Brown, Sheila (2005), *Understanding youth and crime – Listening to youth?*, 2nd edition, Berkshire: Open University Press.

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March 2006

Understanding Youth and Crime – Listening to youth? is much more than an introductory textbook about the underlying concepts linked to childhood and youth and their possible relations with crime. It is even more than a study merely about youth: it is an excellent scientific journey into the fundamental issues about basic mechanisms of societies at large and the way in which the 'youth issue' is constructed within them. The two main messages of the book is that understanding youth and crime rather means *understanding our perceptions* about youth and crime; secondly, in searching for the effective ways to solve youth problems we cannot avoid actually *listening to youth*. The main critical point of the author is that no matter what academic or political approaches we are talking about, the paternalistic view that the *adult* world is able to solve the problems of the *youth* world without involving them generally exists.

The different chapters of the book emphasise the importance of *participation*; namely, of involving and asking questions directly to those agents whom we are talking about. The overviews about the theoretical and policy-related background of youth issues are given throughout one consistent 'narrative flow' of the author. Brown puts a significant emphasis on *distinguishing between the facts and perceptions* while exploring the different concepts aimed at understanding the characteristics of youth's behaviour, as well as at giving adequate responses to norm-breaking by or against them. With a lot of interesting examples and case studies, the book is constantly highlighting how powerful the media's and the public sphere's interpretation of any phenomenon is on our perceptions.

Concerning the different chapters of the book, firstly, current perceptions of childhood are described by a historical overview about the ways in which youth has been constructed in different times and societies. This thought-provoking elaboration demonstrates the different "socially produced notions of age-appropriate behaviour and identity" (p 5). Besides gaining more insights into the meaning of childhood in different times, the fundamental questions of 'otherness' are also touched upon. The process of how youth has become considered as problem category and how it has become the projection screen of the fears of the adult world is well illustrated by describing the general need of societies for creating groups of 'we' and 'them'.

The next chapter outlines the ways in which criminologists and other related academics considered youth and their relations to crime. The presented theories can be distinguished according to their intention whether they "contribute to the construction of youth-as-other" or rather explain the process of "marginalisation and scapegoating of young people in society" (p 35). The author criticises current theoreticians for simplifying the notion of youth crime to a list of causes and presuming that "the 'delinquent' can be simply differentiated from the 'non-delinquent' or that 'delinquency' itself could be seen as a … monolithic category" (p 37).

Following this, the political approach to the "youth crime question" is presented by the detailed examination of the main policy developments in the UK from the 1960s. Not surprisingly, this chapter is also highly critical of various political tendencies and strategies, and particularly of the significant impact of the managerial and retributive concept in penal policies. While it explains interesting underlying mechanisms behind the different policy developments in youth issues, it sometimes tends to turn into a one-sided critical approach to any reform attempt, not considering their possible positive influence on victims and offenders (e.g. by the broader implementation of restorative justice in the criminal justice system).

The author's constant intention is to make black and white distinctions of the politics, media and popular opinions. This aim is most explicitly expressed by the chapter discussing the dualist character of the "youth problem"; namely, how young people can be either or both "victims" and "villains" of crimes. Amongst other issues, the overview highlights the "relative scant attention paid to the victimization of children and young people" (p 106) and the construction of 'acceptable' and 'non-acknowledged' forms of victimhood in the politics' and public's eyes.

The last three chapters deal with areas that have just recently gained attention on the criminological agenda: girl-offenders, the influence of the internet and of the globalisation of youth crime. The flow of interesting cases studies and thought-provoking conclusions is continued in these sections as well. However, the more these 'new' fields are discussed, the more the book is turning into a subjective selection by the author of certain problems and social phenomena.

All in all, Sheila Brown's interdisciplinary study is unquestionably a unique overview that is highly useful for sociologists, criminologists, victimologists and any other professions. If her main question, "how we could more listen to youth?" provokes further debates amongst the different professions, the book will contribute to more adequate responses to youth problems.