

WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE in communities with social problems

- WHY Should Playwork concern itself with youth?
- Research shows that the pre-adolescent stage is the stage at which young people first begin to show the signs of deviant behaviour and these signs grow into problem behaviour for institutions and services that have difficulty in adapting.

Explanation

- Research shows that in this development stage it is normal for young people to question the assumptions of adults and to wish to test for themselves the adult expectations that have directed their learning until this stage
- But still in adult society the institutions for this development stage are still controlled by adults with these expectations.
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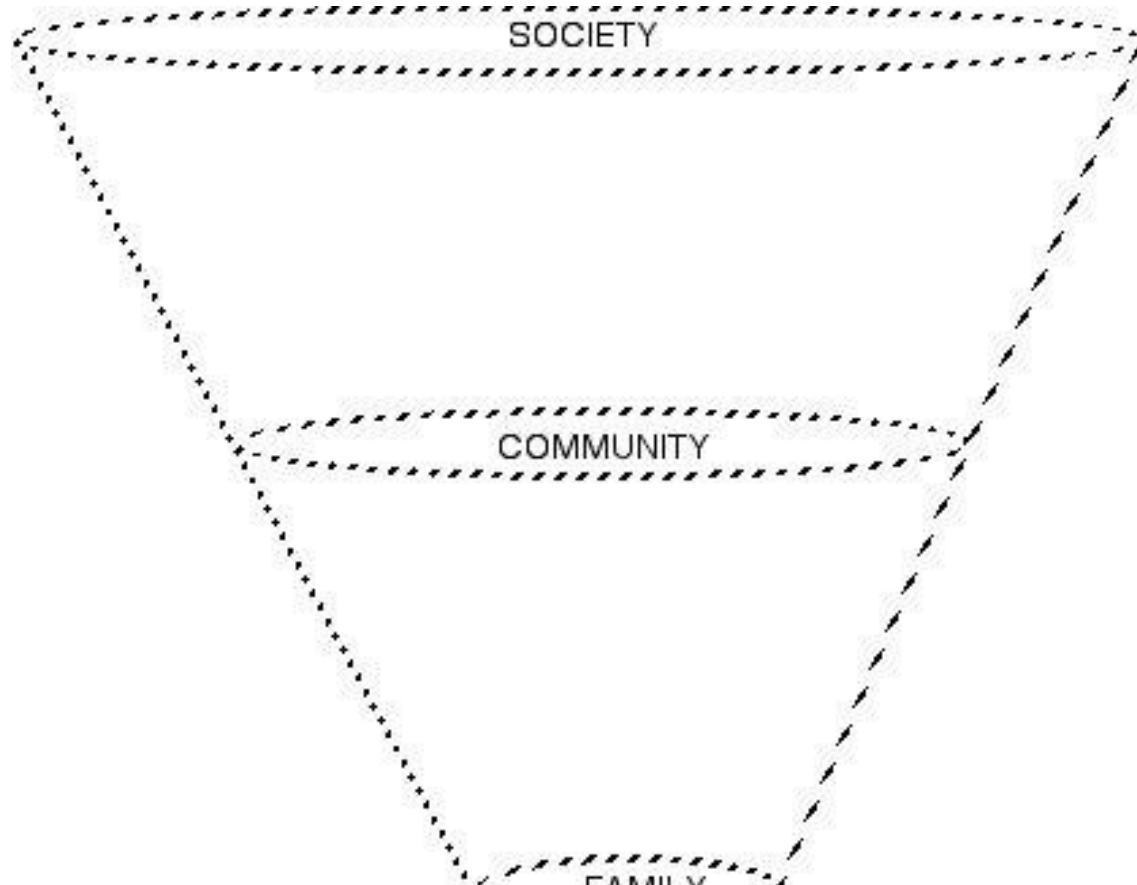
Sharing Ideas on importance of all work with children & youth to be within the community

By a stroke of fortune at the IPA International Conference 1985 in Rotterdam I found myself as a keynote speaker sharing the platform with Yuri Bronfenbrenner

I was stating the case for the play / youth worker being a facilitator using the outdoor community space to meet the different needs of children and youth at all development stages

He was explaining his research showing the risk that the *meso* part of society was disappearing and the importance of working to keep the benefits of this context especially for children's social development

Modern society , community & family is
rapidly changing
Bronfennbrenner

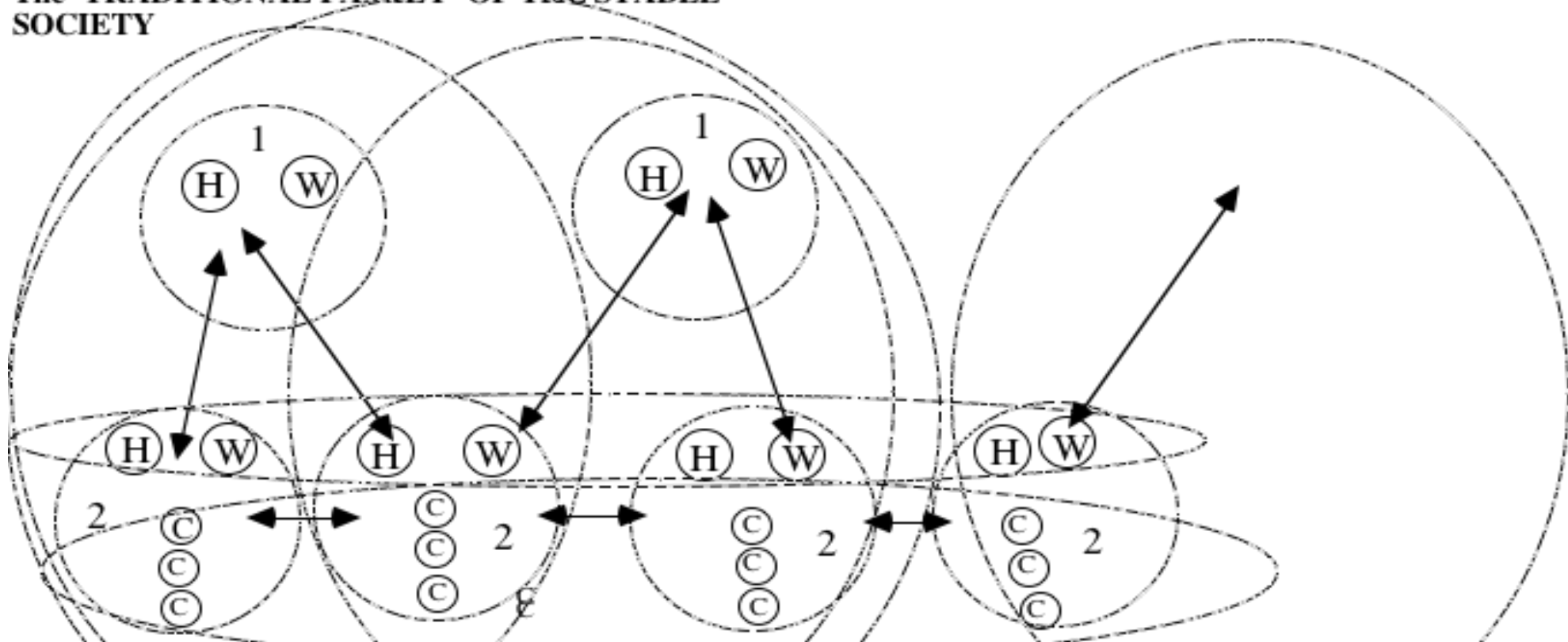


The traditional family is disappearing

- The

DIAGRAM A.3

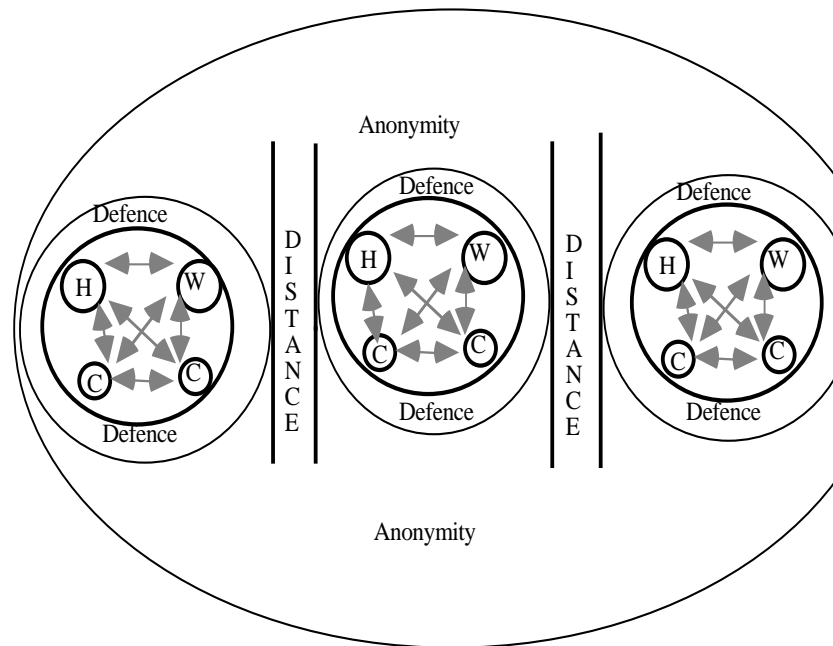
The "TRADITIONAL FAMILY" OF THE STABLE SOCIETY



Modern family

DIAGRAM A5

THE MODERN "NUCLEAR" FAMILY



"Nuclear " family unit of parents & children - isolated from other units & from community

Intensive inward-orientated inter-personal dynamics.

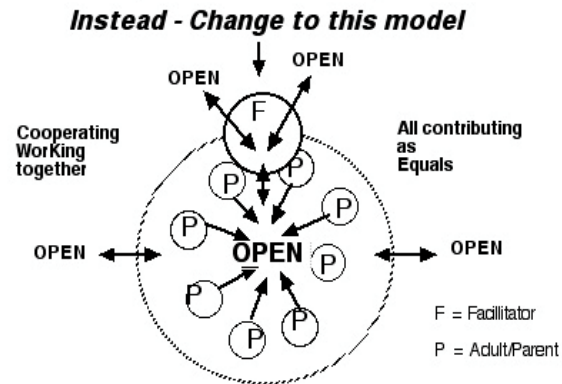
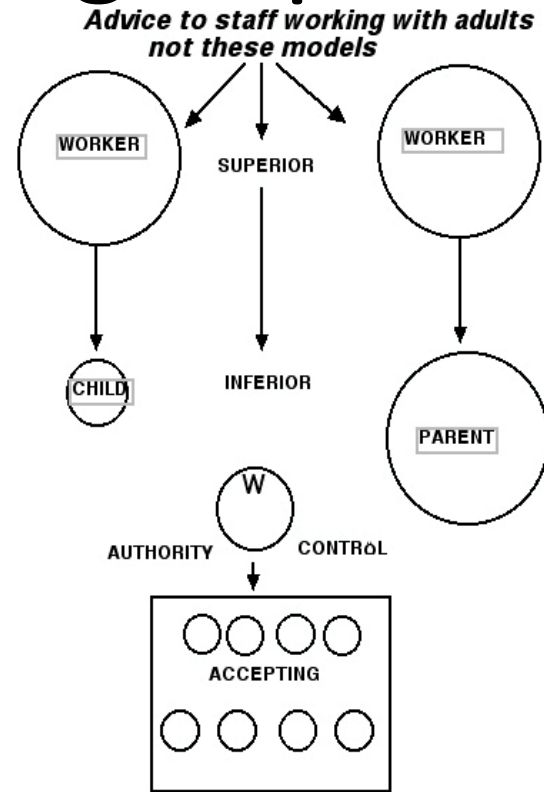
Adolescents seek social contact with other adolescents

Research has shown that as young people enter the pre-adolescent development stage the prime influence on their social behaviour and attitudes and interests moves from the family to their near contacts and friends

But friendship groups are not dictated by age or sex

- Modern society organises services for children by age rather than development but adolescents enter and pass through the development stage at different ages .
- institutions and services have great difficulty in adapting to these developmental changes changes

Working with this Development stage means working with groups in the community



Orientation of young people is outwards from family to community to seek friends

- BUT THE COMMUNITY IS NO LONGER A FRIENDLY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT
- MY RESEARCH OF MANY COUNTRIES SHOWS THAT HELPFUL SERVICES FOR THIS DEVELOPMENT STAGE HAVE NEVER BEEN GOOD BUT ARE EVEN REDUCING
- (Partly I believe because adults are afraid of the questioning and resistance of young people to adult direction and control)

OUR DEFINITION OF PLAY SHOULD include THIS *SEEKING* BEHAVIOUR of YOUTH

- Working with adolescents in the community requires a new form of worker with special training to understand
- the way groups form and shape behaviour
- The community and the local culture and the local needs of youth
- new methods for approaching and befriending apprehensive and critical young people
- IMMENSE TOLERANCE & PATIENCE

My own work with these problems

- Began with Whyte's "Street Corner Society" the classic study in the 50's of a STREET GANG in New York and still provides understanding of the same processes today
- Youth in a depressed community with no opportunities or goals.
- Seek activities to fill the vacuum often deviant or misuse
- Group around a stronger character who becomes leader because he/she excels at the chosen gang activity
- Keeps control over group by selecting activity that confirms his/her leadership
- Allocates roles and duties that suit members and define their status in the group
- Uses the power of membership to keep the members in the group
- Dismisses members who show resistance or opposition to his/her leadership

Lessons

- Explains resistance to any form of approach from outside authority
- “Distance” around group resists any form of activity not ‘chosen’ by leader/group
- Worker must aim to be ‘trusted’ and therefore all contact with gang must aim to show ‘approachability’
- Worker must have patience to learn possible needs where the gang could be helped - information /assistance