

Knowledge and Misconception About Youth — Implications for Education

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It is argued that being a youth is not a static and homogeneous stage for all young people. Without an understanding of the social processes where they locate themselves within relations of age and generation as well as social divisions of class and gender, no valid knowledge about them can be generated. A search on keywords of “youth, students, Hong Kong” from the libraries of local tertiary institutions yielded 773 entries as a common source of “knowledge” on youth in Hong Kong. Spanning from 1949 to 1997, 34% of these studies were initiated by non-government organizations to examine the youth’s social and political awareness, service need of the youth and youth culture. Studies published by academic journals (27%), the second largest group of studies, however, tended to focus on their developmental and schooling processes. A meta-analytical approach was used to find out how the needs, values and experiences of the youth within a specific historical epoch are socially mediated or constructed. In posing young people as a social problem, studies tended to assume that there is a minority who are at risk and require institutional help to bring them into line. In treating the youth as subjects for identifying their needs and concerns, most studies failed to take into account how social, economic and political forces have mediated their behavior and values as individuals and as a group. While the experience and meaning of being a youth is changing over time, the conception about youth for institutional and policy purposes has not changed much. Without removing the misconception about youth, a “valid” knowledge base about them cannot be established. Such a knowledge base is essential to developing the kind of education that is capable of helping the youth to fulfill individual aspirations as well as to meet the challenges of societal development.

Introduction

Within traditional Chinese society, being a youth was not regarded much as an individual who had distinct bio-physiological and socio-psychological needs and, thus, was entitled to any distinct treatment (Tu, 1976). Despite being a valued child in the family, his/her personal welfare and concern came only after those of the family as a whole. Under Confucianism, it was within the family where he/she learned his/her roles and fulfilled his/her needs in relation to those of other family members. Conflict and confrontation among family members, specifically between adults and the young, were therefore not expected or tolerated in Chinese families. In early days, Hong Kong as a Chinese society had cherished the basic Confucian family values in dealing with individual needs and concerns given the priority of family welfare and harmony (King, 1992).

As of today and like in many contemporary Western societies, youth as a specific age group with distinct needs has become a concern in related policy making and welfare service planning in Hong Kong. Numerous studies have been conducted to examine different aspects of the life of young people. In understanding how youth emerged as a public concern or social problem in Hong Kong between 1949 and 1979, Lui (1996) found that their concerns and behaviors had always been subjected to social construction. Such social construction, through imposing stereotypes, tended to reflect the fear and anxiety society as a whole experienced within changing social, political and economic conditions. By imposing stereotypes, the older generation was able to set limits to the behaviors and aspirations of the younger generation so as to ensure their own control and minimize any unpredictability generated by young people's disruptive behaviors. While it is important to understand why parents, teachers and those in authority would construct youth behaviors and concerns in one way rather than others, it is also as important in making sense of these behaviors and concerns from the young people's own perspective.

Research Objectives and Procedures

This paper aims to review and reflect on what has been found about youth, specifically about their needs and deviant behaviors, in the past four decades in Hong Kong. Following Griffin (1993) and Wyn and White (1997), it is argued here that being a youth is not a static and homogeneous stage for all young people. Without an understanding on the

social processes where they locate themselves within relations of age and generation as well as social divisions of class and gender, no valid knowledge about them can be generated. So, before examining their needs and delinquent behavior, certain social, economic and political forces will be identified as the context in which they interpret their experiences.

In searching for studies on youth in Hong Kong, numerous keyword searches on "youth, students, juvenile delinquency, Hong Kong" from the library catalogs of the seven tertiary institutions in Hong Kong were conducted between January 1997 and July 1998.¹ These searches yield 564 independent entries. In looking for journal articles, mainly from English-language journals, which supposedly address international audience, on youth or students in Hong Kong, the databases of Psycho INFO Chapters/Books 1/87-12/97, Psych INFO Serials 1984-12/97, Social Work Abstract 1977-9/97, Sociofile 1/74-10/97, and ERIC 1966-9/97 have been searched. As of August 25, 1998, 381 entries were located. After eliminating duplicate entries and those studies with their major aim on testing psychological or educational measuring instruments with students as subjects, a total of 209 journal articles were coded for the purpose of the present study. A total of 773 entries constitute the data source of the present study.

Based on the title, publishing year, publisher, subject keywords, and/or abstract provided, each entry was coded in terms of its main topic, publishing format, year of publishing and background of publisher. While the search for studies on youth in Hong Kong cannot be claimed as an exhaustive one, the identified studies with their accessibility through university libraries can be considered as a common source of knowledge on youth in Hong Kong. The kinds of subject matters covered by the studies and the publishers' background over such a wide span of time can provide information to delineate the social, economic and political context in which those in authority, whether as a researcher or as a sponsoring agency, made one kind of construction versus others about the behavior, concern and experience of the youth.

Youth Studies: Knowledge and Misconception About Youth

The publishing formats of the 773 entries range from books, journal articles, formally published reports to handwritten reports. Spanning from 1949 to 1997, the four most covered topics on the youth emerged: schooling processes (13.4%), social and political awareness (13.4%),

developmental processes (13.1%), and youth culture (13.0%) (see Table 1). The least covered topic is work and related values (2.3%). By taking the time period into account, we find an increase in the number of studies over time. However, there is a shift in the focus of these studies across the time period.²

In the first period (1949–69), the earliest “study” identified is a handbook for students edited by the *Hong Kong Students Weekly* in 1949.³ With its small number of studies covered, one can infer that there was not much societal effort spent on understanding the youth during that period. It was not until the sixties when some juvenile crime waves and social disturbances had occurred, did the government and some organized interests start to pay systematic attention to the concern and the behavior of the youth as individuals and as a social group. This attention was reflected by the three studies on delinquent behavior identified during this period. In the time periods of 1970–74 and 1975–79, most studies focussed on service provision, schooling processes and youth development. The rise in population of the age group between 10 to 24 in this period may account for such a focus.⁴ As Hong Kong society moved into the eighties along with social, economic and political changes, the young people’s leisure life, consumption pattern as well as their social and political awareness came into the focus of those who aimed either to provide services to them or to understand their social participation and political orientation. Into the nineties, some education-related issues, such as the decreasing quality of school education and students’ language proficiency, and the increasing public concern for teenage suicide led to more studies on their learning processes as well as their psychological and emotional development.

Table 2 illustrates the timing at which different “publishers” came to participate in the discourse on youth. Before 1970, university students’ unions, education-related professional organizations and non-government organizations were more active than the government in making effort on understanding the youth. Into the seventies, more academic studies on youth came out. The rapid expansion of tertiary education in Hong Kong since 1990 led to keen competition for prestige and resources among academic researchers. This competition may help explain a sudden rise in the number of journal articles after 1990. Despite the effort of academic researchers throughout the eighties and the early nineties, it was still the non-government organizations who were the most vigorous researchers in helping build the knowledge base about youth in Hong Kong. As more societal resources have been spent on welfare service provision, the

Table 1 Main Subject Matter of Youth Studies by Time Periods

Subject matter *	Time period n (%)										Total
	1949-69	1970-74	1975-79	1980-84	1985-89	1990-94	1995-97				
Delinquent behavior	3 (25.0)	1 (4.8)	2 (6.5)	9 (12.0)	17 (9.8)	17 (7.1)	13 (6.0)				62 (8.1)
Health-related attitude & behavior	0	0	0	4 (5.3)	6 (3.4)	24 (10.0)	23 (10.6)				57 (7.4)
Family and social life	1 (8.3)	3 (14.3)	3 (9.7)	5 (6.7)	8 (4.6)	10 (4.2)	17 (7.8)				47 (6.1)
Youth culture	2 (16.7)	2 (9.5)	4 (12.9)	13 (17.3)	31 (17.8)	31 (12.9)	17 (7.8)				100 (13.0)
Schooling processes	1 (8.3)	4 (19.0)	3 (9.7)	7 (9.3)	23 (13.2)	33 (13.8)	32 (14.7)				103 (13.4)
Developmental processes	1 (8.3)	0	5 (16.1)	9 (12.0)	11 (6.3)	36 (15.0)	39 (18.0)				101 (13.1)
Work & related values	0	1 (4.8)	0	2 (2.7)	2 (1.1)	7 (2.9)	6 (2.8)				18 (2.3)
Social and political awareness	0	0	3 (9.7)	11 (14.7)	23 (13.2)	36 (15.0)	30 (13.8)				103 (13.4)
Need assessment	0	1 (4.8)	2 (6.5)	3 (4.0)	10 (5.7)	6 (2.5)	4 (1.8)				26 (3.4)
Service & policy	1 (8.3)	6 (28.6)	6 (19.4)	4 (5.3)	25 (14.4)	24 (10.0)	17 (7.8)				83 (10.8)
Guide/Source book for youth	2 (16.7)	2 (9.5)	2 (6.5)	8 (10.7)	10 (5.7)	8 (3.3)	8 (3.7)				40 (5.2)
Other topics	1 (8.3)	1 (4.8)	1 (3.2)	0	8 (4.6)	8 (3.3)	11 (5.1)				30 (3.9)
Total (%)	12 (1.6)	21 (2.7)	31 (4.0)	75 (9.7)	174 (22.6)	240 (31.2)	217 (28.2)				770 (100.0)

* Delinquent behavior = Criminal behavior as well as other behaviors found to be deviant conduct by those in authority, such as misbehavior within the school.

Health-related attitudes & behavior = Attitudes and behaviors regarding sexual health, eating habit, drug-taking, smoking, and self-destruction.

Family and social life = Family relation, peer relation and orientation regarding love, courtship, marriage and having children.

Youth culture = World views and leisure life.

Schooling processes = Learning experience and skills in school.

Development processes = Topics on psychological, mental and emotional development.

Work & related values = Job choice, expectation and work ethics.

Social and political awareness = Voluntary work, social participation, and political consciousness or national identity.

Need assessment = Study on youth needs.

Service & policy = Service provision and policy planning.

Guide/Source book for youth = Specifically tailored for youth to guide their conduct and life.

Other topics = Including topics on their orientation towards using technology and environmental consciousness.

Table 2 Publisher's Background by Time Periods

Publisher's Background	Time period n (%)										Total
	1949-69	1970-74	1975-79	1980-84	1985-89	1990-94	1995-97				
Non-government organization	3 (25.0)	4 (20.0)	8 (25.8)	25 (33.3)	64 (37.0)	83 (34.7)	74 (34.1)	261 (34.0)			
Government or public body	1 (8.3)	2 (10.0)	4 (12.9)	9 (12.0)	14 (8.1)	22 (9.2)	12 (5.5)	64 (8.3)			
District board	0	0	0	3 (4.0)	12 (6.9)	17 (7.1)	9 (4.1)	41 (5.3)			
Academic journal	1 (8.3)	1 (5.0)	5 (16.1)	16 (21.3)	39 (22.5)	57 (23.8)	90 (41.5)	209 (27.2)			
Academic institutions	2 (16.7)	5 (25.0)	8 (25.8)	3 (4.0)	15 (8.7)	38 (15.9)	13 (6.0)	84 (11.0)			
Commercial publisher	1 (8.3)	3 (15.0)	1 (3.2)	12 (16.0)	22 (12.7)	15 (6.3)	13 (6.0)	67 (8.7)			
Students' union or educational organization	4 (33.3)	4 (20.0)	5 (16.1)	7 (9.3)	3 (1.7)	4 (1.7)	2 (0.9)	29 (3.8)			
News magazine & others	0	1 (5.0)	0	0	4 (2.3)	3 (1.3)	4 (1.8)	12 (1.6)			
Total (%)	12 (1.6)	20 (2.6)	31 (4.0)	74 (9.4)	173 (22.6)	239 (31.2)	217 (28.3)	767 (100.0)			

participation of the non-government organizations in the discourse on youth seems essential to their fight for better and more services for the youth and, of course, to their own professional and organizational development.

From Table 3, one finds a difference in the focus of effort of different publishers in examining the youth's concerns and behaviors. Regarding the effort of non-government organizations, most of their studies were on social and political awareness, service provision and youth culture. This coverage reflects their own professional and organizational needs. As a policy maker, the government and its commissioned bodies, such as the Commission on Youth, put in a lot of effort on devising and elaborating youth policy and service. Among the different aspects of the life of the youth, the policy maker was interested more in their delinquent behavior and health-related attitude and behavior. The control and/or prevention purpose regarding some "unwanted" youth behavior on the part of the policy maker can be inferred here. With the institutionalization of district boards as a communication channel between citizens and the central government since 1982, more studies on youth culture, their needs and delinquent behavior were initiated by district boards. As expected, academic researchers tended to have more interest in understanding the fundamental developmental processes of the youth and their schooling processes. Given their marketing knowledge, commercial publishers seemed to have found publishing handbooks for the youth more profitable. With diverse interests of students' unions and education-related professional groups in different periods, there was no particular focus of their studies. On the contrary, news magazines tended to focus on current issues about the youth, such as their language deficiency and political consciousness during times of political transitions. Given the differences in professional interest and organizational requirement, the difference in focus among different publishers should be comprehensible here.

Having elaborated the socio-historical background where various youth studies were initiated, we now make use of a meta-analytical approach to find out how the needs, values and experiences of the youth within a specific historical epoch are socially mediated or constructed. As a preliminary attempt on reviewing youth studies done in the past four decades, only two sets of studies were chosen for presentation here given certain practical constraints — processing time and availability of the studies. In choosing the studies, the factor of how rigorous they are as scientific studies is not the major concern. Nevertheless, there are some criteria in putting a set of studies together for synthesizing findings and/or

Table 3 Main Subject Matter of Youth Studies by Publisher's Background

Main subject matter	Publisher's background n (%)								Total
	Non-government organization	Government or public body	District board	Academic journal	Academic institution	Commercial publisher	Students' union or educational organization	News magazine & others	
Delinquent behavior	20 (7.7)	10 (16.6)	7 (16.7)	8 (3.8)	11 (12.9)	3 (4.5)	2 (6.7)	1 (8.3)	62 (8.1)
Health-related attitude & behavior	15 (5.7)	10 (16.6)	4 (9.5)	21 (10.0)	6 (7.1)	0	1 (3.3)	0	57 (7.4)
Family and social life	21 (8.0)	3 (4.7)	2 (4.8)	13 (6.2)	1 (1.2)	2 (3.0)	4 (13.3)	0	46 (6.0)
Youth culture	37 (14.2)	4 (6.3)	12 (28.6)	22 (10.5)	15 (17.6)	5 (7.5)	5 (16.7)	0	100 (13.0)
Schooling processes	11 (4.2)	3 (4.7)	1 (2.4)	51 (24.4)	18 (21.2)	10 (14.9)	5 (16.7)	4 (33.3)	103 (13.4)
Developmental processes	16 (6.1)	2 (3.1)	2 (4.8)	67 (32.1)	6 (7.1)	7 (10.4)	1 (3.3)	0	101 (13.1)
Work & related values	9 (3.4)	3 (4.7)	0	3 (1.4)	3 (3.5)	0	0	0	18 (2.3)
Social and political awareness	60 (23.0)	4 (6.3)	4 (9.5)	12 (5.7)	10 (11.8)	2 (3.0)	5 (16.7)	5 (41.7)	102 (13.2)
Need assessment	16 (6.1)	0	7 (16.7)	1 (0.5)	2 (2.4)	0	0	0	26 (3.4)
Service & policy	44 (16.9)	18 (28.1)	2 (4.8)	5 (2.4)	4 (4.7)	8 (11.9)	0	2 (16.7)	83 (10.8)
Guide/Source book for youth	9 (3.4)	3 (4.7)	0	0	2 (2.4)	25 (37.3)	1 (3.3)	0	40 (5.2)
Other topics	3 (1.1)	4 (6.3)	1 (2.4)	6 (2.9)	7 (8.2)	5 (7.5)	6 (20.0)	0	32 (4.2)
Total (%)	261 (33.9)	64 (8.3)	42 (5.5)	209 (27.1)	85 (11.0)	67 (8.7)	30 (3.9)	12 (1.6)	770 (100.0)

contrasting differences in observations. The criteria include the study being an independent report, having a clear time frame, clear study procedures, and a systematic presentation of data.

Studies on Delinquent Behavior

In posing young people as a social problem, studies tended to assume that there is a group of "mainstream" youths who are distinguished from a minority who are "at risk" and require institutional help to bring them into line. Studies on the problem of "Ah Fei" (e.g., *Report on the Problem of Ah Fei*, 1965) in the sixties tended to identify those youths with "problem behavior" as a menace to society while studies on juvenile delinquency in the seventies (e.g., *Social Causes of Violent Crime Among Young Offenders in Hong Kong*, 1975; *Adolescent Aggression in Hong Kong*, 1975) tended to focus on how dysfunctional family relations lead to the youth's disruptive behavior in school and in society. The concern for youth has become mediated by many factors as Hong Kong society undergoes various social, economic and political changes through the eighties and the nineties. Different professional and interest groups, including organizations of teachers, school administrators, social workers, politicians, and academicians, have come to participate in public discourse on youth problem and other related topics with various concerns and vested interests. Studies on youth were initiated by many different organizations, such as non-government organizations and district boards.

As shown in Table 3, the majority of identified studies were done by non-government organizations, among which the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups conducted most studies. Many collaborations among non-government organizations, government departments, district boards, and academics were established in examining the behaviors and values of the youth. Some collaborative works include: *A Study on the Values, Leisure, Behavior and Misbehavior of the Youth in Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung* (1985), *A Study on the Behaviors and Attitudes of Youths in Kwun Tong* (1986), *Teenage Runaway in Kowloon City* (1989) and *A Study of Youth Problems in the North District* (1992), and *A Study of Youth Behaviors and Values in Tuen Mun* (1995). These studies tend to focus on the developmental path by which an individual youth has to navigate different "push" factors, whether having dissatisfied school life or dysfunctional family relations, and "pull" factors, such as the influence of triad society and delinquent peers in establishing and actualizing him/herself.

With different district foci and differences in sample size and sampling procedures, it is difficult to have a direct comparison on their research findings so as to make any strong deduction about the factors that "cause" juvenile delinquency. As a scientific undertaking, most of the recent studies rely on theoretical arguments developed in the West on juvenile delinquency in conceptualizing their research questions. However in analyzing the findings, most of these studies fail to take into account the specific socio-historical context in which the youth locate themselves and interpret their experience and the expectations of their significant others, like their parents and teachers. Also, the effects of gender and social class, and their compound effect have not been addressed much in understanding why the pattern of deviant behaviors of a girl is different from that of a boy. In fact, the majority of studies on juvenile delinquency is class-bias as their subjects are mainly young people from the lower socioeconomic strata to whom researchers can get access.

In making policy suggestions, again studies hardly pay attention to any social and economic constraints borne by those who will be affected by their suggestions, if such suggestions are ever to be implemented. For example, having observed a strong relationship between lack of parental care and delinquent behavior, the recommendation for having more programs or activities for enhancing parent-children relationship, suggested in Wong et al.'s (1995) *A Study on Youth Behaviors and Values in Tuen Mun* and Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups' (1995) *The Stop-out Syndrome: When Night Life Takes Over From Home Life*, may be found irrelevant by those parents who have never thought about such a relationship or impractical by those who do not have the time, given the burden of making a living, to participate in those programs and activities. Similarly, the proposed changes for teachers to make, such as attending courses/seminars on student counseling, suggested in Lee and Lo's (1994) *A Study on Youth Problems in the Southern District*, for remedying the relationship between dissatisfied school life and delinquent behavior tend to ignore both personal and administrative constraints in implementing that kind of changes.

Studies on the Needs of Youth

Four studies on the needs of youth from different periods were selected for discussion here. All of these studies were done by non-government organizations and they shared similar objectives in identifying the needs of youth

and yielding relevant information for service planning. The breakdown of their objectives, subjects, measurement instruments, sampling methods, as well as sample sizes and characteristics is found in Table 4a while their research findings, discussions and recommendations are found in Table 4b.

In the first two studies, *Study 1981* and *Study 1988*, no theoretical arguments were used in the formulation of research questions on what needs young people would have, why they might have such needs and what priority they would have on those needs. The way they structured their measurement instruments reflects what they wanted the needs of youth to be rather than the needs of youth being identified by the youth themselves. In the discussion from *Study 1981*, such deficiency in the conception about the needs of youth was noted. The recent two studies, *Study 1990* and *Study 1994*, shared similar conception about youth regarding their development as individuals, members of a group and members of a community/society. While the questions on subjects' satisfaction with family, school and community lives in the two studies were structured differently, similar patterns of responses were found. Most subjects from the two studies did not have negative family relations but they did not find much support from the family (*Study 1990*) or did not have much confidence in seeking advice from parents when they had problems (*Study 1994*). Nevertheless, many still found their parents their significant others in making important decisions (*Study 1994*). The deferential status of the parents to their children has always been ignored in studies on youth development. This neglect is done by posing questions on the importance of peers rather than the parents in one's social network and decision making.

As expected, good relationship with classmates was the mostly chosen factor that affects the subjects' satisfaction with school life and the next mostly chosen factor is enjoying extra-curricular activities. In treating the subjects' relationship with teachers as an indicator of satisfaction with school life along with the previous two factors is to ignore the relative power position of the teacher and the student within the hierarchy of a school. Given a difference in power, whether perceived or in its actual exercise, one cannot expect students, who are in an inferior position, to refer or relate to their teachers, who are in a superior position, in a way as they do to their fellow classmates. The neglect of this relative power position in school reflects inadequate conception about youth or youth development in these studies.

The concern for social and community participation of youth in *Studies 1988, 1990 and 1994*, reflects changes in the social and political development of Hong Kong society in the last twenty years. While the needs of youth as reflected by their queries about their biophysiological development, their emotional problems, academic concerns, and recreational preferences adequately justified most of the services currently provided by the non-government organizations, these organizations were also aware that given changes in the social, economic and political development, it was essential for them to expand their roles or functions in serving the youth. However, given limited resources and an invalid knowledge base, it was not easy for them to develop any concrete recommendations for new programs or services that can help develop the capacity of youth in meeting new challenges posed by societal development. As a whole, in treating the youth as subjects for identifying their needs and concerns, most studies failed to take into account how social, economic and political forces have mediated their experience as individuals and as members of school, family or society.

Implications for Education

In the West, some scholars have observed that constant conflicts between the older and the younger generations, whether manifested themselves in crime rates, in truancy rates, or in the number of runaways, reflect the resistance of the young to the control imposed by the adults (e.g., Fornas, 1995). Many capitalist societies have undergone some form of cultural transformation since the Second World War. Such transformation has brought to society new ideologies, new things, and new modes of doing things. All these are for the young to explore. But with vested interests in maintaining the power relations, it is not easy for the older generation to accept and to appreciate anything new, so control has to be imposed to confine the life and conduct of the young within existing institutional arrangements. So, many of the young people have become cynically suspicious about society and cherished no sense of morals or obligation to anything (Sloterdijk, 1988). This cynical reason is defined as certain enlightened false consciousness. To show their discontent, they ridicule any rules and regulations for being senseless and non-enforceable through their outrageous clothing, conspicuous consumption, violent behaviors, drug-taking and even self-destructive behaviors (Heller, 1990). It is in post-modernist society where boundaries or barriers imposed by scientific

Table 4a Studies on the Needs of Youth: Methods

Study	Objectives	Subjects	Measurement instruments	Sampling method	Sample size and characteristics
<i>Report on Study of the needs of Youth</i> (Family Planning Association of Hong Kong, 1981) (Referred as <i>Study 1981</i>)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To identify the kinds of problems facing youths seeking counseling services; and To enhance and tailor services that can meet their needs 	<p>"First-time" clients who came to seek counseling in five service agencies within the period of July 1, 1989 to June 30, 1990</p>	<p>Clients are interviewed by a "counselor" with a set of structured questions within a formal setting</p>	<p>Whole population of the "first-time" clients with various missing cases from different agencies</p>	<p>2,442 respondents: females (79.3%) under 22 (77.8%) students (47.2%) full-time workers (44.5%)</p>
<i>A Survey on Service Needs of Youth</i> (YWCA, 1988) [In Chinese] (Referred as <i>Study 1988</i>)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To identify the service needs of youths and to solicit their opinions on services provided; and To yield information for further service planning 	<p>Residents aged between 10 to 29 of the Central and Western District (between November & December in 1987)</p>	<p>Interview survey with open-ended questions conducted in the street</p>	<p>Quota-convenient sample based on the age structure of the district population</p>	<p>210 youths: students (42.4%) working youths (57.6%) Age group: M/F 10-14: 20/20 15-19: 20/20 20-24: 30/30 25-29: 40/40</p>
<i>A Report on Developmental Needs of Junior Secondary School Students in the Southern District</i> (Caritas HK, 1990) [In Chinese] (Referred as <i>Study 1990</i>)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To identify the developmental needs of students in the family, school and community; To understand their activities within all these three settings 	<p>Junior secondary school students from the Southern District (during January 1990)</p>	<p>Self-administered questionnaire survey through the help of individual schools</p>	<p>Systematic sampling method to locate Form 1 to Form 3 students from individual schools within the district</p>	<p>1,131 students: females (56%) males (44%)</p>
<i>A Report on Service Needs of Youth-Clients of Service Organization in Shamshuipo</i> (Shamshuipo Community Organizations Coordinating Committee, 1994) [In Chinese] (Referred as <i>Study 1994</i>)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To identify the service needs of youth-clients; and To provide relevant information for service planning 	<p>Clients aged between 14 and 18 of the participating agencies within the period of April 1, 1992 to September 30, 1992</p>	<p>Self-administered questionnaire conducted by individual agencies</p>	<p>A systematic random sample based on a combined list of all qualified clients</p>	<p>292 clients: females (47.6%) males (52.1%) students (91.8%) non-students (8.2%)</p>

Table 4b Studies on the Needs of Youth: Results and Discussions

Study	Review of literature	Findings	Discussion and recommendation
<i>Study 1981</i>	No	<p>Five major types of problems identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> physiological problems (53.0%) emotional problems (29.6%) academic & occupational problems (13.8) spiritual needs (1.5%) environmental concerns (1.0%) 	<p>On definition of the needs of youth</p> <p>On co-operation among agencies in providing services</p> <p>(Concrete recommendations)</p>
<i>Study 1988</i>	No	<p>Top three service needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recreational facilities craft/hobbies courses academic courses <p>Least mentioned needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> community participation programs personal development programs 	<p>On enhancing the education function of youth centers in promoting social awareness among youths</p> <p>On diversifying and co-ordination services to meet various needs</p> <p>(No concrete recommendations)</p>
<i>Study 1990</i>	Yes	<p>Love & care from parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> yes (over 60.6%) vs. no (below 30%) <p>Support from the family:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> adequate (45.4%) inadequate support & trust (31.5%) inadequate respect & acceptance (22.8%) <p>Satisfaction from school life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> good relationship w/ classmates (68.2%) adequate opportunity for self-actualization (42.2%) enjoying extra-curricular activities (35.1%) 	<p>On the importance of the family in providing support to students</p> <p>On the functions of school to teach and to cultivate that meets the changing needs of students</p> <p>On diversifying community youth services</p> <p>(No concrete recommendations)</p>

Study 1994	Yes	<p>Making use of community/youth facilities: no (70.4%) vs. yes (29.6%)</p> <p>Most participated community activities: sport (64.4%) art & craft courses (40.4%) picnic (38.9%)</p> <p>Whether having a happy family: yes (80.2) vs. no (19.1%)</p> <p>When facing problems, seek opinion from: friends (44.9%) self (20.9%) parents (12.3%)</p> <p>The significant others: parents (63%) friends (63%) self (48.3%)</p> <p>Satisfaction from school life: good relationship w/ classmates (70.2%) good relationship w/ teachers (25.7%) enjoying extra-curricular activities (30.1%)</p> <p>Knowledge about community facilities: full knowledge (56.5%) some knowledge (23.7%) no knowledge (6.1%)</p> <p>Community service needs: picnic (56.8%) hiking (43.5%) sport/ball game (36.3%)</p>	<p>On personal development On individual needs within groups On individual needs within community On specific programs to enhance social awareness and community participation of youths (Concrete recommendations)</p>
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rationality have been removed, cynical reason has become institutionalized and help guide individuals to reflect on what society is really like and where it should go (Bauman, 1992).

Similar patterns of adolescent deviant behaviors have been observed in Hong Kong society (Chan & Lee, 1995). However, to apply the concept of cynical reason or enlightened false consciousness found to be borne by the youth in the West in explaining the conduct of the youth in Hong Kong seems not appropriate. On one hand, there is no cultural basis, both in the substance and the procedure, on which we can place Hong Kong society along with other contemporary Western societies in the category of post-modernist society. Also, it is difficult to reason how a 12 or 15 years old would have enough life experience and cognitive ability in developing such consciousness or in accepting and understanding it as a guidance for his or her "socially undesirable" behavior. Chan and Lee (1995) have elaborated clearly that the youth culture as represented by those behaviors cannot be understood or treated as a deviant subculture that directly opposes the mainstream culture. To reconcile or remove any conflict between the older and younger generations, their respective experiences, values and concerns have to be taken into consideration.

As noted by Lui (1996), since past studies tended to focus on youth either being a threat to society or being threatened by society at large in their development, there has not been much examination on the possibilities and opportunities for youth to assume an active role in constructing themselves through direct participation in societal development. In our review of some selected studies on youth in the areas of juvenile delinquency and need assessment done in different periods of time, it is found that while the experience and meaning of being a youth is changing over time, the conception about youth and the approach to studying youth for institutional and policy purposes have not changed much. The concern for youth should not automatically preclude the interests and concerns of adults, be they teachers, parents and policy makers. It should be the job for all adults and youths who commit themselves to building a better society where everybody is allowed and encouraged to fulfill individual aspirations as well as to meet the challenges of societal development. The role of education is critical in helping to develop such a commitment. Before doing this, we need to remove any misconception about youth. Only by establishing a "valid" knowledge base about them can we talk about what kinds of programs, educational and/or public services that can help young people develop their potential.

A Concluding Remark

The attempt I have made here to review and reflect on what have been known about youth in the past four decades based on existing studies falls short of a number of methodological requirements. Without an exhaustive list of studies, it may not be fair to assess the relative effort exerted by different researchers with different backgrounds in understanding youth and youth development. Due to time and resource constraints, I was unable to select a set of studies that could have been more representative in terms of subject matter, subjects of the study, orientation of the study, i.e., whether as an exploratory, deductive study or policy study, and background of publisher or researcher in the two areas of juvenile delinquency and the needs of youth I have covered here.

Notes

1. The seven tertiary institutions are: The University of Hong Kong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and Lingnan College.
2. Given that no studies done in 1950 to 1961 were located, the first time period was set to range from 1949 to 1969. The rest of the time periods, except the last one, are of 5-year range. To end the time period in 1997 is a practical decision.
3. This handbook is in Chinese: 香港學生週刊社編，〈香港學生手冊〉，1949.
4. Between 1969 and 1981, the population of the 10–24 age group increased from 718,819, 23% of the total population, to 1,587,691, 31.8% of the total population (Commission on Youth, 1992).

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