn, then, between main sources of income and that income which is *supplementary* in nature.

Table 2.8 Sources of income for younger sample interviewed

Sources of Income	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Social Security Payments	44	8.7
Educational Support/Austudy	65	12.8
Family	231	45.7
Work (formal)	105	20.8
Work (informal)	33	6.5
Illegal Activity	9	1.8
No Income	5	1.0
Other	14	2.8
Total	506	100

Table 2.9 Sources of income for older sample interviewed

Sources of income	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Social Security Payments	33	16.7
Educational Support/Austudy	43	21.7
Work (formal)	62	31.3
Work (informal)	29	14.6
Illegal Activity	4	2.0
Don't Know	4	2.0
Other	23	11.6
Total	191	100.0

The sources of income for the under-25 year olds is shown in Table 2.9. The main sources of income were Work (formal and informal) (45.9%) and Government benefit (social security and educational support) (38.4%).

An initial indication of alternative types of income is provided in Table 2.10, which describes perceptions of different types of illegal income-generating activity. As noted earlier, and as demonstrated in official police statistics, drug dealing and theft feature prominently.

It has long been acknowledged in the youth studies literature that young people generally have 'adult' needs when it comes to basic provision of food, clothes, books, shelter and so on (see Chapter 6). For most of these the young people primarily rely upon parents and families. Any disposable income tends to be spent on other important needs, although it may include in some cases assisting their families with rent and other expenses.

The ways in which young people spend their money implies that their public activity very much relies upon having an income of some kind. Table 2.11 indicates the main ways in which money is spent, with entertainment and clothes topping the list.

As will be discussed in later chapters, the social activities and public presence of

Table 2.10 Younger sample's perceptions of the different types of illegal activity engaged in for the purposes of income by young people in the area

Type of illegal activity	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Drug dealing	19	41.3
Theft (other than shoplifting)	5	10.6
Stealing	10	21.7
Mugging	2	4.3
Burglary	4	8.6
Missing	6	13.5
Total	46	100.0

Table 2.11 The ways in which younger sample spend their money

Ways in which money is spent	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Rent	38	4.9
Entertainment	230	29.6
Clothes	154	19.8
Travel	29	3.7
Food/Bills	87	11.2
Sports	21	2.7
Family	6	0.8
Save	74	9.5
Cigarettes/Alcohol	49	6.3
School/Books	14	1.8
Drugs	14	1.8
Car	12	1.5
Other	48	6.2
Total	776	100.0

Table 2.12 The ways in which older sample spend their money

Ways in which money is spent	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Rent	39	10.4
Entertainment	58	15.4
Clothes	42	11.2
Travel	11	2.9
Food	54	14.4
Bills	42	11.2
Sports	0	0
Save	26	6.9
Cigarettes/Alcohol	14	3.7
School/Books	22	5.9
Drugs	6	1.6
Car	28	7.4
Other	34	9.0
Total	376	100.0

young people is influenced by their economic resources. This is especially so when it comes to commercial leisure and entertainment outlets.

For the under-25 year olds, a different pattern of spending emerged. This is indicated in Table 2.12.

Given the differences in income sources identified by each group of young people, it could be expected that a greater proportion of income would be spent on living costs by the older age group. This is demonstrated in Table 3.12, which implies that less reliance or dependance on the family translates into a variety of necessary expenditures associated with living costs.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a general outline and overview of sources of youth livelihood. The lack of well-paying jobs for many parents, and many young people, means that obtaining an adequate income is often a source of constant concern.

Main Findings:

- Young people's economic activity can be mapped out in relation to a series of five interrelated economic spheres (the formal waged, the informal waged, the informal non-waged, the welfare, and the criminal economy).
- Most of the young people lived in local areas which had relatively high proportions

of social security recipients, high levels of unemployment and low levels of economic wealth.

- The under-18 year olds relied mainly on their families for income support, with further support provided through work or government benefits.
- The under-25 year olds relied primarily on paid work and government benefits as their main source of income.

Young people, as producers, attempt to gain income and supplement their income in a number of different ways. Similarly, as consumers, young people are confronted by the fact that their 'spare time' activities are increasingly subject to some kind of financial cost.

The social composition and availability of community resources at the local level will also have an impact on what young people do for money, and how they spend their time. It is important, therefore, to interpret the research findings in the context of whole communities which are faced with the question of how best to make ends meet.

Even given the background information on household income and unemployment rates, it is nevertheless still the case that some young people do engage in independent economic activity in the formal economy (although, interestingly, this may not preclude them from simultaneous dependence upon their families). The next chapter considers in greater depth the opportunities for full-time and part-time work in the formal waged economic sphere.

3. The Formal Waged Economy

States parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

Article 32

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

For most young people paid work is a means to supplement their existing sources of income. As well, the status of 'worker' is usually secondary to their status as 'student'. The difficulties of finding full-time work means that many young people are locked into either full-time unemployment or full-time education.

The aim of this chapter is to provide an indication of young people's experiences of the formal waged economic sphere. The project attempted to discern the main areas of paid work available to young people, and their perception of the main characteristics of the work that was on offer.

The Formal Economy

A large number of unskilled jobs disappeared and young people were the main losers in that and that's something that's never been addressed. The main way of addressing it has been to increase school retention rates, and to create more training to basically try to hold people in education longer. [Youth Worker]

The formal economy includes economic activity which is taxed, state-regulated and measurable. Henry describes this economic sphere as including 'all employment, production, and consumption of goods and services, provided that such activity is officially registered with the state accounting system or relevant state agencies and thereby subject to state laws and its administrative regulations' (1988:32).

Employment Patterns

Over the last twenty years the Australian formal economy has been characterised by 'the permanent presence of high rates of unemployment' (Burgess, 1994:115). Between August 1976 and August 1992, the number of persons recorded as unemployed in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 1995) Labour Force Survey increased from 292,000 to 906,400. Generally, the community profiles of the targeted areas revealed that significant proportions of the local populations were experiencing great economic hardship and a relatively low proportion of family members were employed within the formal economy. As indicated in the previous chapter, unemployment is a major issue in each of the communities surveyed and increased in each of the areas over the period 1986–1991.

About 37 per cent of the under-18 year old young people said they were currently working. However, the figure rose to 42 per cent when asked if they had worked previously. What kind of work, and under what conditions, were of major concern for the research project.

Between 1986 and 1991 the proportion of Australian young people (15 to 25 years) in full time employment decreased by 11 per cent (ABS and NYARS, 1993; see also Freeland, 1994). This decrease was most significant for those aged 15 to 17 years, of whom 57 per cent were full time employed in 1986 but only 30 per cent full time employed in 1991. It has been estimated that 300,000 full time jobs for young people have been permanently lost over the last 25 years (State Youth Affairs Councils and Networks, 1992).

In January 1995, the full-time unemployment rate for 15 to 19 year olds was 24.2 per cent (ABS, 1995). In February 1995 there were more than 365,000 young people out of

work in Australia, with 75,000 of these unemployed for more than 12 months and 35,000 unemployed for more than two years (Spierings, 1995). In June 1995, of those aged 15 to 19, 94,700 were looking for full-time work, with 56,000 looking for their first full-time job (ABS, 1995). It has been estimated by the Department of Employment, Education and Training that by the year 2001, only 13 per cent of young people will be employed in full-time work (Pawsey and Whittingham, 1990). Gregory and Karmel's projected figures of youth unemployment are bleaker: they estimate that, if linear trends continue, by the year 2001 there will be no full-time work for young men and women aged 15 to 19 (Gregory and Karmel, 1992).

The lack of full time work available to young people in the areas surveyed in our research reinforce the figures cited above. Only a small proportion of the young people indicated full time work as a main source of income (see Table 3.1). Pressures and changes in the full-time labour market affect the flow of people into part-time work. Freeland (1994) estimates that in 1966, 3.5 per cent of men and 3.4 per cent of women aged 15 to 19 had part-time work, and by 1993 these figures had risen to 18.6 per cent and 26.7 per cent respectively. Part-time work has increased in such areas as the fast food industry, clerical work, service industries, tourism, personal services and the retail industry (White, 1989). In the present study, a significant proportion of young people indicated part-time work—especially of a 'casual' nature—as the main source of income for young people in the area.

The difference between 'part-time' and 'casual' work is that the former generally refers to some kind of regularised workplace agreement and conditions (for example, award structure), while the latter makes reference to the hiring of workers on a need-only basis. Regardless of how they defined their own workplace, the young people who were interviewed were rarely employed on a full-time basis, and jobs were mainly supplementary to their status as students.

In fact, most young people in part-time work are students, and employers have been found to prefer these workers to the full time unemployed (Sweet, 1987). It is estimated

Table 3.1 Structure of younger sample's employment

Employment structure type	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Full-time	13	3.3
Part-time	27	6.7
Casual	88	22.0
Missing	21	5.3
Not in paid work	251	62.7
Total	149	100

Table 3.2 **Structure of older sample's employment**

Employment structure type	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Full-time	23	15.3
Part-time	31	20.7
Casual	30	20.0
Other	1	1.1
Not in paid work	65	43.3
<i>Total</i>	85	100.0

that approximately 60 per cent of school students aged 15 years and over would have undertaken some part-time work for typically eight hours per week (Boss, Edwards and Pitman, 1995). 25 per cent of all young people in school or tertiary education have part-time jobs compared to 12 per cent of all those young people not in full time education (Senate Standing Committee, 1992). It has been argued that employers prefer students as they tend to be more confident and better groomed, and communicate better than many unemployed young people (Senate Standing Committee, 1992). While students may be more likely to be employed than their contemporaries who are not in education, all young people face competition from older workers who are seen by employers to be more experienced, reliable and trained.

The structure of the under-25 year olds' employment parallels that of the younger age group, although in general more of this sample group are in some form of employment. This is shown in Table 3.2, where once again casual and part-time work predominate.

In part, the similarities in employment opportunities reflect shared experiences of the two age groups in terms of the continuing importance of education or training in their lives. The similarities are also due to the sampling procedures adopted, which made a point of targeting TAFE and higher education students as part of the comparison group.

Changes in the scheduling of labour to meet peak demand and general de-skilling in retail work have made it possible for employers to hire cheap and inexperienced youth on a casual, part time basis. However, the conditions of these employment arrangements tend to belie their status as offering satisfactory and reasonable work. What emerges are job opportunity trends which include part-time or casual work with little job security, low wages and limited entitlements to sick leave and other benefits, and these have become a permanent feature of the youth labour market (Senate Standing Committee, 1992). For those young people in the paid work force, there are strong pressures to accept low wages and poor conditions under the threat of dismissal and no future job security.

Work Places

By far, the businesses and employers perceived by the young people, and by the youth and community workers, as most likely to employ young people, were in the service industry and retail industry. Another important source of paid work was the industry/manufacturing area. For example, when asked which industries had employed them previously, just under 14 per cent of the young people referred to industry/manufacturing. Figures from a 1993 analysis of industries employing young people across Australia saw the wholesale/retail trade as the main employer of those aged 15 to 19 years (41.8 per cent). Manufacturing and recreational services were the next biggest employers, employing 12 per cent and 10.6 per cent of young people respectively (ABS and NYARS, 1993).

Over half of the under-25 age group in employment were employed in the service industry. Most of the young people referred to working in fast food outlets, doing waiting jobs in cafes and restaurants, working as shop assistants, and employment as supermarket check-out workers as the main sources of youth employment.

The casual and part-time nature of the work available to young people is reflected in answers to questions about work-times and hours of work. Almost 60 per cent of the under-18 year olds were employed in places where the times of work varied (for example, weekends, weekdays, nights, days). A similar proportion said that their hours varied (for example, number of hours per week). Flexible work thus required flexible work schedules for most of the young people interviewed. A slightly lower (54%) proportion of the older young people also said that their hours and times of work varied.

Work-Related Experiences

In the case of the under-18 year olds, just over 10 per cent were asked by an employer to work for free as a trial period. The main industries where this occurred were the 'service industry' and the 'retail industry'.

Table 3.3 Industries employing younger sample who are presently working

Types of employment	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Service Industry	44	28.4
Industry/Manufacturing	12	7.7
Retail Industry	42	27.1
Door to Door Sales	2	1.3
Clerical	4	2.6
Trade	14	9.0
Government Programs	1	0.6
Family Businesses	3	1.9
Other	33	21.3
Total	155	100.0

Note:
The number of responses to this question is 155 rather than 149 as people might have more than one job.

However, a higher proportion (18%) of older workers reported that they had been asked to work for free by employers. The industries where this occurred are shown in Table 3.4. Of those who were asked to work for free, 52 per cent (25 out of 48) agreed to do so, and 48 per cent (23 out of 48) refused. For those who did the trial period of work, about two-thirds were later offered employment.

There was evidence that a sizeable number of young people also perform unpaid work on an informal basis (in addition to domestic labour). For example, there were instances where the young people would work in enterprises unpaid in order to get experience, and in return would receive movie passes, food vouchers, reduced accommodation charges and the like.

The youth and community workers were conscious of a number of different ways in which young people were exploited in the workplace. This is shown in Table 3.5.

Interestingly, the service industry was also the most commonly identified place of exploitation of young people. The underpayment of young people on an hourly basis and the number of hours worked in total (many of which were unpaid) were problems which especially stood out. In addition, the community and youth workers were aware of instances where no WorkCover had been provided, where young people were forced to carry huge responsibilities in the workplace, where employers used the young person only as long as a wage subsidy was available and then sacked them, and where young women in particular were subjected to sexual harassment and assault.

When asked about the contact which young people had with unions, particularly in the light of widespread evidence of various kinds of workplace exploitation, the majority of the youth and community workers said that young people had had no contact with a union. This was confirmed by the young people themselves in that only 26 out of 400 had had contact with a union while employed.

Table 3.4 Industries employing older sample for a trial period without pay

Types of employment	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Service Industry	17	62.9
Industry/Manufacturing	1	3.7
Retail Industry	2	7.4
Trade	3	11.2
Government Programs	1	3.7
Other	3	11.1
Total	27	100.0

Table 3.5 Youth and community workers' perceptions of forms of youth exploitation in the workplace

	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Hours worked	24	28.9
Under paid	34	41.0
Unpaid	5	6.0
Harassment	3	3.6
Early / Unfair Dismissal	12	14.5
Other	5	6.0
Total	83	100.0

The young people who did know about unions, and who had need to seek union assistance were, however, very favourable about their experiences:

St Kilda

I had some union hassles over an inspection allowance. We sorted it out in the end. Another lot of hassles were over an unfair dismissal and there were some snitches and some union members copped some flack from management. There's a fair bit of politics in it. The unions are very good for the worker. If I were to go into business I wouldn't think so! But for workers you have to have unions.

Dandenong

They're good. They look after you if you're a paid member. I've had problems with a company and that union sorted it out, did a pretty good job so I'm happy.

Dandenong

They've been really good. I gave a week's notice about going on a camp and work said "not good enough". I rang my union and then said to my boss, "does this mean I won't have a job when I get back?" and she said "I'm not saying you will, I'm not saying you won't." The union said you could turn up that morning and tell them because you're casual. Whenever you've got a problem you can ring them up and they'll call your boss. I rang the union because Safeways gave me no hours and they were really good.

The overall work experience for under-18 year olds was mixed but generally favourable. When asked how they felt they were being treated by their employers, 73 per cent of the young people currently in work answered 'generally fair'. However, a further 22 per cent did feel that they were being treated 'generally unfair'. Interestingly, when asked about their experiences, 78 per cent of the under-25 year olds responded that they were treated 'generally fair' by their present employer—but when asked about previous employment this dropped to 61 per cent, with one-third saying that they had been treated 'generally unfair'.

The length of time the under-18 year old young people had worked in the past varied greatly. Only a small number of respondents (19) had worked in one job for more than one year. The data showed that many who had worked had done so for varying periods, ranging from less than one month to less than one year. In part, this reflects the precarious nature of youth employment generally—especially given the casual and part-time status of most youth jobs. By way of contrast, almost 44 per cent of the under-25 year olds had

worked in a previous job for more than one year.

Questions were also asked regarding the reasons why the young people left past employment. The highest number of responses were in the categories 'dismissal', 'redundancy', 'establishment folded' and 'young people chose to leave'. A smaller number of young people also referred to 'school commitments' as a reason for leaving paid employment. It was clear that young people were moving in and out of paid employment due to a combination of both structural factors (for example, closing down of businesses; job shedding) and personal situations (for example, dissatisfaction with the job, school commitments). For the older age group, the biggest response by far was 'personal choice' as the reason why they left past employment. Going back to school, bad conditions and the temporary nature of the work, were also specifically mentioned.

Younger Sample's Comments on Availability and Experiences of Work

Coburg

If you go work at Maccas like an 18 year old, you're not gonna get a job there, they have to pay you a decent wage, where when you're younger they can pay you jack shit.

Coburg

Supermarkets, that's about it, there's nothing else in Coburg...there's nothing much in Coburg.

Coburg

They're [employers] not giving us [school leavers] the opportunity, obviously you need experience and stuff like that, how about giving us a little bit better go.

Coburg

It's not a working class area, there's no work whatsoever in Coburg.

Coburg

I've been on the dole on and off for about a year and a half...I've found it hard finding a job.

Coburg

"Cos younger people get a lower, a minimum wage it's, most of the work around here is part-time and its really not worth working you know 'cos like you get, what is it, seven dollars an hour and then you get taxed on it and then at the end of the week you know, you're working a few hours a week part-time and you get more money on the dole...so there's no use in working part-time so the only work you can get, is worth

getting is full-time work.

Coburg

There's not a real lot of places that set out to employ young people, there's really no-one except for the fast food chains and they only want you 'cos you're a cheap labour. They're just using you as soon as you're too old they'll get rid of ya, they'll find a problem with ya.

All areas

I could not find anything at all in [my suburb]. [common quote]

Coburg

...A lot of people are real fussy who they employ now...a few of my mates have gone for jobs 'n' they've sorta asked for qualifications 'n experience, but how can you have experience when ya, you know, they ask for 19 year olds or 18 year olds 'n you've only been in the workforce two minutes so how can you have experience."

Coburg

Most people have to move out of the area [Coburg] to work and they're not prepared to do that.

Coburg

Every job requires a background of something. Now, unless you wanna sweep up shit in the stables down in Flemington you're not gonna get a job.

St Kilda

Coles is the only place someone my age could get a job unless they had experience.

Footscray

No it's all mainly the older people you've got McDonalds and stuff which has always got your 15 and 16 year olds always go looking for jobs at McDonalds, Hungry Jacks...but no places, there's hardly any new places for people under 19 maybe."

Dandenong

At times I felt it was unfair, but mostly fair. She would sometimes make me do errands for her that weren't part of the job.

Dandenong

I [left the job] because of my sexual preferences. I tried to talk it out with my boss but it was his son that was causing the trouble so I had the choice of quitting or being sacked so I quit. I didn't know what I could do at the time.

St Kilda

[Young People] always get the crappy jobs. They give preference to older people it seemed and they just talked down to you all the time and they just seemed to treat age as a big difference.

St Kilda

I got the job because my god sister was chef there. She left 'cos the kitchen was too small and so the company actually chucked me out and said "we're making you redundant" and didn't give me any payment or anything and I did sign the form and read through it and it said we can't sack you unless you do one of the following things and I never did any of them.

Dandenong

Safeways cut my hours down from 28 to nothing. That's a big change. I've got 19 cents in the bank. I've been having to scab \$3 for bus fare which is really embarrassing. I've been not eating. They just put me on whenever they need me. It's really scummy 'cos you work a four hour shift and you get a 15 minute break. They've been putting me on a three and a half hour shift, three and 45 minute shifts [that is, no breaks]. I get treated like shit there. When I call for a service, they go to all the ones that call after me, my customers get really angry and make complaints about me so they've got something to come back at me with. It happens every shift I do, and then they say, "If you don't get you act together you'll lose your job."

Footscray

Fast food places. The reason why they employ kids is because they don't have to pay them that much.

St Kilda

They treat you like you're an idiot sometimes, but I think it was fair [being sacked]. I was late, not showing up, so I was costing the company money. I realise that. I tried to pull my finger out in the end but it was too late. I can understand that they had to let me go.

St Kilda

At McDonalds it was slave labour.

Footscray

At McDonalds it depends on the managers—the good personalities treat you good and the bad personalities treat you like shit. Also if they hire young people then they

treat you like really bad you know. You're young and you don't know nothing and you're the one that needs money. If they hire older people, they might fight back and answer back not like the younger people who like just shut up.

Collingwood

I was doing a paper round and it was shit pay. It took ages and I only got \$4 for a round, but I guess the paper didn't have much money to pay people because it was only a small business.

Collingwood

I worked all day really hard to make a good impression and they didn't pay me or even call back.

Collingwood

It's very hard to get work, full stop. No-one can to give these young kids the chance to gain experience.

Dandenong

You have to know a lot of people and the area, but it would be really scummy money like \$5 an hour, but it's money.

Older Sample's Comments on Work Experiences

Footscray

When I got older I didn't get offered as much work so they could employ more younger people. They took way my hours and said I was stand-by.

Coburg

I was made redundant and I was told there no more work...but when I went to see my boss 'cos he promised me another job there was someone else doing my old job.

Coburg

The pay, the bullshit team ideology, the pressures to work without pay to support the assistant manager.

Collingwood

I was getting paid less because of my age and I was doing the same work as everyone else.

Coburg

I was made a casual for no reason and was worried about job security. I kept asking to

be made permanent but was fired.

Knox

The pay was okay but I would work for 16 hours without a break. You'd have to sneak out to have a cigarette.

Coburg

I was treated very well and enjoyed my work...then we got a new boss and things changed. I was the youngest person at work and all the others were married with kids and from the start I was treated like I didn't know anything. I was accused of making a pass at a female resident and was suspended on the spot. Anyway I thought that disclosing that I was gay would help as I wasn't interested in girls...anyway things got worse and it took about 13 months to be cleared. I never worked there again.

Youth & Community Worker Comments on Exploitation in the Workplace

F.

They [employers] are aware that the market out there is...they can take their pick from the market so they have no obligation to the people that they're employing because if they don't work out there's ten thousand more that are going to come into their spot, so "like it or lump it" really, and yeah it's exploiting the economic situation as it is, the labour market as it is.

A.

Young people are open to exploitation because jobs are so few and far between.

All young people are very aware that their jobs are often of a very unstable nature and it's better to have one that stinks than to not have anything at all.

K.

I think businessmen are out there to exploit every person they possibly can, and make as many dollars as they can, and I think if young people are in the market to be exploited, then they'll do that. [re: unpaid job training]

K.

Some employers would keep people on, but most of the employers—especially the Big Mackers and people like that—just rip the young people off. I suppose some young people would say, though, that even that amount of experience is better than nothing. So some young people would agree to be exploited to get the experience, and I think it stinks, I don't think it's the answer.

L.

I think that often young people in circumstances—like say they're working in a business like a small restaurant or something like that, they can be in quite powerless positions 'cause they depend on the income, so they'll perhaps feel like they have to accept a low grade level of sexual harassment...that relies on the fact that the employer has the power over the employee.

N.

Young people need job descriptions as they end up doing shit work like making coffee etc. and then there is no job at the end." [work for training allowances]

T.

If I object there is 100 other people who will take the job. I need the money. [reasons given for accepting 8 to 5 shift without break]

Q.

Young people are very vulnerable as they don't have the skills, the information...they haven't been there long enough to know that it's unacceptable to be paid under-award wages and [they're] very vulnerable until they find someone in that industry who says, "You are only been paid \$5 per hour, we're been paid \$10 per hour, something is amiss."

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an indication of the experience of young people in the formal waged economic sphere. Not surprisingly, for most young people the world of paid work is one characterised by casual and part-time employment. Similarly, the precarious nature of this work is seen in the variable hours and times worked, and the different experiences which the young people have of paid work.

Main Findings

- Those young people employed in the formal waged economic sphere were rarely employed on a full-time basis.
- The main employers of young people are in the service and retail industries.
- Most young people were employed on a part-time or casual basis.
- The times and hours of work varied and there were few instances of standardised

work times.

- More than half of those who were employed thought they were treated fairly at work.
- A series of different types of work-related exploitation were identified (for example, low pay, extra hours, sexual harassment).
- Finding and retaining paid work is of major concern to the young people, as are the level of pay and number of hours available for them to work.

For many young people, and especially those who are trying to find full-time employment, the immediate job prospects are bleak. Competition for jobs is fierce, and many young people are forced into difficult work environments, for low pay. Many others are forced into work in the informal sectors of the economy.

4. The Informal Waged Economy

States parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

Article 32

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Far too often public discussion of youth livelihood ignores the fact that much of what young people do to gain an income takes place on the fringes of the official or formal labour market. For many young people, attempts to balance welfare payments and/or formal waged work in a manner which allows them a moderate income means that they need to supplement their money from 'other' sources. Very often these sources are small businesses. And often the transactions which take place between young worker and employer is 'off the books'. In other words, there exists a shadow world, an 'underground economy', which at a superficial level appears to serve the interests of both young people and businessperson alike.

However, the very existence of cash-in-hand work is premised upon major problems in the basic structure of economic relations in society. On the one hand, young people

are forced by circumstance and low incomes into work which is unregulated—and unprotected—and thereby are placed in extremely vulnerable positions when it comes to working conditions, wages and human rights. On the other hand, many businesses, especially small businesses, are pressured to cut corners and engage in illegal employment practices due to market competition and the dominance of large companies and transnational corporations across a range of service and product areas. Cut-throat competition gives rise to deviant employment practices—and it is the most vulnerable groups of society including young people who are the most likely to be taken advantage of under such conditions.

The Informal Waged Economic Sphere

Because they don't have any rights as employees they can be sacked and they've got no comeback because they didn't exist, so they can be exploited, they can be sacked, they can be paid an under award wage, and in the long run they don't get any acknowledgement of what they've done in terms of work, so there are a whole heap of drawbacks. [Youth Worker]

For present purposes, the informal waged economy is defined as those economic transactions that are unregulated, untaxed and not officially measured (Mattera, 1985). Broadly speaking, such activity shares many of the characteristics of the formal waged economy, in that if not for the fact that transactions take place 'off the books' and often on a cash-in-hand basis, they would be seen as legitimate economic activities (Mattera, 1985; Gershuny, 1983). In using this definition, a distinction is made between informal economic activities, and criminal activities, the latter having a different substantive character and which cannot simply be transformed into legal activities through a change in state regulation. In other words, the informal economy involves 'the unregulated production of otherwise licit goods and services' (Castells and Portes, 1989:79).

For this project, the informal economy was seen to relate to transactions more closely associated with a relationship between employer and employee within an established workplace (for example, cash-in-hand payments), rather than self-generated economic activity which is often an addition to formal employment. Because young people lack skills, experience and opportunities to make contacts in the formal economy, they are less likely to pursue informal labour assertively and are far more likely to participate in the informal economy as an employee. This was noted recently by the Senate Standing Committee (1992) which took evidence of the exploitation of young people working in

unregulated labour areas such as courier services, leaflet delivery and commission based sales. Concern was expressed that young people in these jobs, not covered by awards, were almost totally unaware of their rights and were often abused and exploited.

Alternative Income Sources

Changes in resource allocation in the formal economy have both marginalised and disadvantaged young people. For many young people, the lack of paid work in the formal economic sector leads them to pursue alternative work arrangements in the informal waged economy. Pressures in one economic sphere have direct and indirect consequences for activity in the other spheres.

Interviews with the youth and community workers indicated that the largest sources of supplementary income available to young people were seen to be work on an informal basis, or cash-in-hand work. This is indicated in Table 4.1. The majority of cash-in-hand work occurred in the service industry, with the retail industry being the second largest employer. Other types of cash-in-hand work included such things as piece work done at home, family businesses, baby sitting, nannying, hairdressing, door-to-door sales and mowing lawns.

According to the under-18 year olds who were interviewed, a sizeable proportion of respondents had been employed in the informal waged economic sphere. This is shown in Table 4.2.

At the time of interview, just under 40 per cent of the young people who were in paid employment were employed in the formal waged economic spheres, and 60 per cent

Table 4.1 Youth and community workers' perceptions of the ways in which young people supplement their income if inadequate

Source of income supplement	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Income Support	2	2
Other Support (vouchers etc.)	4	5
Family	7	8
Work (formal)	5	6
Work (informal)	24	29
Illegal activity	27	33
Personal/private loan	4	5
No supplement	4	5
Other	6	7
Total	83	100

Table 4.2 No of young people interviewed who had been employed in the formal waged economy and the informal waged economy

Sector	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Formal Waged Economy	62	36.9
Informal Waged Economy	98	58.3
Missing	8	4.8
Total	168	100.0

Table 4.3 The percentage of young people interviewed who thought that there were jobs in the local area that they could get for a short time

Believed jobs available	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Yes	195	48.8
No	130	32.5
Don't know	70	17.5
Missing	5	1.3
Total	400	100.0

were employed more informally. For the under-25 age group, two-thirds worked in the formal waged economy, and one-third worked in the informal waged economy.

The two largest sources of supplementary income available to young people were seen to be work on an informal basis, or cash-in-hand work, and activity of an illegal nature (see Chapter 7). The majority of cash-in-hand work occurred in the service industry, with the retail industry being the second largest employer. The categories of work included such things as working in a cafe, restaurant, supermarket, milkbar or fast food outlet; cleaning; delivery services including pamphlets; factory work; building labourer; gardening and lawn-mowing; and working in retail shops such as chemists, clothing shops, petrol stations and video shops.

Over half of the under-25 year olds reported that the service industry was where cash-in-hand work was available. Waitering work and bar-tending, as well as fast food employment featured prominently. Other types of cash-in-hand work included such things as piece work done at home, family businesses, baby-sitting, hairdressing, door-to-door sales, mowing lawns, nannying and low level drug dealing.

Knowledge about local conditions and local businesses appears to be one of the key ingredients when it comes to taking up cash-in-hand types of work opportunities. Some

Table 4.4 Types of jobs younger sample felt that they could get for a short time in the local area

Types of employment	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Pamphlet Distribution	9	4
Small Family Business	28	12.6
Fast Food Places	36	16.1
Paper Round	32	14.3
Supermarkets	28	12.6
Baby-sitting	11	4.9
Drug Dealing	6	2.7
Retail	16	7.2
Other	57	25.6
Total	223	100.0

Table 4.5 Types of jobs older sample felt that they could get for a short time in the local area

Types of employment	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Pamphlet Distribution	5	7.0
Small Family Business	7	9.9
Fast Food Places	17	23.9
Paper Round	2	2.8
Supermarkets	2	2.8
Baby-sitting	2	2.8
Drug Dealing	1	1.4
Other Retail	10	14.1
Other	25	35.2
Total	71	100.0

indication of this is provided in Tables 4.3 and 4.4, which deal with 'short time' jobs at the neighbourhood level.

While not all 'quick money' types of jobs are strictly speaking cash-in-hand, one can infer that many would involve greater potential for this kind of monetary payment. In addition to 'illegal' workplace relations of this nature, some mention was also made of criminal activity as a form of alternative income source.

An interesting contrast was apparent in the under-25 year olds perceptions of short-term jobs. Their perceptions of the types of jobs available to them are shown in Table 4.5.

Here we see employment in 'fast food places' and 'other retail' coming to the fore, while 'paper rounds' decreases as a meaningful option.

Work in the informal waged economic sphere is problematic from a number of viewpoints. The under-18 year olds had mixed feelings about such work:

Footscray

If you know the person you tell them like don't tax me, because I still want the dole...like I know a few people who do that, don't get taxed.

Coburg

Many small businesses would be just black money I reckon.

Coburg

If you know someone you're OK...it's not what you know it's who you know.

St Kilda

Cash-in-hand questions stink because you don't know if you are getting award wages sort of thing. I mean they give you \$3 an hour and it's cash-in-hand and you can't do anything about it because you don't want to go through the tax department and get the tax taken away.

Youth & Community Worker Comments on Cash-in-Hand Work

The youth and community workers interviewed for the project referred to a range of issues associated with cash-in-hand type of work:

C.

When the CES says to an employer, "we're not going to take your vacancy," or "You're not going to have Jobstart," that just basically sends them underground...and the

market is still a buyer's market, and they can pick and choose.

F.

They're not able to count their work experience and have that part of their work history in their resume.

Because they don't have any rights as employees they can be sacked and they've got no come back 'cause they didn't exist, so they can be exploited, they can be sacked, they can be paid under an award wage or under what is a reasonable wage, and in the long run they don't get any acknowledgment of what they've done in terms of work so there are a whole heap of draw backs.

I.

I think cash-in-hand in one way is an exploitation anyway, because the reason it's cash-in-hand anyway is basically to benefit the employer and not the employee—yes it does take away tax so the kids get more money but I would say the employer probably saves a lot more money through his own tax and things in the cash-in-hand.

Also cash-in-hand doesn't offer or enable them to come away with a reference and proof that they've actually had employment.

By its very nature the fact that it's illegal it's sort of devaluing them anyway—"Well you'll work for us but you'll work for us under the counter or out the back," and it's sort of degrading a little bit because what he's saying is that you're not a full employee.

I.

Your part time work becomes often more important than if you had that outside support so you can't afford to take a day off because if you lose that job you may—that job might be the difference between surviving in your accommodation and being back on the streets.

It takes on far more importance in that young person's life than a part time job should and it becomes a necessity.

M.

Suits kids because they don't pay tax, but mainly suits employers because kids don't earn enough to pay tax anyway and then the employer doesn't have to do things required of him if it's illegal.

In the case of the cash-in-hand economy, the issue of union involvement was especially problematic in that the idea of protecting young people's industrial rights via a union may come into conflict with their immediate perceived income needs. This is captured in the following observation made by one of the workers:

I.

I think it's a vicious cycle, if unions were to campaign for instance to stop cash-in-hand for young people, a lot of young kids would lose their work, similarly with the fast food chains, if things were tightened up there and conditions and all improved it would also reduce the employment options for young people.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief glimpse into the underground economy of the informal waged sector. Young people know this sector well. A large proportion of those interviewed had had experience in this sector, and for many it was or is an essential way in which to supplement their income.

Main Findings

- For many young people work in the informal waged economic sphere is an important way to supplement their income.
- Most informal work is of a cash-in-hand nature.
- Employers in this sector tend to be small companies and businesses, mainly in the retail and service industries.
- Involvement in the cash-in-hand economy depends partly upon knowledge about what the 'quick money' jobs are and who is offering them.

But work on a cash-in-hand basis is not unproblematic. As demonstrated in the comments by youth and community workers, such work is often exploitative and does not offer young people much in terms of future formal waged work prospects. A substantial growth in the number of people active in the shadow economy can be anticipated in the years to come. This is because of business pressures to compete on unequal markets, the transfer of much production activity to small businesses as part of contracting out by governments and larger companies, and the sheer financial needs of young workers to attain income from any source possible.

5. The Informal Non-Waged Economy

States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognised in the present Convention.

Article 5

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

States parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Article 31

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The amount and type of work which young people perform on an informal non-paid basis has enormous implications for their 'spare time' activities, their feelings of self-worth, and for their overall health and wellbeing. As with paid work in the informal waged economic sector, the participation of young people in unpaid work is often overlooked in discussions of their skills, knowledge and livelihood.

This chapter discusses the labour of young people which is associated with their household activities, and with assisting other members of their family or local community in return for nonmonetary favours.

Informal Non-Waged Work

Young people are being used to support the family so that they can maintain them.
[Community Worker]

In the informal non-waged economic sphere, goods and services are exchanged for non-financial rewards. Ruthven (1993) has estimated that unpaid labour in the home currently represents an equivalent of about 4.5 million jobs, although if out-sourced this would translate into approximately half this number. For the young person providing labour to the family unit, this directly facilitates the acquisition of income or allows other family members to do so. By making nonmonetary contributions such as helping out in the family business, with child care, or domestic labour, some young people play an important part in family economies (Hartley and Wolcott, 1994).

In the present study there was evidence that a sizeable number of young people perform unpaid work on an informal basis. Responses from youth and community workers demonstrated that the bulk of this kind of work was associated with domestic labour (32 per cent of responses) such as house cleaning, and with child care (26 per cent of responses). Table 5.1 sets out the proportion of young people who do unpaid work at home for their family or friends.

The kinds of work which they perform in their place of residence is outlined in Table 5.2.

Generally speaking, most young people engage in informal unpaid work. The bulk of this work consists of domestic labour of some kind (for example, house cleaning, dishes,

Table 5.1 The percentage of young people interviewed who did unpaid work at home for family or friends

Undertook unpaid work	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Yes	319	79.8
No	78	19.5
Missing	3	0.8
Total	400	100.0

Table 5.2 Types of unpaid work young people were doing

Types of unpaid work	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Child Care	25	6.1
Domestic Labour	265	64.8
Piece Work	4	1.0
Family Business	12	2.9
Gardening	68	16.6
Other	35	8.6
Total	409	100.0

laundry, garbage disposal), and of gardening. It also includes childcare and assisting with family businesses.

The Value of Unpaid Labour

One of the major difficulties with unpaid labour in the home is that often it is very hard to quantify its value. Most paid labour is quantified according to hours on-the-job, combined with reasonably well-defined notions of skill level, experience and level of responsibility within the production process. This is not to say, however, that these definitions and quantifications of labour are necessarily just or fair—simply that by convention there is usually a standard by which to compare different workers and work environments.

The case of home-based work is substantially different. In order to gain some idea of how the young people evaluated their own contributions, the project asked them about their expectations regarding the amount of labour they performed. Table 5.3 shows their responses.

By and large most young people felt that their contribution was fair (59%), with a few regarding their efforts as too little or too much. Again, one of the difficulties with this type of investigation is that how we define ‘reasonable expectations’ tends to be related to social context, rather than quantifiable economic measurement. Thus, a ‘fair’ contribution would need to be interpreted in the light of general domestic arrangements and interactions, which would colour perceptions of what is appropriate or suitable types and levels of labour input from different members of the household.

Given that the exchange of nonmonetary goods or services is often viewed positively, it is interesting to inquire whether unpaid work in the private sphere for the family unit provides young people with a less exploitative working environment than similar work in the public sphere. Clearly this will depend on the nature and onerousness of the tasks involved. There may be a valid distinction to be made between enabling labour

Table 5.3 **How young people felt about the expectations of unpaid work at home**

Rating of expectations	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Too little	58	14.5
Too much	66	16.5
Fair	236	59.0
Other	7	1.8
Don't Know	4	1.0
Missing	29	7.3
Total	400	100.0

contributions such as child-minding and domestic labour, and young people actually performing income-generating tasks such as sewing or working in the family business without receiving income.

The ways in which gender and ethnicity impact upon the extent and types of informal un-waged activity was also an important element of the project. For unemployed young women, a forced dependency on parental resources has a number of implications. Concern has been expressed that the constraints and activities of young women within the home are different from those of young men and that there are major pressures for young women to perform 'womanly duties' associated with domestic labour (Baxter, Gibson and Lynch-Blosse, 1990; Brake, 1985). Lack of independent resources and the tighter controls often imposed on young women by parents place significant restrictions on women's activities in and out of the home and may add to the difficulties in other aspects of economic and social life (White, 1990; Brake, 1985; Presdee, 1984; Wyn and Holden, 1994).

In addition, domestic labour is difficult to measure (in terms of economic or other value) and there is no set working day or times allocated for this type of work. Within this context, young women may end up spending long hours pursuing domestic duties, eager to establish that their work represents an equal contribution to the household livelihood (Game and Pringle, 1983).

Not all unpaid work is performed as part of a family or household contribution. For instance, young people often undertook work which involved transactions in return for some identifiable reward (use of a car, access to space, use of equipment). Table 5.4 indicates the proportion of under-18 year olds who engaged in this type of activity.

Table 5.5 outlines in greater detail the sorts of activities in which young people were engaged on an economic, but unpaid, basis.

Table 5.4 The percentage of young people interviewed who did unpaid work at home for family or friends in return for favours of some kind

Undertook unpaid work	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Yes	176	44.0
No	219	54.8
Missing	5	1.3
Total	400	100.0

Table 5.5 Types of unpaid work for favours that young people were doing

Types of unpaid work	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Baby-sitting	11	5.9
Car maintenance/repairs	11	5.9
Small Business	19	10.3
Gardening	19	10.3
Housework/chores	43	23.2
homework	11	5.9
Unspecified/general jobs	29	15.7
Other	42	22.7
Total	185	100.0

As indicated in the table, housework and general chores constituted the main types of work performed in return for favours. However, significantly, assisting with a small family-run business, as well as gardening and odd jobs were also mentioned. An extended list of these kinds of jobs would include items such as car maintenance, house renovations, cooking, computer and typing, painting, taking care of grandparents, moving, mowing lawns, cleaning gutters, fencing and baby-sitting.

Conclusion

This chapter has raised the issue of the place of informal unpaid labour in the lives of young people.

Main Findings

- Unpaid labour in the home and local area comprises the biggest category of work relative to the other economic spheres.
- Most young people engage in some kind of informal unpaid work.
- There are major difficulties in assigning an economic 'value' to work of this nature and this has implications for the quantities and types of work performed by different members of a household.
- There is a network of favours involving unpaid work which allow young people to benefit without monetary transactions taking place.

In many ways, informal unpaid work as described in this chapter constitutes an important connecting point for members of a household. However, as indicated, there may be problems associated with this kind of labour, particularly when it comes to the ways in which young women's time and energy is constructed in the domestic environment.

While some benefit may come to the young person as a result of involvement in such work (for example, room and board), the need for direct financial reward remains strong. In many cases young people look to the state as provider of income assistance.

6. The Welfare Economy

States Parties shall recognise for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realisation of this right in accordance with their national law.

Article 26
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

States Parties recognise the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular: ... (b) encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need; (c) make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means...

Article 28
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Young people have difficulty in gaining full-time employment, or any kind of employment which pays sufficiently well to cover independent living expenses. For many young people the state therefore becomes a significant source of income.

This chapter discusses two major areas in which young people are especially assisted by the state: education/training payments, and welfare payments. In each case, the provision of financial and other benefits to young people is very often contingent upon the undertaking of tasks oriented to possible future paid work. However, in each case the level of payment is also generally very low, even though much is required on the part of the young person in order to claim it.

The Welfare Economy

Until the first of January if you're on homeless Austudy you still do not get a rental subsidy which in effect means that if you go back to school, having been unemployed, then you're choosing to be a student rather than be unemployed, you're \$62 a fortnight less off. [Youth Worker]

The defining characteristic of the welfare economic sphere is the receipt of a 'residual' income from the State. In all cases these are condition-based payments which depend on the fulfilment of particular criteria, for example, attending compulsory education and training programs. Income within this economic sphere ranges from regular benefit payments to indirect state subsidies in the form of, for example, discount passes for public transportation. Activity in this economic sphere has dramatically increased as many young people have been forced into education and training schemes in light of reduced employment opportunities and the restructuring of welfare due to perceived budgetary constraints and political decisions regarding the allocation of state monies.

Education and Training

Recent figures estimate that close to 80 per cent of young people now stay on at school until the end of year 12 (Sweet, 1995). Whereas in 1966, 63 per cent of 16 to 19 year olds were employed and 30 per cent were in education, by 1989 only 37 per cent were employed and 58 per cent were in education (Maas, 1990). In May 1993, almost 50 per cent of 19 year olds and a fifth of 22 year olds were attending educational institutions (Castles, 1993).

However, while young people may well be trying to improve their own individual employment chances, research has recently shown that increased levels of education have not resulted in increased job opportunities nor greater levels of remuneration (Gregory and Hunter, 1995). In areas where education expansion had had its greatest

impact, unemployment had risen from 4.4 per cent in 1976 to 13 per cent in 1991 and average income per adult had risen by less than 0.5 per cent per year. Gregory and Hunter conclude that while education and skill training may determine who gets jobs, they have very little influence on the number of jobs available or average rates of pay.

The importance attached to training and work experience in official government policy and employer expectations necessarily has an impact on the concrete experiences of young people in the labour market. In January 1995, the Government introduced the Youth Training Allowance for all those unemployed persons aged between 15 to 17. Under this system, which replaced the Job Search Allowance for this age group, young people are allocated a case manager who will oversee their search for suitable work, training or education placement. This benefit carries 'a greater reciprocal obligation' for recipients to engage in training, work experience, approved education or job search activities (Keating, 1994:96). More recently, the newly elected Coalition government implemented a 'dole diary' scheme in order to tighten up claimant procedures, and is undertaking a major review of all allowances and benefits paid to young people (see Vanstone, 1996; Newman and Vanstone, 1996).

The importance attached to education, training and work experience in official government policy and employer expectations necessarily has an impact on the concrete experiences of young people in the labour market. The youth and community workers interviewed for this project indicated that the type of work young people do in return for a training allowance or the then Job Search Allowance tended to be either low level in terms of skill development, or to focus on the personal attributes of the young person, especially their appearance, rather than actual capacities for different kinds of work. Table 6.1 shows the youth and community workers' responses to a question regarding the type of work young people do in return for a training allowance or job search allowance.

In addition, the conclusions of other researchers, that training courses frequently do not result in jobs, that some young people get caught in a repetitive pattern of short

Table 6.1 Youth and community workers' perceptions of the type of work young people do for training allowance/job search

Type of work	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Administration work	13	23
Computer work	6	11
Presentation skills	10	18
Gardening/Outdoor work	6	11
Community work	7	12
Other	14	25
Total	56	100

courses which seem to be leading nowhere due to a lack of available jobs, and that the courses young people had done had not given them sufficient skills, is a cause for concern (Carson and Doube, 1994).

The competition for limited job opportunities, combined with pressures to demonstrate some kind of previous experience when applying for what there is on offer, generates pressure on young people to gain job training however they can. According to youth and community workers, there were significant instances of unpaid job training, mainly concentrated in the service industry. Other forms of unpaid job training included a number of community based organisations, including youth service agencies themselves, as well as commercial enterprises such as a travel agent and farm.

Welfare Economy Payments

The level of income received by young people in the welfare economy (for example, education, training and unemployment benefits and allowances) has consistently been found to be inadequate. Many authors have noted the deficiencies in youth income in this sphere and have established that it is often below the Henderson poverty line (Thomson, 1993; Morris and Blaskett, 1992; Sheen and Trethewey, 1991).

Those on unemployment or training benefits or Austudy find the pursuit of livelihood is further complicated by such issues as the disparity between amount of income support available to different age groups and through different programs, even though costs and needs can be identical (King and Payne, 1993); the penalties attached to seeking income supplements in the formal economy (Hartley, 1992); difficulties with identification requirements and bureaucratic procedures, including waiting periods (Trewetey and Burston, 1988; Thomson, 1993); and, when on unemployment benefits, the obvious problem of having to demonstrate an active seeking of full time work in the formal economy when there is none (State Youth Affairs Councils and Networks, 1992).

In this study, as discussed earlier (see Chapter 2) a significant proportion of the young people are reliant upon government income support and educational assistance as main sources of income. The forms of assistance that most young people are eligible for tend to be 'scaled down' to what is considered appropriate for them. This is particularly concerning given that independent young people do not face lower living costs than adults and young employed people living with their families generally make some contribution to household finances (State Youth Affairs Councils and Networks, 1992).

An illustration of the low level of payments available to young people is provided in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Welfare economy payments (August 1996)

Client Category	Austudy	per week	Unemployment Benefits	per week
Under 18 years, without child(ren)	Standard	\$70.30	At home	\$70.30
	Away/independent	\$116.05	Away from home	\$116.05
18 years plus, without child(ren)	18-21 standard	\$84.55	18-20 at home	\$84.55
	Special ¹ standard	\$103.45	18-20 away from home	\$128.35
	22-24 at home	\$108.35		
	Away/independent	\$128.35		
	Special ¹ single away/independent	\$155.50		
	Special ¹ partnered without child	\$140.60		

¹ Aged 21+ and transferring from a DSS payment (received for 6 of last 9 months) or undertaking ESL course.

Source: Newman and Vanstone, 1996

This table shows that young people who are reliant upon the state for income support, whether in regard to unemployment or to educational assistance, do not fare particularly well. The monies provided are below the poverty line, and do not reflect an adequate income from the point of view of the physical and social needs of young people across the different age groups.

A further issue with respect to the welfare economy is that of the relative importance of outside or independent income support for young people. As indicated earlier (see Chapter 2), reliance upon the family is of substantial importance for the under-18 year olds. As young people get older, the family is not perceived as viable or as suitable a source of income support. This is reflected to some extent in the differences in welfare economy payments between the two age groups interviewed as part of this research project.

For example, only 8.7 per cent of the under-18s were receiving social security payments, and 12.8 per cent were in receipt of educational assistance of some kind. As shown in Table 6.3, however, the older age group depended to a greater extent on payments of this kind.

In this case, well over a third of the sample (38.4%) of young people looked to government-provided benefits or allowances in order to make ends meet (as compared with 21.5% of the younger age group).

Table 6.3 The percentage of the older sample receiving income from the welfare economy

Source of welfare income	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Social Security Payments	33	43.4
Educational Support/Austudy	43	56.6
Total	76	100.0

Conclusion

This chapter has briefly discussed various aspects of the welfare economic sphere. The combination of ever more selective criteria in the claiming of state assistance and the low level of payments for young people were seen as especially problematic.

Main Findings

- A significant number of young people are reliant upon welfare and educational payments as a main source of income.
- The level of payment for young people is below the poverty line and is not adequate to meet their physical and social needs.
- There are various institutional pressures to reduce the number of young people claiming state assistance, and this has implications for their immediate as well as future income and employment prospects.

Any changes to the nature of welfare economy payments (that is, greater selectivity in provision) will have major implications for the economic and emotional wellbeing of young people. The manner in which such payments are actually paid out by service-providers also has an impact on how young people see themselves and their position in the wider society (see Chapter 10). More generally, if such payments are too low, or not forthcoming, then even greater pressures exist to propel some young people into the criminal economy.

7. The Criminal Economy

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances.

Article 33

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

Article 34

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.

Article 35

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The aim of this chapter is to describe findings relating to the nature and extent of criminal activity involving young people.

Methodologically, there was a major problem in undertaking this part of the research. Due to ethical and legal considerations it was decided not to ask each individual young

person about their own involvement in criminal activity or offensive behaviour. Rather, in order to protect the reputation and legal integrity of the young person the questions on crime and the criminal economy were framed in terms of 'young people in general'.

While the reliability of the data on its own terms could thus be seen as somewhat limited (that is, it was based upon perceptions of other young people's engagement in criminal activity; and it was not based upon direct experiences of the young people interviewed), nevertheless the data does appear to be a generally reliable indicator of broad trends and patterns. That this is so, is indicated by the strong correlation between what the young people said in the course of the interviews, and the official police statistics on criminal activity within each of the local areas (see Chapter 1).

The Criminal Economy

Some young people have to be very resourceful...I think that at a young age they become integrated into an adult illegal economy which can be around drugs or gambling would be a very interesting thing to look at in this community. [Community Worker]

Activities in the criminal economy differ from those in the informal economy in that the latter are not in themselves different from legitimate economic activities except that they are unregulated by the state in terms of taxation and other government regulations. Activity in the criminal economy is however distinct from 'regular work' of the formal or informal kind in that it involves irregular illegal activity (Auld et al., 1984). Income in the criminal economy is generated through irregular commission of offences, ranging from shoplifting to burglary. Subsistence criminality in which young people tend to be involved ranges from individual-based 'one off' offences and spontaneous activity to group activities, including enterprises involving production, distribution and exchange (for example, of drugs or prostitution services), and, at the extreme, organised crime. For most young people involved in the criminal economy, such activity is sporadic, unlikely to be highly organised and contingent upon their immediate life situation.

Criminal Activity for Income

Few youth and community workers identified illegal activity in the criminal economy as either a major source of income (4 per cent of responses) or as a main source of paid work (1 per cent of responses). However, illegal activity was viewed as an important

means of supplementing an inadequate income (33 per cent of responses). The interviews with young people confirm this, with many responses indicating that the reason young people commit crimes associated with money making is to *supplement* income, and others saying that the reason was 'basic survival'. Over 80 per cent of both the under-18 year olds and the under-25 year olds thought that people in their age category made money from crime.

The types of illegal activity that were seen by community and youth workers as being most prevalent among young people are presented in Table 7.1. The biggest proportion of this activity lies in three main areas: theft, shopstealing, and drug dealing. It is important to note as well, that workers commented on the ways in which young people were drawn into, and/or directly victimised, by existing groups engaged in illegal activity of some sort.

The biggest category of criminal activity identified by the young people was 'drug dealing' (33.8%), closely followed by shopstealing (28.1%). This is shown in Table 7.2. The other main types of crime committed for money were 'theft' (other than shopstealing) (15.7%) and burglary (10.8%).

The pattern of criminal activity identified by the under-25 year age group is markedly different to that referred to by the younger age group. As seen in Table 7.3, 'drug dealing' constitutes a much greater proportion of the responses (49.1%) than the other types of offences. Property crimes such as shopstealing (14.1%) and theft (19.9%) are also once again prevalent, indicating a continuing interest in property crime. Also, 'prostitution' was cited as an alternative income activity in 3.2 per cent of the responses.

Well over 50 per cent of the young people interviewed thought that young people engaged in these kind of criminal activities for financial reasons. This is indicated in

Table 7.1 Youth and community workers' perceptions of the types of illegal activity in which young people engage

Types of illegal activity	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Shoplifting/sale of stolen shop goods	31	24
Theft (other than shoplifting)	20	15
Burglary	14	11
Mugging	5	4
Drug dealing	35	26
Drug running	2	2
Prostitution	11	9
Other	11	9
Total	129	100

Table 7.2 Types of illegal activity that younger sample thought young people did for money

Types of illegal activity	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Shoplifting/sale of stolen shop goods	179	28.1
Theft (other than shoplifting)	100	15.7
Burglary	69	10.8
Mugging	19	3.0
Drug dealing	215	33.8
Drug running	6	0.9
Prostitution	11	1.7
Other	37	5.8
Total	636	100.0

Table 7.3 Types of illegal activity that older sample thought that people under 25 years did for money

Types of illegal activity	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Shoplifting/sale of stolen shop goods	31	14.4
Theft (other than shoplifting)	43	19.9
Burglary	12	5.6
Mugging	1	0.5
Drug dealing	106	49.1
Drug running	10	4.6
Prostitution	7	3.2
Other	6	2.8
Total	216	100.0

Table 7.4. Reasons such as 'supplement income', 'survival', 'homelessness', 'money' and 'easy money' together illustrate the economic rationales put forward to explain the crimes.

A similar pattern of responses emerged with respect to the under-25 year olds. As shown in Table 7.5, a variety of economic reasons are given as explanations for crimes such as theft, drug dealing and burglary.

In the interviews the young people and the youth and community workers had much to say regarding who committed these kinds of crimes, and why.

Table 7.4 The reasons younger sample interviewed felt that young people did these crimes

Types of reasons	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Supplement income	88	15.3
Survival	88	15.3
Boredom	22	3.8
Peer pressure	19	3.3
Fun/excitement	33	5.7
Family problems	39	6.8
Showing off	22	3.8
Homelessness	8	1.4
Money	126	21.9
Drugs	32	5.6
Don't know	15	2.6
Easy money	23	4.0
Other	61	10.6
Total	576	100.0

Table 7.5 The reasons older sample interviewed felt that people under 25 years did these crimes

Types of reasons	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Supplement income	24	11.2
Survival	20	9.3
Boredom	10	4.7
Peer Pressure	6	2.8
Fun/excitement	7	3.3
Family problems	4	1.9
Showing off	0	0
Homelessness	2	0.9
Money	59	27.6
Drugs	18	8.4
Don't know	5	2.3
Easy money	27	12.6
Other	32	15.0
Total	214	100.0

Young People's Comments on Criminal Activity

Coburg

They can't get a job because some kids are just different, maybe they're not well presented and don't come from good families and they don't fit into the normal average Joe and some people look down on them and think I'm not going to employ you. So they just turn to crime just to get by.

Footscray

I guess it's because they feel that there's nothing left for them and it's like at such a young age they start to get into those kind of scenes and then it just becomes a habit and they think that it's so easy to make money that way than working, that's why they stick to it, like they don't want to leave it...people say society is to blame but I think it's really up to the individual...like I personally could've been a drug dealer if I wanted to but like I thought about it and thought like it might be good for a while but what about the long term, like it's not going to last it's not something you can hang on to in the future.

Knox

They're not disciplined enough and they need money quick and so they don't see any other form of getting money. They couldn't be bothered working so they go out and it's the easiest, cheapest and fastest way of getting money.

Knox

Depends, if I was going to do it [crime] it would be for money...I know a lot of people who steal and stuff because they have to because they just can't afford to get stuff.

Coburg

Someone at my school...um...stole from Myers all Fiorelli purses and like they're worth, I went and checked 'em out, they're worth 55 dollars and like I got it for five dollars which was pretty good for me.

Coburg

I can shift money...there's plenty of ways of making money with marijuana.

St Kilda

When you walk down the street with your mates you check all the cars; break into video games and get all the coins out at video parlours; you say to someone, "Do you want this shit?" and they say, "yeah," and you take their money and don't see them

again.

Coburg

Gold's one of the best things that's why a lot of people do robberies... 'cos it can't be traced 'n' you bring it to pawn shops.

Coburg

How else were we supposed to make money? Where were we during the day, we weren't at school were we, we had to do something. Maybe some kids would rather stay home 'n' play their Nintendo, we did that, how long can ya do that for.

Coburg

I was just shoved right out of home [after he came out to his parents] I really didn't have a job and like it was 13 weeks to that dole that I had to wait, and sort of well the only thing was prostitution.

Coburg

Maybe they just go out and do it because they're bored and got nothing better to do.

St Kilda

Most of the people I know who deal drugs don't actually use them themselves. Like now I know people who do use the drugs but a lot of the people doing it now are only doing it for the money. Like I know people who do it to pay for their rent and stuff so they just have to.

Coburg

It's never their fault, I reckon it's the parents fault they haven't been brought up right or...um...you know, the parents let 'em out too late...they don't watch over 'em, they don't keep watch. Lucky I've got good parents, you know. I've still got a curfew now when I'm 18...They've got nothing else to do with their time, they're unemployed.

Coburg

I don't blame them, 'cause there's no jobs out there for the person to do. A smoker would do anything for a smoke...He doesn't wanna do it but sometimes in the circumstances you have to.

St Kilda

Pot earns more money for you because you don't get that much of a profit on hard drugs as there are chains of people and you lose money. But if you deal in pot in your own area, in a small circle you can earn money.

St Kilda

Because they can't get a legal source of income.

St Kilda

Parents don't put them on the right track and tell them what is right and wrong and so they obviously think that it is alright to do things like that. There is no-one there to look after them to show them that they care and love them.

St Kilda

I know someone who robbed a Franklin's store because they were hungry.

St Kilda

They don't have a job and don't go to school and don't have any experience to get a job.

St Kilda

Because the Government won't give them money—a benefit cover or something like Austudy or LAH Allowance. If I was living on the streets for more than a couple of months, then I would go and commit a good crime so I could go to jail and get a bed you know. Because there is no way I'd go to a refuge home because they just break down the door and there's just a tiny lock on the door and they just pinch your things and you get beaten up at least twice a day.

St Kilda

I don't know why you'd do it if there's no money in it. I'd only do a crime if there's something in it. It's stupid to do it in the first place. They get bored. There's shit all to do these days. There's nothing to do at all. You sit around at home and all you do is think about what to do and then if something comes up, you give it a try and it works, it's a good rush, then you do it again.

Footscray

Young people need to get money fast to pay off someone like where they get their drugs from.

Footscray

Some people are desperate for money and they get it any way they can. If that's the only sort of influence they've got and get involved in this sort of stuff then that's the way they're going to head instead of getting proper jobs and stuff. I mean they just don't have the right sort of influence and direction.

Footscray

Maybe with high schoolers because they wear casual clothes and want the latest sort of thing they don't want to look like a dag they might get beat up for it and so they might steal things so they can have the latest top brands and stuff, you know, wear Country Road. I think a lot of them don't pay for these sorts of things and so just to sort of fit in to be a part of everyone else and be cool and stuff.

Coburg

Drugs are a big thing in Brunswick...dope there's heroin addicts, there's everything. There's kids as young as 16 around Brunswick speeding off their face. All you have to do is walk down Sydney Road about 11 o'clock at night see young kids as young as 14 just walking the streets smashed off their face.

Youth & Community Worker Comments on Illegal Activity**M.**

We had the situation where these paedophiles who had places down in St Kilda actually came to [Area 4] and picked up young people on the basis that they were offering them a job down at St Kilda and then the young people went down there and it was a whole setup like they really were offering them jobs, and then those kids were subjected to who knows what...I see that as preying on young people's vulnerability in terms of income and stuff like that.

L.

Some young people have to be very resourceful. They come from extremely large families...and I think that at a young age they become integrated into an adult illegal economy which can be around drugs, or it can be—I would think gambling would be a very interesting thing to look at in this community.

M.

I think that some of the drug stuff and thefts...it becomes something they do because there's nothing else to do or that's a way to get attention, or, it becomes more than just money.

Criminal Activity Not for Money

Not all criminal activity is associated simply with financial gain or economic pressures. Questions were asked about those offences which were committed, but not for money. Table 7.6 outlines those illegal or deviant activities which the young people felt many

Table 7.6 Types of illegal activity (not for the purpose of money) that younger sample thought that young people did

Types of illegal activity	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Stealing cars/joy-riding	63	12.5
Drug use	120	23.7
Vandalism	113	22.3
Graffiti	114	22.5
Fighting	20	4.0
Mugging	6	1.2
Drinking/smoking	36	7.1
Steal/theft/break and enter	15	3.0
Missing	19	3.8
Total	506	100.0

Table 7.7 Types of illegal activity (not for the purpose of money) that older sample thought that people under 25 years did

Types of illegal activity	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Stealing cars/joy-riding	13	8.2
Drug use	45	28.5
Vandalism	30	19.0
Graffiti	36	22.8
Fighting	2	1.3
Mugging	2	1.3
Drinking/smoking	18	11.4
Steal/theft/break and enter	0	0
Other	15	9.5
Total	158	100.0

young people engaged in for other than economic motives. 'Drug use' (23.7%), graffiti (22.5%) and vandalism (22.3%) evoked the most responses. Notably, stealing cars/joy-riding (12.5%) was also mentioned a number of times.

For the older age group, 'drug use' (28.5%) was the most prevalent type of activity identified, as seen in Table 7.7. This was followed by graffiti (22.8%), vandalism (19.0%) and drinking/smoking (11.4%).

The under-18 young people felt that much of this kind of activity was due to a combination of boredom and creating alternative ways to have fun and excitement. This is indicated in Table 7.8. However, a significant proportion of responses also pointed to 'drugs' (18%) as a reason for this type of activity.

A similar pattern emerged from the under-25 year old responses, as shown in Table 7.9.

Table 7.8 The reasons younger sample interviewed felt that young people did these crimes (not for money)

Types of reasons	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Boredom	86	23.1
Fun/excitement	105	28.2
Peer pressure	32	8.6
Family problems	17	4.6
Dares	3	0.8
Don't know	25	6.7
Showing off/attention	37	9.9
Drugs	67	18.0
Total	372	100.0

Table 7.9 The reasons older sample interviewed felt that people under 25 did these crimes (not for money)

Types of reasons	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Boredom	45	33.1
Fun/excitement	37	27.2
Peer pressure	11	8.1
Family problems	3	2.2
Dares	2	1.5
Don't know	6	4.4
Showing off/attention	4	2.9
Other	87	20.6
Total	136	100.0

Each age group felt that young people engage in these kinds of illegal activities due to boredom and the need for excitement. Why these particular kinds of activities are ways to achieve 'fun' is a matter of some concern.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a portrait of young people's involvement in criminal, illegal and deviant activity. As discussed, the motives for different types of crime vary.

Main Findings

- The main types of criminal activity engaged in for money were those of theft and drug dealing.
- It appeared that the extent of drug dealing as a source of income rose with the age of the young people involved.
- The types of crimes committed without an economic motive included drug use, vandalism and unhealthy lifestyle pursuits such as drinking and smoking.
- A major factor in the commission of non-economic crimes was a sense of boredom, or a need for excitement.

The findings in this chapter are disturbing in a number of ways. They appear to indicate a large and growing 'drug culture' among young people, both in terms of sources of income, and as a way to deal with the boredom of everyday life. While some care has to be taken in interpreting the data, given the methodological limitations outlined at the beginning of the chapter, the findings do suggest that problems experienced in other sectors of the economy (for example, unemployment and/or low levels of income support) are creating the conditions for the expansion of a drug-based economic sphere. Young people will be directly implicated in any such expansion.

8. Community Life and Youth Gangs

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

Article 13

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

States Parties recognise the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Article 15

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

States parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Article 31

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Young people are involved in a number of relationships and interact with a wide range of people and institutions at the local community level. Part of the research project was directed at how the young people spent their time, and what kind of contact they had with various institutions such as schools, police services and leisure and recreation services.

This chapter discusses the nature of youth activities from the point of view of what young people do with their time, and where they do it. An important aspect of youth experience is the time and activities they share with their friends. This is a central concern of the chapter, particularly insofar as the group behaviour of young people is often linked to the phenomenon of 'youth gangs'.

Youth Activities

Where and how young people spend their time is a crucial factor in establishing their overall position in society and the resources available to them. Table 8.1 describes the places where young people said they spend most of their time. Of particular note here is that fact that the largest response categories are 'home' (28.1%) and 'friend's places' (17.2%). Too often the public debate on young people's activities fail to acknowledge that, for most young people, the primary place of interaction is in fact the private space of the home.

The figures relating to where the under-25 year olds spend their time are even more

Table 8.1 Where younger sample spend most of their time

Types of places	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Home	203	28.1
Friend's places	124	17.2
Shopping centres	87	12.0
Train stations	9	1.2
Parks/public places	47	6.5
The street	26	3.6
Sports clubs/recreation	54	7.5
Cafes/food outlets	18	2.5
School	34	4.7
Work	18	2.5
Youth centres	29	4.0
Other	74	10.2
Total	723	100.0

Table 8.2 Where older sample spend most of their time

Types of places	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Home	82	40.8
Friend's places	32	15.9
Shopping centres	0	0
Train stations	0	0
Parks/public places	3	1.5
The street	0	0
Sports clubs/recreation	3	1.5
Cafes/food outlets	4	2.0
School/TAFE/Uni.	37	18.4
Work	22	10.9
Youth centres	0	0
Other	18	19.0
Total	201	100.0

Table 8.3 Youth and community workers' perceptions of where young people hang out in the area

Types of places	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Parks/public places	20	11
The street	22	12
Shopping centres	27	15
Hamburger/food outlets	9	6
Amusement parlours	36	20
Youth centres	8	4
Recreation/sporting facilities	19	10
Home	10	5
Friends' places	10	5
Other	22	12
Total	183	100

Table 8.4 The places where young people and their friends hang out

Types of places	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Parks/beaches	49	6.0
The street	55	6.8
Shopping centres	142	17.5
Hamburger/food outlets	16	2.0
Amusement/pool parlours	36	4.4
Youth centres	40	4.9
Recreation/sporting facilities	59	7.3
Home	101	12.4
Friend's places	123	15.1
Train station	8	1.0
CBD	72	8.9
School	26	3.2
Pubs/clubs/discos	33	4.1
Movies	19	2.3
Other	33	4.1
Total	812	100.0

striking. In this case, as shown in Table 8.2, 40.8 per cent of the responses referred to 'home', and 15.9 per cent to 'friend's place' and places where they spend most of their time. In addition, educational institutions (18.4%) and 'work' (10.9%) were seen as places where some of the older group spent most of their time.

The visibility of young people, and the public nature of their activities, is understandable when one considers where they spend a significant proportion of their time when outside of the parental home or friend's places. Table 8.3 shows the places where youth and community workers perceive young people to hang out in the local area.

Two locations of particular note which were mentioned under the category 'Other' were hanging around outside train stations, for example Flinders Street station in the heart of Melbourne's Central Business District, and spending time outside schools (even though they were either not attending or the school was not open).

The young people themselves identified a wide range of public venues and public spaces where they spent time with their friends when not in a private home. This is shown in Table 8.4.

Table 8.5 shows the main types of daytime activities engaged in by young people (excluding school). Reinforcing an earlier observation, it is notable that what young people do with their time during the day tends to be located in the family home or at a friend's house or flat. It is also evident from the table that many young people are kept

Table 8.5 What younger sample do with their time during the day

Types of activities	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Work	53	7.4
Seek employment	19	2.6
Training programs	15	2.1
Substance use	4	0.6
Hang out with friends	113	15.7
Sleep	19	2.6
Find food/shelter	1	0.1
Illegal activity	7	1.0
Attend youth centres/programs	32	4.4
Sport	87	12.1
Amusement parlours	20	2.8
Home/friend's places	184	25.6
Homework	64	8.9
Shopping centres/malls	29	4.0
Public place/beach	27	3.8
Other	46	6.4
Total	720	100.0

Table 8.6 What older sample do with their time during the day

Types of activities	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Work	30	10.9
Seek employment	5	1.8
Training programs	8	2.9
Substance use	6	2.2
Hang out with friends	30	10.9
Sleep	13	4.7
Find food/shelter	1	0.4
Illegal activity	4	1.5
Attend youth centres/programs	5	1.8
Sport	20	7.3
Amusement parlours	3	1.1
Home/friend's places	43	15.7
Homework	32	11.7
Shopping centres/malls	6	2.2
Public places	3	1.1
Other	65	23.7
Total	274	100.0

busy with fairly conventional things such as homework, work, seeking employment, using youth services, sports and shopping.

For the older age group, the pattern is slightly different but a number of similarities remain. Table 8.6 indicates what the under-25 year olds do with their time during the day.

Table 8.7 shows what the young people do with their time at night. The importance of peer relations is highlighted in the top two responses: 35.4 per cent tend to be at home

Table 8.7 What young people do with their time during the night

Types of activities	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Night work	9	1.4
Substance use	15	2.3
Hang out with friends	104	16.1
Parties	37	5.7
Illegal activity	7	1.1
Pubs/clubs/discos	73	11.3
Find food/shelter	0	0
Attend youth centres/programs	22	3.4
CBD/train stations	20	3.1
Home/friend's places	229	35.4
Sport	19	2.9
Sleep	21	3.3
Cinemas	28	4.3
Other	62	9.6
Total	646	100.0

or at friend's places, and 16.1 per cent identified 'hanging out with friends' as the main thing they do.

What young people do when they 'hang out with friends' and how their public behaviour is perceived and regulated will be discussed in a later chapter (see Chapter 11). For the moment it is useful to consider the problems and difficulties associated with day-and night-time activity, in particular issues relating to lack of money, as identified by both the youth and community workers, and the young people themselves.

Youth and Community Worker Comments on How Young People Use Their Time

C.

They want sex and drugs. They want to lie in a park with a needle in their arm and not be hassled by the jacks. It's what they want. How can you change that? Can you? Given the current economic climate, given the ever diminishing funding dollar for programmes and for resources, given the fact that young people I work with at 15 are a squillion times more cynical than any person of my age or older...no. It's very hard to say, "Oh, you've got to get off the drugs; you've got to go back to school, you've got to take more care with your personal hygiene," when their answer is, well, "Why? I'm going to be dead by the time I'm twenty five and that's just the way life's going to be...why should I go to school when there are no jobs, why should I go to TAFE when there are no jobs, I don't want to work anyway."

C.

At night they do drugs, and it's not just dope. A lot of them aren't doing serious stuff like smack...the big thing is prescription tranqu's [tranquillisers]—the rohies [rohypnol], the tryptanol—I mean no-one out here can afford to do any of the designer drugs, you never find acid out here or ecstasy. A big racket [is] going in prescription tranqu's at the moment, and they all go around in groups and get them. They use one Medicare card, and they'll go to fifteen different twenty-four hour service providers—"I'm at school, I'm studying, I'm really stressed out."—and they get it. Rohies are five bucks a tablet I think they were going for...even twenty, it's a hundred bucks, not bad for fifteen minutes work at the doctors.

Young People's Comments on Use of Time and Space**Footscray**

We should have more activities, youth associations that are fun.

Knox

There's enough to do there but you've gotta have money like a lot of people just don't have the money to go out to the movies all the time, go play video games all the time.

Footscray

If you've got money, yeh, there's nothing much to do if you don't have money that's what gets people into drugs and stuff like that, nothing to do.

Knox

It's just that sort of you need money to do most things and like most people don't have much so they can't do things they'd like to do so they go out and just run a muck, yeh for fun I suppose.

Coburg

[About boredom] If you've got money you can go and do something like you can pay to do something. If you haven't got money you've gotta find something. It's like lets go and sit in a park whoopee do, what's that...it's like if you go and sit in an park with a bunch of your friends the time's gonna drag on, you're gonna get bored and someone's gonna start doing something. It's like, it might be bloody pulling a slide apart you know, just bored, ay.

Dandenong

There's nothing to do at all. I spend most of my time at the CES looking for jobs. Soccer training kills some time too.

Dandenong

There's nothing else to do. I've been trying to get something going with St Kilda Council but they don't get very far. The more you bug the Council the more they keep saying they'll do something and then they don't...We've had youth forums and all sorts of things...You try and help and they wreck it. Last Wednesday we were having a Youth Forum for young people so we could speak out for what we thought. Because I was organising it I was the youth representative on the day and they stuffed me around and I was saying what I thought and they [Council] were saying "Sssh, sssh. Don't say that."

St Kilda

It would be good if there were more places like all ages nightclubs, somewhere you can hang out that is safe as well. Where you've got supervisors, people around. And somewhere that's not too big and gets too crowded.

Collingwood

Things have changed around here since that idiot Jeff Kennett came in—he cut a lot of the funds we used to get. He closed the centre down for a while. I think a lot of things need to be done or its going to blow up one day.

St Kilda

There's nothing open at night. We're bored usually.

St Kilda

I'd go other places, but if I wanted to go to a place to have fun I'd have to call up a few mates that are big and take them with me. There's no way you can go to a pinny parlour in the city without coming out rolled or some money taken off you or some shit if you're by yourself. The Asians are causing the problems. They're all gangs.

St Kilda

There's not much. There should be more things for 18 and below people but there's enough for 19 upwards. I just get so bored especially if I just sit home and I've got nothing to do. I just sit down and watch TV, or listen to my music, just get so bored or I just walk around.

Footscray

Movies too expensive...that's why everyone resorts to thieving and selling drugs and stuff, 'cos they need the money to go somewhere each day when they're not going to school...there's really nothing to do.

Coburg

Without Coburg Tech. there isn't obviously 'cos when there was Coburg Tech. there was everything to do, you had a swimming pool, you had a hall, you had somewhere, it felt like you had somewhere to hang out, it was like a hangout.

Coburg

A lot of things depends on money, it really all revolves around money.

St Kilda

Everything depends on money. If you don't have any money you can forget about having fun.

St Kilda

There's nothing to do, it's so boring. It would be good to have a place to hang out, to go when you didn't want to be at home where there's a pool table, something to eat, somewhere to hang out.

Knox

There used to be a Knox holiday program for teenagers, that was really good, but they've taken that away now that they've got commissioners in the city council.

Collingwood

There's nothing to do at night and nowhere to go, especially when you haven't got any money or a car, so we just stay here [outside of youth centre when closed].

St Kilda

It's hard getting transport at night because they stop at certain times at night and it's not very safe and they don't always have cameras in all the trams, trains and buses. This guy did something to me and the police never got back to me. The security system is stuffed.

St Kilda

It's been nearly seven months that we haven't moved from either my house or that pinball parlour. Every weekend. You don't ever get anywhere else. You just basically smoke. You sit there, you're bored, you say, "What do you want to do?", don't come up with nothing and mull up again.

Coburg

Stress out, try and think of something to do and that's mainly when we do something stupid.

Footscray

There are things to do if the young people want to get involved. What actually happens is they don't actually do anything about it so there's always something happening but they're too lazy. We had a surfing machine and did lots of advertising and got lots of people from Ringwood and Strathmore but no-one from this area. It can be a real let down for my mum [youth worker YMCA]. She did everything and these people were always complaining there's nothing to do around here. We have a youth centre because it's the YMCA and not seen as really cool you know, they're always really worried about their images. So there are always things to do if they want it but half of them don't use it.

Footscray

We have a limited income and a lot of things that are like fun and interesting like go-carting...are just too expensive so like you've gotta play it down and not go for the expensive things.

Footscray

[When we're bored] *"We look for money I mean if you've got money you can do plenty of things.*

Knox

We just come here [to the shopping centre] because there's nothing else to do."

Youth 'Gangs'

Young people tend to associate with each other in groups. As indicated in previous tables and discussion, young people spend much of their time with other young people. Public perceptions of groups of young people have in recent years often made reference to 'youth gangs' (see White, 1996; Aumair and Warren, 1994). An important aspect of the research was to investigate the meaning of 'gangs' for the young people themselves.

Tables 8.8 and 8.9 provide an indication of the characteristics which the under-18s and the under-25s identified that they had in common with their immediate peer groups.

As these tables appear to indicate, most young people hang around together for the simple reason that they share similar interests or they attend the same educational institutions. There is nothing intrinsically wrong or insidious about young people spending time with like-minded and similarly positioned young people.

However, the issue of 'youth gangs' is often presented in the media as a serious and growing social problem. We were interested, therefore, in the young people's perceptions regarding groups of young people, and group behaviour. Table 8.10 shows the characteristics identified by the young people as most definitive of a 'youth gang'.

What is striking about this table, and the comments made by young people on 'gangs' (see below), is the varied perceptions and perspectives on what actually constitutes a 'gang'. There was no uniform definition of what a gang is among the young people interviewed, nor was there among the youth and community workers. The answers given on questions relating to gangs showed a deep ambivalence and ambiguity regarding the existence and activities of youth gangs.

Table 8.11 indicates the perceptions of young people regarding common characteristics of gang members who they felt were active in their local areas.

On the theme of common group characteristics, the older group were asked to indicate

Table 8.8 What members of young sample's group have in common with each other

Aspects of group	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Ethnicity/culture	45	8.0
Gender	20	3.5
Music	45	8.0
Fighting ability	5	0.9
Age	22	3.9
School	113	20.0
Sports	45	8.0
Don't know	20	3.5
Same interests/like same	116	20.5
Smoke	10	1.8
Drugs	18	3.2
Other	106	18.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>565</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 8.9 What members of older sample's group of friends have in common with each other

Aspects of group	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Ethnicity/culture	7	3.4
Same interests	84	41.2
School/TAFE/Uni	68	33.3
Work	1	0.5
Don't know	13	6.4
Other	31	15.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>204</i>	<i>100.0</i>

whether or not their friends were from similar or different social backgrounds. This is shown in Table 8.12.

What the data appears to suggest is that the composition of groups of young people tends to reflect immediate life circumstances, and immediate social contacts. There is not a necessary connection between some attributes (for example, ethnicity) and the nature of the group or gang. Similarly, there is not a necessary connection between some groups who are identified on the basis of a particular social characteristic (for example, particular nationality) and criminal activity. Nevertheless, stereotypes of both 'groups', and 'group behaviour', were not uncommon in the young people's discussion of youth

Table 8.10 The characteristics by which young people define gangs

Attributes	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Similar dress	31	4.5
Troublemakers	92	13.5
Rough	37	5.4
Violent	90	13.2
Carry weapons	35	5.1
People who defend territory	11	1.6
People who protect each other	48	7.0
Do illegal activities	87	12.7
Ethnicity	24	3.5
A group of friends	89	13.0
Negative terms	62	9.1
Don't know	13	1.9
Other	65	9.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>684</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 8.11 Where gangs exist, what members of those gangs have in common with each other

Attributes	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
School	12	2.6
Ethnicity	93	20.3
Loyalty/protection of members	33	7.2
Weapons	14	3.1
Similar dress	44	9.6
Family breakdown	10	2.2
Illegal activity	74	16.2
Fighting	66	14.4
Troublemakers	20	4.4
Don't know	14	3.1
Other	78	17.0
Total	458	100.0

Table 8.12 Whether the older sample's friends were generally from the same cultural background or was there a mixture

Types of Background	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Same cultural background	33	22.0
Mixture of cultural backgrounds	109	72.7
Missing	8	5.3
Total	150	100.0

gangs generally.

Young People's Comments on Gangs

Footscray

I got into drugs in the first place because I used to hang around with a gang. I try to avoid that scene now.

The people I used to hang out with would never leave the house without a certain weapon...it's not so much they leave the house with a weapon to out there and do something to someone, it's more for their own self-protection...I know one person that came out once without a machete and said, I gotta go home now, and it's like why, because Oh I haven't got my machete on me, there's no way I'm going out on the streets without a machete, because they used to get into a lot of fights.

Footscray

Nowadays I don't go out any more because I feel that if I continue going out then I'll end up somewhere else [jail]. I can't get to walk around Footscray that long, like yesterday or a couple of days ago I took only ten steps and I got searched. I was around there only about ten minutes I got searched about four or five times and every time they search me it's like I know who you are so you don't have to give me your ID. Sometimes it bothers you, you know, in front of other people you're getting searched."

I couldn't give my parents up for my friends so I gave my friends up for my parents but

any time I need my friends they're always there for me. [Talking about leaving his gang and that this behaviour almost destroyed his life.]

Knox

Gangs are nothing really. It's just adult crap. I mean sure there's a lot of gangs that hang around at Knox bus stop and things like that but all they do is sit around and talk and have a smoke. They don't do anything criminal, I mean occasionally a couple might go up and smash a window or something like that but that's little compared to what people say...there's gangs everywhere but just not the type of stereotypical gangs that people run around belting the shit out of everyone.

Dandenong

When you hear the word gang like, you know kids, a whole group of kids going out vandalising things...I suppose that's what I think a gang is. But it depends on what sort of point of view you have of a gang, if you're in a gang and you know what they do and you know what they're like I suppose that might change your point of view. But when you hear a gang you think you know kids just out to cause trouble.

Dandenong

There's about 30 of us, mostly Koories. When we hang out in Playzone, they told me we can't hang out there at night any more because people are too scared to walk in there. He said the police are going to come down and stop us hanging around. But it's their business they're losing. We spend about \$30 each in there when we've got money.

Coburg

Turkish people. Other races are not allowed as we talk about Turkish stuff although we don't have anything against other races.

Coburg

We don't go out with a group but in school we might all hang out together. Most of my friends are Lebanese but I socialise with everyone.

A person that is not a show off and doesn't think he's better than the rest. A person who doesn't back stab or talk behind your back. I get along with most people but some Australians I don't. They've got a different tone of language. You get into fights sometimes.

St Kilda

We don't have rules, entrance happens naturally.

Coburg

It shouldn't be allowed because they carry knives. If they didn't carry weapons it would be alright. If you have to fight you should fight with your hands. If I'm ever in a fight I use my hands and that's it. I would never be in a gang like that.

Dandenong

Some people need to be accepted by someone. They need to feel part of something"

I don't have any objections. If they want to be a gang then let them. But I don't like it if someone's wearing a certain colour they go and bash them.

Dandenong

Gangs are rough boys. We just stay together, but if they want to fight we'll kill them.

Knox

Gangs do things because they are really stressed about the government and they don't know where the jobs are going. They don't know anything—they are just told stuff and it's bullshit. They're told they're going to get jobs by school teachers and stuff but things are not that simple. Gangs break windows, steal clothes mainly for themselves. They need money for drugs.

St Kilda

A big group usually with some sort of arms like guns or usually knives, into drugs a bit.

St Kilda

A group of people who hang around...like homies. I call that a gang because they go around with knives, bashing people.

St Kilda

A group of reckless teenagers who have nothing better to do than go around causing malevolent trouble.

St Kilda

In Australia there are no gangs. It's a load of bullshit. The only gangs I know of are bikkie gangs. Some kids hang around in groups and break into cars but they aren't gangs.

St Kilda

I don't think there is such a thing [as gangs]. There are groups, that's all.

Dandenong

A group of people who hang around. You don't have to do anything illegal. Just a

group of friends.

Coburg

A group of violent teenagers who go out looking for trouble. [common quote]

Coburg

People that carry weapons. Thirty or forty blokes [like a Mafia] who hang out at one spot and if anyone enters without permission they're done for.

Footscray

People see gangs as being hostile groups of kids. I see gangs as just a group of friends hanging around with each other. Just a group of mates trying to have fun. Some gangs are just trouble makers and that's why they've got such a bad reputation.

Dandenong

A group of mostly one race, and sometimes they meet another race and fight.

Dandenong

It's no good. Too many people get killed or hurt. They bash people up. We're not a gang, we just hang out together. It's not a gang but people think it is.

Dandenong

Group of guys looking mean, hang out at night in dark places, have knives, smoke, drink beer. They'd pick on you if you walk past, say some smart remark.

St Kilda

A bunch of guys that are all out there to get to that point where you can walk up to any cunt, start anyone. Me myself, look at the size of me, I'd go up to some six foot guy and I could smash his head in and he wouldn't do nothing. But all the gangs, none of them are sick cunts. Everyone wants to be, but the real sick cunts are the Greeks and Italians, not in gangs, just independently.

Dandenong

How we hang around in a group isn't the same way they hang around at Capitol, those black cunts. Bandanas and that. We don't go around asking for trouble. They do. We don't get stoned or pissed and start a fight. They do.

St Kilda

The only ones left that are trouble are the Asians in Footscray. We're not a gang. People used to say, "The Port boys," and, "The Port girls." Just if something happens to one of us everyone gets really angry and there are big all-in brawls. We don't go

round picking fights, it's just a community, everyone knows everyone.

Footscray

They don't have parent's in Australia or generally they don't have a good family therefore they stick together. A gangs like a family for some of these young men.

St Kilda

I've just had lots of people who have been attacked by them and have got one person in my music course who has moved away from Tullamarine to escape from a Turkish gang who he didn't even know.

Footscray

I don't feel safe walking around Footscray at night, because of gangs. [16 year old female]

Dandenong

They intimidate people. It doesn't affect me if they do graffiti and steal, but if they steal from kids that affects me.

St Kilda

Be careful of them and wish they'd leave me alone. I've strong feelings after being beaten up by a girl from a gang.

St Kilda

In my area there is always someone bashing someone or doing something wrong and someone getting hurt. I'm just sick of it. Even in your own house you can't be safe.

St Kilda

Well I've been in one before—it's a bunch of insecure people who just do things just to get a reputation. They're so stupid, a waste of time—it just leads into big trouble.

Collingwood

A lot of kids get bored—there's nothing for young kids to do—you need money to do things.

Knox

There used to be lots of gangs in Knox. At one stage the black people rebelled against and formed their own group.

Knox

Homies, the Knox gang. They wear big baggy clothes. Most of them are Chinese. They come from split up families.

Coburg

We're a gang but we don't go around breaking windows. We stick up for each other. We don't go looking for fights but its happened a few times. Usually the other guy ends up in hospital. We don't cause any trouble to anyone else, we help them sometimes.

Coburg

I've seen some bad things, I've hanged around with a gang you could more-or-less say, it was just a group of mates, we never had a name for us or anything. I mean out on the street we used to brawl and I've found that on the street these days you gotta be dirty...I mean I've been smashed with batons and shit like that...It's all a load of shit if you ask me.

St Kilda

I wouldn't like to be bashed by them because they always do 50 onto one. They're not smart. I don't really care as long as they don't touch me. If they get on my territory, I'll do something about it.

Footscray

Maybe they [gangs] have a complex that everybody hates them like the Vietnamese and people who have their racial thing and so they stick together because they think that they're going to be accepted that way"

Knox

Most of them these days are afraid to be too rough. They don't go out looking for a fight but if someone wants to have a go they'd have a go back, protecting each other I guess.

They dress in a certain way, tight jeans in one place and baggy pants in another.

They're pretty stupid really but I'd rather be in a gang than walking the streets by myself.

Coburg

There's a few ways I s'pose you could describe gangs...people that create problems for other people doing illegal stuff and there's people that are out there fighting and there's people that are just hanging out together.

Coburg

[About whether gangs bother her] *"No 'cos I was a girl, if I was a guy it'd be a different story.*

Coburg

They [Asians] stick to themselves so much it's not funny, it's dangerous how they stick to themselves.

Coburg

Gangs are just there because they just didn't have a good life you know, they just didn't get what their parents should give them...they probably got a lot of shit from their parents.

Coburg

A gang is just of group of friends that get together...if there's bad people in the gang then they're gonna do stupid things.

Dandenong

A group of kids just hanging around...I think the idea of a lot of kids scares some people because they think they'll get up to mischief.

Footscray

You think that because Asians band together that an Asian should feel no worries about walking around with a predominantly Asian community, but that's a myth because I can walk down to Footscray right now and feel threatened because of the gangs that are around...there's lots of racial tension anyway and I don't think that'll ever disappear. First of all the racial tension is between Australians, actually not as much Australians just non-Vietnamese, non-Asian, non-Vietnamese basically and Vietnamese.

Knox

I've seen a smaller gang before, a lot of them are rough looking sort of got the dark clothes on and sort of like a bottle in one hand and a rock in the other hand...that's just my generalisation of a gang but then I've seen gangs that are totally the opposite, there can be good and bad gangs.

Footscray

They all like violence and they all like drugs and they all like to be considered cool and top of the world.

They're bad for sure they're bad...since they cause trouble and problems to society then I guess it's not alright...Like I call a gang a group 'cos like we get classified, our group of girls that hang out together, we get classified as a gang as well, like people in the street will say, "oh, yeh, they're the Footscray girls," whatever, but I don't consider

our group as a gang because, just because we're in a group and we're always together they classify us as a gang.

But to me, I classify a gang as in when they get together and they plan things and they say like alright this week we're gonna rob this house or this week we're gonna bash this girl or this guy whatever. But we don't do those kinds of things, we get together and have fun...people just get the wrong image of a gang and like they say things about a certain kind of person just from the outlook but they don't look into the inside of them.

Footscray

The reason why a lot of people form gangs around here is like it tends to help them like if someone knows that they're in a gang it's less likely that they'll get hurt because a lot of times walking around at night you can get hurt for no reason.

Conclusion

This chapter has described various features of community life relating to how and where young people spend their time. An important part of the discussion has been on the question of 'youth gangs'.

Main Findings

- The main place where young people spend their time is at their own or a friend's home.
- When they go out, young people tend to congregate in the public spaces of malls, shopping centres and the street.
- Young people engage in a wide variety of economic and social activities during the day and during the night, most of which are 'conventional' in nature.
- The sources of connection between different young people tend to be based on shared interests (for example, music, sport) and on attendance at the same institution (for example, TAFE programme).
- There is no single and agreed upon definition of 'gang'.
- Particular 'ethnic' groups of young people are singled out as being 'gangs', often on the basis of shared appearance and language.

Most of the young people in fact spend most of their time, with friends, in the private spaces of their own home or at a friend's dwelling. When they go out, they tend to hang

around, in groups, in public spaces such as shopping centres, commercial venues and the street. It is interesting in this regard to note the types of places where 'gangs' are perceived to hang out. This is shown in Table 8.13. Importantly, given the overlap between where groups of young people hang out, and where 'gangs' hang out, and given the difficulties in providing a precise, or uniform, definition of what a 'gang' actually refers to, it can be anticipated that very often the two types of youth formation will be confused in the public mind. This has implications for how youth-specific activity and use of space is policed and regulated (see Chapter 11).

A further issue which complicates any discussion of 'youth gangs' is that of youth behaviour generally. A majority of under-18 year olds and under-25 year olds felt that there was not enough to do in their local areas. Many relied upon public transport to go to other areas where more interesting things might be happening.

Almost 80 per cent of the young people said that they get bored. Table 8.14 indicates what young people say they do when they are bored.

The significance of 'boredom' and the search for excitement cannot be underestimated in the lives of young people. However, the occasional episode of antisocial, criminal or illegal behaviour on the part of bored young people should not be misconstrued as somehow constituting 'gang behaviour'. Nor should such activity be taken out of context and involve the imposition of a 'master definition' of these young people which sees them first and foremost as 'criminals'. Sporadic deviant behaviour needs to be assessed for what it is: an infrequent breaking of the rules, which rarely transforms the overall activities, behaviour or self-image of young people.

Table 8.13 The types of places in which gangs hang out

Types of places	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Shopping centres	108	24.8
Train stations	48	11.0
Parks/public places	56	12.9
CBD	29	6.7
Bus depots	10	2.3
Amusement/pool parlours	47	10.8
The street	42	9.7
Don't know	37	8.5
School	14	3.2
Discos/cafes	10	2.3
Home	8	1.8
Other	26	6.0
Total	435	100.0

Table 8.14 What young people do when they get bored

Types of activities	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Hang out with friends	107	24.8
Listen to music	29	6.7
Stay at home	46	10.7
Homework	1	0.2
Watch TV/video	67	15.5
Illegal activities	22	5.1
Nothing	57	13.2
Sport	16	3.7
Talk	22	5.1
Other	64	14.8
Total	431	100.0

9. Social Differences

States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties.

Article 22
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse, torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegrating shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

Article 39
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Previous comments by young people about the nature of criminal activity (Chapter 7) and youth gangs (Chapter 8) illustrate how various social differences are perceived to

play a major role in the kinds of activities and opportunities available to different groups of young people. Inequality in social opportunities and community resources appear to be of special significance to particular categories of young people, as does the social expectations regarding appropriate behaviour and suitable economic contributions (see Chapter 5).

Recent academic and community research in youth studies has highlighted the importance of examining class, gender and ethnicity in the shaping of young people's lives (see Wyn and White, 1997; Cunneen and White, 1995). The area of ethnic differences is of particular concern, especially given the relative dearth of material on ethnic minority youth in Australia (but see Pe-Pua, 1996; Guerra and White, 1995).

The aim of this chapter is to briefly describe how the young people thought about different categories of their peers; in particular, it is concerned with the influence of gender and ethnicity on youth behaviour, attitudes and activities. The project as a whole uncovered many different dimensions of the ways in which gender and ethnicity impinge upon youth lifestyle and opportunity. Some of these have been alluded to in previous chapters, as noted above. This chapter provides but a small indication of the kind of material which will be examined more closely as the research data is further processed and analysed.

Gender

One of the concerns of the research was to explore any differences in the work and social experiences of young men and young women. Almost two-thirds of the young people said that there were significant differences in the types of things young men and young women do with their time. Table 9.1 provides an indication of the gender differences in the activities of young people.

Table 9.1 Young people's perceptions of gender differences in the activities of young men and women

Types of differences	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Guys go out/do more	27	13.1
Girls at home more	15	10.3
Girls into shops/clothes more	23	15.9
Guys do sport more	28	19.3
Girls talk/gossip more	30	20.7
Guys do alcohol/drugs more	12	8.3
Guys get into trouble more	12	8.3
Other	59	40.7
Total	206	100.0

The actual and perceived differences in what young people of either gender do with their time and energy is also captured in the comments provided by the young people.

Younger Sample's Comments on Gender

Footscray

I wish I was a girl it's so easy a girls life. They go out, they hang around, they go city, they go party. I don't even know how to dance, I don't like parties...girls are more free.

Dandenong

Boys are more into sports. If they get bored they go play basketball, footy or soccer. Us girls usually sit around and talk. [very common opinion]

Footscray

Boys hang out in youth centres and play games like pinball and the girls do but not as much. Girls are less active—they just walk around the city and sit in one place. One thing about Asians—they're a lot stricter on the girls—they want them to stay home and study.

Dandenong

Guys get to go out more than girls. Girls do house chores, guys escape from that and go have fun.

Dandenong

Not all girls are interested in sport, they're more interested in clothes.

Dandenong

We like to talk more and stay home more than guys. Some guys can't stand to stay in the house. Some are like us but most get out and about.

St Kilda

It depends on the individuals. Some guys don't have any female friends and end up doing guy things with mates but other guys hang out with girls. It depends on age, maturity and who you are.

Dandenong

Girls are more mature...they muck around in a different way. Like I'm not saying they don't muck around but not as much as the guys.

St Kilda

There's not many girls around my area...I don't know what they do. Most guys have an advantage—they socialise, they go out more. The girls don't have mobile phones!

St Kilda

Guys get bored more easily. They'd find other stuff to do, get into trouble. My friends and I can hang out at the park but guys wouldn't want to do that, just sit there and talk amongst themselves.

St Kilda

Using a computer is really male-dominated, 80 per cent male, which says something. Girls maybe talk on the phone instead?

St Kilda

At this school I think a lot of the guys just smoke pot all the time and that about all they do—listen to heavy metal and stuff and the girls look at shops and interesting stuff.

St Kilda

The chicks go out shopping, to dances and raves. Some guys do go out but most guys aren't into dancing.

St Kilda

I reckon they do the same things but because people put it down to the sexes they expect men to be a certain way and women to be a certain way but in reality it just like two of the same things.

Dandenong

Most guys might do different things but starting now with guys understanding that girls have the same rights and things like that, girls are beginning to do what boys like to do...Girls like girls meetings and talk about boys and laugh. Guys might have their own little group and might talk about a footy game or a girl they might want to pick up. Girls might talk about what was on TV last night.

St Kilda

Young men and women do the same sorts of things—it depends on the type of group you hang around with.

Dandenong

We do the same things but not the same way. Like footy, there's no rule that guys have to play it and girls can't. Girls can do the same things as guys but they don't. There's

too many guys here.

Dandenong

Boys look at sex but don't look at love.

Dandenong

Albanian girls don't go out of their houses because that's the way it is—that's the whole tradition. Our sisters stay at home or work.

St Kilda

There are girls out there that choof, sit around, go out and play football just like I would, but in general there's a big difference.

St Kilda

Guys sit around, watch TV, smoke. Guys talk a lot—too much and too loud. They aren't happy unless they've got all the little luxuries around them—food, drink, comfy seat—everything they want. Girls—it doesn't worry them. Guys laze around, all they're interested in is guys—the other guys. Girls run around more.

Coburg

They say that when we get married [Muslims] that the lady's job is from the front fence to the back fence and the man's job is just on the street, he brings in the food and that.

Collingwood

Girls talk about sex and lingerie. Boys like talking about cars, motorbikes and body building.

St Kilda

Guys hang out more. Girls have more of a direction and more of a plan. Male friends sit around all night. They have a 'hang out' mentality. Girls are more tame.

Footscray

With my Vietnamese community they look at you and like if you walk around the street in Footscray for example I wouldn't dare to light up a cigarette and smoke because like they'd consider me as one of those whore bags or sluts or whatever so I wouldn't do that in public like if I smoke I'll like hide away.

Initial data was also collected on issues relating to gender and work. Table 9.2 presents

Table 9.2 The percentage of the older sample who felt that their gender had affected their experiences in the work force or in looking for a job

Gender has an effect	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Yes	34	22.7
No	102	68.0
Missing	14	9.3
Total	150	100.0

an indication of how the under-25 year olds saw the impact of gender on work experiences and in looking for work.

While gender was not seen to be particularly relevant in a majority of cases, the following comments illustrate some of the issues raised in the interviews.

Older Sample's Comments on Gender and Work

Collingwood

Its male dominated in my subject area so it may be more difficult for a woman in biochemistry.

Collingwood

Females are preferred in hospitality to an extent.

St Kilda

Being female in an all male working environment has helped me.

St Kilda

Females are preferred in hospitality to an extent.

Knox

When I was 15, working on a trial basis my boss slapped my buttocks and touched by breasts and when he touched more personal parts I turned around and broke his nose and walked out. Being female doesn't limit you rather there are sneaks and snags that you have to be careful of.

Footscray

In the tyre industry being male gives you an advantage.

Footscray

I asked in 'Bras and Things' if they would employ males and they said no because of gender.

Footscray

Yes, I applied for the police force and passed all the tests but they were looking for

females and I have to wait 12 months before I can apply again.

Coburg

No not gender issues but issues surrounding my sexuality. Discrimination and prejudice is very evident in jobs involving young people.

Coburg

I think girls have more options some times I mean guys have to do the dirty work and its harder to get something more stable like in the office or something.

Ethnicity

Issues relating to ethnicity were particularly strong in discussions with young people of 'youth gangs' and social activities. Specific questions were also asked regarding the influence of ethnicity on the activities of young people. A majority (58%) of the young people felt that young people from different ethnic backgrounds do different things. The response of the young people is indicated in Table 9.3.

The table indicates a strong sense of difference among many of the respondents. As seen in the comments below, this difference was also often based upon either stereotypes of different ethnic minority young people or was accompanied by an element of hostility toward the 'other'. In the light of inflammatory and racist statements made recently in federal parliament, the attitudes of some young people towards others is a matter of some concern. The comments by the young people reflect real and profound processes of social division, and in some cases a highly charged atmosphere of conflict and suspicion is emerging between some groups of young people.

Table 9.3 Young people's perceptions of the effect of nationality/culture on the activities of young men and women

Culture/ nationality	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Racism	21	12.3
Families are strict	37	21.6
Get into trouble/fights	3	1.8
Places where people hang out	10	5.8
Religious/cultural obligations	38	22.2
Lifestyle/hobbies	28	16.4
Depends how long in Australia	6	3.5
Other	28	16.4
Total	171	100.0

Young Sample's Comments on Ethnicity

Footscray

No I like what country I'm from [Vietnam]. There's nothing wrong with me, I do what I want and if someone has a problem with that then I deal with it.

Footscray

Some people don't like Asians, others don't like white people. Sometimes I feel left out being from the Philippines. When I first came here I had problems with the language and felt that I didn't fit in.

Footscray

Like in Footscray right if you're Asian, no European, you walk around you're alright. But like me [Asian] I can't walk around ten or fifteen minutes without being searched, it's a bit unfair...sometimes they [police] strip me whole body off. [Talking about the discrimination he has experienced as an Asian person living in Footscray.]

Coburg

It depends on what kind of influence their family had on them.

Dandenong

Nationalities that believe in tradition wouldn't let their daughters go out because they're girls and would let they're sons go out because they're males.

Dandenong

An Australian or a Skip would come home and go straight at the books, study. Not much of these guys do that, that's why they're unemployed and all. People with an ethnic background would go to school and then go to the park and play.

St Kilda

Sometimes there's a mix but you usually see Asians and all that sort of stuff all hanging around the city in a big group and train stations.

St Kilda

Their backgrounds can be so different that they don't enjoy or have access to the same things. Someone may have a really violent background so they'd be more prone to joining a gang.

Dandenong

If you're Muslim or something you can't go out, they won't let them. Their parents are stricter than Australians.

St Kilda

If you follow footy and you might have more aboriginals on one team and people say, "how can you support them?" I don't like that. I'm not really racist but I don't really like the Asians who hang around in the city because all they do is cause trouble. I don't think it makes much of a difference in this school—everyone's pretty much—they don't really care.

Dandenong

If they were born here they act the same and do the same things, but if they are refugees or came here recently they'll do things from their own country.

Dandenong

Ethnic boys prefer to go to the drags and the Australian boys prefer footy.

Coburg

The Lebanese try and start fights. The Turkish sit around and talk amongst themselves.

Footscray

Chinese New Year for example, the people are different. Others stay out most of the night, I probably would stay in.

Footscray

If you're Lebo or Albanian you get raised in a certain way and with the guys they get raised in a violent way you know, most Lebanese people you see they're really violent...it's all from their parents.

St Kilda

Asian people are more prone to violence and get more bored. They're more recent migrants. Not a lot speak the language so they spend more time together.

The impact of ethnic background on work experiences and job opportunities was also explored with the older workers. Table 9.4 shows the perceptions of the under-25 year olds with respect to the influence of ethnicity on work experiences.

Table 9.4 The percentage of the older sample who felt that their culture or nationality had affected their experiences in the work force or in looking for a job

Culture/nationality has an effect	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Yes	16	10.7
No	120	68.0
Missing	14	9.3
Total	150	100.0

While there is some evidence of antagonism between different groups of young people, based upon 'ethnic' appearance, cultures and languages, few of the under-25 year olds felt that ethnic minority young people were particularly discriminated against in the formal labour market. Nevertheless, who you are, in terms of nationality and ethnic background, was perceived to make a difference in some cases.

Older Young People's Comments on Ethnicity & Work

Coburg

The fact that I'm white and speak English well has probably helped me.

Coburg

Yes in the Pancake Parlour you get front counter jobs if you're white and you work in the kitchen if you're not.

St Kilda

Being Anglo-Saxon is a bonus to an extent.

Knox

We [Greek] do have Easter at a different time and I'd much rather take Greek Easter than Australian Easter but my bosses don't let me or see it that way.

Coburg

Yeah...the first day I started my job, my foreman asked my nationality, which I didn't think was important and he said we have another one on our hands.

Collingwood

I think these days it is hard. They think Asians are into crime, lazy and don't want to work.

Coburg

I have experienced some racism. Not major stuff by some racist jokes and just being made aware that I'm from and ethnic background.

The comments by youth and community workers also provided important and interesting observations regarding the issues, problems and dilemmas experienced by specific groups of young people.

Youth & Community Worker Comments on Ethnicity

E.

A lot of them [Vietnamese young people] have come to Australia as refugees and are caught between two cultures, not in the same way that migrant children are caught between two cultures, but caught between two cultures in the sense that they didn't actually spend their childhood in their own culture, they often spent them in camps, and so they've not actually grown up in Vietnam, they've not grown up in Australia, they've grown up in camps. And I see this as a very new and definite problem for workers because we don't know how to deal with these kids, and we need to investigate what their situation is, what their circumstances are, their expectations, aspirations, so that we can know how to deal with them...because they operate differently than a lot of other kids do. And I think that the perception would be around [Area 4] that it's those young people who are mostly involved in criminal stuff.

D.

Young people who were born here, or who arrive here when they [are] under ten or twelve, they pick up English very quickly. But young people who did not go to school, or who finished their school earlier when they [were] in Vietnam, and arrived here at the age sixteen or seventeen...they pick up English slowly. So language is one thing which prevents them getting a job.

H.

About 80 per cent of my time is still directed towards Vietnamese young people. They seem to still have the greatest needs—and I think partly because when I think about say the South Americans who came in here for a long time, say kids from the former Yugoslavia, they've had contact with European-style culture and if they're worried or upset and need something they tend to have this ability to come and demand it or sing out about it or make a noise that attracts your attention, but the Vietnamese young people in general have a lower profile, haven't got a cultural tradition of yelling out if they need something and basically show a brave face to the world, so if you're crumbling inside you don't show it.

S.

They're not accepting of difference, these kids, but that doesn't mean they won't accept different nationalities as long as they're the same in that they're [Area 5] kids, that they look pretty much the same, that they're socioeconomic background's the same.

O.

The Turkish community is very restrictive of young girls as are Vietnamese... although not as much...there is a big issue of homelessness with Vietnamese young people—boys are running away from home and now girls too.” [activities and restrictions]

L.

Cultures like the Arabic community have quite traditional roles, but even the Greek and Italian communities have traditional roles. It's just that the Greek and Italians are a cycle ahead of Arabic and Lebanese communities, so that the kids who fought the battles to live a different way from the traditional lifestyle are now becoming parents, whereas you've still got, with say the Lebanese community, the kids still fighting the battles to be maybe more in line with the values of this society, whatever they may be.

O.

Families are leaning on kids to miss school to work, especially migrants...young people are being used to support the family so that they can maintain them.

O.

[Exploitation exists in] the Vietnamese community in particular. For example a Vietnamese boy was lent money by a relative in Sydney when he first arrived in Australia. He paid this back over seven years by doing two weeks free work in his uncle's Sydney restaurant, each year.

P.

The decrease in the availability of factory work in a competitive labour market environment means it is difficult for young people from NESB to compete. The language barrier is a very real limitation.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided but a brief outline of some of the issues surrounding social differences among young people. Certainly a lot more work and investigation is needed in both the areas of gender studies, and ethnicity and racism, if we are to understand fully the perceptions and comments of young people regarding perceived social differences.

Main Findings

- Young women were perceived to have very different social interests than young men, and most of these tended to be seen in terms of traditional or conventional understandings of gender preferences (for example, girls like shopping, boys like sports).
- The young people tended to see each gender in terms of more passive categories for young women (for example, like to talk) and expressive categories for young men (for example, like to do).
- Major differences in lifestyle and behaviour were identified when it came to diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Perceived ethnic differences were often a source of hostility or negativity.

Sexism and racism are persistent problems for many young people, and these are compounded by difficulties faced in the labour market and in the home. The attitudes and behaviours of young people themselves indicates that much needs to be done to ensure that social difference does not translate into further social inequality or social division.

10. Assistance and Developmental Institutions

States Parties recognise for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realisation of this right in accordance with their national law.

Article 26
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

States Parties agree that education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) the development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his or her own;

(d) the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) the development of respect for the natural environment.

Article 29
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

A 'developmental' institution is one which has the power to confer positive as well as negative social labels (see Polk, 1994). Such institutions include the family, school, work, recreation and leisure institutions. As used here, the term 'developmental institution' refers to those institutions which are designed to assist young people on the basis of developmental potential, work opportunities and financial wellbeing. While such institutions are often concerned in some way with issues of social control, they nevertheless offer the possibility of social benefits and rewards for young people.

How well and to what extent developmental institutions assist young people was of particular concern to this project—especially with respect to institutions such as the school, the Department of Social Security, and the Commonwealth Employment Service. In circumstances of high youth unemployment and major social and financial problems, developmental institutions clearly have a crucial role to play in the formation of young people's social and employment opportunities.

Education and Schooling

As a key developmental institution the school and higher education play an increasingly important role in furthering the personal and occupational prospects of young people. Part of the intention of the research project was to gauge the educational experiences of young people and how these impacted upon other aspects of their lives. Table 10.1 shows those aspects of schooling which the young people liked. The two main areas cited were friends (33.7%) and education/learning (22.4%). It is important to acknowledge the central place of educational institutions in young people's lives, not only or solely as 'preparation for the future', but as an immediate source of social connection. This is reflected in the importance attached to having friends within the schooling context.

Table 10.2 outlines the kinds of things which the young people did not like about school. Here the major criticisms tended to congeal around institutional processes, including issues relating to curriculum and the pressures associated with formal structured learning processes ('work/homework', 'some subjects'). The criticisms also related to negative experiences with teachers.

Generally speaking, how young people experience schooling depends a lot upon the kind of school they were attending or had attended, and the ways in which the school as a whole catered to their perceived needs and capacities. This is indicated in the comments the young people had about schools and education.

Table 10.1 What young people like about school

Aspects of school	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Friends	178	32.7
Education/learning	122	22.4
Teachers	38	7.0
Sports	18	3.3
Opportunities	22	4.0
Activities	17	3.1
Nothing	46	8.4
Everything	13	2.4
Don't know	6	1.1
Recess/lunchtime	21	3.9
Other	64	11.7
Total	545	100.0

Table 10.2 What young people dislike about school

Aspects of school	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Work/homework	119	25.7
Teachers	105	22.7
Students	43	9.3
Nothing	68	14.7
Everything	20	4.3
Some subjects	24	5.2
Don't know	4	0.9
Other	80	17.3
Total	463	100.0

Young People's Comments on School

Footscray

Most of the teachers here are really willing to help me, recently I had a lot of problems and without them backing me up...I could be somewhere else [jail].

Coburg

Most of the teachers at Coburg tech. put out their hand and said look, this is how you wanna do the work if you wanna learn...I took the chance and started learning, they were more like a friend not a teacher.

We didn't wanna hang around the streets, we'd rather be at school, it's better. Now what students tell you that?

There was too many students for the teacher, like...I wasn't used to 30 students in one class, I was used to 15, 11, 6, 10 students you know, maybe sometimes we'd have 18 students in a class and the teacher could move around and actually teach, but with 32 students they were the numbers in each class and the teachers couldn't get around to teach everybody in what, 45 minutes.

It wasn't worth me staying there [Box Forest Secondary College] if I'm gonna be like say a C student and someone else's gonna be a B and A student, they're gonna get taught more, that's what the teachers were like there.

St Kilda

I go to a TAFE, not a high school, so I like heaps of things—the attitude of the school, the curriculum, the surroundings, the freedom they give you, the cost.

Coburg

Sometimes people can be real arseholes. The way they were teaching you wasn't the right stuff. It wasn't up to my standards—it was hard for me. I didn't understand.

St Kilda

There is too much overcrowding, and you don't get as much individual attention as you would in a private school.

Footscray

It's a social place like for socialising like I can't really say it's the work because everyone hates work...I come here because there's nice people here, very supportive.

In response to a general question on how young people perceive school, the youth and community workers were fairly evenly split. Of those who responded to this question (44 in total), almost 48 per cent said that young people were generally positive toward school. However, 52 per cent felt that the young people had a generally negative attitude toward school.

The youth and community workers commented on a wide variety of problems, experiences and possibilities relating to the role of the school in young people's lives.

Youth & Community Worker Comments on Education and Schooling**A.**

I think that all young people value education and even though they may have dropped out and aren't going any more—even those young people who didn't see school as being terribly relevant—all give me the feeling that they would like to be at school learning and that school was relevant to them.

F.

They're not prepared to do training because they want to get on and get a job with money and training doesn't pay so it's seen as stalling them to get them where they want to be.

H.

Boring. Technical age has meant that instant gratification is a large part of young people's lives—school doesn't provide that so it's boring... Schools operate differently. There doesn't seem to be the same identity to a school. Once upon a time the school was very much in its local community, it was zoned so only kids in that area came into your school. Kids by and large had parents at home so there was some parent involvement

at times. It was easy to get to school, sometimes teachers at that school lived in the area. Now zones are gone we get kids travelling here from Hoppers Crossing, Altona, Keilor, Brunswick, sometimes we've had them coming in from South Melbourne, Richmond, Broadmeadows—therefore I don't think kids are identifying as strongly as they used to with the school because it's not offering them other things to make them want to identify.

K.

If you don't fit in, more so today than ever before, they'll kick you out. If you are not an average student, are struggling or have many issues in your life, the school system gets really...more dollars have been taken out of the special types of courses, and I think that stinks. The most disadvantaged are being disadvantaged yet again, and almost told like they're not valuable.

I.

In a lot of ways it pays to be unemployed and on the dole than go back to school. Now I think that disparity needs to be improved.

Until the first of January if you're on homeless Austudy you still do not get a rental subsidy which in effect means that if you go back to school, having been unemployed, then you're choosing to be a student rather than be unemployed, you're \$62 a fortnight less off.

I.

If you're unemployed and do a job training program then you will get a travel allowance, you will get allowances that will cover the cost of your training—if you're a homeless student, you don't get any assistance for school books.

School also is seen far more in a social sense now, because young people aren't sort of fired up to come to school to learn, they come to school to meet their friends... sometimes the school might be the only place they mix.

There are kids here who come here because they need the Austudy to survive.

R.

Certainly the effects have been incredible in the schools; overcrowding in classrooms, teachers really stressed out as far as them being able to deliver in the classrooms, which means we're getting young people dropping out not because they really wanted to but have a learning difficulty or just a slow learner or had some sort of literacy problem—they just didn't get the support in the classroom and just weren't surviving

and drop out. Another thing is more violence that we're getting through here. Parents of kids that've dropped out because they've been horribly bashed or something.

There's divisions within the schools—it may be that there's in one school yard three divisions and three different campuses amalgamated just not mixing, and ownership battles...and then we've got schools around here that've just got incredible gender imbalance which is detrimental in the long term effect.

J.

The expectation of the school is, and I believe this is right, that you mightn't be able to change kids' family environments, you mightn't be able to change their friendships, but the one thing you can do is educate them at a school, and that's the best favour you can do for them.

Employment Services and Social Security

As discussed earlier (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 6), a significant and growing proportion of young people utilise or are reliant upon government assistance for both income support and employment opportunities. It was important, therefore, to assess the ways in which state agencies are responding to the needs of young people.

Around a quarter of the young people and two-thirds of the under-25 year olds had had dealings with the Department of Social Security (DSS). Table 10.3 indicates what young people liked about their treatment or dealings with the DSS. What is striking about this data is that the biggest response to the question was, 'nothing' (36.7%), indicating a high degree of hostility by the young people toward the DSS. The financial assistance provided was one of main things which this group 'liked' about the institution.

A similar level of general disfavour was evident among the under-25 year old age group, as shown in Table 10.4.

Table 10.3 What younger sample liked about the Department of Social Security.

Attributes	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Nothing	40	36.7
Helpful	21	19.3
Treatment	12	11.0
Everything	0	0
Money	19	17.4
Other	17	15.6
Total	109	100.0

Table 10.4 What older sample liked about the Department of Social Security.

Attributes	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Nothing	39	41.1
Helpful	23	24.2
Treatment	22	23.2
Everything	3	3.2
Money	3	3.2
Other	5	5.3
Total	95	100.0

Table 10.5 What younger sample disliked about the Department of Social Security

Attributes	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Waiting	50	43.1
Staff	11	9.5
Mistakes	5	4.3
Everything	6	5.2
Nothing	18	15.5
Other	26	22.4
Total	116	100.0

Table 10.6 What older sample disliked about the Department of Social Security

Attributes	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Waiting	32	25.4
Staff	19	15.1
Mistakes	7	5.6
Everything	16	12.7
Nothing	26	20.6
Other	26	20.6
Total	126	100.0

Tables 10.5 and 10.6 summarise the things which each age group disliked about the DSS. Although there was some confusion over the terms 'everything' and 'nothing' in the data coding, it was clear that overall there was little respect for or satisfaction with the manner in which the Department of Social Security, as an institution, dealt with the young people.

About 26 per cent of the under-18 year olds, and 61 per cent of the under-25 year olds had had contact with the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES). The perceptions of young people regarding the CES, however, were generally more favourable than those relating to the DSS. This is indicated in Table 10.7 which shows that overall the young people felt that they were treated well, they were provided jobs and that the CES staff were helpful, although a sizeable number of respondents still replied that they liked 'nothing' about the CES.

A similar pattern of responses is apparent with regard to the under-25 year olds, as shown in Table 10.8.

When asked about what they disliked about the CES, some interesting similarities and differences emerged between the two age groups. As seen in Table 10.9, the young

Table 10.7 What younger sample liked about the Commonwealth Employment Service

Attributes	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Treated well	24	22.6
Helpful	20	18.9
Nothing	33	31.1
Jobs	11	10.4
Other	18	17.0
Total	106	100.0

Table 10.8 What older sample liked about the Commonwealth Employment Service

Attributes	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Treated well	29	31.2
Helpful	21	22.6
Nothing	36	38.7
Jobs	2	2.2
Other	5	5.4
Total	93	100.0

Table 10.9 What younger sample disliked about the Commonwealth Employment Service

Attributes	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Staff	7	7.2
Waiting	32	33.0
Everything	7	7.2
Nothing	21	21.6
Other	8	8.2
Lack of jobs	22	22.7
Total	97	100.0

Table 10.10 What older sample disliked about the Commonwealth Employment Service

Attributes	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Staff	16	15.2
Waiting	18	17.1
Everything	6	5.7
Nothing	34	32.4
Lack of jobs	13	12.4
Other	18	17.1
Total	105	100.0

people felt that the biggest problem was the 'waiting', followed by the 'lack of jobs'.

For the under-25 year olds, the issues identified were spread more evenly over the categories 'waiting', 'staff' and 'lack of jobs'. It would initially appear that as one got older, and perhaps more routinely used the service, issues such as staff attitude and treatment of the young people become even more important.

Young People's Comments on Social Security & Employment Services

Coburg

[About the YAC] *Because they have heaps of information on careers and a lot of other stuff that affects young people like sexual diseases of anorexia and things like that, they're really helpful.*

Coburg

It's pathetic [DSS] but like I have to go in there, I have got no choice.

Footscray

Takes too long, forms to fill out... One of the main reasons I went back to school was that I was told that I would have to wait 13 weeks for job search allowance, couldn't afford no income at that time. Mum just died, Dad had no money.

St Kilda

It might be OK for older people, but for kids and teenagers it seems they really don't care. If my mum missed a payment they'd be on to it straight away. If I missed a payment they'd say, "You have to come down, you have to do this, do that." It's so much trouble being a teenager there. They make it so much harder for you to get anything. Everything's hard to get when you're young.

St Kilda

You know you try your best to find a job but they just don't understand.

Coburg

Like every time I go to the CES it's always got experience needed...no experience no job, that's all it is.

Coburg

All the jobs in there, experience necessary. How can you get the experience first if you haven't had a go of the job? Some people have a lot of trouble OK. Some young people these days have a lot of trouble, it's not easy, I believe it's not easy to get a job, you just gotta be lucky.

Coburg

Really you have to fluke to get into a job there which you don't need any qualifications and there haven't been three thousand people ringin' up before ya.

Coburg

It's like a meat market more-or-less [the CES] in there...like you go in there look on the board 'n' if there's nothing there stiff shit you go, like I don't reckon that's enough you know.

St Kilda

The hassles, the way they treat you. The people at the counter act like you owe them something, like it's them who are giving you the money, not the Government. They lie a lot. There are long waits.

St Kilda

They [DSS] never say, "How are you?" It's just, "Give us your form. Oh, you haven't signed this one." They could help you out if they wanted to but they're normally cunts.

St Kilda

So far they haven't done anything good for me. Last week at the YAC I saw this video for schools. It looks like they are trying to encourage young kids to leave school as social security is such a helpful place. I thought it was really pathetic because they're going on that it's better to keep kids at school and now they're putting this video out that would make them leave school. I don't think that the Social Security will be any help at all.

St Kilda

They're not all that helpful. I've walked in there and couldn't find anything on the boards, gone up to the counter and asked them to look on the computer in case

something's just come in, and they say they can't. But whose fault is it? You can't blame them.

Dandenong

It was too easy. Everyone was getting away with everything. I'm working and I get taxed and I'm paying their wages. I reckon they're too easy on the kids.

St Kilda

It's laid-back here [drop in centre], there are discussions, they're in touch with youth. It's not about forcing us but about us doing it ourselves.

Knox

I hate [Health and Community Services - H&CS] well I've been in and out of homes with them. They've lost me on the streets—treated me like shit. I hate them. They took me away from my family into CARA house. The person in charge hit me because I wouldn't eat my dinner.

Knox

They [Knox Kids] try to help young person get their lives back on the right track. Plus they are all volunteers. That makes a hell of a difference. If they just came to get paid you'd know they don't care.

St Kilda

The YAC's good. They should have the YAC instead of the CES for young people—you don't get treated like a number.

St Kilda

The thing about youth housing and this course [YAC employment skills course] is that they treat you with respect. The DSS treat you like shit.

Collingwood

You gotta wait ages for them [H&CS] to put somewhere. Now I'm living with my grandma, I've been waiting for two months for them to put me into a house. Fuck they stuff you around.

St Kilda

The good thing about this place [drop in centre] is if you want to be dropped off home [at night] you just get the [community] bus. You know you're OK. There's a lot of supervisors.

St Kilda

They [youth workers at Swamp] don't make you feel stupid for talking. They're

friendly—they're more like friends than social workers.

Being beaten up by the people who come here. Sometimes I think they should have more social workers here to keep an eye on everybody because things like that shouldn't happen when you come to a place like this.

Footscray

They [DSS] look at you in a very low class because you haven't got a job and like it's not your fault.

Footscray

[What do you like about the CES?] Not much see anything I might be bias because I haven't been able to find a job. It's just that it's ridiculous most of the jobs you find on the board, I mean I've applied for a job and...I take a quick look on the computer and see the "Number of vacancies: two"; "Number of people applying: 88" and I sort of start to think it's highly unlikely that 'Michael' from Footscray is going to get hired.

Collingwood

It's all about money. If you have money you can do everything you want to. It's true. If you can't get money you've got nothing to do. If there was another centre or something—they used to take us out, go to a movie or Macca's, but they don't do that everyday—it only opens two days. We get so bored in the holidays, we've got nothing to do.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined in broad terms how the young people experienced and felt about institutions and services which are intimately connected with their employment opportunities and future work prospects.

Main Findings

- Young people had both positive and negative feelings about education and their school experiences.
- The things which young people liked most about school were friends, and the opportunity to learn.
- The things which young people did not like about school included the curriculum content, institutional processes and pressures, and disrespectful teachers.
- The young people were very negative about the ways in which they were treated when using the Department of Social Security, although they did appreciate the money they received.

- The young people had positive things to say about the Commonwealth Employment Service, particularly with respect to being treated well, being provided with jobs and finding the staff helpful.
- The young people were frustrated by the lack of jobs, long waiting periods and some forms of staff treatment associated with the Commonwealth Employment Service.

There is room for improvement across the various developmental institutions examined in this chapter. For example, the forms and processes of schooling and of government departments should actively incorporate recognition of the rights and needs of young people into day-to-day institutional operations. Overall, any such improvements imply much greater financial resources being committed to education, employment and financial assistance services and agencies. This is especially important with respect to schools, insofar as they offer the greatest potential to play a positive and empowering role in the lives of young people.

The negative experiences associated with the institutions warrant further and careful consideration, especially insofar as they play such a key role in the immediate and longer-term developmental prospects of young people.

11. Authority Figures and Coercive Institutions

States Parties recognise the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.

Article 15

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

States Parties recognise the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognised as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which takes into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society.

Article 40

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

By their very nature, 'coercive institutions' are involved with the negative labelling of young people (see Polk, 1994). That is, if we take the police as an example, the point of intervention is not so much to open up developmental possibilities but to curtail perceived deviant or criminal activity. As used here, coercive institutions include those agencies

and officials whose role is to regulate people's behaviour and, in particular, to ensure that public order (as broadly defined) is maintained.

The concern of this chapter is to examine three types of authority figure who feature prominently in the affairs of young people—the police, private security guards and transit police. As numerous studies have shown (see especially, Blagg and Wilkie, 1995; White and Alder, 1994) the relationship between the police (and private policing agencies) is often strained and marked by ongoing conflict. As will be seen, how young people spend their time is inextricably linked to how their activities are perceived by others, and by the manner in which 'outside' agencies intervene in their affairs.

Policing and Social Control

The diverse activities and varying degrees of involvement in both formal and informal aspects of the economy mean that young people will invariably be in contact with a wide variety of 'authority' figures. These include family members, the police, commercial or private security guards, youth workers, social security officials, transport officials and religious leaders.

Table 11.1 shows the reasons why young people feel restricted in terms of where they can go. The table is particularly interesting in that the crucial authority figure identified is 'the family'. Notably, the police do not feature prominently at this stage. However, the young people did feel that, due to such things as their age and family ties, they were often not allowed to go to certain places.

As noted earlier (see Chapter 8), young people tend to spend most of their time with

Table 11.1 The reasons why young people feel they are restricted in where they can go

Reasons for restrictions	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Not allowed to go to places	109	20.3
Income	49	9.1
Age	62	11.6
Safety	42	7.8
Transport	41	7.6
Family	135	25.2
Police	6	1.1
Commercial security	7	1.3
Teachers	7	1.3
Public housing security	1	0.2
Youth accommodation	2	0.4
Shop keepers	2	0.4
Self	27	5.0
Low	9	1.7
Other	37	6.9
Total	536	100.0

Table 11.2 The places where younger sample had contact with the police

Types of places	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Street	176	56.1
Home	30	9.6
School	12	3.8
Police station	24	7.6
Shopping centres	38	12.1
Other	34	10.8
Total	314	100.0

Table 11.3 The places where older sample had contact with the police

Types of places	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Street	80	66.1
Home	20	16.5
School	1	0.8
Police station	11	9.1
Shopping centres	2	1.7
Other	7	5.8
Total	121	100.0

friends, and in each other's dwellings. When they do venue out, they generally hang around in public spaces such as shopping centres and the street. And it is here that they are most likely to come into contact with authority figures such as the police, security guards and transit police.

Around 70 per cent of each age group had had personal experiences with their local police. Table 11.2 shows the places of contact between the young people and the police. As suggested previously, the street (56%) and the shopping centre (12.1%) are the most likely places for this contact.

The older age group was also likely to have contact with the police in public places. This is shown in Table 11.3. However, for this age group the proportion of street-level contact is greater (up to 66.1%), the shopping centre contact lower (down to 1.7%) and the home-related contact much higher than in the case of the young group (to 16.5%).

Tables 11.4 and 11.5 describe the nature of the contact between the police and the two groups of young people. For the younger group, the experience tended to be mainly negative, or at best ambivalent.

For the under-25 year olds, however, there was generally a more positive response to

Table 11.4 Younger sample's views on whether the police contact was generally good or bad

Assessment	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Generally good	81	29.3
Generally bad	100	36.2
Good and bad	69	25.0
Don't know	6	2.1
Other	3	1.0
Missing	17	6.4
Total	276	100.0

Table 11.5 Older sample's views on whether the police contact was generally good or bad

Assessment	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Generally good	44	41.9
Generally bad	29	27.6
Good and bad	23	21.9
Don't know	0	0
Other	1	0.9
Missing	8	7.7
Total	105	100.0

Table 11.6 Younger sample's perceptions of good experiences with the police

Type of Experience	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Helped in event of crime	27	37.5
Met through school/camp	5	6.9
Treated well when stopped	22	30.6
Other	18	25.0
Total	72	100.0

Table 11.7 Older sample's perceptions of good experiences with the police

Type of Experience	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Helped in event of crime	14	33.3
Met through school/camp	0	0
Treated well when stopped	18	42.9
Other	10	23.8
Total	42	100.0

the police (41.9% compared with 29.3%). This would appear to indicate significant differences in the ways in which the different groups relate to the police—perhaps due to the social and educational background or situation of the two groups, perhaps to the different kinds of policing associated with different age groups.

In order to assess the overall relationship between the police and the young people, the young people were asked about whether or not they had had good, as well as bad, experiences with the police. Table 11.6 shows that the police were perceived to be helpful when the young people had been a victim of crime, and young people felt that they had been treated well when stopped by the police.

The older group likewise had positive experiences with the police, and a greater proportion said that they had been treated well when stopped than in the case of the younger age group. This is indicated in Table 11.7.

Questions were also asked about negative or bad experiences with the police. The responses of the two age groups varied considerably with regard to this topic. Table 11.8 shows the types of issues that the young people associated with negative experiences.

Table 11.8 Younger sample's perceptions of bad experiences with the police

Type of Experience	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Badly handled when crime victim	7	4.1
Assaulted	30	17.8
Falsely accused	15	8.9
Hassled/threatened	51	30.2
Caught doing crime	51	30.2
House raid	9	5.3
Racism	6	3.6
Other	0	0
Total	169	100.0

Table 11.9 Older sample's perceptions of bad experiences with the police

Type of Experience	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Badly handled when crime victim	5	6.3
Assaulted	5	6.3
Falsely accused	8	10.1
Hassled/threatened	35	44.3
Caught doing crime	8	10.1
House raid	8	10.1
Racism	1	1.3
Other	9	11.4
Total	79	100.0

These included being hassled (30.2%), being caught doing crime (30.2%) and being assaulted (17.8%).

By way of contrast, the older group emphasised 'being hassled' (44.3%), as well as issues such as being falsely accused, being subjected to house raids, and being caught doing a crime. This is shown in Table 11.9.

The relationship between young people and the police is an uneasy one at the best of times. As the following comments by young people indicate, there are many issues and problems associated with how some young people are dealt with by some police, some of the time.

Young People's Comments on the Police

Coburg

Yeh, then we're walking in a big group we all got searched for pocket knives, drugs, get our names taken down... I don't like it much.

Coburg

Get pulled over [by the police] nearly every day here.

Coburg

I was basically charged with prostitution.

Coburg

They way they [people with authority] treat... our generation sorta thing, it's bullshit 'cos they don't respect.

Coburg

I've been stripped on Moreland Road. [by the cops looking for drugs]

Once they see a wog, this is no shit...in a court case, it's not equal rights, they're one eyed.

Coburg

"I s'pose it was hot anyway, I s'pose you stole it anyway."—He was just being like real sarcastic 'cos I was a young person he was a police officer, they don't want nothin' to do with ya, they're real pigs.

Footscray

A girl friend of mine told the police the truth, but they though she was lying and they hit her...very hard, physically hit her...a lot of cops, and they were guys.

Collingwood

One day when my mum kicked me out, now a car got stolen that night. Now he didn't know who it was. I was walking from Fawkner to Coburg 'cos the trains had stopped. I got pulled up by a copper and he took me in his car and started driving me back. He asked me what I was doing out and I told him that I had a fight with me mum. Then he said were you in a stolen care tonight and I said no I wasn't in a stolen care. Then he said you were in a stolen car and started slapping me around in the back of the car and said, "Don't be a little smart arse. Ya know, we're only asking a couple of questions," and I said, "I told you I haven't been in a car."

Then he said, "What's your name?" and I said, "I don't answer any questions without my lawyer," and he said, "A smart arse, eh," and started slapping me around. When we got the station he was really nice and I told the Sergeant and he said, "My men don't do that," and I said, "That's not true," and I showed him a little hand mark on my neck and said, "I s'pose your policemen don't do that either," and he said, "No, they don't," and I said, "Fine." I got out of there and they drove me back to my nan's and I showed my nan the mark and she went off at them and they haven't done anything cause they can get away with anything.

Footscray

Most are racist because we're Asian and we can't do anything because they're cops. They ask you all these questions and you have to just shut up.

Footscray

My friend and I were stopped on the street, the police took our photo and made us go to the toilet and strip search us...but I was lucky because she [female police officer] had to leave, but my friend was strip searched...she is eighteen.

St Kilda

When they came to arrest Andy, one of the younger policemen who was about 20 to 21 hang around my house and was just there for me.

Coburg

Work experience in the magistrates and the cop shop. Cops were very different. On the street they treat you like shit, in there they are friendly. They have to be tough to survive.

St Kilda

Last weekend my boyfriend was busted for possession and arrested. I've had a few run

ins myself. I was stranded once somewhere by myself and went to them for help. They offered me \$10 for a head job. I was 16. Then they contacted my grandmother who I was living with at the time and sent her a list of all the times I'd been stopped in the street. They thought I was a prostitute. It really upset her.

St Kilda

When I was younger I copped a lot of hassles. Being young I think attracts the police to you. Easy targets. They don't have knowledge of the law. They target young people because they don't know about the law. A lot of intimidation too, they're bigger, they get right in your face. When I was 13 I was stopped on Fitzroy Street, they got details, searched my arms and ankles for track marks. Checking a 13 year old for track marks is a little ridiculous.

St Kilda

One night at Chaddy there were about five of us and 30 Asians and they were waiting for us. We walked out and they were all there. We ran to Macca's, they called the cops and the cops gave us a lift home.

St Kilda

It's only this year that it's stopped. In Port Melbourne they'd pick us up every day. Pick us up four times in one block. Say the same things, search the same places. They're idiots. They've got nothing better to do. They'd just pick on us cause they've got nothing better to do. All my friends aged 12 to 25 have been belted head to toe. My best friend who's only 16 just last week came out of the jack shop with a bright red eye—all her blood vessels burst. A sheila jack ripped a chunk out of her face. All cause she'd had one drink. I've been belted with the yellow pages against my chest. I've had everything done to me.

Footscray

Once I took something and they treated me real bad. They took me to the cop station and like my parents didn't come for three hours and they stirred me about my parents not coming to pick me up. They didn't treat me good enough.

Knox

When me and my friends were walking down the street, they stopped the car, grabbed us, put us against the thing, smashed us against the thing and checked us down for nothing.

Footscray

I don't reckon any police experience is good.

St Kilda

They were walking down the street at 1 am, hadn't had anything to drink, just walking home and the police pulled them up, you know those big torches. They went up to them and they were beaten up with the torch. They chucked them in the van and took them home.

Footscray

They have a job to do, but they hassle people on the basis of their dress, car, music. Misconceptions about people...cops overreact.

Footscray

In a way I hate them but in a way they have to do their job but I hate them for all the wrong things they do you know. Some cops are smart arses and pick on you for no reason you know because you are Asian. Like some of them are alright but in the end I still hate them you know because they're cops I just hate them.

Footscray

I'd like to become a cop. I respect what they do and what they stand for.

Coburg

I like them. They help people. They're not there to bash people or cause trouble like some people say.

Coburg

They [police] don't bother me, I mean if you've done nothin' wrong you shouldn't be worried.

Footscray

I hate them! Too much power over people, they abuse their powers. I've seen cops harass young people in Footscray.

Coburg

Police in general could do better job because there are a lot of teenagers who want good role models.

Coburg

I think they've [police] got it easy...I think police just pick on anyone just to say that they've done something, but...they're concentrating too much on things that aren't worth it and they're not concentrating on things that they should be.

Coburg

Well the police are good you know, they're out there just to see if there's troublemakers to stop 'em you know. A lot of police go around and like if they see like a group of kids they stop...just to see what's goin' on this 'n' that you know, just to make sure that the streets are good...there's no disagreements with the police, they seem alright you know, they're just helping us out.

St Kilda

Its very frustrating because when people think of how the police are—they think they help you but they just don't want to listen to adolescent people like whether they are right or wrong. They don't care so no matter what you do you're always in trouble...they do so much good but in turn they do double wrong and I don't like it. Honestly we need them but they make me so mad.

St Kilda

I hate them. They're pigs. They don't care about young people at all. They're too corrupt. Maybe if they were going out to do good things it'd be different.

St Kilda

All the cops I've met have been really nice. It just depends on which one you get.

Dandenong

They're good. Teach kids a lesson. Keep you safe patrolling around.

St Kilda

Some are alright. Some are real arseholes. A couple from St Kilda Police Station have beat up a couple of my friends when they didn't hear what they wanted to hear. I don't like that.

St Kilda

Instead of trying to catch the bad guys they go after the good guys instead. The people who do get hurt aren't meant to get hurt. The wrong people get hurt. I reckon we don't need them, they don't help. Why should we have them?

St Kilda

I don't like the police in Melbourne. I spent seven years in NSW and the police there were really nice. The ones here seem to be, "You move and boom, five times." Who need to shoot someone seven times.

St Kilda

I don't blame them for doing their job to the law because that's what the law is, but I

feel they take it too far and have no respect at all. I've never been treated with any basic respect by them. Their behaviour is just atrocious.

Dandenong

I want to kill them all. I hate them. The colour they wear, the things they do. They pull us up at night just to piss us off. They'll get our names and addresses and then come back later and try to bust us for something we haven't even done. One time me and my friend got caught getting drunk in a primary school, and they tried to accuse us of breaking into houses because I had a cut on my thumb from cutting sandwiches for my lunch.

St Kilda

I'm up on them. They get young people, they've got them, they chuck them in the room and the kids freak out. They've got five heads sitting there asking them questions. But I know exactly what to say. Even if I've done the crime sometimes I can get myself out of it. But I don't like them 'cos they hassle me. If one of the cops knows me and knows I'm a little smart arse then they'll tell the others and all of them will pick me up when they see me. That's why we moved from Carnegie, 'cos everyday, three or four times, just from leaving my street, I'd get picked up.

St Kilda

I haven't been in any trouble whatsoever. I've just been picked up every now and then, asked for name and address. I haven't been in any trouble, and most of my friends haven't either. I don't mind male police but I cannot stand female police. They think since they've got the law they can do whatever they want. They act like real arseholes. But male police are mostly pretty cool about everything.

St Kilda

With friends at night, the police drive up and ask us what we're doing, then just drive off. Once at a train station at night police asked us what we were doing there after the trains had stopped. I try to avoid them when I can. You never hear many good stories of encounters with police. From what I've heard they often just pick someone up to get them into trouble.

Dandenong

I used to have a lot of respect for them but now I am finding out what they do behind closed doors, I don't have any respect at all.

Footscray

I'm not happy with what's happening now about the shootings and that kind of stuff.

It could be prevented. I mean I can understand if they people have guns and are threatening their lives but generally it's not good enough.

Knox

One night me and a couple of mates were walking down the street, had a bit too much to drink, the coppers picked us up, put us in a cell and started to beat the shit out of us with batons and phone books. That happens all the time.

Knox

They're dickheads, they think they're good cos they're cops, they've got too much authority.

Footscray

Some of the cops are really racist. They pick on the Asians. They give you the face that makes you think they really hate Asians.

Footscray

The police are pretty racist themselves...I've been called into the police station a couple of times for not doing anything for just looking like a criminal...it's not always that I wasn't doing anything like I've done my fair share of crime but every time they called me in I had no intention of doing anything.

Footscray

Personally I think the Victorian Police is crooked in general the majority of police are crooked...that's why I think the Federal Police have been brought into Footscray to investigate the heroin. The reason why the Victorian Police haven't been able to crack that heroin bust is because by cracking the heroin bust they're going to bring down a lot of their colleagues as well, that's my personal opinion.

St Kilda

They're always in a no win situation. Lots of them make things difficult for themselves in how they behave to the public. They could exercise a lot more common sense and discretion. They feel they only serve and protect a certain part of the community.

Knox

They're arseholes. Every time they arrest me they bash me.

St Kilda

Personal experiences of friends becoming police has changed my view from thinking they're there to pick on young people instead of support them. But some of them are just bad cops, with personal vendettas.

Collingwood

Around here they always stop you. They know you, they know you don't sell drugs, but they just check you out. You don't feel that good about it when the cops start checking you, touching you. You don't like no one to touch you. That shits me bad. Especially if they see you're black or Asian, they think you've got drugs on you.

Security Guards

Another authority figure which looms increasingly large in the lives of many young people is that of the private security guard. Many shopping centres and malls employ security guards, and in some places they have been granted extraordinary powers to move on or exclude 'undesirables' from the public commercial spaces (see White, Murray and Robins, 1996).

Just under half of the young people had had personal experiences with security guards. Table 11.10 shows that, for many young people, the security guard is not viewed in a particularly positive light.

When asked about any good experiences with security guards, the young people described how they were friends with some of them, and how they had been helped or protected by the security guards. However, as indicated in Table 11.11, a 'positive experience' in this case, was also interpreted as simply being treated well when being hassled by the security guard to move on.

The bad experiences young people have with security guards are shown in Table 11.12. The most problematic aspect of the relationship lies in the fact that young people feel constantly hassled, under surveillance and told to move on by the security guards. In some cases, however, they were also caught stealing by the security guards.

What many young people felt about security guards was a sense of unfairness in terms of how the guards responded to them—particularly because of their age.

Table 11.10 Young people's views on whether contact with security guards was generally good or bad

Assessment	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Generally good	51	26.7
Generally bad	72	37.6
Good and bad	32	16.7
Don't know	3	1.5
Other	2	1.0
Missing	31	16.5
Total	191	100.0

Table 11.11 Young people's good experiences with security guards

Type of Experience	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Friends with them	4	13.3
Treated well when hassled	12	40.0
Helped/protected	5	16.7
Other	9	30.0
Total	30	100.0

Table 11.12 Young people's bad experiences with security guards

Type of Experience	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Kicked out/moved on	37	45.1
Caught stealing/doing crime	10	12.2
Hassled/searched/accused	16	16.0
Over surveillance	8	8.0
Other	11	11.0
Total	82	100.0

Young People's Comments on Security Guards

Footscray

Sometimes when you're in a pretty large group they tell you to move out and if you say...why what are we doing they say right get out and they kick you out of the shopping centre.

St Kilda

They follow you around as if you're going to steal just because you're young.

Dandenong

Whenever we go down to Capitol Centre we always get kicked out. We get together, get a drink, food, sit down at a table and just chat. The security guard comes around and says, "Would you like to take a walk?" We're used to it, but we don't like it.

St Kilda

They tell us to go away sometimes 'cos we stay there with no money, just stay all day when we're bored, and they just tell us to go. Like at the video store.

St Kilda

They usually watch us really carefully. More than anyone else. We get all the looks and scathing glances.

Dandenong

My friend got bashed after we were riding through the shopping centre on bikes. They chased my friend and caught him and bashed him after we'd already left the shopping centre.

St Kilda

I was standing outside Southland—there was a big fight going on. They were standing back doing nothing.

Dandenong

Sometimes if gangs chase you the security guards help you and they kick the people out or phone your parents.

Dandenong

I don't like being followed around. I might look like I'm up to something but I do shop-lift but not to the extent that some people do. I look like I do so naturally they follow me around and I don't like that.

St Kilda

My sister got kicked out of Chadstone for taking a mood ring and they were interrogating her in a little room and we had to wait outside. They should've waited 'til my mum came down 'til they interviewed her.

St Kilda

Friends belted in nightclubs. They have no right to belt people, five security guards on one. I see it all the time.

Knox

It's discrimination against teenagers. They always ask to look in your bag. I suppose a lot of teenagers steal but it's discrimination against all of us.

Transit Police

Transit police are associated with the regulation of social behaviour and the policing of fare evasion on the trams and trains of Melbourne. Just over a third of the young people had had personal experiences with the transit police. As with other authority figures, the young people felt that they had a generally negative relationship with these officials. This is indicated in Table 11.13.

When asked about any positive or good experiences with transit police, the young people highlighted that a good experience was when they were treated well when asked

Table 11.13 Young people's views on whether contact with transit police has been generally good or bad

Assessment	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Generally good	43	31.1
Generally bad	55	39.8
Good and bad	20	14.4
Don't know	3	2.1
Other	2	1.4
Missing	15	11.2
Total	138	100.0

Table 11.14 Young people's good experiences with transit police

Type of Experience	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Treated okay when hassled	13	44.8
Asked for ticket	10	34.5
Other	6	20.7
Total	29	100.0

Table 11.15 Young people's bad experiences with transit police

Type of Experience	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Hassled	16	31.4
Fined	25	49.0
Racism	3	5.9
Falsely accused	1	2.0
Other	6	11.8
Total	51	100.0

for a ticket or when questioned by the transit authorities. This is shown in Table 11.14.

The main criticisms of the transit police were that the young people were fined (49%) and that they were hassled (31.4%), as shown in Table 11.15.

Young People's Comments on Transit Police

St Kilda

Once a mate grabbed my bag and jumped off the train. I rushed through the carriage to get my bag, and I got three fines totalling \$250. It was going to be two fines but then he [transit police] asked if I was happy with two fines and I said, "Perfectly happy," and I don't know if it was the tone of my voice but he gave me a third fine for \$100 for 'language'.

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the experiences of young people in relation to authority figures such as the police, private security guards and transit police. In each case, there were significant instances of conflict and negative social interaction.

Main Findings

- The major reason why young people feel restricted in where they can go and what they can do is family pressures.
- When they are in the public domain, young people are frequently in contact with authority figures such as the police, security guards and transit police.
- The place of contact for police and young people is usually the street and shopping centres.

- The under-18 year olds generally had bad experiences with the police, and spoke of being constantly hassled, assaulted and being caught doing crime.
- The under-25 year olds generally had good experiences with the police, but associated negative experiences with being hassled, assaulted and being falsely accused of crime.
- The young people had generally bad experiences with private security guards, related to being hassled and told to move on.
- The young people had generally negative views of the transit police, and this was linked to being hassled and to being fined for transit and fare-related offences.

Where young people go when they wish to spend time outside of the family home is usually limited to public spaces such as the street and shopping centres. What they do in these places is also often circumscribed by the amount of money they have to engage in various commercial recreation and leisure activities. How public space is socially constructed, and whether or not such space can be made 'youth friendly', are major issues that are worthy of greater investigation, particularly from the point of view of the development of positive user strategies (see White, Murray and Robins, 1996).

For a variety of reasons, young people frequently come to the attention of different authority figures in the public domain. One of the consequences of the ways in which young people interact with these figures is that very often the young people do not feel that they are part of a local community. Furthermore, they become frustrated and angry at the perceived hassles and abuses associated with the contact with authority figures. This is most acutely felt by the under-18 year olds. Clearly there are major issues here with regard to both the economic and the social standing of young people in society.

12. Looking to the Future

States Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike.

Article 42
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Young people today are subject to a wide range of economic, institutional and personal pressures. Given the difficulties associated with the youth labour market, and given the central place of the wage for economic wellbeing, the financial and social opportunities for young people appear to be severely limited. As this report has demonstrated, many young people are, however, very resourceful when it comes to making ends meet.

This chapter discusses the future prospects of young people from the point of view of what they feel makes them happy, and in terms of their overall experiences of work and gaining an income in the present. While human existence cannot be reduced to simple financial considerations, the issues of income and meaningful work vitally shape the context and nature of the young people's social interactions now and into the future.

Being Happy

Part of the research was directed at determining what made young people 'happy'. That is, what did they value in their own lives, and what made them feel positive about themselves. Tables 12.1 and 12.2 indicate what each age group felt were the most important things that made them feel happy.

As can be seen, having friends was seen by both groups as the most important aspect of being happy. To varying degrees each age group also saw going out and having fun as likewise important aspects of feeling happy.

A crucial issue raised by these findings relates to the form and nature of social interaction, which institutional contexts will most facilitate the making and retaining of friends. As indicated in an earlier chapter (see Chapter 8), very often social connections are made in the context of places such as school, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions, tertiary institutions, and work. Shared interests often reflect shared statuses and positions—such as being a fellow student, or co-worker. How to sustain and nurture positive peer relationships is an issue which warrants further consideration in the light of contemporary pressures which either make it difficult for young people to enter particular institutional spheres (for example, paid work) or which may force them out of existing institutional spheres (for example, higher education fees).

The young people were asked about what would make their life happier. Their responses are shown in Table 12.3.

While finding a job (that is, meaningful, secure paid work) is seen to be important, a large proportion of the young people replied that they simply do not know what would

Table 12.1 What makes younger sample feel happy

Source of happiness	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Friends	199	34.9
Family	44	7.7
Going out	59	10.3
Having fun	58	10.2
Trusted by friends	2	0.4
Money	14	2.5
Don't know	16	2.8
Drugs	14	2.5
Life	17	3.0
Sport	28	4.9
Everything	9	1.6
Girls/Guys	20	3.5
Other	91	15.9
Total	571	100.0

Table 12.2 What makes older sample feel happy

Source of happiness	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Friends	62	31.3
Family	14	7.1
Going out	17	8.6
Having fun	16	8.1
Money	15	7.6
Don't know	7	3.5
Drugs	0	0
Life	0	0
Sport	0	0
Girls/guys	16	8.1
Other	51	25.8
Total	198	100.0

Table 12.3 What would make young people feel happier

Source of happiness	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Trusted by friends	2	0.4
Having girlfriend/boyfriend	13	2.8
Money	89	19.0
Job/successful career	50	10.7
Doing well at school	18	3.8
Don't know	91	19.4
Freedom	45	9.6
Travel/holiday	9	1.9
Move out	17	3.6
Family changes	24	5.1
Other	110	23.5
Total	468	100.0

make their lives happier. In general, most seemed to indicate that they had fairly conventional aspirations and hopes—secure, paid work; marriage; children; travel; house; friends. However, each young person's visions of their own future varied considerably.

Young People's Comments on their Future

St Kilda

Getting somewhere with my band, earning more money, doing well at school and at work.

Collingwood

I'm not asking for a lot. Just good times with my friends and something to do.

Coburg

I think to an extent, having a job has affected my outlook on life.

St Kilda

It being known that I'm human—a typical homosapien with the means to get from here to there and help when I need it.

Coburg

To get my life back together...once I get off the drugs.

Coburg

To actually live a normal life, to work maybe three days a week. No one gives ya that sort of opportunity.

Coburg

A good job, a nice car and a good house, that's all I want ever.

St Kilda

To know I had a job that is always there, that I could always fall back on.

Dandenong

If I could find a job and keep off the streets, and if they could extend the drop in centre.

Footscray

When you smile, when you give a hand to someone that needs it I think that's when you're successful and that's when you're happy.

Knox

Just if everyone had a better chance in life and there wasn't as much criticism towards people, everyone would be happier than I reason.

Coburg

If I go the way I am, I don't know, I could be in Pentridge for all I know.

Dandenong

I'm only 18 and I run a 20 acre farm. I'm doing well. I reckon I'm doing well compared to these guys. They're just bludgers!

Dandenong

Playing soccer is what I really want to do with my life. Get a scholarship and go overseas to play, but I'll never get that far because I dropped out.

Coburg

He [partner] helped me through a lot of emotional problems and just helped me through like and what life was like...he pulled me out of so many refuges, he pulled me out of there and put me into a flat. He paid for this flat and I only pitched in so much, OK...So many times I've, like, wanted to attempt suicide.

Footscray

My Mum is one [role model] because she's really good with people and I feel I've been brought up with the right morals. I know it's wrong to steal and do drugs so I wouldn't do that sort of thing...so I guess my Mum

Footscray

I'm not worried much about the future. I think that study is the most important thing for me. Whatever happens I'll put my effort into study and if I can't study because my knowledge or my ability for study isn't good enough then I'll stop study and do some work.

Footscray

I'll be surprised if I'm alive, suicidal sometimes, have had a mixed up life. If I'm not dead I'll be married with kids.

Footscray

I look up to a lot of people because everyone's got a bit of something you want...the one person I look most to is probably my mum...She thinks the way I think, she feels the way I feel...She faces life in a unique way like if there's a problem she'll take it on like she'll challenge the problem and solve it...She solves her problems...She's happy she's a strong woman I like people who are strong in their mind who are self controlled...They know what they want, I like those kind of people.

Past, Present, Future

The kinds of futures open and available to young people are to some extent shaped by opportunities and experiences of the present and the near past. Tables 12.4 and 12.5 indicate the participation of both age groups across the different economic spheres. Given the methodological problems associated with determining direct participation in the criminal economy (see Chapter 7), it can be expected that much greater participation occurs in this sphere than is recorded here.

From these tables we can see that young people's experiences of work and income support are roughly ordered in the following way:

- Informal non-waged work
- Welfare economy
- Formal waged work
- Informal waged work
- Criminal economy

Table 12.4 Participation of younger sample in the different economic spheres

Type of economic category	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Formal waged economy	88	15.1
Informal waged economy	58	9.9
Informal non-waged economy	319	54.9
Welfare economy	108	18.5
Criminal economy	9	1.6
Total	582	100.0

Table 12.5 Participation of older sample in the different economic spheres

Type of economic category	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Formal waged economy	56	22.5
Informal waged economy	29	11.6
Informal non-waged economy	83	33.5
Welfare economy	76	30.7
Criminal economy	4	1.7
Total	248	100

The research was also concerned to determine whether or not the young people participated in the different economic spheres simultaneously, or whether they moved from one sphere to another as circumstances changed. Tables 12.6 and 12.7 show the multiple participation rates of the two age groups across the different economic spheres.

Combined with previous information on participation rates in any one sphere, it is evident that a significant number of young people are engaged in activities in the informal non-waged sphere and one or more of the other economic spheres. How this will prepare them for the future is a big question.

For example, Table 12.8 sets out what the under-25 year olds felt about what they would like to be doing in the next five years.

Paid work, tertiary education and marriage/family: these are the aspirations and hopes of the present generation of young people. Changes in each of these areas—from further reductions in employment opportunities, to scaled-up student fees and educational costs, through to lack of income and childcare support for parents and children—will have a major impact on whether these dreams are transformed into realities.

Summary and Conclusions

This study has raised a series of questions regarding the economic and social resources available to the young people, and the types of everyday activities in which the young people engage.

Table 12.6 The numbers in the younger sample who were participating in more than one economic sphere

Type of economic Sphere	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
No participation in any sphere	10	2.5
One sphere only	187	46.8
Two spheres	151	37.8
Three spheres	31	7.8
Four spheres	0	0
All spheres	0	0
Missing	21	5.3
Total	400	100.0

Table 12.7 The numbers in the older sample who were participating in more than one economic sphere

Type of economic Sphere	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
One sphere only	54	36.0
Two spheres	72	48.0
Three spheres	15	10.0
Four spheres	0	0.0
All spheres	0	0.0
Missing	9	6.0
Total	150	100.0

Table 12.8 What older sample will be doing in the future

Activity	Responses to each category	
	Number	Per cent
Tertiary education	21	12.3
Working	95	55.6
Overseas	8	4.7
Married/family	23	13.5
Don't know	10	5.8
Other	14	8.2
Total	171	100

Significant findings include:

i. Income Sources and Economic Activity

- Most of the young people lived in local areas which had relatively high proportions of social security recipients, high levels of unemployment and low levels of economic wealth.
- The under-18 year olds relied mainly on their families for income support, with further support provided through work or government benefits.
- The under-25 year olds relied mainly on government benefits and paid work as their main source of income.
- Those young people employed in the formal waged economic sphere were rarely employed on a full-time basis.
- The main employers of young people are in the service and retail industries.
- Most young people were employed on a part-time or casual basis.
- The times and hours of work varied and there were few instances of standardised work times.
- Most young people thought they were treated fairly at work.
- A series of different types of work-related exploitation were identified (for example, low pay, extra hours, sexual harassment).
- Finding and retaining paid work is of major concern to the young people, as are the level of pay and number of hours available for them to work.
- For many young people work in the informal waged economic sphere is an important way to supplement their income.

- Most informal work is of a cash-in-hand nature.
- Employers in this sector tend to be small companies and businesses, mainly in the retail and service industries.
- Involvement in the cash-in-hand economy depends partly upon knowledge about what the 'quick money' jobs are and who is offering them.
- Unpaid labour in the home and local area comprises the biggest category of work relative to the other economic spheres.
- Most young people engage in some kind of informal unpaid work.
- There are major difficulties in assigning an economic 'value' to unpaid work of this nature and this has implications for the quantities and types of work performed by different members of a household.
- There is a network of favours involving unpaid work which allow young people to benefit without monetary transactions taking place.
- A significant number of young people are reliant upon welfare and educational payments as a main source of income.
- The level of payment for young people is below the poverty line and is not adequate to meet their physical and social needs.
- There are various institutional pressures to reduce the number of young people claiming state assistance, and this has implications for their immediate and future income and employment prospects.
- The main types of criminal activity engaged in for money were those of theft and drug dealing.
- It appeared that the extent of drug dealing as a source of income rose with the age of the young people involved.
- The types of crimes committed without an economic motive included drug use and vandalism.
- A major factor in the commission of non-economic crimes was a sense of boredom, or a need for excitement.

ii. Community Resources and Social Activities

- The main place where young people spend their time is at their own or a friend's home.
- When they go out, young people tend to congregate in the public spaces of malls, shopping centres and the street.
- Young people engage in a wide variety of economic and social activities during the day and during the night, most of which are 'conventional' in nature.
- The sources of connection between different young people tend to be based on shared interests (for example, music, sport) and on attendance at the same institution (for example, educational programme).
- There is no single and agreed upon definition of 'gang'.
- Particular 'ethnic' groups of young people are singled out as being 'gangs', often on the basis of shared appearance and language.
- Young women were perceived to have very different social interests than young men, and most of these tended to be seen in terms of traditional or conventional understandings of gender preferences (for example, girls like shopping, boys like sports).
- The young people tended to see each gender in terms of more passive categories for young women (for example, like to talk) and expressive categories for young men (that is, like to do).
- Major differences in lifestyle and behaviour were identified when it came to diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Perceived ethnic differences were often a source of hostility or negativity.
- Young people had both positive and negative feelings about education and their school experiences.
- The things which young people liked most about school were friends, and the opportunity to learn.
- The things which young people did not like about school included the curriculum content, institutional processes and pressures, and disrespectful teachers.

- The young people were very negative about the ways in which they were treated when using the Department of Social Security, although they did appreciate the money they received.
- The young people had positive things to say about the Commonwealth Employment Service, particularly with respect to being treated well, being provided with jobs and finding the staff helpful.
- The young people were frustrated by the lack of jobs, long waiting periods and some forms of staff treatment associated with the Commonwealth Employment Service.
- The major reason why young people feel restricted in where they can go and what they can do is family pressures.
- When they are in the public domain, young people are frequently in contact with authority figures such as the police, security guards and transit police.
- The place of contact for police and young people is usually the street and shopping centres.
- The under-18 year olds generally had bad experiences with the police, and spoke of being constantly hassled, assaulted and being caught doing crime.
- The under-25 year olds generally had good experiences with the police, but associated negative experiences with being hassled, assaulted and being falsely accused of crime.
- The young people had generally bad experiences with private security guards, related to being hassled and told to move on.
- The young people had generally negative views of the transit police, and this was linked to being hassled and to being fined for transit and fare-related offences.

Concluding Remarks

The intention of this report has been to map out the main issues relating to youth livelihood and youth opportunities. The results indicate the nature and extent of, and involvement in, different sectors of the economy by young people. Generally speaking, the kind of work one does, and where one does it, depends upon factors such as the kinds of skills, knowledge, social connections and material resources available to the young person.

Each of the economic spheres described in this report (formal waged, informal waged, informal non-waged, welfare and criminal economy) offers both benefits and disadvantages to the participant, in terms of range of activities available, legitimacy, meaningfulness, level of material support, social status, satisfaction, space for creativity and so on. However, positive life experiences tend to congeal around a more 'mainstream' status, particularly with regard to secure income and employment prospects. Negative experiences are more likely to be linked to economic, social and political marginalisation, which in turn is characterised by unpredictability, low social status, relative powerlessness and insecurity.

The negative social identity and self-identity of young people is broadly shaped by their lack of economic resources, their alienation from institutional processes associated with the labour market, schooling and social security, their presence in groups in public spaces such as shopping centres and malls, and the response of authority figures to their activities and visibility at the local neighbourhood level.

The economic positions and social activities of young people are complex and inter-linked at a number of different practical levels. By understanding the social world of the young it is hoped that we can gain a better appreciation of the difficulties they face, the social dilemmas they represent, and the rights which ideally they should possess.

Fundamentally, the crucial issue underpinning the present situation of many young people is lack of the basic means of life. If we as a society cannot act to fulfil their needs, then young people certainly will—*any which way they can*.

Coburg

I think it's because Australia isn't listening to, well the government in particular aren't listening to, the youth of today's needs... You know, create the jobs or sort of give them somewhere to hang out.

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Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CES	Commonwealth Employment Service
CBD	Central Business District
DSS	Department of Social Security
ESL	English as a Second Language
H&CS	Department of Health and Community Services
LAH Allowance	Living Away from Home Allowance
NES/NESB	Non-English Speaking/Non-English Speaking Background
NYARS	National Youth Affairs Research Scheme
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
YAC	Youth Access Centre



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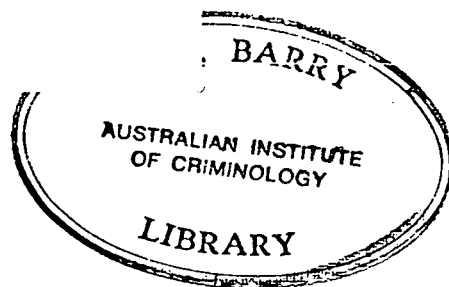
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