

Schooling & Culture (1978–84) was a radical education journal produced for teachers by a range of educators and young people as a means to support political debate and critical practices within schools. Established on the eve of a new conservative government, its title reflects the debate between two pedagogical, but also political, paradigms. On one hand *schooling* which by the late 70s had, for progressive educators, become shorthand for a state apparatus of socially divisive and reproductive forms of education manifest in traditional disciplinarian approaches to teaching; and on the other *culture*, denoting the space outside the school and the role that popular and youth cultures would play in a conception of education that was committed to social justice.

Inner city schools by the late 1970s were often over populated and under staffed, with high rates of truancy paralleled by liberal use of expulsion to 'deal with' bored and frustrated students. This was a period of high immigration and mass unemployment and decisions as to what constituted valuable learning or 'useful knowledge' were subject to contestation and debate within and outside of the school. Traditionalist approaches to schooling – many secondary schools were still driven by church organisations – lacked relevance and meaning for many young people and schools were often unaware of how to respond to, let alone engage, racially diverse working class kids, many of whom had been taught by experience that school meant little more than a step toward instrumentalist youth training schemes and unemployment. The subjects in school, and resources available to support them, only re-instated this irrelevance, with text books across the curriculum that depicted white, nuclear families of mum and dad, two kids and a dog...in History it was kings and queens, rote learning in English and in Art two peppers and a candlestick to be laboriously rendered in line and tone.

The practices of many schools were symptomatic of wider structural inequalities and systemic racism that underscored tensions



Schooling & Culture archival materials

across Britain throughout the 1970s. On TV and in newspapers, government enforced narratives of 'idle black youth' disguised an increasingly authoritarian and violent culture of policing that

Schooling & Culture work in progress, 1980.



Schooling & Culture related exhibition at The Cockpit. Courtesy Andrew Dewdney.



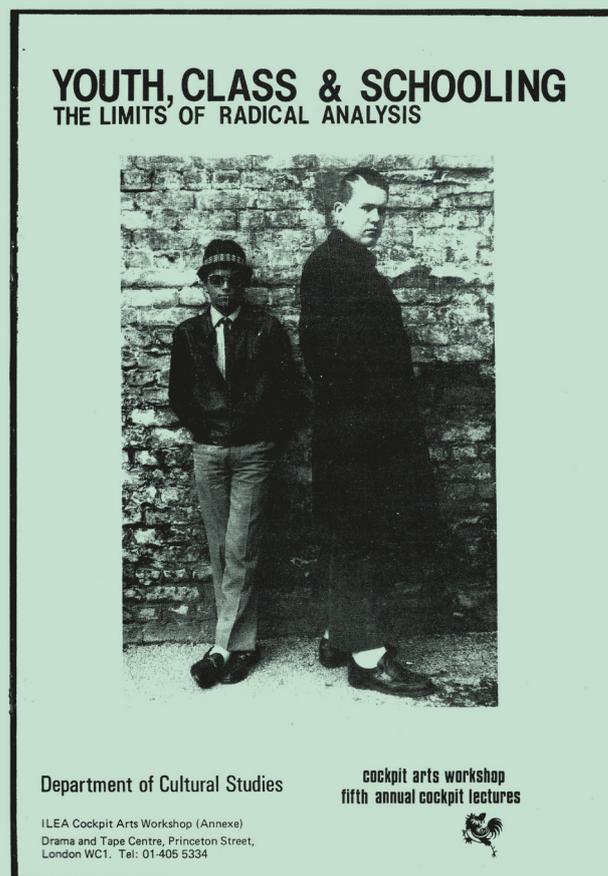
precipitated the race riots in Brixton and Toxteth in 1981. And in the school, with free use of the cane until 1987, this violence was legitimized where punishment for 'bad behavior' was often enforced with little or no recourse as to what the school represented for young people and why.

Yet it was the migration to and diversity of UK cities that led progressive change at this time. Within schools across the country many, often younger, teachers rejected the punitive approach of their forbears in favour of one that would pay attention to the worlds of the students they taught. And through the persistence of dedicated teachers working alongside unions, gradual change to the range of texts set by exam boards were made possible. In 1982 left wing activist and geography schoolteacher Dawn Gill produced *Secondary School Geography in ILEA: Its Contribution Towards the Creation of a Racist Society*, a report critiquing the well-meaning but implicitly colonial, imperialist values conveyed through the teaching of geography divorced from its social, political dimension. Initially banned from publication this report led to the organisation of the sell-out *Racist Society* conference at the Institute of Education in 1983.

Head teachers in particular had the opportunity to lead the school as a community in which commitment to multicultural education, parental involvement, pupil democracy, frank approaches to sex education, and the outright banning of corporal punishment and, in some cases, expulsion,¹ offered an alternative to the disciplinarian regime that prevailed elsewhere. And whilst such schools were not without their problems — the measures of accountability that have today become excessive and militaristic did, then, guard against significant abuses of power — at best they reflected a culture of care and commitment to understanding the place of education within a wider socio-political system.

Yet it was often outside of the school that independent initiatives laid claim to radical new approaches to of teaching and learning. In an era before the national curriculum, Teacher Resource Centres, funded by Local Education Authorities and dotted throughout cities and across the country, were established to develop new resources with and for teachers. For those interested in developing new ideas, an entire support network was available.

1 Michael Duane of the infamous Rising Hill school in Islington deemed expulsion to be illegal within compulsory education.



TRCs also ran professional courses that, with the support of progressive heads, meant sustained release from school to engage in specialised training. One such course was 'The Inner City Child', held in 1974 at the Inner London Education Authority resource centre in Highbury Corner, where 20 or so teachers spent six weeks learning about the social experiences of working class kids in the city. The ideas released from such courses fed back into the school new thinking that refreshed and often challenged prevailing practices within it. Perhaps most significantly, the prevalence of such courses reflect how teachers' individual professional expertise was valued and deemed beneficial to the community of the school as a whole.

Teacher Resource Centres were related to the many other informal yet organized spaces established in cities in the 1970s; youth centres, community darkrooms, motor-bike workshops and adventure playgrounds all offered alternative opportunities for learning, play and social life across generations. *Schooling & Culture* emerged from one such external site: The Cockpit Arts Workshop in London. Originally housed in a purpose-built theatre, Cockpit Arts was set up to promote drama projects for schools, later with the

addition of music and visual art departments. Photography was central to the work at Cockpit Arts, with workshops delivered in schools using a portable darkroom carried around in a transit van. Later, when the Cockpit moved to new premises in Holborn equipped with photographic darkrooms, teachers could attend with school groups for specialised workshops alongside curious itinerant young people excluded from, or disaffected by, school. The significance of photography as a tool for working class education cannot be underestimated; the production of images acted as both a form of self-representation and vehicle for critique of the dominant means of production within mainstream media. This dual function of self-representation and cultural analysis was indebted to the work of Stuart Hall and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham. 'Culture', for Hall, referred not to high art or 'elitist culture', but something that surrounds and constitutes us all. Cultural Studies would provide a radical re thinking of the role of everyday experience alongside critical analysis of the media as a means to render visible mechanisms of power and challenge common sense values and beliefs.² Such was the influence of Hall that frequent

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THE CULTURAL STUDIES TEAM - PART OF THE COCKPIT ARTS WORKSHOP



developing educational approaches which enable young people to articulate their experience through visual and written forms of representation.

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CULTURAL STUDIES IN SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY



disagreements between Cockpit Arts and the Art Inspectorate to whom they were responsible led to the re-naming of the 'Visuals Department' to 'The Department of Cultural Studies', and re assignment to the Multicultural Education Inspectorate.

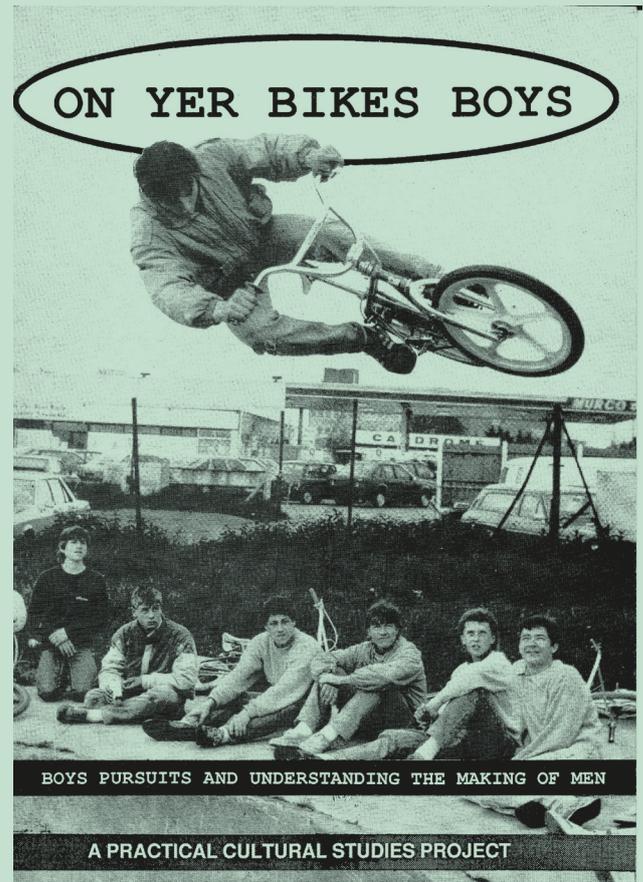
Cockpit Arts also produced exhibitions of work made by young people. Andrew Dewdney, one of the founders of *Schooling & Culture*, cites the experience of having work looked at by a 'real' audience as key to many young people's sense of achievement that was in stark contrast to the abstract vacuum of examinations at school. These exhibitions were often produced in collaboration with photographers who developed innovative approaches to exhibition making that forged new space between artwork and teaching resource, including 'Who's Still Holding the Baby?' by feminist collective the Hackney Flashers and 'Beyond the Family Album: Public and Private Images' by socialist photographer Jo Spence. Such was the interest in and popularity of these exhibitions that they became requested on loan by schools across the country, requiring the employment of a full time exhibition co-ordinator and the production of a DIY touring system of laminated card displays, packed into laundry

boxes and distributed via courier and National Rail's Red Star parcel service. The success of these exhibitions reflects the sharing of ideas across, and the porous relationship between, external sites and the institutional space of the school.

Schooling & Culture the journal was a direct manifestation of, and desire to extend, the work done at the Cockpit. The 1970s was a high point of independent radical publishing and advertisements throughout its issues — from *Radical Science* to *Teaching London Kids* — demonstrate the proliferation of these as 'important platforms and arenas for organisation, debate and the dissemination of practical ideas amongst critical and committed teachers.'³ Yet whilst many journals existed, the *Schooling & Culture* group felt these to be either overly academic with little application for practice, or overly practical with little theoretical or political direction. By way of response Issue One declares that *Schooling & Culture* would be committed to 'practical strategies for action!' This bridging of practice and theory reflected a conscious allegiance with 19th century workerist conception of 'really useful knowledge' that had been formulated in opposition to the production-driven education allotted to working class people during industrialisation. Importantly, really useful knowledge constituted a radical alternative to reductive, socially divisive (*and still-prevalent*), dichotomies of 'academic' versus 'technical' or 'vocational' education and would become a key theme thrashed out over its 14 issues.

Through posters, essays, lesson plans, comic strips, book reviews and teachers accounts *Schooling & Culture* articulated a critical analysis of 'the ways knowledge is selected, structured and valued within school... and the *purposes and effects* of this social management of knowledge.'⁴ Yet whilst critical of much orthodox practice within schools, *Schooling & Culture* was committed to working *with* schools, recognising that it was within compulsory education that young people as well as energetic and open-minded teachers could be found and made contact with. In this sense their relationship with the school embodied Raymond Williams' notion of *in and against*, whereby political change necessitated working within systems of power as a means to enact change.

Reading through the editorials of *Schooling & Culture* gives a sense of the rapidly changing political landscape with which teachers and young people were faced, but also the internal negotiation of this by a group of educators grappling to respond via the relatively slow process of a publication. For Dewdney the journal's evolution can be separated broadly into three phases. In its first iteration, and reflecting the education system through which its founders had come, it was characterised by a critique of art education, with what they



Schooling & Culture archival materials

deemed to be its woolly and deeply conservative notions of the 'inner creativity' of the individual, in favour of a concrete and social commitment to the analysis and expression of visual culture — essentially a pouring in of ideas influenced by Stuart Hall and the CCCS. Significantly, it was more often than not the English, Drama, Social Studies or Geography departments that embraced new pedagogies of visual culture, and the diverse interests of these subjects are reflected in the following issues.

The second phase from 1980–1982 was more self-reflective, addressing perceived issues of exclusion within *Schooling & Culture* itself in terms of who spoke for who; not only had the content of the first issues been

3 *Schooling & Culture* editorial Issue 6 p2

4 *Schooling & Culture* editorial Issue 6 p3

produced mostly by further and higher education lecturers, its editorial board were aware that, as four men and one woman, all white, that the social organisation of the publication would need to reflect the concerns of the journal and its desired audience. Consequently subsequent issues were offered to different editorial collectives, such as issue 7 on *Gender, Class and Education*. With a large editorial of (mostly) women, many of whom worked directly within schools, it was this issue that articulated a much-needed intersectional analysis with features on the gendered dimension of teaching, learning and political work, but also the intersection of race, class and gender that played out in and outside the school.

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The final phase between 1982 and 1984 marks *Schooling & Culture's* response to what by this stage had become the palpable threat to the existence of the Inner London Education Authority posed by the conservative governments agenda of 'back to basics' schooling (sold as a means to address rising inequalities but, arguably, aimed at the creation of a more compliant and, once again, production-driven workforce). These later issues are characterised by an urgency conveyed by a far more graphic visual style – partly in response to written feedback from teachers that it had previously been too academic and dry, but also reflecting an embrace of the visual languages of mainstream media (*within and against*). These issues exemplify an approach to cultural analysis from the ground up through an emphasis on the styles, rituals and meanings of young people's cultural heritage, from Russell Newell's *Rasta: A Way of Life* to a feature on Skins, Mods and



Rockabillies. Other experimental contributions include *'Keepam Down Comprehensive'*, a serialised fiction co-authored by the 'Markham Teachers Group' which narrates contemporary socio-political issues outside of the school through the lens of the teachers and young people within it. In one 'episode' the Brixton riots are articulated through various perspectives of biased media coverage, corridor encounters with students and after school conversations in the pub, giving an insight to the antagonisms and dilemmas faced by a heterogeneous school population.

It was through a left distribution agency, Turnaround, as well as the staff room, protests and the postal system that *Schooling & Culture* was distributed, passed around, or copied on the *banda* machine. And with calls for back copies from 'institutions as differently placed as the British Council or the single Teachers Centre in a Midlands city'⁵ there existed a regional network of teachers seeking alternative approaches to an oppressive disciplinarian regime that had dominated British schooling since the Victorian era. At the centre of the school the staff room was a place of mutual

5 *Schooling & Culture* editorial issue 6 p3



Schooling & Culture research materials and editorial table in progress, 2016.



Schooling & Culture work in progress, 2015.

support as well as disagreement; the open discussion of politics had not – yet – been demonised as against the grain of the school brand. Yet by the mid-80s, and despite united and massive opposition from the teaching profession, the workshops, youth centres, TRCs and the ILEA that funded them were subject to unprecedented cuts, with all external provisions deemed too costly to maintain.

ILEA Cockpit Theatre and Arts Workshop

'ART STUDIES' SCHOOLS' WORK



CATALOGUE, PROJECT NOTES

The very notion of a space to which teachers could go to reflect upon their teaching, engage in political debate, develop ideas and new pedagogies with the support of encouraging staff appears to be the stuff of legend today. However the legacy of this work is manifest in the ongoing work of teachers, educators, youth workers, young people and many others who continue to resist a punitive and increasingly infantilising culture of performance, measurement and competition. *Schooling & Culture 2* seeks to articulate, share and build on this work.

Schooling & Culture was founded and edited by Andrew Dewdney, Adrian Chappell, Alan Tompkin and Martin Lister. Amongst the many organisers and contributors to *Schooling & Culture* were Claire Grey, Jo Spence, Nica Nava, Stephen Miller, David Hampshire, Gloria Chambers and Eileen-Hooper Greenhill, David Lusted, Chris Mottishead and Bob Caterrall.

Announcement:

Autonomous Tech Fetish (ATF) is a feminist and queer technology collective committed to gathering, sharing and making. We explore how digital technology is fetishised and how we can respond – to defetishise it or refetishise into new forms, new configurations that serve our needs and desires.

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