

**How welfare reform does and does not happen: a qualitative study of local
implementation of childcare policy**

Pam Carter

Research Institute for Public Policy and Management

Keele University

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	8
Abstract	10
Preface	12
Figures	
Fig.1 Research Diary Extract	25
Fig. 2 Jane Eyre quotation	31
Fig. 3 Letter from Paymaster General to Jane's M.P.	36
Fig. 4 Sunday Mirror Force Our Lazy Mums to Work	49
Fig. 5 from Law (2003)	81
Fig. 6 Sure Start policy artefact	122
Fig. 7 child poverty the local government contribution diagram	131
Fig. 8 CLP / Strongham structure	133
Fig. 9 Model of governance reproduced from Newman (2001:34)	152
Fig. 10 Respect pen	196
Fig. 11 Respect logo and brand	197
Fig. 12 teddy as policy give-away	205
Fig. 13 teddy as toy	207
Fig 14 Planning and Commissioning Framework DfES / DH (2006)	217
Fig. 15 Sure Start wants and needs	217
Fig. 16 section of CLP map	277
Fig. 17 Caf without an e poem	286
Fig. 18 slide from Community Learning Partnerships District Consultation Event	295
Fig. 19 the CLP journey	310
Fig. 20 Child's paper watch	325
Fig. 21 Highlighter pen	333

Table 1	Overview of thesis	19
Table 2	Dataset	86
Table 3	Interview Sample	96

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter One	Introducing Jane Introducing the Thesis	22
1.	Pam's story	23
	Getting to Know Jane	24
	Jane's story – a Pen Portrait	27
	Jane and Pam's Inter-view	30
2.	Interpreting Jane's Story – What Might it Mean?	37
	Discourse	37
	Governance	39
	Jane's story in Space and Time	47
	Women's Work	49
3.	Conclusion	52

SECTION 2. METHODOLOGY

Chapter Two	Assembling Methods and Methodology	54
1.	Introduction	55
2.	Policy Research – Gold standards and Enlightenment	56
3.	Ethnography	
4.	Interpretivist Methodology	59
5.	Structuration Theory	62
	Organization Theory and the Politics of Restructuring	64
6.	Situated Research	71

	Representation	74
7.	Framing a Palimpsest: a Sensitizing Device	76
8.	Methods Assemblage	85
9.	The Ethics of Getting In and Getting On	89
	Sampling	94
10.	Analysis	98
11.	Conclusion	101

SECTION 3 POLICY CONTEXT / LITERATURE REVIEW

	Chapter Three A Genealogy of Childcare Policy	102
1.	Introduction	103
2.	Women's Public and Private Work: a Genealogy of Childcare Across Time and Space	104
3.	Sure Start: an Iconic Policy?	112
	New Labour Flagship	112
	Policy Transfer	114
	Initiativitis	116
	Policy Branding	117
4.	A Playful Semiotic Interlude	119
5.	Evidence Based Policy?	123
6.	Virtual Children's Centres and Every Child Matters	129
7.	Conclusion	134

	Chapter Four Childcare and Welfare Reform	135
1.	Introduction	136
2.	Inter-Disciplinary Insubordination	137
3.	Ideas of Progress and Policy Research	139
4.	Welfare Reform and Modernisation	142

5.	Implementation	145
6.	From Government to Governance	148
7.	Governing Through Markets, Hierarchies, Networks, Families	153
	Markets	153
	Hierarchy	165
	Networks	167
	Governmentality and the Family	170
8.	Towards Community Governance	173
9.	Conclusion	176

SECTION 4 EMPIRICAL THEMATIC CHAPTER

Chapter Five	Framing and Re-framing Childcare Wants and Needs	177
--------------	--	-----

1.	Introduction	179
2.	Policy Interpreters Governing Meaning	177
3.	Child Poverty Accord: Reforming welfare through re-framing policy	186
4.	“Tough Love”: Family intervention as social control	196
5.	Educare : Neologisms and epistemic communities	204
6.	Framing Community Wants and Needs	208
7.	Conclusion	218

SECTION 5 CHRONOLOGICAL EMPIRICAL CHAPTERS

Chapter Six	Consulting on Strategy, Translating Policy	220
-------------	--	-----

1.	Introduction	221
2.	Policy Translation	222
3.	Consulting on the Strategy May 2006	225

	Attitudes to Change	230
	Achieving Buy-in : rules and resources	238
5.	Consulting on Governance	243
6.	Authorising Policy, Rubber Stamping Strategy	250
7.	Conclusion	252
Chapter Seven	Performing Policy Implementation	254
1.	Introduction	255
2.	Quick Wins and Re-branding	256
3.	Ticking the Box , Sensing the Quality	263
4.	Translating Competing Agendas	266
5.	Performativity and Managing Performance	271
6.	Towards Community Learning Partnerships	275
	Early Days	279
	Jurisdictional Integrity	291
	Elected Members and Select Members	293
7.	Shopping for Policy Products	302
8.	Conclusion	304
Chapter Eight	Gluing the Palimpsest: Reform beyond financial year end	307
1.	Introduction	308
2.	Policy Signification	309
3.	Black Holes, Accountability and the Public Purse	312
4.	From Sure Start to Children's Centres: Spreading the jam thinner	315
5.	Active Welfare in the Social Investment State	322
6.	Enter the Carnavalesque	325
7.	Conclusion	346

SECTION 6 CONCLUSION

Chapter Nine	Conclusion	348
1.	Introduction	349
2.	Third Way Governance of Childcare: how welfare reform does and doesn't happen	351
3.	Negotiating Policy Contradictions in Implementation	356
	Governing Time	358
	Governing Spaces	359
	Governing Money	362
4.	Governing Symbolically: Evidence Based or Iconic Policy?	365
5.	The Limitations and Contributions of This Research	371
Appendix A	Every Child Matters 5 Outcomes Framework	376
Appendix B	Interview topic guide	377
Appendix C	Template Analysis	379
Appendix D	Themes emerging from data analysis	381
Appendix E	Research Protocol produced for local authority	380
Appendix F	Sex and Relationships Education & Teenage Pregnancy Menu	385
Appendix G	Research participants quoted in thesis	387
Appendix H	Fieldwork meetings referenced in thesis	389
Appendix I	Glossary	390
References		391

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Abstract

This thesis explores tensions within UK childcare policy and welfare reform. Through an ethnographic study of policy implementation, I examine themes of government, governance and governmentality. The evidence based policy movement assumes that the nature of evidence is self-evident but ethnographic data reveals how implementers draw on cultural resources of interpretive repertoires, myth and symbolism to make sense of policy. Central Government structures the policy implementation process with a “core offer”, hypothecated funding, a timetable and targets. Local policy actors manage implementation partly through tick box performative practices but they stretch time and juggle money. Implementation practices comprise branding, reification and commodification processes and the design of elastic policy products. Change and stasis are both in evidence with time-scales experienced variously as tight, as long running or as plus ça change.

The community is produced as subject and object of governance, as an agent of change and a site for policy intervention. This glosses over childcare as women’s issue, market tensions and social class determinants of child poverty. Drawing on a range of theoretical resources and using the analogy of a palimpsest I show how discursive governance achieves a temporary policy settlement. This is neither workfare nor welfare but an unanticipated creative set of outcomes, exemplified in a circus project. I reveal some relatively hidden aspects of public policy and analyse give-away artefacts as hyper-visible policy manifestations. Commitment to a public service ethos is in evidence with policy implementers exercising their discretion in the

interstices of market and state bureaucratic governance regimes. The Sure Start brand moves on from a flagship programme to Sure Start Children's Centres but a novel Community Learning Partnership struggles to tug the oil tanker of children's welfare services in a radically new direction or solve the wicked issue of child poverty.

Key words: policy implementation, childcare, welfare reform, governance, governmentality, palimpsest, ethnography.

How Welfare Reform Does and Doesn't Happen: A Qualitative Study of Childcare Policy Implementation

Preface

“Child poverty is a scar on the soul of Britain and it is because our five year olds are our future doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers and workforce that, for reasons not just of social justice but also of economic efficiency, we should invest in not just – as in the past – some of the potential of some of our children but invest, as we propose today, in all of the potential of all of our children.”

Gordon Brown, at the press launch of the Saving and Assets for All consultation.2001

“I’ve been to some pretty horrendous family environments where I’ve seen real suffering and poverty and appalling degrees of hygiene and living and there are children in those environments and apart from the issues about value judgements and class, I think there are still issues there about how a wealthy society like ours allows that to continue really. “ (Rod, a Youth Work Manager, interview LA08)

1. Introduction

New Labour's programme of welfare reform attempts to reconcile a "work first" approach to social inclusion with a communitarian emphasis on localism, a policy of enabling families to exercise choice in the childcare market and a shift from a "something for nothing" welfare dependency culture to a "no rights without responsibilities" system of welfare. Theories around the regulatory state demonstrate how hierarchical mechanisms attempt to steer policy outcomes through the use of performance measures and indicators. However, influential work by Lipsky (1980) on discretion, demonstrated that policy can be made in practice through the influence of "street-level bureaucrats". My research reveals how interpretive practices can both realize and distort policy goals, resulting in unpredictable consequences. This thesis shows how, despite central government urging evidence based policy and practice, with a managerialist emphasis on delivery ("what matters is what works") implementation gets done through relatively open-ended processes of meaning making and interpretation, using symbols, organizing metaphors and rhetorical devices *as well as* technocratic instrumental rationality. I present some artefacts to illustrate some ways in which welfare reform might be variously framed and discursively packaged. I explore tensions between quick fix policy solutions and long running social structures to show how, while decision makers *do* utilise research and "management information", they also invoke symbols (including a ghost) and they draw on unwritten rules. The reform of welfare is studied through observational data from two national conferences and in-depth interview data from a range of people responsible for local implementation of childcare policy. This is complemented by a study of a local authority strategy of Community Learning Partnerships, (CLPs) devised to implement Children's

Centres and Extended Schools policy. My ethnographic study of one of these Partnerships reveals an attempt at forming a new organizational identity and shows how this is embedded in an artefact that operationalizes and materializes what at other times may be experienced as vague policy. These localized indeterminate processes can subvert apparently instrumental rational policy goals and expose some ambiguities that lie at the heart of welfare reform and “modernised” forms of governance.

2. Why childcare policy matters – research question and central research problematics

The fifth outcome of the UK Every Child Matters umbrella policy for children is “Achieve Economic Wellbeing”.¹ The policy *means* to achieve this end goal are complex, resting in large part on strategies of “making work pay” for parents through topping up earned incomes with tax credits. This fiscal strategy sits alongside the national child care strategy that commits the state to enabling a sufficient supply of affordable childcare that in turn is linked to a target to move 70% of lone parents off welfare benefits into paid work (DfES, 2004). Childrearing has traditionally been women’s work, historically carried out in the private sphere of the family, associated with women’s biology and their implied caring natures. This biological essentialism has been challenged by feminists and there have been major gains for women’s equal opportunities in the labour market. However, the sexual division of labour persists. Women earn less than men over their lifetimes, overall they have less power in public life and women still bear the major caring responsibilities in the UK and globally. Welfare

¹ See Appendix for Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework

reform is moving policy in a direction away from the Beveridge breadwinner model of welfare towards a worker-citizen model (Lewis, 2003, Lewis et al, 2008).

Some feminists believe that there is currently too much emphasis in policy on paid work and the labour market at the cost of an “ethic of care”. I share Ruth Levitas’ utopian vision of a caring, imaginative, progressive society. She urges elimination of the paid work ethic and a more equal division of socially necessary fulfilling and creative work and care (Levitas, 2001). While this utopia may be unrealisable in the near future, I also share Penelope Leach’s dystopic fear of a society in which childcare is increasingly commodified with quality and choice dependent on the ability to pay at the expense of supporting and celebrating “...*that atavistic mystery we call parental love.*” (Leach, 1994, reproduced in Hendrick ed. 2005). The central research problematics that my study aims to address are:

1. Childcare policy is centralized so that we now have the first ever national childcare strategy yet discourses of localism are prominent in New Labour’s modernisation agenda.
2. Childcare policy is at a critical juncture of welfare reform. Paradoxically childcare has come into the public gaze as a policy issue at a time when the public sphere is being hollowed out by market forces and congested with policy initiatives.
3. “Modern” quick fix policy solutions appear to be in tension with traditional long running social structures such as class, religion and the gendered division of labour.

English childcare policy relies on market mechanisms (with childcare delivered as a means of enabling welfare-to-work strategies), on bureaucratic systems (such as the Common

Assessment Framework with childcare framed as a means of protecting vulnerable children from harm) and partnership and network governance to achieve the goal of “social inclusion”. These various governance regimes intersect with broader discourses of deserving and undeserving welfare recipients. Childcare policy matters because it holds some potential to improve labour market opportunities for parents, thereby increasing equal opportunities for women, contributing to the reduction of child poverty. This is the hegemonic representation in policy texts. Conversely, as critical policy analysts (Dean, 2001, Lewis, 2006) have argued, it carries the potential to be a policy lever for enhancing “workfare”, thereby reducing social protection for parents and shifting the collective responsibility for caring for young children from the state to the market or back to the private sphere of the family, or, as my study explores, to the strategically vague arena of community governance. My central research question is “how are the ambiguities, tensions and contradictions of childcare policy experienced by people responsible for implementation and what do their sense-making practices look like?”

3. Why the policy implementation process is particularly interesting

The national evaluation of Sure Start demonstrated the complexity of policy implementation with a senior member of the evaluation team writing in 2006 that, despite an investment of nearly three billion pounds and the positioning of Sure Start as a flagship policy, it is not precisely clear what Sure Start is or was (Rutter, 2006). The “implementation gap” may not be a matter of local bureaucrats deliberately subverting policy intentions, it may also be that policy goals themselves are vague and subject to re-interpretation in implementation. Not only might policy goals and programme strategies be vague, they may be contradictory as Stone (2002) argues. In this thesis I study shifting processes of governance and welfare reform through accessing what has traditionally been regarded as the “black box” of the policy implementation process. Rather than by assuming coherent policy objectives and measuring

outcomes (which input-output model is a more usual approach for policy evaluation) I look at how means and ends or inputs and outputs are understood and reconfigured in the implementation process.

4. Why I chose to study this

Childcare has been important in my life. I have three sons and used formal childcare when I became a mature student. Before that I “chose” to leave a well paid job to care for them and then worked part time in a “micro-job” when my family helped to care for them. At the time the choice did not feel like a free one. Psychologically I was influenced by ideologies of good mothering and experienced the guilt of never being good enough. Economically, my decision resulted in much reduced pension contributions and earning capacity. However, I was fortunate in benefiting from free higher education with free crèche provision and gained my degree. In 2003 I was employed as an internal evaluation officer working across three Sure Start local programmes for a Primary Care Trust. This job was exhilarating but also frustrating. My experience was that frequently decisions were not based on carefully considered evidence but on a variety of other logics in operation, including the self-interest of powerful people. Often, pragmatic decisions were made on the hoof in the face of time constraints, with legitimacy secured post hoc through rationalizations constructed to justify decisions. I witnessed middle class professional women exercising their discretion and making decisions based on their assumptions about what working class women wanted and needed. This prompted my interest in accountability for policy and the relationship between politics and administration. I was interested in exploring the variety of rationalities, including the

importance of rhetoric as well as quantitative targets that seemed to be at play in implementing childcare policy. As I moved from practice to research, Sure Start local programmes were mutating into Children's Centres and I was interested in how this policy change would be interpreted and managed in implementation.

I took advantage of the specificities of the PhD that I felt allowed me more critical distance than I'd had as an internal evaluator. The "evidence based policy and practice" discourse presents evidence as *self*-evident but I wanted to explore how facts and values surrounding childcare might be expressed, represented and embodied as people grappled with policy. I have included a "natural history" of my research in the methodology chapter. The thesis builds upon research carried out as part of my doctoral training in research methods. My M.Res. dissertation analysed one key childcare policy text and that textual analysis enabled me to develop some of the research questions around policy implementation in practice that my PhD empirical study has sought to address. Chapter one, Jane's story was presented as "Jane's story: A governmental narrative of work to welfare" at a Dilemmas in Human Services conference in September 2008 and my paper has been accepted for publication². An abstract titled "Doing the Public Good: Ethics, Ethnography and Policy Research" based on material from chapter two has been accepted for presentation at the Ethnography 2009 conference.

² <http://www.uel.ac.uk/dilemmas/index.htm>

5. Overview of the thesis

Table 1. Overview of thesis

Section 1	Introduction	Jane's Story	Ch.1
Section 2	Methodology	Assembling Methods & Methodology	Ch.2
Section 3	Literature review, policy context, some empirical analysis	A Genealogy of Childcare Policy	Ch.3
		Childcare & Welfare reform	Ch.4
Section 4	Empirical thematic chapter	Re-framing Childcare Wants & Needs	Ch.5
Section 5	Empirical chronological chapters	Consulting on Strategy, Translating Policy Performing Policy	Ch.6
		Implementation	Ch.7
		Gluing the Palimpsest	Ch.8
Section 6	Conclusion	How Welfare Reform Does & Doesn't Happen	Ch.9

The first chapter presents empirical data on an individual case. I had not intended that my study would focus on an individual as a unit of analysis but I found that when I analysed it carefully, Jane's story encapsulated all of the themes in my thesis, including my methodological concerns. While her case or story could not necessarily be generalised, (she could be regarded as a statistical 'outlier') the contradictions it exposes are at the heart of welfare reform. In chapter two I explain my research design and methodological underpinnings, introducing the concept of a palimpsest as a sensitizing device. Chapter three documents a genealogy of childcare policy to introduce the reader to key policies and the idea of "initiativitis". Chapter three also relates these policies dialectically to a variety of frames or discourses and I present the first of my artefacts to introduce policy framing and branding. A small amount of illustrative data and analysis from my empirical study is also included in this chapter. Chapter four is a review of some of the literature on governance and modernisation as

these relate to welfare reform and childcare in order to situate my study in the context of a broader body of academic research. Again, I include some analysed data here to illustrate theory in relation to policy. The next chapter is where the main empirical section of the thesis begins with a thematic analysis of how implementers frame public and private childcare wants and needs. I draw on data derived from observation of three policy arenas and interview data to show how policy from central Government is interpreted and how local translations occur in practice. Throughout the thesis I weave interview data around ethnographic data. Chapter six begins the ethnographic tale of a Community Learning Partnership and demonstrates contradictory attitudes to change, illuminates the practices deployed by a local authority as it consulted on its strategy and describes how the strategy was adopted. Chapter seven continues with the establishment of a Community Learning Partnership as it struggles to form an organizational identity and deliver policy implementation. Using the concept of performativity, I show how policy is interpreted and meanings are negotiated. Chapter eight analyses how the process of reform is uneven but how a temporary policy settlement is achieved. In the concluding chapter I synthesise themes from my research and existing academic knowledge to suggest a modest contribution to knowledge. I sum up my research and set out some possibilities for further enquiry.

6. Where my contribution lies

My study contributes an understanding of how welfare reform and “modernisation” does and doesn’t happen – how change and stasis are in tension at the meso level of a Community Learning Partnership as well as in more macro policy arenas. This illustrates the limitations of

reading off policy outcomes from stated policy intentions as expressed in official documents. The ethnography reveals a more complicated, less settled policy formation. My analysis of childcare policy in process offers insight into implementation as a set of social practices, which may often be contradictory but which can nevertheless achieve a temporary policy settlement. My analysis of public policy artefacts is, I believe, unique and contributes to an understanding of policy translation, representation, branding and reification.

SECTION ONE : INTRODUCTION

Chapter One

Introducing Jane introducing the thesis

Contents

1.	Pam's story	22
	Getting to know Jane	23
	Jane's story – a pen portrait	25
	Jane and Pam's inter-view	29
2.	Interpreting Jane's story – what might it mean?	36
	Discourse	36
	Governance	38
	Jane's story in space and time	46
	Women's work	48
3.	Conclusion	53

“Jane”: *And so now I’m on benefits basically which after working for twenty years isn’t a nice place to find yourself in. I felt angry because I want to work. Financially it’s a nightmare and we struggle. You’ve got constant money worries I didn’t have before and now we just about scrape by*“.

1. Pam’s story

This chapter will present a single case study. First I beg the reader’s indulgence while I display what I feel may be some relevant information about my background. I’ve been a Policy Officer in a local authority, a travel agent (*not relevant*) a Community Worker, a Senior Evaluation Officer working in a Primary Care Trust. I’ve been a full-time mum and mum is still a stable part of my identity, as is feminist. Now is the time for me to learn the art and craft of becoming a researcher. Willis and Trondman (2002:400) cite Bourdieu: “The ‘scholastic’ is “free time, free from the urgencies of the world, that allows a free and liberated relation to those urgencies and to the world”. Re-reading now a Personal Development Profile that I completed as part of my training in research methods I note that I did conceive of my PhD time as “time for me”. In deliberating what form the thesis should take and how to write up, I decided to take advantage of the particular luxury of independence that the PhD affords. The academy has often felt during this journey like a space for independent thought, relative to more expedient research projects that are constrained by shorter time spans and by the politics of research contracts. More recently, the exigencies of market forces have begun to intrude into this academic space. You may work out stuff about me by reading these words. I have

public and private selves but Pam is the name I go by. It's how people know me. This introductory chapter isn't "All About Me". I want to believe I've heeded the cautions about the dangers of solipsism (Bleakley 1999) but I *do* want to situate myself in the research. I want to be reflexive and acknowledge the fact that the PhD has been a learning journey for me. I also want to give due weight to this as a research project, potentially of value to others – a contribution to shareable knowledge, not simply a personal development project. Willis (2004:179) writes about reflexivity “...*not as a personal confession but as the awareness of the productivity of our research questions and theoretical resources.*” I am trying to achieve a useful integration of data and theory through interpretation while acknowledging the limitations of my subjectivity.

Getting to know “Jane”

About six months into my fieldwork I read on-line about a particular Children's Trust Board that was the first in its county to have a parent representative (as opposed to paid officers, voluntary sector officials or elected councillors) on its board. When I interviewed a Parent Support Worker at a Children's Centre, I asked her about this unique representative and she put me in touch with “Jane”. I went prepared to ask “Jane” about her role on the Children's Trust to explore my research interest in governance. Let me introduce you to “Jane”. That's the pseudonym I've labelled her with. I don't tell you what she looks like except that, like me, she is white. I don't know her age although she is younger than me. I don't know an awful lot about her. I spent about an hour and a half in her company. We exchanged correspondence by e-mail then she posted me a document. I don't presume to know her well. I guaranteed her

anonymity but possibly she doesn't want to be anonymous. Quite possibly she may want her story shouting from the rooftops.

Before I interviewed "Jane" I had interviewed a local authority officer who had responsibility for implementing the Children's Centres and Extended Schools strategy. He told me:

"Yeah I mean we've got some real successes you know. We've had people – [as] with all Sure Starts - they came in as a depressed mother and have now got NVQ in childcare and is in full time employment. I mean we've all got those sort of tear jerking case studies. " (LA01)

I don't think my presentation of "Jane's" story is "tear-jerking" and it isn't a "case" of her obtaining full time employment, although when I interviewed her she *was* studying for an NVQ in childcare. Hers is a case of unintended consequences with injustice and indignation framing her narrative.

Fig.1 Research Diary Extract

*: market didn't respond to Jane's childcare needs – too risky
case study – exemplar – denouement
Jane = the exception that proves the rule*

As I look back on this extract from my research diary I note I've jotted the words "denouement" and "exemplar". To provide a denouement for "Jane's" story would mean to freeze frame it in time and construct the narrative as though it had an ending. Schostak (2006:141) claims that "A narrative kills". He writes :

A life is not composed as a narrative, a linear sequence of clearly separated events joined by adding "and" between them: ... this happened *and* then this happened *and* then this happened *and* ... Nor is there some place to start. Nor even a place to end. However, the researcher as an accountant of experience, like the obituary writer begins at the beginning and ends at the end."

Of course, since I interviewed "Jane," her life has continued³. I have been given a snapshot of her biography and for that I feel very privileged. I shall present a pen portrait but "Jane's" story is not exactly exemplary in relation to the rest of my thesis. Inevitably, individual biographies bleed over the edges and escape the frames of their pen portraits and complicate ideal typologies. In framing her as a case study I do her a disservice. To borrow a concept from Bourdieu (1991) I enact symbolic violence. On the other hand, in representing the disservice that was (in her opinion) meted out to her by the Government, I hope to provide analytic insight into changing forms of governance and processes of welfare reform by which child care is subsidised by tax credits so long as parents meet certain conditions. These include

³ After she told me her story she e-mailed me to say her "case" featured in a parliamentary debate on a private members bill and this has resulted in the successful new right for parents of children with disabilities to have a short break from caring.

being in paid employment and paying for childcare to be carried out in regulated environments outside of the family home. This is the welfare-to-work policy, dependent upon the availability of sufficient affordable childcare, intended to be part of the government's target to abolish child poverty, which I set out to study. I didn't expect to find a contradictory work-to-welfare story. It confounded my expectations. Stone, writing in the foreword to Schneider and Ingram (2006p.ix) writes "If social scientists ever discover the molecule of governance, surely it will be the category." "Jane's" story of how she was *categorised* variously by government and within a Children's Trust made me think differently about government and governance. Although individual and particular, it gives some context, especially if I flesh out what I know was going on around her in policy terms that she may not have been aware of. Frequently "context" is in the background while data, the study, is foregrounded. Here I present "Jane's" individual case as *both* to show how history and human subjects are dialectically related.

Jane's story: a Pen Portrait

"Jane" was off work on maternity leave. She had a child, Lewis, who had been diagnosed at the unusually early age of 21 months with diabetes. He had allergies as well, including a cat allergy. "Jane's" relationship had broken down so it was especially important to her to be able to return to work after her maternity leave so that she could provide for her family. She tried to obtain childcare for Lewis but nurseries were reluctant to care for him because of his medical condition. She decided to be honest when she advertised for a nanny, explaining that Lewis was an insulin dependent diabetic. She got a couple of applications and offered the job to one

applicant but then when the person turned up Lewis was having a hypo⁴ so she decided she didn't want the job. "Jane" then made arrangements with her sister-in-law who had had medical training and they made a business arrangement so that "Jane" would pay her sister-in-law to look after her children. Because of Lewis's health problems, "Jane" wanted this to be in her own home. She planned to pay her sister-in-law using tax credits. However, this was not possible. The rules don't allow the use of tax credits for childcare that takes place in the family's own home. "Jane" couldn't believe that the government would want her to be out of work claiming income support when she would prefer to be in work using tax credits. She wrote to the government giving medical evidence of Lewis's condition but received no reply so she contacted her MP who took up her case. Just before her maternity leave ran out she received a letter from her MP with a copy of a letter from the Paymaster General. The letter expresses sympathy and suggests that "Jane" ask social services for help in finding a domiciliary care worker to care for her children. "Jane" discovered that this advice was incorrect as she was told that domiciliary care workers aren't allowed to give injections. The letter gave an explanation of the government's reasoning for not allowing tax credits to be used to pay family members to care for children in their own homes.

"Jane" found herself unable to return to work. She is now worse off financially and she feels very frustrated that, as a result of government policy, she is out of work and dependent on benefits. Fortunately for "Jane" and her family, Sure Start and the Children's Centre have been very helpful in caring for her children, taking account of Lewis's needs. "Jane" volunteers at the Centre, is re-training in childcare (she was pleased to find she had an aptitude for caring with children with disabilities – she hadn't realised she was capable of being so patient). It is

⁴ Hypoglycaemic attack

very rewarding for her to see a child make progress as a result of her efforts. She has recently been asked to volunteer as a parent representative on the Children's Trust Board. She would like to think that her story may make a difference.

[THE END] ...

"Jane" has joined the statistical ranks of the unemployed. She is a single mother on benefits with a disabled child. Research by the Women's Budget Group (2005) presents statistics to show that "the overall risk of poverty (measured as below 60 per cent of the median after housing costs) among lone parents is 52 per cent." (p.11) The Every Disabled Child Matters campaign draws on published academic research to show that:

"Families with disabled children remain disproportionately likely to be in poverty.

They are more than twice as likely as other families to be unable to afford five or more everyday items." (EDCM 200,p..3)

. "Jane" lives outside the area originally designated as a Sure Start area so possibly her family's risks of social exclusion are reduced. These statistical "actuarial" calculations of "risk" and the complexity of professionals and managers attempting to manage risks in the area of child welfare have been analysed by Parton (2006). I encountered statistical data in the course of my qualitative research and will be demonstrating both its functionality and dysfunctionality in practice.

I did promise “Jane” that I would tell her story although I explained that it may not make any difference in the short or long term:

Pam: Well there’s no way I can promise that my research is going to change the world but –

But I want it to. I want things to be better for “Jane”. I want, like Stake (2004) to change the world.⁵ I don’t want policy to pinion voices in dead texts, real lives to be confined to the iron cage of administrative environs, electronic databases or library vaults, represented by Others, mis-represented through the unintended consequences of policy or misunderstood in what Schneider and Ingram (1997) have called “degeneratively designed policy”.

Jane and Pam’s inter-view

“Jane” story provides my introduction, she introduces my thesis. I am going to be speaking about “Jane”. I’m going to re-use her words and re-present her story. I shall be chopping up her transcript and coding, analysing and re-ordering it⁶. “Jane’s” transcript comprises 7,811 words. My pen portrait of her runs to 583. Her words will become an amalgam with my words and the words of academics and other, more literary authors. This amalgam will be a palimpsest. From now on I’ll drop the inverted commas around her pseudonym.

Just after I named Jane I remembered a different Jane – a fictional, Victorian, plain Jane :

⁵ Besides Stake, Game and Metcalfe’s *Passionate Sociology* (1996) as they hoped “set off reverberations” for me and encourages me.

⁶My N-Vivo representation of Jane’s transcript comprises 40 nodes and 124 references. The tape lasts 51 minutes and three seconds. There are two interruptions.

Jane Eyre : "Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags" (Chapter 12, Jane Eyre).

Fig. 2 Jane Eyre quotation

And then along comes Jean Rhys in 1966 and scrapes the Bronte palimpsest with her inscription of Bertha the subaltern's story which was a sequel in historical terms but a literary prequel, a revisionist history that became part of the palimpsest of women's writing (Rhys, 1968). I reckon Jane's going to manage to "exercise her faculties" without my help. I don't think her taking part in my research improved her particular situation. I have to assume she agreed to take part and signed the informed consent form because of altruistic reasons. I'm hoping Jane's story helps me and helps you, dear reader, to see some of where I'm coming from and going to with this palimpsest of a PhD. No doubt I figure as a very minor character in her life but for me she may well turn out to be a heroine. Not so much because of her heroic deeds but because of what she so generously gave me – the opportunity to write about her, to theorise her situation, to code and classify her experience. Hers is a cautionary tale and I think it expresses rage, or at least, indignation at injustice (Freire, 2004).

Jane: "I felt very angry because I want to work. There's no reason for me not to work. I've got everything set up and the reasons they came out with were just total rubbish because

they would have registered her. You know – they would have paid me to pay her in *her* home but y’know she was the same person in *my* home. And they wouldn’t do it and that was rubbish. The reasons they came out with didn’t make any sense at all and that was just so frustrating, y’know. I don’t want to be on benefits. I don’t like y’know, I wanted - . You set out, don’t you? You have children and to my mind you set out with what you want for them in your head. And part of that to me personally is you go out and you work to give them the best standard of living you can. And that was just taken away from us and I was just – y’know. It feels very unjust.” (LA35)

“Her” refers to Jane’s sister-in-law who featured in the version of Jane’s story that I presented above. Jane is explaining to me how she has a notion of what she wants for her children in her head. She questions me rhetorically – “*You set out, don’t you?*” attempting to enrol me into her view of the world but acknowledges that her point of view is personal – “*to me personally*”. Feminists campaigned using the slogan “the personal is political” and I suggest Jane’s story exemplifies this. Her reference to injustice illustrates the paradox of rule that Weber analysed (Weber, 1917, reproduced in Runciman ed. 1978). Rules are instigated to govern the particular instance through impartial “fair” application. What is fairness for some is injustice to others however. Weber noted the role of passion and values in social science years ago, Young (1977) reiterated this and I suggest that, in the light of the contemporary prescriptive “Evidence Based Policy and Practice Movement”, (Coote, Allen & Woodhead, 2004) it is worth repeating that attention to the “fact-value distinction” is important in policy analysis and I shall pursue this dialectic throughout the thesis.

But back to the inter-view:

Pam: “And had you had job satisfaction? Had work meant a lot to you in a personal way besides an income?”

Jane: “Um – if I’m really honest, no. But **that wasn’t relevant**. The part that was relevant – it wasn’t that I didn’t like working, it was that my job was a bit cut-throat if you like. But **the part that was relevant** was that I would have carried on working because even more important than my enjoyment was my providing for my children.”

Pam: “Mm”.

Jane: “And so you can tolerate all sorts because you want to provide for your children.”

Pam: “Mm”.

[emphases added]

Let’s stop the tape here at about five minutes in to the interview. Let’s think about what’s relevant. I ask Jane about job satisfaction and whether work meant a lot to her aside from an income. The question relates to my research interest in paid and unpaid work but betrays my middle class, heterosexual identity, living in an increasingly old fashioned nuclear family. Work had meant so much to me in the past. It meant that I gained a social status, an identity and a social life outside of the home environment. I was one of those women Betty Friedan wrote about in *The Feminist Mystique* who had a problem that has no name (1983). We both adopt the title “Ms” but I’m not the same as Jane. She lets me know what’s relevant to her. She makes my questions fit her answers (Graham, 1983). She exerts some control over the content of the interview (Duncombe and Jessop 2002). I had a topic guide to inform my

interview questions but I used it very loosely. ⁷Schostak (2006) describes his colleague's experience of interviewing: "*The interview transformed from its expected course of question followed by answer into 'something more like a discussion.'*" (p.50). Schostak goes on :

"As a performance, or rather an unfolding relation between conscious beings who are not necessarily fully aware of their effects on each other, the emergent form of the interview can be surprising and stimulating. These effects ... are part of the data of the interview. However, such data is rarely provided and if it is, is barely theorized."

Here I am theorizing my similarity to and difference from Jane that I believe constructed what Schostak terms the inter-view. Jane goes on to distinguish between benefit claimants, using the same discursive strategy of enrolment with an additional epistemological warrant claiming 'perfect' knowledge:

"There's two ways to look at benefits. You know perfectly well there's people on benefits because they just can't be bothered. And those people I don't have time for. And then there's people on benefits because they don't have any choices and that's a different thing."

Choosing not to debate deserving and undeserving claimants, I asked whether she had experienced job satisfaction and she replied:

⁷ See Appendix B

Jane: “I could have got through – y’know, disliking the job because I would have been doing what I feel I’m supposed to be doing which is working to give my children a certain standard of living. So you know that, **that part was quite irrelevant**. [my emphasis]. Whether I liked the job or not was - y’know. It was a means to an end if you like. Which was about providing. Because I’d become a single parent whilst the baby was only a few months old and so it was even *more* important to provide for my children. I wanted to do it as part of partnership, y’know. Being on my own it became even more important. I didn’t want to be put on the benefits system that you know – anyway, never mind.”

Pam: “So has that had an impact on your quality of life then?”

Jane: “Drastically, drastically.”

What Jane felt was pertinent to her was paid work as a means of providing for her children. The 10 year child care strategy supports Jane’s personal strategy: “*Work is the most important route out of poverty and children benefit in the short and long term from having at least one parent working.* (DfES, 2006 p.12) However, I shall show in the thesis how child poverty and welfare to work might be difficult to get onto local policy agendas.

This is a copy of the letter that Jane received via her MP. I include it here because it corroborates Jane’s story and I find its language and symbolism interesting.

4/27277/06



RECEIVED 18 SEP 2006

HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ

[REDACTED] MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Your ref: [REDACTED] treas

13 SEP 2006

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter of 21 August enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Ms [REDACTED] about the childcare element of Working Tax Credit (WTC).

I am very sorry that [REDACTED] is having difficulty finding childcare for her son that meets the conditions for support through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit (WTC). Perhaps I could explain the reasons for these qualifying conditions.

The childcare element is designed to help remove the childcare barrier that often prevents people taking up or returning to work. The Government recognises that if it is to ensure that families with children can move into work or remain in work, it is important to provide affordable, good quality childcare provision. This is why the support provided through tax credits is only available for the costs of registered or approved childcare and is in line with the Government's commitment to promote good quality and safe provision.

There are various types of childcare providers that are eligible for tax credit support. These include traditional registered childminders, foster carers (for children other than those they are fostering), domiciliary care workers and providers approved under the light-touch Childcare Approval Scheme introduced in England in April 2005. However, the latter does not apply to care given in the child's home by a relative of the child.

While the Government recognises the valuable service that people often perform when caring for children who are related, it believes that regulating childcare arrangements made between family members would be a regulation too far. Furthermore, many people using relatives for childcare would not welcome such interference and tend not to pay significant sums for the help they receive anyway. There would be drawbacks to the Government providing a subsidy that encouraged the commercialisation of family arrangements. It would tend to distort the pattern of family and community care, which is arguably not the province of Government, by introducing external factors into the relationship. External intervention, through subsidy and child safety regulation, could be particularly sensitive if, for example, it led to the Government declaring a relative of a child unsuitable to act as a registered carer of that child. All these effects could be seen as an unwelcome interference into, and a distortion of family life.

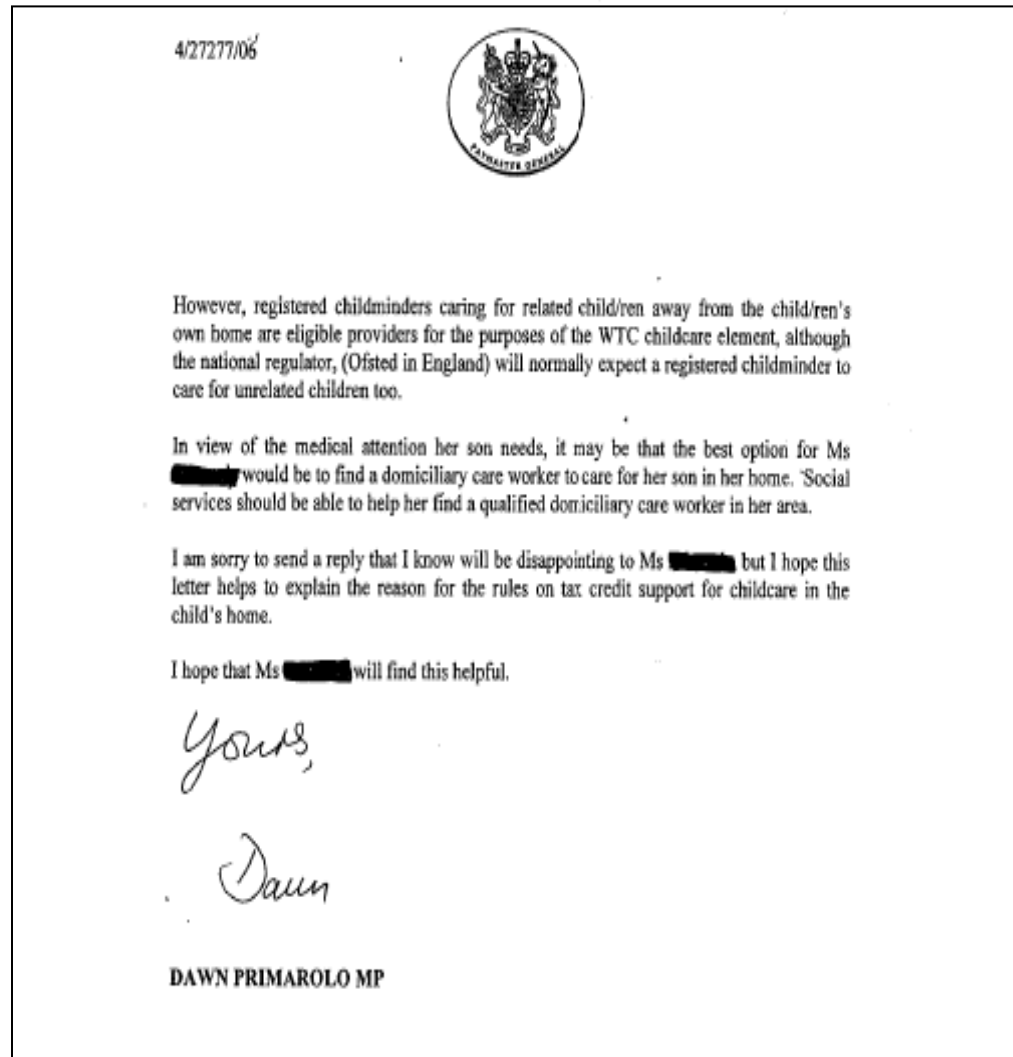


Fig. 3 Letter from Paymaster General to Jane's M.P.

2. Interpreting Jane's story – what might it mean?

Discourse

The subject position of “constituent” addresses Jane as a citizen constituted within the structure of the nation state. She has exercised her democratic right to representation but her welfare rights are limited by legislation. I point this out here to indicate that in this thesis I

shall be arguing with some postmodern theorists, some of whom, such as Derrida, have suggested that there is “nothing outside the text” but this extreme relativism denies the authoritative power of “official” texts (Smith, 2005) and the performativity of language (Rose and Miller, 1992). Foucault claimed that power organised hierarchically with zero-sum winner and loser conditions is no longer operational and, although Jane’s claim as a constituent was denied, I find Foucault’s analysis of how bio-power (1980:186) produces subjects useful. Foucault argued that the monarch is dead, that power should no longer be sought in one authoritative location such as the representative of the Crown, that “sovereign power” has become dispersed, fluid, and productive, rather than repressive (Foucault, 1980 ch.5). He also suggested that reality is discursive, that power and knowledge are inextricably entwined and that truth cannot be accessed. He showed how subjects are subject to discourse and power but are also the subjects and objects of discourse. As they act as agents – the active pronoun of their sentences, they are simultaneously the bearers of discourse, subject to regimes of power. The theory of governmentality refers to these processes of subjectification (Burchell, Gordon and Millers eds., 1991, ch.4). When active citizens can be persuaded and encouraged to adopt behaviours that government requires and expects then there is no need for coercive power (Rose, 1989). Note however the symbolism of Her Majesty’s (HM) Treasury. This is an official document emanating from the Crown branded with the seal with its “straplines”: “hon y soit qui mal y pense” and “dieu et mon droit.” God knows what they mean to people living in the UK today – 39% of whom did not vote in the last general election. To Jane the letter meant that her case was closed.

Smith's work on institutional ethnography (2005:180) illustrates the power of texts and shows how they "coordinate institutional courses of action". Clarke's *Situational Analysis* also acknowledges the significance of texts and shows how the work they perform can be traced ethnographically (Clarke, A., 2005). In forthcoming chapters, in order to examine how (to paraphrase Yanow, 1996) childcare policy *means*, I shall present a variety of textual and pictorial representations of policy as well as studying policy artefacts semiotically. I shall also present ethnographic data that shows how texts are reinscribed in implementation practices and how artefacts are used to enrol policy entrepreneurs into competing policy agendas.

Governance

Governance theorists such as Rhodes (1997) suggest that the state is hollowing out and that governance is taking over from government, that the power exerted by government has been replaced by the more diffuse, decentralised, less hierarchical, more horizontal exercise of power within governance. Governance also highlights supra-national processes of globalization and European integration that reduces the power and autonomy of the nation state (Walby, 2003). Others suggest that this analysis is oversimplified (Hill and Lynn 2005). Rather than rushing in to the topic of governance I asked Jane an introductory question about her experience of being involved in Sure Start:

Pam: "And have you been involved in Sure Start for a while?"

Jane: "Yeah. Well it wasn't really Sure Start. Erm, I've been involved since my little boy who's three, he was two and two months so almost two years."

Pam: “So at that stage was it at the time of the change from Sure Start to Children’s Centres?”

Jane: “Well you see the Children’s Centre and Sure Start were different. They were in different places. And it’s now – Sure Start has come under this roof, if you like, is my understanding of it. They weren’t initially, although Sure Start families were directed to the Children’s Centre, if you like, for additional services. That’s my understanding of it. When I first came to the Children’s Centre, because of where I live, ‘cos Sure Start is very much of a postcode lottery if you like and because of where I live I wasn’t classed as Sure Start and I was working etcetera but my little boy’s got health problems and so I was actually first able to go to a mother and toddler group, which is Sure Start ran. And because I had links with Sure Start and I’m now no longer working, then, you know, I’m classed as a Sure Start parent even though my postcode doesn’t match that”.

Jane has a limited understanding of the Sure Start programme and how it became incorporated into the Children’s Centre⁸. She may also have been unaware of similar Area Based Initiatives with their partnership governance arrangements aimed at regeneration that would have been taking place around her such as Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, Single Regeneration Budget, European Regional Development Fund Objective 2, Health Action Zone and so on. She knew that she was able to attend a mother and toddler group which she says was “Sure Start ran”. I present a genealogy of childcare policy in chapter three to show policy changes

⁸ This is unsurprising. Rutter (2006:140) attempts to answer the question “Is Sure Start an Effective Preventive Intervention?” and decides that findings are inconclusive and that “The problem for Government is that there is no ‘it’ that comprises SureStart.”

and explore associated representations of mothers and toddlers (and fathers) but for now we might just note that Jane was originally “classed” as not entitled to the “additional services” that Sure Start offered to some families because of her postcode. She perceives her entitlements as being not only about her postcode but also in relation to her employment status and her little boy’s health status. Schneider and Ingram (2005) have shown how policies contain inherent assumptions about “deserving and entitled” populations and Newman (2001) uses the term “imaginary publics” to convey these people that policy “calls up”, in Althusser’s theory “interpellates” . The word that leaps out at me from the letter Jane received via her MP is “arguably”.

“There would be drawbacks to the Government providing a subsidy that led to the commercialisation of family arrangements. It would tend to distort the pattern of family and community care, which is **arguably** not the province of Government, by introducing external factors into the relationship.” [emphasis added]

The use of this rhetorical disclaimer acknowledges the controversy that blurs the distinction between public and private matters at the same time as the letter’s decision closes off the argument. Except for the word “arguably” the letter from the Paymaster General presents “government” and “family” as stable public and private categories. In contrast, Donzelot (1979: xxv) suggests that we “...posit the family not as a point of departure, as a manifest reality, but as a moving resultant ...”. Donzelot draws attention to the interaction between the governance of the public and the private, between the family and the state. Jane is subjected to the Paymaster General’s decision. Critical social policy acknowledges the Janus-faced nature

of the state that operates both care and control (see Moss and Petrie in Hendrick 2005). This is generally recognized by welfare users.

Jane: And so the midwife came and I was having a really bad pregnancy....and so she said to me – have you heard of the children’s centre? And at that stage I actually thought this was something to do with social services because it used to be a Council building. So I didn’t know anybody could come at that stage ‘cos it was sort of like brand new anyway.

Pam: Would you have had a stigma then around social services?

Jane: Yeah. I’m fully aware now over Lewis. I could contact social services and I never have. Because yeah, it is a stigma for me. There’s reasons behind it, one of them being – I mean they just carry this – stigma with them anyway.

Mair and Watson (2008:11) show how, in the area they studied, “... the initials of Sure Start S.S. had been seen as a disguised reference to Social Services and the centre had been avoided wherever it was humanly possible.” Jane refers to the “new brand” of Sure Start which, for her, didn’t take away the stigma until she was able to develop trust in the Centre and feel welcomed rather than threatened.

Jane felt that the Treasury had controlled and thwarted her plans to provide for her children.

Jane: That money is your luxuries if you like. It’s the children’s holidays. It’s, you know, them asking for something and you being able to say yes instead of thinking well

actually perhaps no I *can't* do that. Or y'know. Now I have to sit and think about everything we do. Whether I can afford to do it.

Whether children's holidays are a luxury or a necessity, a need or a want, has not been settled within policy. Glendinning & Kemp (2006) have usefully distinguished between the "cash and care" elements of welfare. Jane refers to her financial situation – she is worse off than being in work and is unable to use tax credits as she had hoped to pay her sister-in-law. Glendinning and Kemp show how the UK is increasingly moving towards an active investment notion of welfare, predicated on "work for those who can, support for those who cannot." (Levitas, 1998). The welfare state administers cash benefits through a series of citizenship entitlements – from means tested income support to universal child benefit. The complex rules that apply to tax credits are determined by the Department for Work and Pensions. The administration of the *care* element of welfare is devolved to local authorities who can, along with their partners such as Primary Care Trusts, exercise discretion in relation to local circumstances and (hypothetically) this would be influenced by local politicians. During the Thatcher government, as Newman (2001) shows, control over policy became increasingly centralised, and Labour has continued this with its modernisation agenda mandating partnership forms of governance at local level. The 2004 Children Act requires the care of children to fall within the governance arrangements of Children's Trusts (Churchill, 2007). These multi-agency partnership bodies are required by statute at the level of Local Authorities that have social services responsibilities – that is top tier. Local Authorities below the level of LASS (Local Authorities with Social Services responsibility) are also expected to co-ordinate with the higher level authority and with their local partners and this is the partnership that Jane has just

been invited to join.⁹ Jane is situated in policy terms subject to these three tiers of central and local governments. She has also found her situation “governed” by her local childcare market – those carers that did not provide for her son’s needs. In market terms she did not receive customer satisfaction. Her attitude towards social services is “governed” by stigma which is a cultural factor. To be a user of Social services is perceived in this instance by Jane as an oppressive, rather than productive form of subjectification. I have visited Jane’s local Sure Start Children’s Centre several times and attended a meeting of the parents’ forum. The centre comprises a network of services including primary health care provided by qualified health visitors and “paraprofessional” outreach and support workers, secondary health care provision by doctors, physiotherapists and occupational therapists for children with disabilities, local authority run childcare and community associations that organise parent and toddler groups and arrange outings. The governance arrangement is much looser than the inflexible rules that apply to Jane’s tax credit claim.

Pam: So can I ask about how things have led up to you being on the children’s trust?

Jane: Um I got involved in the parents’ forum which is basically a group for parents which is where basically, well in my opinion you get your say. You get to know what’s going on um and you get your say in what you want to go on. I started coming – ooh I don’t know when, early last year, when I first found out about it. Because I think you should get involved in, y’know, what your children are doing. You should know what’s going on for them. Um and I really like it ...

⁹ See fig.8

Jane refers to the parents' forum that is a group designed to enable parents to have a say in the way the Centre is run. Sure Start was designed to be a participatory programme with emphasis on involving the people who were policy beneficiaries in shaping the local interpretation of the central policy (Williams and Churchill, 2006). This was an opportunity for parents (in practice mostly mothers) to be policy partners or "active citizens" rather than merely the objects or passive recipients of policy. As Sure Start mutates into Children's Centres that become the responsibility of Children's Trusts, governance arrangements are emergent ¹⁰ and I shall illustrate some of the attempts to secure governance and the implications of this in the thesis. Meanwhile Jane explains her experience:

Jane: "Anyway ... we got to hear that the children's trust board was being set up and y'know, a basic outline of what it's set up for and then um in one of the sessions they asked for volunteers. And I said yeah I'd do it so long as I could get the childcare. 'Cos everything's based around making sure your children are OK. And then I got a phone call from J [parent support worker] asking if I'd go along."

This casual process of selection is in contrast to the formal election process Jane's MP and local councillors would have gone through to get elected. I ask Jane about her representative function:

¹⁰ Recently there have been proposals to establish a firmer legislative basis for Children's Centres governance arrangements. See <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=conResults&external=no&consultationId=1575&menu=3> accessed 15 June 2009

Pam. “So are you sort of seen as representing all parents in the area? Are you there to put parents’ views forward?”

Jane. “Um yes, I mean I thought initially I thought it was probably a little bit short sighted of them to have one parent representative. Because my children are young. So my experiences are based around young children. And I know I’ve got quite diverse experiences that a lot of people will probably never ever have. Um but well I don’t know anything really about teenagers, say. So I thought it was probably a bit short sighted. But now, I can understand, really because what they say is if you had representatives for all the people that you thought perhaps should be there the – y’know, you’d have oodles and oodles and oodles of people there. And you’d really never get anything done cos you’d have so many opinions and so many people trying to – y’know. So I can now understand why there’s only one parents’ representative. ... I get a real feel for what’s going on and y’know, I’m asked my opinion and its brilliant. They’re just so positive – first time I went there was so much enthusiasm for having a parent there and it was almost a bit over the top how pleased they were to see me. And I thought well how difficult is it to ask a parent, you know? ...Because a real deal has been made about having a parent’s representative. Apparently most of the Children’s Trusts haven’t got one. Why they can’t sort that out, I don’t quite know. But y’know it’s been put to me as an important role.”

Jane is pleased to perform her role but suspects other partners at the Trust meetings are going “over the top” in their enthusiasm for her voluntary presence. Lowndes and Sullivan (2004) suggest that such participation may be tokenistic. Barnes, Newman and Sullivan (2007)

studied the operation of partnerships and note the tension between this informal, flexible form of representation and principles of democratic accountability. Little et al (2002: 1081) have shown how a “rather hollow offer of power is dysempowerment”. This lies at the heart of debates about modernisation and governance within childcare policy – who has the legitimate power to represent parents and their childcare needs, what are the governance structures that enable dialogue between policy makers and users, whether hidden discourses may be as powerful as quick policy fixes and whether partnership and participation are being “performed” ritualistically.

Jane’s story in space and time

Pam: But have you got like um a particular term of office or have things not been worked out?

Jane: It’s not gone that far yet, no. It’s early days if you like.

Jane says it’s “early days” and it is, for Children’s Trusts. I suggest that she appears as a “quick win”- as evidence that the Trust is committed to participation and is “delivering.”

Minutes of the Children’s Trust state

“The board noted that the X-----. Children Trust Board was well ahead in terms of the District Children and Young People’s Plan and that they were still the only Board with a parent representative.”

(Minutes of a meeting of the _Children's Trust Board held on Monday 10th September 2007 at 9.30am at the Town Hall sourced online)

The Sure Start parents' forum, however, has been in existence for several years and so we might expect there to have been lessons learned about how to involve parents in governance arrangements. Sure Start was initially promoted as a programme with a ten year life span in contrast to other short term initiatives. Norman Glass (2005) has queried whether the new version, Children's Centres, can be classed as the same policy. The early days of the "new" policy seem to go by at a frenetic pace as I shall show in later chapters. End goals of policy vary from an anticipated generational change to implementing change by the end of the financial year. Time is somewhat elastic then as Adam (2004) has shown.

Jane referred in her story to a postcode lottery. Sure Start was designed as a community based initiative and attempted to be both administratively tight (such that specific postcode addresses were in or out of Sure Start local programme boundaries) as well as attempting to make programmes physically accessible to local people so that programmes were supposed to be located within "pram-pushing distance" of families, covering approximately eight hundred nought to three year olds up until their fourth birthday (DfES,2002). The policy shift from Sure Start to Children's Centres shifts understandings of community space with a new universal policy goal of one Children's Centre for every community by 2010, raising the spatial and conceptual issue of "community".

Women's work

I find no shame in Jane's narrative of how she ended up a single parent living on benefits but many *do* make these claims, possibly in ignorance of individual biographies (that's how a stereotype works) and it is likely that Jane would be aware of such powerful discriminatory discourse and what sociologists term a moral panic (Cohen, 2002).

FORCE OUR LAZY MUMS TO WORK

Carole Malone 7/10/2007 Sunday Mirror

Fig. 4 Sunday Mirror Force Our Lazy Mums to Work

<http://www.sundaymirror.co.uk/news/columnists/malone/2007/10/07/force-our-lazy-mums-to-work-98487-19909667/> accessed 080408

Single mothers are contentious welfare subjects (Daly and Rake, 2003) but contemporary policy texts are careful to describe lone parents using gender neutral terminology (Carter, 2006). However, empirical research demonstrates that nine out of ten lone parents are women (Williams, 2004). There is a tension in policy research as in all social science between “is” and “ought” (Williams, 2004). The tension manifests here between acknowledging that most single parents are women while guarding against representations of this as a truism, as evidence of women's essential caring nature or as evidence of women's “preference” as the economist Hakim (2003) theorizes. Policy claims to be offering “choice” over “work-life balance” and increasingly welfare subjects are positioned as “choosers” (Clarke J. et al 2007).

Feminists insist that “working mother” is a tautology but we see in Jane’s discourse as well as in welfare to work policy texts (see Lewis, 2006) that work is generally only recognised in policy terms when it is paid work.

Because women for the most part take responsibility for young children, childcare is a necessity to allow them to participate fully in public life. Sure Start local programmes were well resourced and were frequently able to provide crèches. I ask Jane about her need for crèche provision.

Jane: And I thought it was really nice that they do invite me to the core meetings and they want to hear what I’ve got to say.

Pam: And childcare is always able to be provided?

Jane: Well, what we do, whenever they’re setting up a meeting (cos obviously these people have got loads of other meetings and commitments and whatever) so when they’re setting up a meeting they give like a list of dates. And I always bring the list to [Parent Support Worker] and say you know, I’ll mark off the bits that I can’t do for whatever reason, um and then I’ll say to H right can you provide childcare at these times? And she’ll go through and then I just e-mail back and wait for a response and so far it’s worked in.

Pam And you get that provided for you as part of the arrangement?

Jane. Yes. Um well it was P said that any of the meetings that er yeah it would just come out of the children’s centre budget.

Jane explains that the Children's Centre budget can pay for her crèche use that enables her to attend the Trust Board meetings. Rather than childcare being provided for Jane to work, the crèche enables her voluntary participation in the quasi- civic/public partnership of the Children's Trust. The question of what crèche and other more regulated childcare is *for* and how local policy entrepreneurs frame the responsibility for childcare will be examined as I present data from meetings, conferences and interviews through the thesis. The issue of how partnerships fund and organise childcare that is not linked to getting parents into the labour market but into other areas of public life after the generously funded early wave Sure Start local programmes is uncertain.

I asked Jane whether her ex-husband was involved in caring for their children:

Pam: And can I ask a sensitive question but you don't have to answer, in terms of Lewis's father, is he taking any responsibility at all ?

Jane: No, basically. When we first split up – I mean that was hard because I don't believe in divorce. I believe y'know, marriage is for life and it just didn't happen like that. And it was even harder because once you've set out to have children you don't expect when your baby's a few months old that you're gonna be split up. And at first I kept things extremely laid back and let him come and go to the house as he pleased. In an attempt really to have minimal impact on Lewis. ...But I suppose as time's gone on he just doesn't really bother. And I've encouraged him, y'know, to – y'know what I mean? I couldn't have been more laid back if I'd tried – to make it easy for him to see them and do things with them. But I mean I couldn't call upon him and say right you have Lewis

for the day because he wouldn't know how to deal with his injections and – he could treat a hypo but he wouldn't know what food he could have, he wouldn't know about carbohydrate count, he wouldn't know how to set up the injection. So he couldn't have him for a day. But no, since back end of last year he hardly bothers with them. Which I just find awful because, y'know. They don't have an understanding – I don't really understand myself, if I'm honest. So no, he's not.

Jane tells me she is left holding the baby and with the major responsibility for her child with a disability. This fits with research that points to women, whether they are in paid employment or not, still carrying the major responsibility for childcare while many men who are in employment are working very long hours that are not conducive to the quality of their family lives (see Pettinger et al eds. (2005).

3. Conclusion

In describing Jane's story as an unintended consequence of policy I am assuming that policy is intentional. It exists in texts that are written for particular purposes but also in practices that may correspond to or subvert intentions. This introductory chapter presented Jane's story – a single case that paradoxically exemplifies some tensions in contemporary childcare policy through being an "exception that proves the rule". Jane's story introduces the concepts of governance and governmentality through her role as a Parent Representative on the Children's Trust Board. The informal way in which she was selected for this representative task is in stark contrast to her MP, the elected representative called on to pursue her fruitless claim for

tax credits to suit her particular circumstances. I highlighted the bureaucratic nature of rules and introduced the more flexible governance regime of the parents' forum and the Children's Centre. We have seen how Jane's work-to-welfare story is an unintended consequence of the government's childcare policy that is shifting understandings of family responsibility for childcare and subsidising it with public funds where it is officially regulated and linked to paid employment. Although mothers today are generally the main carers of young children, policy is presented in gender neutral terms to avoid political risk. While the Paymaster General claims not to want to "distort the pattern of family life", this single case of an unintended consequence of welfare to work policy demonstrates that the boundaries of public and private are inter-dependent and so the personal remains political (Fraser, 1989). The fact-value distinction, so vital to policy analysis, was highlighted in the rhetoric (arguably) deployed by the Paymaster General's letter. Jane's involvement in the Children's Trust was portrayed as a "quick win" in these "early days". Although Sure Start was supposed to be a ten year programme, its evaluation proved inconclusive and its "brand" is morphing into Children's Centres. This chapter has introduced the concept of a palimpsest as an analogy for this thesis and as a sensitizing device for studying policy. The effect of the governmental text is that Jane and her family live in reduced circumstances, unwittingly subverting the policy intention to reduce child poverty. The local Children's Trust is faced with the challenge of joining up these policy contradictions. Denied special treatment by the "one size fits all" tax credit policy, Jane makes history but not under conditions of her own choosing. She moves from a fixed period of maternity leave to an uncertain future as an unemployed welfare claimant and a volunteer active citizen.

SECTION TWO: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Two

Assembling methods and methodology

Contents

1.	Introduction	55
2.	Policy Research – Gold Standards and Enlightenment	56
3.	Ethnography	59
4.	Interpretivist Methodology	62
5.	Structuration Theory	64
	Organization theory and the Politics of Restructuring	68
6.	Situated Research	76
	Representation	74
7.	Framing a Palimpsest – a sensitizing device	84
8.	Methods Assemblage	87
9.	The Ethics of Getting In and Getting On	88
	Sampling	93
10.	Analysis	97
11.	Conclusion	99

1. Introduction

To answer my research question “how are the ambiguities, tensions and contradictions of childcare policy experienced by some of the people responsible for implementation and what do their sense-making practices look like?” I draw on a range of theoretical resources that enable me to analyse how some meanings are proscribed, how what is regarded as evidence is socially constructed within epistemic communities and how policy re-framing happens according to some deep-seated assumptions around what and who childcare is for. This part of the thesis shows some of my workings out. I discuss the epistemological and ontological aspects of my research and outline my analytical framework to show the methodological principles according to which the data was generated and analysed. The chapter presents a description of my research methods so that the reader can familiarise themselves with my data set and make their own assessment of whether my research conclusions are credible. Writing about critical management research, Kelemen and Rumens (2008:175) note that “Adopting a reflexive stance is a fundamental step in acknowledging the existence of ethical dilemmas and considering the implications they may have on the process and outcomes of doing critical management research”. My project is oriented towards governance and public policy (specifically childcare policy) rather than the discipline of management but this connection between ethics and reflexivity is apposite for my study so I reflect in this chapter on my methodology, on research governance processes and on how these relate to my own ethical practice.

Writing about the challenge faced by doctoral students when confronted by the question “How are your claims *authenticated*? Why should we believe your version of the ‘made story’?” Edge and Richards (1998:350) propose that “authenticity can be demonstrated by careful documentation of procedure”. As qualitative researchers these authors maintain that “.... The illocutionary force of the research outcome has changed. It is no longer, ‘I explain and thereby (globally) suggest’. It is ‘I interpret and thereby offer a [context-specific] understanding’. This is the aim of my thesis – to provide a rich description and convincing representation of what I saw, collected, theorised and experienced in my particular fieldwork settings. As I don’t know what I don’t know, here I rhetorically acknowledge my blind spots in full ironic awareness of the futility of this reflexive “confession”. The “futility of self-criticism” has been described by Lather (1991:83) who writes:”...there is “much that eludes the logic of the self-present subject.” Nevertheless, I shall venture out of Plato’s solipsistic cave.

2. Policy Research – Gold Standards and Enlightenment

In this section I explore methodologies for studying the reform of welfare policy. In 1991 Finch suggested that “social policy as a discipline in general has paid much less attention to methodological issues than have the social science disciplines upon which it draws” (Finch, 1991) . Subsequently, we have seen the rise of the evidence based policy and practice movement (EBPPM) (Coote et al, 2004) as well as the rising influence of poststructuralism and postmodernism on some social policy research. The former can often appear to eschew values in favour of scientific objectivity. The latter may offer little of value in answer to the

normative and practical question “what is to be done?” (Fraser, 1981). Methodological assumptions around a hierarchy of modes of evidence persist, especially in the medical profession, with randomised controlled trials (RCTs) constructed within the medical profession as the “gold standard”, found at the top of the methods hierarchy (Rutter, 2006). Jane’s case would probably be regarded within this approach as a statistical outlier. RCTs follow the hypothetico-deductive model of research, measuring statistically whether or not a “treatment” is effective or not. There is not the space here to fully discuss why this research model may be invalid for studying complex, diffuse social interventions with their myriad array of variables¹¹. I show in chapter three how the NESS¹² evaluation research was disseminated in a highly politicized and media sensitive environment such that “evidence” was contested and carefully re-presented (Clark and Hall, 2008).

Much traditional policy evaluation research takes place post hoc and seeks to evaluate the effects of policy that must be held still and definable as an object. Alternatively, ex-ante analysis seeks to clarify goals and objectives or models the effects of policy with the aim of improving policy decisions and outcomes. Modelling of social situations positions the researcher at a distance, dealing with abstractions, in direct contrast to an ethnographic methodology that privileges first hand witnessing and participation in messy “real time” situations and processes. An ethnographic interest in culture is in contrast to econometric models that are often based on the assumption of a rational individual subject who can be incentivised using policy instruments (carrots and sticks) to alter their behaviour, for example to take up paid employment or commence breast feeding. My aim here is not to construct

¹¹ Cropper et al (2007) offer useful insight into the complexity of programmes devised to tackle health inequalities.

¹² National Evaluation of Sure Start see www.ness.bbk.ac.uk

“positivism” as an easy methodological target. Schneider and Ingram (1997) make a convincing case for recognising the value of what they term “policy sciences”, (by which I understand them to mean positivist, rational assessment of effectiveness) and they suggest that this methodological approach may be combined with critical theory. Rather than throwing the positivist baby out with the constructivist bathwater, following DeLeon (1997) I want to say that, if the ends of social science are moral and political – to create a better society, as well as epistemological – to better understand our social world - then sometimes positivism is useful and mixing methodologies can work (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008). For example, counting how many poor children there are in comparative European countries can draw attention to Britain’s appalling statistics (Dornan 2004). Clearly a social scientist would be interested in how the measure is defined, who does the counting and so on but to say that child poverty is a social construct can feel like contemplative navel gazing and over-theorising what ought to be an immediate, pressing problem (Hacking, 2000). Crotty (1998:14) suggests that “The ability to measure and count is a precious human achievement and it behoves us not to be dismissive of it.” Qualitative research often relies on metaphors of quantification. I am trying to convey that I have *a lot* of data – I immersed myself in the field for a period of nine months. The national evaluation of Sure Start relied heavily on quantification, attempting to assess definitively through statistical analysis of a range of variables whether the programme “worked” – i.e. was effective. However, it was the findings of the qualitative implementation study that had most impact on me (Meadows, 2004). The “fact” that Sure Start did not work as anticipated did not lead to its closure. A more subtle discursive shift in Sure Start’s presentation emerged, linked to Children’s Centres which as Rutter (2006) and Glass (2005) show paradoxically *are* and *are not* Sure Start local programmes.

3. Ethnography

Policy documents provide readily available data for analysis but I have chosen to study the relatively less visible arena of implementation that has frequently been regarded as a “black box” (Hill and Hupe, 2002). While I acknowledge the structuring constraints of policy tools and instruments, including hypothecated funding regimes and legislation, as well as the impact of New Public Management and the “audit society” (Power, 1997) I want to emphasise that my main interest is in exploring policy implementation as a social practice. The value of ethnography is to understand social phenomena in “naturalistic” environments. Mason (2002:175) suggests that:

“Qualitative research is in my view particularly good at supporting “mechanical” arguments that focus on how social phenomena and processes operate or are constituted. This is because of the rich, contextual, and ‘local’ nature of most qualitative investigation which is done in ‘messy’ contexts.”

Ethnography has sought to understand social phenomena from the inside perspective of members of a community while bringing an outsider perspective (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This, however, implies the existence of an undifferentiated, homogenous culture and frames the ethnographer as an uncontaminated outsider who gains knowledge of how to be an insider (Wittel, 2000). In my situation, I felt like I had a certain amount of inside knowledge that already indicated that there would be dissonance within policy implementation. Despite heavy

discursive deployment in policy and academic texts of the term “community”, I wanted to analyse the *process* of creating a community, to investigate to what extent there *was* a common understanding. Ethnographers suggest that to get to understand and know a community takes time (Willis 2000). I believe that my work experience (nine years working for local authorities or NHS organisations in regeneration projects and as a Planning Officer for Social Inclusion) afforded me experiential, tacit knowledge of local implementation of policy both “top down” and “bottom up”. Duke (2002:45) terms this tacit knowledge “street sense.” My tacit knowledge informed my ability to access the policy field and to comprehend some of what was taking place. The disadvantage to this “insider” perspective was that it was hard for me to “make the familiar strange.” Having recently been employed as an internal evaluation officer within a Primary Care Trust, with all the associated political and ethical problems of carrying out evaluation research on behalf of managers, I had been looking forward to a more objective (or at least more independent) researcher role, backed up by the cultural credibility of belonging to an academic institution. I can distinguish between my closer identification with practitioners who were doing jobs that I felt I understood and could feel that I might have competence to do. On the other hand, when interviewing people with more or very different work experience than myself, I felt that interview data gathered fell short of a more complete shared inter-subjective understanding of their experiences. My partial insider knowledge did not necessarily automatically gain me entry or automatically admit me once I had my ethical approval, my “anthropologist’s visa”.¹³ I witnessed the emergence of a new infrastructure - the CLPs - for the administration of the County Council’s Children’s Centres and Extended Schools strategy. Leigh Star (2002:108) suggests that “infrastructure” has often been regarded as “low profile” – “infrastructure is usually singularly

¹³ This phrase was used by Teresa Smith at a Social Policy Association Postgraduate event I attended.

unexciting as a research object for ethnographers” but in my study, as I relate the emergence of a new infrastructure to attempts at welfare reform and modernisation, I believe that mundane practices of policy implementation are of significance for studying welfare reform and as I show in chapter eight, they can be interpreted as exciting and visionary.

Smith’s (2005) methodology of “institutional ethnography” recommends analysing texts as mediating institutional practices. However, I was researching in real time the formation and governance of a CLP - not an already existing *institution* but a becoming *network*. Nevertheless, Smith’s view of “facticity” is applicable to how this formation is achieved in practice: “Ethnomethodology has insisted on the view that sense, rationality, facticity, etc are essentially products of and accomplished in, local historical settings.” (Smith , 1990: 211). Understanding the policy-action continuum (Barrett and Fudge, 1981) is crucial to understanding how local practice can become “unofficial” policy and how official documents can be ignored or can translate into unexpected localized actions. My orientation towards ethnography does not commit me to a naïve empiricism or realist methodology. Willis and Trondman (2002:5) use the acronym TIME to argue for a “theoretically informed methodology for ethnography” and in the next sections I critically engage with a range of theories that I have found useful and applicable to my research enquiry. No single author has provided me with a grand theory that I can apply to my data such that my analysis could be said to be straightforwardly “Foucauldian” or “Neo-Institutionalist”. The risk of “grand theorizing” is cautioned against by Willis and Trondman (2002:394) who note: “In no sense is our aim to construct a grand, systematic, waterproof, “ready-made” theory/methodology

counterposed to other scholastic “ready-mades.” Similarly, Mason (2002) cautions against adopting a “recipe book” or a “rote” approach to methodology. She suggests that:

“... it is better to learn what we can from debates about these key issues [positivism and postpositivism] than to assume that one argument, be it postmodernist, modernist, realist or humanist, for example, has the capacity to demolish the other or to assert its ultimate authority ...”(p.6).

I agree that, for rigorous, critical research, rote learning of methodology cannot be justified. I adopt an eclectic research methodology that aims to provide qualitative insight into the complexity of policy implementation and seeks to avoid what Rafaeli and Pratt (2006) term “artefact myopia”.

4. Interpretivist Methodology

One methodological approach to studying policy is an interpretive approach derived from more humanistic (rather than natural science) theories linked to notions of insight, illumination and *verstehen*, sometimes drawing on Habermas and his notion of an “ideal speech community” (Fischer, 2003). In his discussion of a curriculum for planners, Fischer asks : “How ... do we educate students of the professions to appreciate the emancipatory potentials of a situation, or say, the boundaries of human virtue? “ And he answers rhetorically: “This, no doubt, requires greater exposure to the humanities – history, novels, and poetry – than regression analysis”. (p. 233). Authors working with this methodology that have informed my research include Fischer (2003), Stone (2002) and Yanow (1997). An interpretivist

methodology applied to the study of policy foregrounds processes of meaning making. Interpretivist scholars do not always take account of the “linguistic and cultural turns” but an effect of Derrida’s work on deconstruction and Foucault’s work (1980) on the intimate relation between power and knowledge, is to undermine the status of scientific language and to note the *performativity* of texts, that is to say, the way in which the force of rhetoric can be detected in everyday speech and writing (Carter, 2006). This is crucial in policy analysis for problematising the fact-value – the “is-ought” or empirical-normative distinction (Rein 1976, Young 1977). Yanow’s *How Does a Policy Mean?* draws attention to the connotative as well as the denotative features of language. Simon’s proposition that human beings are subject to “bounded rationality” (cited in March, 1988) explains the tendency towards the use of tropes including metaphor as a basic inescapable process of organizing thought (Malone, 1999, Miller and Fox, 2007). Epistemological issues are discussed by McLaughlin (2008). She writes “The resolution of conflicting evidence(s) and reconciliation of conflicting influences on decision making goes on behind closed doors.” (p.40). This points towards my attempt to open some of those doors to research inside the black box of decision making to see how policy inputs and outputs are understood.

Studies of policy do not generally surface the subjectivities of the researcher. I suggest that we should expect researchers who are using interpretive methodologies to describe their “mother tongue” – that is – the theoretical position(s) from which they interpret data. The paradox (sometimes referred to as Mannheim’s dilemma or the double hermeneutic (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008)) for interpretation is that any interpretive lexicon can be re-interpreted in a process of infinite regress that Derrida terms *deferral* (Calhoun, 1992). I am too much of a hair shirt to be an advocate of those extreme relativist approaches that proceed as though their

main aim were aesthetic and to produce an elegant (or even shocking) piece of work rather than a credible piece of social research¹⁴. Persuasion and rhetoric are important epistemological warrants (Edge 1998) but I maintain that “evidence” and “validity” are equally useful and can help us avoid “veriphobia”. (Bailey 2001).

5. Structuration Theory

Policy evaluation research has difficulties with time horizons – over what time period might social change be expected to occur? How far do we look back to judge if progress has been made? (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). My research explores quick policy fixes and long running social structures and I have found structuration theory a useful analytical approach. Giddens developed his structuration theory in his book *The Constitution of Society* (1984). He was clearly responding to critical theorists as well as criticising functionalist sociologists and in his book he pays homage to Marx. He cites “Marx’s dictum that human beings ‘make history’...” which is the important sociological concept that I drew on in analysing Jane’s story in chapter one. Governance is fundamentally concerned with structuration and in Chapter four I link this to themes of governance and welfare reform. The purpose of governance is to formalise and legitimate enabling and constraining rules over action. Feminism raised significant challenges to Marxist theory and poststructuralism has shown how identity is rarely determined by singular structures such as class, race or gender. A poststructuralist way of looking at individuals is to say that the subject is a bearer of discourse, a discursive effect. Recognition of the generative nature of “structure”, discourse and power shows that this need not be incompatible with human agency. I propose we *decentre* the subject without erasing her. In making my questions fit her answers, we saw how Jane exerted a degree of authorial control

¹⁴ See for example Sorensen, 2007 which I have to confess induced a feeling of schadenfreude in me.

over her story yet her “case” – her options for achieving her preferred combination of “work-life balance” - was structured by the Paymaster General’s decision.

Analysing data from my study through a structuration lens reveals a variety of time horizons from the end of the financial year to a generational change. Postmodern theories suggest the death of grand meta-narratives yet policy is inherently teleological – oriented to the future with built in assumptions of improving the human condition. In a recent book subtitled “*governing with the past*”, Pollitt (2008:43) has critiqued what he calls “...the whole ideology of ‘modernization’”. Pollitt is concerned to recover a sense of history, arguing that policy implementers are partially constrained by past actions as the theory of path dependency demonstrates. My criticism of Pollitt is that, in recuperating history in an urge to rectify what he seems to see as reckless policy change, he neglects the way in which the imagination and dreams of social change impinge upon the present. Levitas (2001:449) outlines a “utopian incursion into social policy” “against work” and Leach (2005:421) writes on “Daycare: dreams and nightmares”. These future orientations indicate the significance of time future as well as time present and past in analysis of policy (Abbott 2001).

Giddens (1984:25) theorises the “duality of agency and structure”. Structure is viewed as “... recursively organized sets of rules and resources... out of time and space, save in its instantiations and co-ordination as memory traces ...”. Giddens dismisses “evolutionary” theories of change so that he refutes theories such as classical Marxism that depend upon a motor theory of social change – in Lyotard’s terms a grand meta-narrative of history. While he does not provide a prescriptive methodology for his structuration theory, Giddens draws on Willis’s famous study “Learning to Labour” to illustrate how “... ‘social forces’ operate

through agents' reasons ..." (p.293). He is keen to dispel the idea that either structure or agency should be privileged in micro / macro social science, insisting that sociology should analyse both to show how: "structures are both "constraining and enabling." Giddens explains how the duality of structure and agency operates through "schemata". He writes "because schemata are anticipations they are ... ' the medium whereby the past affects the future"(1984:45). Giddens does not systematically apply his structuration theory to policy but I suggest that policy is a paradigmatic example of a social structure that operates relatively durably across time and space. Policy is designed to be inherently structural and its "memory traces" are likely to be inscribed in legal texts and economic systems, with effects upon agents; although, as the next chapter shows, childcare "initiativitis" and rapid change associated with welfare reform produced instability in the governance of childcare. Theories around participatory governance seek to foster relatively open systems such that policy can enable agents to recursively influence policy structures and so structuration theory lends itself to examining how welfare reform and organizational restructuring of public services might constrain and enable democratic participation, how local public and private childcare services might be being re-structured as well as researching how attempts at policy change might encounter resistance.

Bevir, Rhodes and Weller (2003) deploy the concepts of "traditions and dilemmas" to replace what they appear to view as the worn out concept of structure but in contrast I suggest that, when deployed as a metaphor for relatively stable social processes (as Giddens uses it in his structuration theory) "structure" remains a usable sociological concept. Debates about poststructuralism have begun to surface in studies of governance. Although they do not cite

Giddens, Rhodes and Bevir (who have published extensively on governance) also emphasise the interpretive faculties of agents and they theorise governance as comprising nothing more than “beliefs, traditions, dilemmas and narratives” (Bevir, Rhodes and Weller, 2003). Their approach de-centres government in favour of *governance* and networks. Deconstructionist insights from organization studies (Grant et al, 2004, Jones and Munro, 2005) and neo-institutionalism do alert us to the processual, unfinished, social and cultural attributes of networks and to the messy process of policy implementation, referred to by March and Olsen (March and Olsen, 1976, cited in Moran et al, 2006:22) as a “garbage-can model”. My problem is not with these theories or with structuration theory *per se* but with any mis-recognition of the continued social significance of institutions and organizations, particularly when studying welfare reform and processes of network or partnership governance.

Governance theory highlights changes to processes of government control and so it ought, in my view, to be able to theorise processes of institutional reform such as the privatisation of former public bodies or the attempt to shift government responsibilities towards the civic sphere. For my study of a Community Learning Partnership (CLP) and its relationship to a statutory body - a local authority, I need to add in to structuration theory due recognition of the formal legal powers that can distinguish public from private and civic organizations and that (to use a phrase from Giddens) *instantiate* social practices over time and space, sometimes over *longue durées* (Giddens, 1984, 35-36).

Davies wrote in 2003 “*Some of our Concepts are Missing*”. She argued that, in relation to the NHS as an organisation:

“The influence ... both of Foucauldian and broader postmodernist thinking has been apparent. Concepts such as embodiment, identity, self, narrative, biography, history and risk have prevailed and once again, ‘the organisation’ has been viewed with antipathy.” (p.179)

She goes on to cite Newman:

“Newman’s work also makes clear, however, that the new scholarship on governance, networks and open systems is coming from sources outside sociology. It would be ironic indeed if a discipline so centrally concerned with questions of institutional change, legitimacy, professional expertise and social inclusion were to neglect these topics.” (p.183)

While policy texts are open to interpretation, (and as I shall argue, childcare policy is particularly protean) this interpretive process is not infinitely variable as Derrideans or “strong constructivists” might suggest. There are social and often legal limitations on possible meanings with meanings proscribed by professional practices and organizational cultures. Crotty, citing Eco, writes : “A message can mean many things but there are senses it would be preposterous to accept” (Crotty, 1998).

Organization Theory and the Politics of Restructuring

I borrow the phrase “the politics of restructuring” from Newman (2000). Along with Davies, I agree that where concepts such as “organization” and “structure” are in use in practice, it behoves critical academics to engage with them rather than dismiss them or deconstruct them

too far with abstract idealist philosophy. When considering rapid policy change and long running social traditions and institutions then, it is important to recognise the way in which institutions or organizations are legally able to act as agents or not. While social theory often conceptualizes agents as individuals, it is important to recognise that “agency” as a metaphor for a public sector or voluntary sector organization is frequently in use in practice, as is “body.” That is to say, agents are not always singular individuals but may be corporate entities or public bodies (or quangos) with specific legal powers and responsibilities. This is not a political science thesis and so, without diverging into a discussion of political economy, I note here simply that the state has traditionally had powers to act as a singular body (Esping-Anderson, 1990). Welfare reform has seen a proliferation of “agencies” as well as partnership bodies and networks, purporting to act on behalf of the public interest. Therefore, while I acknowledge the limitations of reading off effects from organization charts or mission statements; to dismiss the concept of an institution or to equate it with “tradition” undermines the idea (that Giddens, 1984 and Foucault ,1980 recognise) of *power to* and *power over* ¹⁵ – constraining and enabling social effects. Several alternative constitutional forms for “partnerships” including “unincorporated association”, “trust” and “charity” are discussed in Sullivan and Skelcher (2002). Davies et al (2005:101), in their wide ranging literature review, document the contribution to studies of governance from “socio-legal studies” noting a normative concern “over the preservation of public values.” If we regard the notion of public value and public service within welfare states as a tradition or a culture under threat from neo-liberalism, then I suggest we might usefully bring back in to contemporary social theory, research and practice, a study of organizations *as agents* and in particular, a study of how such

¹⁵ “Power” has a specific legal connotation for local authorities. The Latin term “ultra vires” refers to acting outside the scope of legally conferred powers.

organizational entities get constituted both formally in law and informally in practice, in order to study welfare reform.

History enters Wincott's (2006:305) "notion of a welfare 'settlement' ". He writes:

" ... in addition to evoking notions of a limited sort of agreement, the notion of "settlement" has an appropriate historical-geological resonance ... The idea that social, economic, and political practice "settles down" and may subsequently become sedimented, leaving traces that can later be (re)discovered, is consistent with some institutionalist themes.

I agree with Wincott's insistence on process and welcome his recognition that "Feminist scholars are familiar with the complex, internally diverse and contradictory legacies left by "real-world" welfare "settlements" (p.303). Bryson (2007) who draws on Marx's materialist conception of history and Giddens' theory of structuration, writes:

" ... the trick is to balance a realistic appraisal of political possibility with the understanding that this is not bounded by what currently exists, and that we are neither the passive playthings of history nor entirely free agents. " (p.21).

Like Bryson, I *do* take account of the socially constructed nature of time in my methodology and I note the existential uncertainty inherent in a sceptical stance towards "progress". While

aiming for some generalisability or usefulness in the future, nevertheless, my research is necessarily situated at this point in time and space.

5. Situated research

Giddens' theory of structuration is drawn on by Bryson (2007). She analyses time, change and continuity in relation to gender and social policy. In *Gender and the Politics of Time* she argues that:

“As the productive and (re)productive needs of society come increasingly into conflict and the time culture of the former is subsumed ever more into that of the latter, the damaging effects of such practices are becoming clearer.” (p. 185).

Bryson adopts an explicitly feminist methodology to explore the way in which welfare states construct work time, family time, time for care etc., identifying “... a specifically temporal standpoint” and in this section I outline my own feminist commitments, drawing on Carter (2006). Arguably the purpose of training doctoral students in a range of research methods is to inculcate students with technical competence such that a range of methods could be drawn upon and tailored to suit specific research questions. Schostak suggests, however, that this emphasis on technical “training” produces “boring theses” and when “... such trainees are let loose into the world they are safe, compliant, useful to policy makers and other ‘users’ ...” (Schostak, 2006:6).

Debates around subjectivity and social science have been well rehearsed (see, for example, Game and Metcalfe 1996, Mason 2002, Hammersley, 2000) but not settled. I reject the idea that methods can be isolated from biographical, historical, contextual, methodological, and thereby ideological issues. When a researcher commits to undertake research that explores power relations with some ambition to redistribute power more justly, there are particular consequences arising from a rejection of objective, scientific truth embedded in positivist theories (Crotty 1998). Having recently been employed as an internal evaluation officer within a Primary Care Trust, I was conscious of the political and ethical problems of carrying out evaluation research on behalf of managers (Gubrium and Silverman, 1989). In my paid evaluator job I had found myself engaging in some incommensurable debates with Sure Start managers who refused to accept the validity of statistical data, knowing as they did the highly contingent ways in which performance data was generated. On the other hand an evaluation researcher from the NESS¹⁶ team would only accept positivist evaluation of change as evidence. This person sought to persuade me that only this type of “hard evidence” would influence local decision makers. I felt that culturally that was not how “things are done around here.” My perception was that decisions were often made on the basis of perceived authority or influence and that as we saw in the last chapter, and as Foucault (1980) has demonstrated, knowledge and “proof” are socially constructed through a myriad of practices. As Carlisle et al (2007;150) note :

“... many researchers freely acknowledge that what constitutes evidence is determined in large part by the knowledge community to which one belongs and by what counts as acceptable knowledge in that community.”

¹⁶ National Evaluation of Sure Start www.ness.bbk.org.uk

What “counted” for the NESS coordinator was positivist social science. This prior experience gave me insight into how to go about gaining access to a field of enquiry. The negative aspect of experience is that it is harder for the researcher to detach herself from existing assumptions, to be open to surprise (Willis and Trondman, 2000) and to make the familiar strange.

Some authors have suggested that research can be divided up into Mode 1 and Mode 2 or “pure” and “applied” research, according to the degree of relevance that studies might have for policy and practice (Kelemen and Bansal, 2002). This can lead to an instrumental, utilitarian view of research such that what is valued is that which is of immediate relevance. On the other hand, as Clarke, J. (2004) shows, academic prestige may be more readily acquired by those who produce the most abstract, (some might say abstruse) philosophically oriented writing (Parker, 2000). I am not arguing here for the academy as a pure contemplative space but I *am* suggesting that knowledge in the form of ideas can make a difference in unpredictable ways (Connolly 2003). This is surely the underpinning of a humanistic approach that seeks to foster critical consciousness in addition to any practical skills training that may be valuable for policy analysis. Game and Metcalfe (1996:147) relate desire and knowledge, drawing on Cixous to explain how “... the double moment of both the desire for mastery and the impossibility of the satisfaction of this desire opens up a space ...” I am in this liminal space, juggling a schizophrenic tendency to produce work that is of use value to satisfy my Calvinist need for productivity, alongside the temptation to play, to exercise imagination, to be creative without being certain what the outcome will be.

In playfully producing this thesis-palimpsest within disciplinary constraints I am taking full advantage of the PhD as a creative time and space. My awareness of this privileged research position highlights my ethical and political responsibilities and so my palimpsest begins to fold back on itself reflexively. In studying childcare, governance, legitimacy, authority and accountability, I am deeply implicated (Schostak and Schostak, 2008). I believe that conducting this research has allowed me to acquire skills and insight such that I might be a more responsible and effective researcher in the future.

Representation

Law (2004) argues against social research that dishonestly assumes (without acknowledging it does so) a god's eye perspective, or an apparently static, scientific, objective "view from nowhere"; as does feminist standpoint theory (see chapter four "Women and men in feminist political thought" in Bryson, 2007). I "came out" as a feminist in chapter one but of course I cannot hope to represent feminists as a whole or all women or all white mothers. Healey suggests, and I agree, "the postmodern challenge is both progressive and regressive" (Healey 1993). Postmodernism suggests that there is no reality to be represented – representation is all there is – the search for authenticity may as well be abandoned in favour of the free play of floating signifiers (Nicholson, 1990). For me, useful elements of postmodernist theory allow an understanding of signs, symbols, hyper-visibility and performativity and I draw on Miller and Fox (2007) and Lash and Urry (1994) amongst others such as Klein (2003) and Lury (2004) who write about brands. Lash and Urry write: "People are bombarded with signifiers and increasingly become incapable of attaching "signified" or meanings to them." (p.3). As

time is a major theme in my study, it makes sense to me to take account of postmodernist theory without necessarily subscribing to the view that we are situated in postmodern times. Indeed, as Bryson shows (2007), contradictory views about time are key to understanding the contradictions of welfare reform.

The limits of tolerance of postmodern ambiguity, and thereby the limits of deconstruction, are reached for feminists with a fundamental belief that women ought to be of equal value to men in both public and private spheres, that historically women have held less political, economic and social power, that this persists and that the real gains of feminism are often fragile. I take on board the challenge that feminism has often been a white, middle class, heterosexual concern (Nicholson 1990) and want to acknowledge that the patriarchal discourse of a nuclear family with a male breadwinner may not translate across all ethnic differences¹⁷. However, where any communities might assert patriarchal rights to treat women as less than equal¹⁸ then feminists have much to gain from subsuming differences in favour of shared gendered experience. I do not want to essentialize women as natural carers. My ontology presumes that women are different from men in some biological respects but my epistemology does not presume a privileged feminist mode of research. I do recognise the value of the feminist challenge to masculinist rationality, the importance of emotions and the value of a feminist “ethic of care” (Hekman, 1990, Williams, 2001). Embodied, experiential ways of knowing show up in my analysis but I do not believe that men and women necessarily hold distinct epistemological positions as a consequence of their biology. Feminist critique of social policy

¹⁷ see Stack for an ethnographic account of Black kinship practices in America and Bell et al for UK survey research into the use of childcare among families from minority ethnic backgrounds.) (Bell 2005; Stack 1974)

¹⁸ Page sixty three of Sure Start Children’s Centres Practice Guidance (DfES 2005) suggests that when practitioners may be working in “*some communities*”, “*fathers may need to be engaged specifically in their role as head of the family.*” (p.63) [my emphasis].

that was largely researched by men is invaluable but I do not believe that this involves a distinct set of methods such that feminist research need be necessarily qualitative, for example. I have found work on the ethic of care and relational autonomy (Sevenhuijsen, 2000) a useful critique of the masculinist rational autonomous Cartesian subject, but I want to reconcile this with an epistemology that assumes that men and women can share in an ethical caring discourse (Williams, 2001).

The agency-structure, or free-will and determinism debate is as old as the ancient Greeks and there is not space here to rehearse a history of philosophical ideas (Di Stefano, 1990). However, I have found feminist work that criticizes the enlightenment project for neglecting the role of women to be most enlightening (Benhabib 1990, Young 1986). In order for citizens to have the luxury of participating in public debate, the role of human reproduction, including child rearing, was confined to the domestic sphere (Landes, 1998). Many citizens have not had historically equal rights to participate in society but we also know that many have successfully fought for emancipation. To date, that has mainly been on issues other than childcare (Randall 2000).

6. Framing a palimpsest – a sensitizing device

Rather than tightly define *a* single policy I have pursued the broad areas of childcare policy and welfare reform to see how local implementers frame the policy that they believe they are implementing – to paraphrase Yanow, how the policy *means* (Yanow, 1996). Nadai (2001) draws on Strauss's work to argue for an understanding of public welfare as “negotiated order”.

While the NESS implementation study drew attention to qualitative processes affecting policy outputs, it confined its remit to the study of what, given the terms of its evaluation contract, it necessarily had to consider as a single, coherent policy. In developing the analogy of a palimpsest this study demonstrates the various ways in which “new” policy overwrites or imbricates existing practice and shows how creative implementers combine a range of policy terminology, images and symbols to represent their own version of what policy is. I have outlined my interest in policy as both enabling and constraining and in how policies overlap and change over time yet can achieve “temporary policy settlements”. Frame analysis has been used to research how policy constructs social problems and policy solutions (Fischer, 2003). Like social research, policy implementation is affected by unexamined assumptions and values or what Schön and Rein (1994) term “action frames”, and Hoppe (1993) calls an “appreciative system”. I suggest that frames can be related to structuration theory and to the Foucauldian notion of discourse (Fairclough, 2000). A policy frame might be a paradigmatic view that constrains and enables the thought, practice and beliefs of policy implementers. The trope of metaphor is key to this process as Schön and Rein (1994: viii) point out : “... policy ‘frames’[rest on] the taken-for-granted assumptional structures ... that seemed to us to derive from generative metaphors, such as housing blight or fragmented services.” As we saw in the last chapter, childcare policy might be interpreted or framed as a neo-liberal shift enabling workfare, as welfare and child protection, as “educare” or as equal opportunities for women, and policy discourse may be strategically vague in order to appeal to a broad political coalition. Stone (2002) recommends that, rather than deploring this lack of specificity, we should embrace the necessity of politics as a legitimate agonistic arena. Stone (2002:5) writes: “Which comes first – the problem or the solution?” and through my study I explore this

dialectic. I draw also on Roe's (1994) *Narrative Policy Analysis* and Bacchi's (1991) *What's the Problem?* to examine how causal narratives construct policy problems and how stories circulate in practice. Becker (1997, pp 6-7) discusses how social attitudes set the limits within which legitimate politics can act. : "Definitions of poverty are constructed through policy but also through ideas, themes, symbols and images". Stories, ritual, myth, semiotics and representational practices then become key to understanding policy framing and interpretation.

Fairclough's work on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 2000a, 2000b) and Levitas (1998) are useful both for methodology and for research on welfare reform. Fairclough uses the concept of intertextuality which I find particularly useful for analysing the implementation process. Levitas uses three acronyms MUD, RED and SID to describe ideal types of competing social inclusion discourses – namely Moral Underclass, Redistributionist and Social Integrationist. Levitas does not focus on childcare but her discourse analysis serves my need to understand the contradictory ways in which childcare policy relates to welfare reform. In choosing to relate my research to a policy history that reaches as far back as inter-war and post-war policy on childcare, I am making a conscious choice to include the second wave of feminism within my historiography and this reflects my feminist methodological approach. I also believe that poverty is material, at least in the sense of being germane to my research and so I hold onto a critical methodological consciousness whilst refusing to get bogged down in philosophical debates (Seale, 2000). I want to introduce the notion of a palimpsest as a way of conceptualizing the shifting, processual nature of policy. However, I don't have a full-blown explanatory theory to develop. I offer up palimpsest as a modest "sensitizing device" (Willis and Trondman, 2002) – another practical concept in my methods assemblage. Jessop writes:

“There are always interstitial, residual, marginal, irrelevant, recalcitrant and plain contradictory elements that escape any attempt to identify, govern, and stabilize a given ... arrangement ... (Jessop, 2004:163).

The palimpsest analogy highlights calls attention to the inherent instability in attempts at governing, specifying, reproducing and implementing policy. Initiativitis is the attempt to define policy as “new”, “modern”, or “progressive” yet frequently the new is overlaid on existing policy practices. I discuss initiativitis further in the next chapter in relation to childcare policy. New policy is likely to encounter more or less residual or enduring, sedimented traces of recent policies in local projects, in local experience and understandings. To make sense of new policy in relation to existing contradictory social formations may require extensive translation work (Newman & Clarke, 2009:20). Those who research policy become intertextual palimpsest scribes as they utilise their own preferred methodological tools and articulate a variety of policy linkages to assemble their own historically informed version of a policy assemblage. Policy gets researched, interpreted and reconstructed using a variety of lenses or prisms depending on values, historical perspectives and future orientations so that the “is” and “ought” of policy are dialectically related. Researcher-scribes might slice the history of childcare policy into chunks of time which might be long durees and epochs, or could be managerialist deadlines for the achievement of targets.

I have sought to research ethnographically in “real-time” to represent some fleeting moments in policy implementation that may fail to achieve the level of permanency achieved by official policy texts. I set these fleeting moments against the long-running sexual division of labour to analyse change and relative permanency and to pursue a feminist agenda that values an ethic of care. Researchers working with more linear, “... mono-causal and uni-directional accounts of change” (Newman & Clarke, 2009:17) may frame childcare policy as a neo-liberal shift enabling workfare, as child protection, as “educare” or as equal opportunities for women according to their methodological assumptions and their value-orientation and politics. I have

attempted to show how these varied and often contradictory understandings are negotiated and assembled as a local partnership develops an implementation strategy. In my palimpsest analogy what counts as the figure of policy and the ground of context shift. Sometimes policy might appear as a rational response to evidence that Britain has too many children living in poverty, at other times, as Donzelot (1979) has shown (and as Jane's story illustrated) what counts as family care is a moving resultant of policy with understandings about work and childcare dialectically related to processes of governance. Implementation practices can result in unintended consequences so that the policy-palimpsest takes on a new layer of meaning and the search for original intentions may prove futile. I show how artefacts function as attempts to commodify the inherently fluid concepts of time and policy but can be analysed as genealogical ciphers. A palimpsest like the Archimedes scroll changes but paradoxically might be said to stay the same. For me the palimpsest analogy draws attention to the need for researchers to acknowledge their disciplinary antecedents. I suggest that policy researchers accept their authorial responsibility as they deconstruct and reconstruct policy in order to make meaningful research claims that go beyond common sense but do not disappear into a philosophical void of meaningless mess. Here is an extract from Law's (2003) "Making a Mess with method": <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/papers/law-making-a-mess-with-method.pdf>

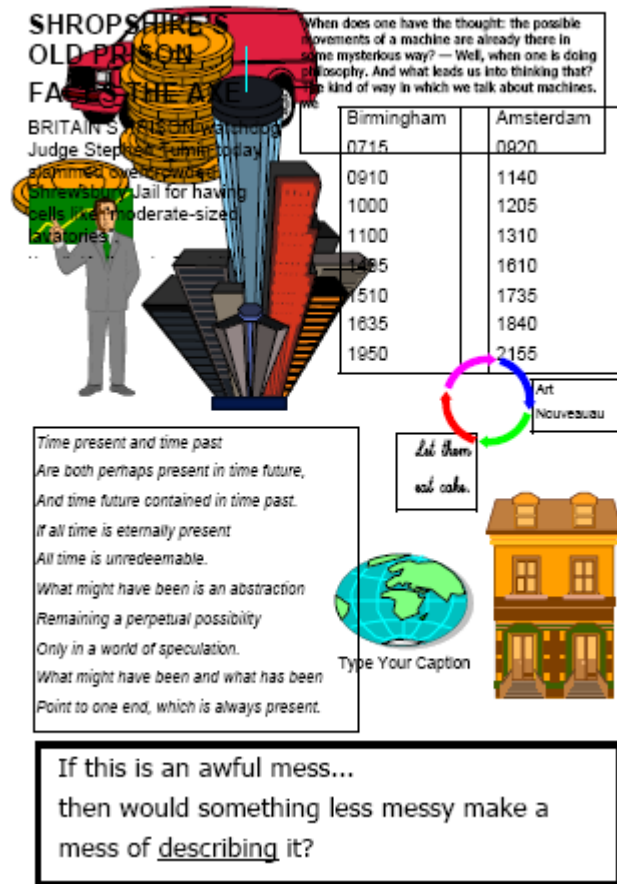


Fig. 5 from Law (2003)

I interpret Law's above diagrammatic mess as a palimpsest. See how he layers images and texts. It is not easy to detect figure from ground. He doesn't use the term palimpsest, preferring "methods assemblage." It serves as an analogy for my own messy but disciplined approach. Historically, palimpsests were parchment scrolls re-used and reinscribed¹⁹. Deetz et al (2004) use the French term bricolage (that roughly translates into English as D.I.Y.) to represent an eclectic pick and mix approach to methodology. Given the inter-disciplinary nature of this research, this promiscuous approach seems to suit my methodological needs.

¹⁹ Images of palimpsests are plentifully available online. Many are beautiful works of art. For one example see <http://www.exploratorium.edu/archimedes/viewer.html>

However, for me the palimpsest analogy captures more closely the sense of historiography and temporality. I came across the notion in a casual sentence about a “palimpsest of projects” by Byrne (2001)²⁰. The idea of a concept as of practical use, as a “gadget” is enlightening for me. In relation to “policy sociology”, Gale (2001) utilises Foucauldian “gadgets” of historiography, archaeology and genealogy, but does not lay claim to a comprehensive adoption of Foucault as theorist:

“My confessions also extend to not being fully attentive to Foucault’s renditions of archaeology and genealogy, even though these have influenced the methods of policy analysis I imagine here. But then Foucault himself provides such licence: *If one or two of these ‘gadgets’ of approach or method that I’ve tried to employ . . . can be of service to you, then I shall be delighted. If you find the need to transform my tools or use others then show me what they are, because it may be of benefit to me.* (Foucault 1980: 65) [Gale’s emphasis]

In this spirit I offer up my palimpsest analogy as a potentially useful “gadget” or concept for recognising the intertextual and temporal nature of policy and for drawing together the methodological links between policy framing, discourse analysis, interpretivism, feminism, structuration theory, poststructuralism and policy analysis. I also utilise the theoretical concepts, derived from Marxist theory, of commodification, interpellation, and hegemony to help me assemble my palimpsest (Clarke, J., 2004).

²⁰ In correspondence Professor Byrne told me it was “just a metaphor I picked up” but he was glad I found it useful.

While I was in the field I found it difficult to work out what my unit of analysis was – what would constitute a “case”. Cases are wholes – even if, as in Jane’s story, they are also “parts” embedded in a larger whole. Poststructuralism critiques the boundedness of things or systems and my palimpsest thesis adopts aspects of poststructuralism in order to focus on policy as process and frame implementation as a palimpsest. The “case” becomes whatever I frame it as following my analysis of how local actors enact policy and how they themselves frame their work. I believe this fits with Gale’s notion of temporary policy settlements (Gale, 1999), with Mosse’s ethnographic approach to policy implementation and with Shore and Wright’s (1997) anthropological orientation to policy. Gale (2001:383) explains the difficulty of framing a policy field:

““What the policy analyst is looking for, what is regarded as ‘the policy’ and/or as ‘policy making’, necessarily frames where and how data about policy will be found/produced.” (p. 383)

Similarly, Majone (1989) writes :

“There is no unique set of decisions, actors and institutions constituting policy and waiting to be discovered and described. Rather, policy is an intellectual construct, an analytic category the content of which must first be identified by the analyst” (p. 147).

Using *bricolage*, Jones (2001) writes about education policy and projects :

“This environment is ‘thick’ not only in the sense of spatial complexity ... but also in the sense of being sedimented. Whether considered programmatically, or in terms of practice, contemporary education involves not the entire displacement of past projects but their reworking. It is an over-determined bricolage, not a single design, and it is dialogic, not monologic in relation to ‘alternative’ traditions and vantage-points.....Critical treatment of this field of discourse, and of the agenda embedded within it, will therefore benefit from attention to its complex genealogies, and to the ways in which it achieves a reworking and synthesis of other positions.”

I suggest that this way of thinking about education policy as dialogic, as structured yet “re-worked” fits with my palimpsest analogy and with my view of childcare policy as “protean” so I rework Jones into my thesis-palimpsest.

The fracturing of foundationalist knowledge and of the coherent, sovereign, authorial subject is compounded by recognition of the role of the unconscious, such that subjects cannot know themselves (their own minds) in a complete sense. Law (2004:153) advocates attention to “materialities” and “imaginaries”. Law’s emphasis on “indefiniteness” and “re-enchantment” (p.154) suits my research inquiry into the meaning making that goes on in policy implementation and welfare reform. Recognition of the unconscious and the imagination allows me to analyse a Freudian slip and a ghost in my data set and to examine the way in which rhetorical practices may mobilise affect and the imagination. Law (2004) discusses the topic of time and counterposes a “Euro-American ontology” with “Aboriginal method assemblages” (p.133). This radical social constructivism however, is a step too far for my

research. I simply cannot practice research other than from an ontology that rests on an assumption of linear time, although I analyse tensions in the subjective interpretation of time.

8. Methods Assemblage

Having outlined the major theoretical resources that my study relies on, this section explains how I generated and analysed data and describes my data set. Case study designs have traditionally been used for policy research (Yin, 2004) and I framed my design in this way at the stage when I applied for ethical approval (see appendix). However, it was difficult to predict in advance what access I would be able to negotiate. I “designed” some elements of my research to try to ensure that I could discover something meaningful within the time and resource constraints of my PhD enquiry. I was also required to produce a design to satisfy the regulations of the Research Governance Framework.²¹ I left the design relatively fluid to allow me to be responsive to opportunities for data collection that might arise but also because, rather than a hypothesis to test, I had hunches to follow up (Buchanan et al, 1988). I had no guarantees that I would be granted permission to enter the black box of policy implementation (see Miller and Bell, 2002 on issues of gate-keeping, access and “informed consent”). Besides ethical and pragmatic considerations of access, I was concerned from the outset with epistemological questions. I imagined that I might find a difference between what documents contained, what people told me and what they did – between talk, texts and practices. The following table represents my dataset, constructed from the conventional qualitative methods of interview, observation, documents and artefacts. The majority of the data was generated over a period of twelve months May 2006 to May 2007. The table shows

²¹ See

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4108962

the relative weight of textual data, much of which comprises minutes and agendas and publicity material produced by the local authority that I cannot identify for reasons of anonymity.

Table 2 dataset

Interviews	Observation	Documents	Artefacts
n = 56	n = 16 meetings	n = 171	n = 5
37 female 19 male (1 gender swap to protect anonymity). All but two people agreed that their interviews could be taped and all taped interviews were transcribed fully.	6 Council consultation events 7 CLP meetings 2 mentor meetings 2 regional, 2 national networking events. 2 parent forum meetings. Data was recorded using paper and pen.	The corpus of documents includes minutes of meetings, strategic plans, Powerpoint presentations and a policy poem authored by a practitioner	Promotional give away items branding various policies comprising a rubbery toy, a child's paper watch, a highlighter pen, a teddy bear wearing a vest, a Respect Agenda pen and pencil.

Policy is a richly textual field and policy documents are often read through a positivist framework as statements of policy intent that specify policy content. My collection of

documents incorporates a green paper, glossy magazines and web pages, policy and practice guidance documents, minutes, agendas, fieldnotes, information leaflets and conference packs. These variously represent the policies of the Department of Children, Schools and Families, one particular CLP, a County Council's Local Area Agreement and so on. Many of the policy documents in my data set are "official", produced by local government or local authorities and available in the public domain and to cite them would compromise anonymity. Others, however, are not available in the public domain and in several instances could only have been gathered by ethnographic methods. Scott (1990, cited in Mosse 2000) writes of "hidden" and "public" "transcripts" in relation to development policy. My study aims to reveal some of the relatively hidden practices of policy implementation as well as paying attention to some less well-studied hyper-visible policy manifestations.

I find I cannot easily tabulate my data set. When is a text not an artefact? When it is read for its textual content rather than its symbolic meaning? I believe I did both in the case of the official letter to Jane that I analysed in chapter one. In which column should Victoria Climbié's ghost belong because I heard it invoked and witnessed its effects?²² When is an interview not an observation? When I pay more attention to what is said than observing the environment in which it is said? My categories are blurred not discrete. Clarke J. (2004b:10) has argued for "theoretical and analytical work ... to be the site of unresolved tensions, difficulties, problems and challenges." In the interest of relating my research claims to the thorny problem of authenticity in qualitative research (Edge and Richards, 1998), I am trying to convey to my reader how it felt to me dealing with unresolved tensions while carrying out

²² Victoria Climbié's story is available at . <http://www.victoria-climbié-inquiry.org.uk/finreport/vicstory.htm>. Her death provoked a scandal and led to the Every Child Matters green paper

this research. It felt like an emotional roller coaster – thrilling, terrifying and fast moving. There never seemed to be sufficient time to digest one experience before moving on to the next. Data hit my senses as white noise and once I had hit upon the concept, I seemed to see palimpsests everywhere.

Using a loosely structured topic guide (see appendix) I interviewed 56 people working in and around a local authority childcare network. As well as headteachers, nursery owners and social workers working in traditional roles, I found people with a variety of job titles such as “Early Implementer Project Manager” and “CLP Community Co-ordinator”. These modern policy entrepreneurs (Williams, 2002) operating at the meso-level with responsibility for making sense of childcare policy, work as “boundary spanners” in the in-between spaces of various bureaucracies, communities and markets to stitch together partnership networks, grass roots initiatives and central government policies into what Gale (1999) terms “temporary policy settlements” as they translate policy across a range of “epistemic communities” (Fischer, 2003) and advocacy coalitions (Sabatier, 1999). Crucially, it was the ethnographic element of my research that enabled the collection of apparently ephemeral yet highly material policy data such as the Sure Start bendy figure that I introduce in the next chapter. Five artefacts play a key role in the thesis as evidence of my having “been there” and these “found objects” function as ciphers for policy with an ontological status that is at once material and symbolic. My artefacts also signify as authentication devices – my souvenirs to demonstrate that I *was there* (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1983, Hannabus 2000).

One way in which I bounded my palimpsest / case study was time. I conducted empirical research over a ten month period.²³ However, even this edge frayed as I found that I remained on the mailing list of the CLP and I include as data, communication I received after the end of the twelve month period.

8. The Ethics of Getting In and Getting On

The tensions and trade-offs of access and distance involves practical and epistemological considerations that entail ethical judgements. Because I interviewed NHS staff, my research is subject to NHS external governance processes beyond those of the university. The Research Governance Framework seeks to regulate research in the interests of vulnerable people, usually conceptualised as “patients” who are the objects of health policy. In order to gain authorisation to interview employees of the NHS, I needed to comply with the Research Governance Framework. I submitted a mixed method case study research design explaining that I wanted to study Children’s Centres with a focus on “parenting” and “work”. I completed the 57 page online COREC ²⁴form and attached a plethora of documentation such as an information sheet about my research, a loosely structured topic guide and a form I designed to obtain informed consent²⁵. I attended the Local Research Ethics Committee (LREC) in person to answer questions. A medical practitioner queried whether I had taken account of the complexity (including long time scales) of qualitative analysis and I replied that I had and had enrolled on a course to learn CAQDAS techniques²⁶. A local councillor asked what I felt was

²³ See Appendix for list of fieldwork meetings referenced in thesis

²⁴ Central Office for Research Ethics Committees see <http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk>

²⁵ See appendix

²⁶ CAQDAS Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

the most intelligent, appropriate question about the political nature of the research. I agreed that I would be encountering “political” situations. The question of politics did not seem to have occurred to the other committee members, who included psychologists. We had a dialogue about my plan to observe meetings. I was advised to hand out my information sheet, withdraw from the meeting to allow time for a discussion and to repeat this on any subsequent meeting where the group members may have changed. I found this impossible to comply with. In practice, whenever the opportunity arose (generally during the round robin introduction part of a meeting) I introduced myself as a researcher, flagged up my information sheet with an offer to give one to anyone who wanted a copy, I guaranteed anonymity and offered to answer any questions regarding my research. When introductions did not take place, it was because the group had begun to expect that, after several meetings, people would know one another and they had business to get on with. It felt unethical to disrupt their proceedings and I frequently found myself making moral judgements “on the hoof” about my overt / covert researcher status, weighing up potential harm against benefits and assessing risk to myself and to others. I do not mean to claim that I was in dangerous situations; the nature of my research was not that I was asking questions about topics more usually considered private or sensitive such as sexuality. The sensitivities arose from the *political* nature of observing a group, talking to individuals about their role in the group and about asking for opinions on “official” policy while negotiating relationships of trust. Spicker (2007:112) argues that certain ethical constraints are applied inappropriately to the field of public policy. He argues for a distinction between public and private spheres such that

“In a democracy, if someone is functioning in a public role, that person is subject to public examination and criticism in that role whether they like it or not.”

So I identified the Paymaster General, Dawn Primarolo in the first chapter and I name Caroline Flint and Stephen Timms in others. My moral responsibility to prevent harm to research participants weighs against my interest in providing what Spicker terms a “critical function”. It is now that I write these words that I can make sense of some of the feelings of discomfort I felt in the field. I felt like a gamekeeper turned poacher. I had checked with some past work colleagues whether they felt that it would be at all realistic for me to conduct observation and they replied that yes, so many people working in the public sector are used to being surveilled, monitored and judged by the likes of SCIE ²⁷or Ofsted²⁸ that this was practically a commonplace experience (Law and Mooney, 2007). It was only later that I understood the risk of entering the field and being perceived as an inspector (Clarke and Hall, 2008). This “placing” or framing of my researcher role as outsider sometimes militated against my attempt to behave as a participant observer. Often I found myself making use of the credentials of the LREC to give reassurance that my research was being conducted ethically. The amorphous nature of the CLP with its fluid membership and “round tables” meant that I did not often stick out like a stranger. I found it relatively easy to gain access to the CLP network, partly because membership was defined loosely. Attendance at CLP meetings seemed to comprise a core membership as well as several people who seemed to drift in and out with no opportunity for me to establish contact. I made no attempt to record observational data other than with the use of paper and pen. The advantage of this was that most other

²⁷ Social Care Institute for Excellence

²⁸ Office for Standards in Education

people at the meetings also made notes so my activity was unremarkable. Sometimes I was conscious of people looking over my shoulder to see what I was writing or seeming surprised at the volume of my notes. I learned that detaching myself in a physical sense from the main meeting could be interpreted by other participants as either self-exclusion, and they felt sorry for me, or I was positioned in the “judge” role which made them uncomfortable so on most occasions I participated alongside them in meetings. Usually there was the opportunity to introduce myself. Sometimes I requested permission in advance from the Chair. On at least one occasion I risked turning up uninvited and my researcher status went practically undetected until I found myself about to be co-opted onto a Management Action Group whereupon I was called upon to explain why I wasn’t voting! On another occasion I found myself the only member of a group willing to draw a picture of a pram so I duly made my mark on a flipchart. These somewhat risky opportunities to observe “policy in action” were highly contingent, dependent upon finding out about the meetings in the first place, negotiating access, legitimacy and building trust or sufficient rapport to be invited back (Buchanan et al 1988). This messy reality is considerably at variance with that envisaged and presented by me in my protocol for the ethics committee. The ESRC ethical framework notes that for studies of, say, crowd control, it is impractical to secure informed consent. It also recognises a plurality of research methodologies, that research designs may be iterative and that in some contexts “covert observation is necessary and warranted” Although “it is only justified if important issues are being addressed and if matters of social significance which cannot be undertaken in other ways are likely to be discovered.” (p.21) I think that some of my observations have been overt, others covert, yet others are somewhere in between. What I argue here is that the coded ethics of the Research Governance Framework are not the same as

personal values and moral practice. I accept that these are similarly socially constructed but an ethical sensibility is surely beyond codification, located in the infinite contingency of principled but situational ethics (Mauthner et al, 2002).

In seeking permission to study the implementation of Children's Centres, I had not anticipated the overlap with Extended Schools, nor was I aware that this local authority had already been running Extended School pilot projects. I met with a senior officer at a County Council – I'll call him "Ted" - and negotiated permission to carry out my PhD study. In return for permission to carry out my PhD research in the area of Children's Centres, we discussed the "quid pro quo". Ted expressed his interest in the theme of governance. A brief discussion indicated that his interests lay in the legal, technical and the cultural aspects of governance. I explained that I had no legal expertise, I was not interested in studying the complexities of VAT legislation but I was extremely interested in culture. The meeting was friendly and fruitful – permission was granted in return for guaranteed anonymity and a summary report of the research to be presented at some time in the future to (some unspecified part of) the local authority. Some explanation was given of how the local authority was interpreting the national policy and creating CLPs, rather than focussing more narrowly on Children's Centres. As requested by Ted, I produced a two-sided sheet of A4 titled Research Protocol (see appendix). The short title of my research as stated on my COREC application was "A case study of local implementation of Children's Centres policy " with the full title stated as : "How does a local partnership, responsible for implementing childcare policy, weigh and manage the issues of parenting and work as it implements Children's Centres?". Both of these assumed that there

was a single coherent policy of “Children’s Centres” to be implemented and that parenting and work bore some relation to this policy.

Early on in my research, following my attendance at several Council consultation events I presented Ted with a report analysing what I had found in terms of “cultural attitudes.” I had one further meeting with him and then contact went “cold.”

Sampling

Sometimes I drew on my existing social capital to request interviews (Edwards et al 2004). One manager of a Children’s Centre wanted reassurance that I had some existing research experience before he agreed to meet me. I explained that I understood his concerns about allowing inexperienced research students access for their research as I had faced this same dilemma myself. The fact that the policy is being delivered within complex governance arrangements influences access as many research participants are outside the Council hierarchy and so outside Ted’s jurisdiction. The “ways in” to the policy are porous in some instances but can appear closed and tightly controlled in others. Once I got my details onto an electronic mailing list I got automatic notification of meetings and was circulated minutes of the CLP (Workman, 1992). This sometimes allowed insight into Goffman’s “backstage” as when, after my fieldwork had ended, I received a broadcast e-mail to the mailing list from a Councillor (see chapter eight).

In my application for ethical approval I had stated that I planned to study a partnership that I imagined would be responsible for implementing the policy of Children's Centres, and I intended to construct a census sample for interview and observe the whole of a partnership. Once I began my fieldwork I discovered that the County Council had decided to combine their implementation of Children's Centres alongside Extended Schools and to create 38 CLPs and so I knew that I could not study these in any qualitative depth. A limitation of my relatively loose research design is that, although I was interested in the childcare market and interviewed some people working in private nurseries, by the time I had established access to a CLP, I realised that OldTown CLP kept the childcare market off its agenda. I decided that the interview data was valuable but it did not fit into the ethnography and so I include it in chapter four in the section on governance through the market. I naively assumed that I had been given "access all areas" permission. However, when I contacted managers more senior than Ted in the authority to request interviews with them, my e-mails were intercepted by their secretaries whose response was that "Ted is dealing with this policy implementation and can tell you everything you need to know." I volunteered to present interim findings back to the CLP whose meetings I attended over the course of several months but the offer was not taken up. I feel I have partially fulfilled my obligation to report back to research participants. On the other hand, I cannot possibly claim that my research has made any difference to the people I met in the field.

Eager to get my hands on some data, I started requesting interviews with officers who seemed to have strategic responsibility for policy implementation. Through a combination of opportunism, snowballing and drawing on my own social capital, I interviewed a range of

people including Jane, a man who worked at an out of school club, head teachers from primary and secondary schools, middle managers from organisations such as Primary Care Trusts, a senior officer in a statutory youth organisation and voluntary sector managers.²⁹

Table 3 interview sample

Employing body	Number of interviewees
Local authority	26
Children's Trust	2
Primary Care Trust (NHS)	2
Voluntary sector	8
Statutory youth organisation	2
Councillor	3
JobCentre Plus	2
Private sector	3
Head teachers	3
Parent representative	2
Regional Government office	1
Local college	1
Total interviews	56

Some of these people were on secondment, one wore two hats of parent representative and Sure Start employee with a part time Council contract, a voluntary sector manager had also

²⁹ See Appendix for list of research participants quoted in the thesis. The list details pseudonyms, interview codes and role descriptors quoted in the thesis to aid the reader's understanding.

been seconded for a large portion of her time to the Children's Trust. Network governance theory shows how policy entrepreneurs from public, private and voluntary sectors are loosely structured into partnership working practices (Newman, 2001). I did not set out to study these people as individuals with an interest in their psychology but in their social relationship to policy and practice. Manning (1989:216) explains:

“Discourse analysis of policy is not actor oriented. Because the focus is upon the codes which provide voices and forms of expression, especially metaphors, the interest is not in actors' feelings, roles or selves.... Personal styles or biography and factual knowledge are less relevant to policy analysis than an understanding of the social grounds for “knowledgeability”, or a semi-shared tacit sense of the correct, the trustworthy, adequate and workable that links formal schemes such as organizational objectives, standard procedures and policies with practical actions.”

As well as attending local network meetings I took advantage of several free and semi-public events, including a meeting to discuss child poverty that was held at the Treasury, and a Respect Agenda Showcase held at a hotel in London. I have appended a list of meetings with dates that I reference in the thesis. For these conferences, I did not conceal my research student status when booking a place and always carried my information sheet. Practically, in a large audience, my presence as a researcher was fairly covert. However, I believed that these meetings discussing public policy constituted a “public realm” and so I could legitimately record my observations.

10. Analysis

My iterative research design meant that I could not predict when I would have sufficient data to allow me to produce a thesis. On reflection, a lack of research experience meant that I collected more data than I could analyse within the time and resource constraints of my PhD. I deselected most of the publicity literature and official documents for analysis as I decided that the unique aspect of this study's contribution is the ethnographic, "unofficial" data that is usually hidden from public view. I had explained to the LREC that I would be using software designed for qualitative analysis and I duly enrolled on an N-Vivo TM course. I imported all electronic transcript files into a data base and began coding. I used "tree nodes" according to a template I had developed from an early literature review (see Appendix D) and I developed more "free nodes" from significant themes that appeared in the transcripts. However, these themes seemed to have a static quality and I was puzzling for a long time over the relationship between my interview data, textual data, the artefacts and my observational field notes. Interview data occasionally gave me insight into contradictions between what people said in private and how they behaved in a group. Also, interview data was interesting for how people used figures of speech such as metaphor to frame the policy. Often, however, it felt as though I was being given an "official line" (Duke, 2002) and I learned little that I could not have gained from reading official policy texts³⁰. At a later stage of analysis, I reworked my numerous nodes into a series of themes that I felt captured all of the data types (see appendix). While N-Vivo software has many features to enhance analysis and flexible interpretation, I found that

³⁰ After one interview was over and I switched off the tape, the interviewee explained that she was leaving her job because of her frustrations. Her tone switched completely from compliance with policy to criticism of the Council's strategy.

nodes and codes chunked my data too much and seemed to prevent me from seeing a larger picture or framing my palimpsest-thesis as a whole (Bourdon, 2002). I needed to find a narrative thread to enable my palimpsest to achieve its own temporary settlement and so when the theme of time became clearer in my analysis, then I decided that change and stasis would form the narrative plot. While thematic analysis is static, narrative is dynamic. I reached a stage in my analysis where I decided to privilege observational data, focussing on what I felt were “luminous moments” (Katz, 2001) and attempt to reflect the moving picture of policy as well as processes of reification – mainly because I feel this is where my study’s contribution lies. The disadvantage of the pen and paper recording method is obviously some lack of accuracy. I distinctly recall a time in the field when I shifted my perspective on my research. I think my mindset had become so infected with the performative nature of the “audit culture” working in health and social care services that I had lost confidence in my sense data and experience, routinely gathering whatever scraps of “tangible evidence” I could. When I realised I could abandon mimesis was a crucial stage in my development as an ethnographer. It came to me in an “a-ha” moment of epiphany that I should not be worrying about verisimilitude. I realised I had a valid experience to relay and that the validity of ethnographic research is derived from theoretically informed first hand witnessing. That meant that I myself was the research instrument (Hannabus, 2000). I needed to develop confidence as a *writer* as well as an *observer* before I could expect to be regarded as an ethnographer and this only came from exposing some of my qualitative writing to a very experienced ethnographer. Yanow (1996:53) demonstrates in a chapter *Writing Up* how a quality criteria for ethnographic writing is its “ability to resonate with other readers and researchers because they share sufficient consensus regarding meanings and interpretations.” I presented a work in progress

paper to doctoral students at a Social Policy Conference and received positive assurances that my artefactual data was interesting and so this gave me the confidence to privilege this aspect of my dataset. I then focused my analysis around how the give-away objects might tell a story of welfare reform and began to weave my interview data and themes into that plot. Rather than a naturalistic narrative whose plot might develop sequentially as my fieldwork did, I found myself reconstructing events in a way that might make sense for the reader. For example I present the Respect data before the Strongham cabinet meeting, although this out of sequence from how my fieldwork happened. I could not have predicted that a single interview and document would provide sufficient data for a whole chapter but Jane's story turned out to be a rich condensate of most of my research problematics. Other data has been significantly boiled down and reduced. Some interviewees are not quoted but this does not mean that their data did not influence my analysis. I have also paid attention to missing data – for example, the absence of health officials and JobCentre Plus representatives at the MAG³¹ seemed significant. My analysis has not happened in a discrete phase of my research but began with my selection of a research topic and continued through the writing up until virtually the last full stop in the thesis. I have taken heart from Mason's view (2002:175) that "how" questions can be as important as "why" questions for explanations and that:

"Qualitative research can be particularly useful here because, although it is rarely used to identify broad patterns or trends, it can provide a detailed, contextual and multilayered interpretation which is unlikely to simplify or caricature developmental processes."

³¹ MAG Management Action Group see Glossary in Appendix

This, then, is my aim – to utilise a broad range of analytical tools in order to look at some of the “developmental processes” of childcare policy implementation, through which welfare reform does and doesn’t happen.

11. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a partial “natural history” of my research (Hammersley, undated) to allow insight into my “workings out”. I have noted the challenge associated with authenticity, I reflexively demonstrated my awareness of inevitable blind spots and I have outlined my commitment to a particular form of feminist ontology and epistemology and combined these with conceptual tools and “gadgets” from a range of interpretive, critical and poststructuralist theories to form a uniquely creative “methods assemblage”. I offer palimpsest as a sensitizing device for representing the way in which welfare reform and childcare may not be experienced as coherent policies but may be sutured together through discursive and semiotic social practices. In making a case for ethnography as a methodology for policy analysis, I am assuming that the implementation process affords a relatively discretionary space that is occupied by a range of actors and discourses. I presented my data set including information on how it was constructed and analysed in an attempt to ground my palimpsest-thesis but I have also alluded to the missing other of my “methods assemblage.” Rather than a one-off assessment of a research proposal, I argue that ethical judgements recur throughout the research process, including responsibility for the final written representation.

SECTION THREE: POLICY CONTEXT / LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Three

A Genealogy of Childcare Policy

Contents

1.	Introduction	101
2.	Women's Public and Private Work: a Genealogy of childcare across time and space	102
3.	Sure Start an Iconic Policy?	110
	A New Labour Flagship	110
	Policy Transfer	112
	Initiativitis	114
	Policy Branding	117
4.	A Playful Semiotic Interlude	120
5.	Evidence Based Policy?	121
6.	Virtual Children's Centres, Every Child Matters, Child Poverty	127
7.	Conclusion	132

“Um I mean I think where it gets very difficult is the flux the public sectors in and y’know the plethora of initiatives which is making life really very difficult.” (Rod, Youth Work Manager, LA08)

1. Introduction

We saw in chapter one that Jane had attended a “Sure Start-ran” parent and toddler group and then she became involved in her local Children’s Centre. In order to familiarise the reader with these programmes and their complex relationship to welfare reform and fast moving childcare policies, this chapter gives some background to the Sure Start and Children’s Centres initiatives. I present a brief genealogy of childcare policy to guide the reader through the thesis from Jane’s individual narrative to a more complex tale of the governance of childcare policy in implementation. I analyse some of the historical and cultural ways in which childcare has been framed that may affect the contemporary local interpretation of national policy mandates. I shall summarise the valuable analyses of UK childcare policy by Liu (2001), Randall (2000) and Riley (1983) and bring these up to date by situating childcare alongside contemporary debates about modernisation and reform of welfare. I also draw on my M.Res dissertation, Carter (2006). The focus of my analysis is on England as that is where my study was carried out; the devolved administrations are implementing childcare policy in distinctive ways. (Ball, 2006b, Mooney et al, 2006, Wincott, 2006). I draw on data from previous research, from policy texts and I analyse a policy artefact semiotically to discuss the significance of policy branding. A modest amount of illustrative data from my empirical study is included for illumination. I return to epistemological questions to explore the extent to which childcare

policy can be described as evidence based policy. I raise the question of whether the shift from Sure Start to Children's Centres is a substantive policy change with the aim of setting the scene for my study that explores how local implementers make sense of rapidly changing policy in relation to their duties, responsibilities and opportunities for creativity.

2. Women's Public and Private Work: a Genealogy of childcare across time and space

New Institutional theory³² is combined with feminism by Randall (2000) to produce a detailed account of how childcare policy in Britain, prior to the publication in 1998 of the Green Paper "*Meeting the Childcare Challenge*", childcare policy was a disparate set of policies. Randall documents the way in which historically, British childcare policy has been incremental and disjointed, rather than systematic and coherent. Historically, other than during war years, the UK has not taken responsibility for the provision of childcare at a governmental or nation state level. Riley's seminal work "*War in the Nursery*" (1983) described the swift creation of war time nurseries to enable women with children to work for the war effort. Feminist research has shown that the state can affect the balance of provision between public and private childcare and that this is influenced not only by military strategy but by ideas about women's roles in society which in turn feeds back into policies around equal opportunities and broader political notions of equality and justice (Showstack Sassoon, 1987). War time might be expected to create a punctuation in any policy equilibrium (Kingdon,

³² Randall terms her theoretical approach "gendered institutionalism". I shall not be critically appraising New Institutionalism except to explain here that the approach aims to decentre the "formal" nature of institutions in favour of a recognition of their contingent and informal aspects – norms, routines etc. (Randall 2000:4)

1995). The subsequent appearance of the 1950s middle class housewife with the ideology of the nuclear family, influenced by Bowlby's theories of attachment and maternal deprivation phenomenon is well documented and researched by feminists (Penn, 2007).

Childcare as a key issue for women's employment has intersected at different periods with anti-poverty policies (see Randall 2000, chapter three). During the post war years, local authorities made some childcare provision in those areas where local labour markets traditionally relied on women's employment such as the textile and pottery industries and the localized consequences of this history can be seen in research by Holloway (1998) that found "*moral geographies of mothering*" as well as more recent research on childcare markets that also found that localized "*cultural factors impact demand for childcare*" (Price Waterhouse Coopers 2006). Research by Bell et al (2005) found variations in the use of childcare amongst different ethnic groups with White and Black Caribbean families most likely to use formal childcare and Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African families least likely to use childcare. The implications of these local contexts, traditions and cultures are that national childcare policy would seem to require local sensitivity in implementation.

Michel and Mahon (2002) describe childcare policy as "protean". The UK has had a long established *medically* based programme of childcare linked maternal and child health with an emphasis on protecting the health of infants and teaching mothers correct childrearing practices. This has been administered as a universal entitlement to a service by midwives and health visitors employed by the NHS whose professions have been influenced by medical knowledge of obstetrics and child development. A welfare or *social* service delivered by

nursery nurses was delivered as a *targeted* policy to parents who were assessed by social workers as being “in need”. A limited supply of state sponsored child care was provided by some local authorities in response to demand and the perceived need to care for children of those families with mothers in paid employment who could not otherwise afford to pay. An *educational* approach informed local authority nursery schools offering free part time pre-school education in a limited number of geographic areas, influenced by theories of socialisation and children’s development, including Winnicott and Froebel’s German kindergarten movement (Randall, 2000). The Conservative government introduced the nursery voucher scheme in 1996 (Liu, 2001). Soon after their election in 1997 Labour abolished the voucher system and mandated local authorities to set up Early Years Development Partnerships bringing public, private and voluntary sector providers of childcare together. Prior to the creation in 2005 of the Children’s Workforce Development Council, early childhood education was professionally delivered by nursery nurses for children below the age of three and by qualified teachers in the case of those children over the age of three in nursery classes (Randall, 2000). These medical, welfare and education policy frames (Rein, 1993a) are mirrored in academic policy analysis with social policy analysts demonstrating an interest in the role of the state in child protection and education analysts interested in pedagogy (Moss, 2006). For example, Frost and Stein (1989:3) wrote “The Politics of Child Welfare” but acknowledged that

“...we restrict our use of ‘child welfare’ to refer to those policy areas which fall under the remit of what is usually called the ‘personal social services’. Thus we have excluded specific analysis of areas such as child health and education...”

This exclusion would not be possible since the publication of the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* in 2003 with its insistence on an integrated system of children's services.

The childcare workforce is ninety seven and a half per cent female (<http://www.daycaretrust.co.uk> accessed 19 June 08) and the sexual division of labour persists today although Kenway and Krack (2004:98) point to the paradox of the “feminization of work” whereby masculinity is “destabilized”. The welfare state was constructed on the breadwinner family model with the assumption of male headed households. Increased divorce rates, women's increased participation in the labour market and different family forms present challenges to the model. Pascall (2008:219) shows that women's lifetime earnings are approximately half men's with significant differences between mothers and other women and between women with different levels of education. The public sector has been one arena where women have traditionally worked in caring roles such as teaching and social work and benefited from what Esping-Anderson (1990) terms “de-commodification” – i.e, labour protection such as maternity leave and pension entitlements and many women have achieved career advancement in the public sector. In recent times when public services are increasingly being contracted out, women are particularly affected (especially women in low paid areas such as catering and cleaning) by processes of outsourcing and privatisation (Armstrong and Armstrong, 2005).

During the 1970s feminists campaigned for 24 hour child care but failed to directly influence the formulation of childcare policy at that time (Michel, 2002). Feminists have sometimes been ambivalent about childcare. As Michel (2002:333) argues:

“... childcare, unlike other items on the feminist agenda – say, anti-discriminatory policies, - involves not only women but children too. In seeking to transform the way in which young children are reared, feminist childcare advocates inevitably challenge fundamental social values and cultural traditions.”

It is widely acknowledged that feminists in the Labour party have influenced contemporary national childcare policy (Penn, 2007, Randall, 2002). Policy proceeds through a complex interaction of ideas and interests, worked through a conjuncture of politics and administration “streams” as “policy windows” open and close (see Kingdon, 1995, chapter eight and Ball, 2006). Kingdon’s theory is deployed by Annesley and Gains (2007) to ask whether there is currently a window of opportunity for feminist policy and politics. In their edited collection, a chapter by Coates and Oettinger assesses progress on “the gender dimensions of Treasury policy under New Labour” as “two steps forward, one step back.” They write: “For all Gordon Brown’s fine words, a long-hours culture, low-investment economy is not the best environment for a gender revolution at home and work ...” (p.128) but they acknowledge (along with the DayCare Trust see Butt et al 2007) that there has been substantial investment of public funds and policy efforts devoted to enlarge the supply of childcare alongside policies from the Treasury to attempt to “make work pay” and to reduce child poverty. New universal entitlements to free part time education for three and four year olds have been welcomed

enthusiastically with 90% take up by three year olds and 97% by four year olds. (Butt et al, 2007). This entitlement is to part time childcare (12.5 hours per week for 38 weeks due to be extended to 15 hours per week in 2010) that does not give adequate free childcare for parents to work more than a limited number of part time hours per week in term time. Currently English childcare policy is a long way off universal provision, and Pascall (2008:222) writes "Meanwhile, the 2.5 hour day is too little acknowledged as a source of maternal pressure and gender inequality in the labour market." Below the age of three, the picture is even more complicated and entitlements are not universal but are highly conditional with demand subsidised through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit.

As Jane's story illustrated, Treasury policies are associated with the *cash* elements of welfare. The *care* elements of childcare services are less *directly* controlled by the Treasury but are the responsibility of the Departments of Health (in the case of health services) and the newly restructured Department of Children Schools and Families with local authorities having a new duty to manage their local childcare market. While the Department of Health had responsibility for children's social services until 2004, with the passing of Lord Laming's recommendations into the Children Act (2004) legislation, children's social services are now formally merged with local authorities' education responsibilities and incorporated into the governance arrangements of Children's Trusts now under the remit of DCSF³³ together with the Respect Agenda and associated Family Intervention Projects (previously under the aegis of the Home Office). As Annesley and Gains (2007) point out, the Treasury exerts control over

³³ At the time of my study DfES – the Department for Education and Skills was the central government department responsible for Children's centres and Extended Schools. In 2007 this was reorganised and the department is now DCSF the Department for Children Schools and Families .

Departments through mechanisms such as Public Service Agreements (PSAs) but despite the rhetoric of joined up government, silos (or what they call “policy chimneys”) remain, with Departments producing policies that may not appear coherent to local authorities charged with implementation responsibilities. (Exworthy and Powell, 2004). This is where we find debates about new forms of network or partnership governance and discussions concerning “wicked issues” and “holistic governance” (6, 2004) that I will explore further in the next chapter.

The Daycare Trust has shown that, unlike England’s ambivalence about whether childcare is a public or private matter, in the Nordic countries, early childhood education and care is seen as a “public good”. (see Petrie et al., 2003 for a comparative study of early years childcare). International influences on national policy come from the OECD³⁴ with Penn (2007) noting a tension between neo-liberal arguments for childcare as a means of moving women from welfare into paid work, providing additional flexible labour to employers and saving welfare bills and a *redistributive* rationale promoting equity and social justice through early childhood education. Illuminating the Paymaster General’s ambivalence that we saw in the last chapter, Fawcett et al. (2004) point out that

“... a key assumption of UK governments has been that raising children is in the main a responsibility to be undertaken by families. While educating children is an activity to be undertaken by government, their care is not a proper concern of governments except when things go wrong” (p. 33)

³⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Those local authorities with social services responsibilities who are expected to respond “when things go wrong” have found themselves under increasing financial pressure as they have sought both to react to high profile child abuse cases, shift towards a preventive model of welfare provision and to contain costs (Parton, 2008, Smith, 1996).

In addition to statutory services, voluntary organisations have historically provided playgroups, crèches, out-of-school facilities, nurseries, and family centres (Smith 1996). These are now actively encouraged and welcomed into the policy arena, often with contractual arrangements to deliver the free pre-school entitlement. The various public and professional childcare frames or discourses, “imagine” – that is, call up discursively (but do not necessarily secure or finalise) a range of alternate subjectivities for policy subjects as Vandenbroek’s (2003) study of crèches and childcare in Belgium demonstrates and as Michel and Mahon discuss (2002). Parents may be discursively represented as “deserving and entitled” (Schneider and Ingram, 2005) or not. The public strategy of childcare then, relates in contradictory ways to the liberal feminist policy frame of women’s equal opportunities, to traditions of parenting and to the market provision of day care with parents positioned as “citizen-consumers” (Clarke J., et al 2007, Lister, 2006, Penn, 2007). There is ambiguity over whether the protean policy of Sure Start Children’s Centres (linked to the policy to abolish child poverty) is aimed universally at all *women* or all *parents* as the policy targets, or *targeted* at lone parents currently in receipt of income support, or at children *qua* children (as Lister 2006 terms them) either in the here and now of their childhood or as a means to future (“correctly” socialised), active worker-citizens (Dobrowolsky and Jenson 2002).

3. Sure Start: an Iconic Policy?

A New Labour Flagship

Sure Start was launched by the Sure Start Unit – an inter-departmental government unit – following the 1997 Comprehensive Spending Review. Funding for new buildings and for a range of services including family support and maternal and child health was released from the inter-departmental Sure Start Unit to local programmes in six annual waves between 1999 and 2004. Sure Start was a “flagship” programme for New Labour, described by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown as the “jewel in the crown” of policies to tackle child poverty (Penn, 2007:196). It fitted the modernisation discourse with its emphasis on “new ways of working”. Parents frequently participated in innovative governance arrangements as Sure Start local programmes were required, under the terms of the funding arrangements to involve local parents in planning and decision making (Williams and Churchill, 2006). Clarke (2006) has analysed the implications of Sure Start from a critical perspective and I draw here on her useful description of policy implementation. In 1999 funding was allocated to 60 “trailblazer” local programmes then rolled out over the period to 2002 to cover 250 local programmes that served a total population of 187,000 children under four – approximately 18 % of all children living in England of that age group. Sure Start was extended to over 500 local programmes by 2003, following the 2000 Spending Review that doubled the planned expenditure to £500 million a year and reached one third of children defined as “living in poverty” under four

(Clarke,2006:704). By the end of 2004 there were 524 Sure Start local programmes in England, funded over a series of six funding rounds. Sure Start programme managers were tasked with setting up services for families with pre-school aged children and using capital resources to modernise existing facilities or to build new Sure Start centres. Initially the programme was generously funded and could afford to give away goody-bags containing information about the programme and children's educational toys and infant feeding equipment (though not, of course, bottles as, in policy terms, "breast is best"). Sure Start's objectives were to give children "the best start in life" through providing good quality play and learning opportunities, advice to parents on breastfeeding and nutrition, provision of family support and parenting instruction and subsidised childcare to enable parents to undertake training or paid work. Over time the objective of enabling parents (especially lone parents) to access the labour market has achieved greater prominence as well as creating greater tensions for local management and administration. Norman Glass was a senior civil servant at the Treasury and Chair of Croydon Sure Start for two years. He argues that Children's Centres are a different policy from Sure Start (Glass, 2005). This raises the question of where one policy ends and another begins, which recursive process the palimpsest analogy highlights. Although they use the Sure Start brand, Children's Centres are operating with proportionately significantly reduced resources and the inter-departmental Sure Start Unit has dissolved, with the programme now located within the remit of the DCSF. Families' entitlement was originally based on their postcode as disadvantaged areas were targeted. This led to frustration on the part of some workers. In their study of the experience of working in partnership with Sure Start from the perspective of staff working in mainstream health, social

services and education, Edgeley and Avis (2007:4) found that these staff supported Sure Start and were enthusiastic about working with the programmes but they also found that:

“Statutory providers questioned whether Sure Start services were reaching those in greatest need ... there was concern that valuable Sure Start services were going to people who did not need them.

The stated goal of Sure Start of tackling child poverty and exclusion by targeting services on deprived areas was experienced problematically by respondents when it was observed that some group activities for parents and children were regularly attended not by those in poverty – not by excluded or hard-to-reach parents – but instead by predominantly ‘confident’, ‘articulate’, ‘middle-class’ carers ...”

The unintended consequence of Sure Start being used by the middle classes demonstrates the paradox of the “inverse-care law” (Hart, 1971) and ambiguity over the distinction between wants and needs.

Policy Transfer

Sure Start was informed by policy transfer from the US Perry/ High Scope and Head Start programmes and despite significant differences in existing policy (such as the UK has a universal health visiting service, the US does not) New Labour made claims that Sure Start was “evidence-based” (Glass, 2001). Perry/ High Scope and Head Start were designed as two generational programmes – that is, they intervened with children as well as their parents.

Longitudinal research claimed that children who had received “Head Start type” intervention in their early years went on to become more law abiding citizens by the age of 19 and were less likely to get pregnant as teenagers than their peers who had not benefited from the programme (Clarke, 2006) with claims of savings for tax payers. Cost-benefits were estimated at a ratio of between 1:4 and 1:7 (Zigler & Muenchow, in Yin 2004). Zigler and Muenchow’s case study (in Yin 2004) “*Head Start : the inside story of America’s Most Successful Educational Experiment*”, shows that political factors came into play to ensure that research reached decision makers in a format that could be translated into policy, saving Head Start from cuts during the Reagan years and after. In aligning research outputs from various programmes with politicians’ interests, a coalition was formed that meant that, even during the Reagan period of cuts in public expenditure, Head Start programmes were protected. Discursively it was framed as a “family programme” thus appealing to right wing politicians who portrayed themselves as family supporters appealing to the “moral majority” (Zigler and Muenchow *ibid* :198). Headline conclusions about whether programmes “work” serve to simplify the complexities of programme design, content and delivery and their interaction with the social environment. Head Start evaluation research did not demonstrate evidence of reducing child poverty nor, when compared to middle class children, was there significant catch up in educational attainment or health outcomes, all of which were Sure Start programme goals. Nevertheless, I suggest that the much trumpeted commitment to rely on evidence to inform policy making, (Burton, 2006) the “flagship” status of the programme and the significant material investment contributed to a feel-good factor for those staff and politicians involved in Sure Start, at least in the early days.

Initiatives

Initially the policy rhetoric insisted that Sure Start would not be yet another short term “initiative” but would continue for ten years in order to achieve lasting change. Implementers’ expectations were that Sure Start would not be a “flash in the pan” initiative but a sustained intervention with lasting effects on families living in deprived areas with young children. A report published in 2006 from the national team evaluating Sure Start (NESS) detailed the “Evolving Policy Context for SSLPs” (Sure Start local programmes). It noted that

“The period between 2001 and 2004 ... has been characterised by a series of major policy developments ... The speed and scale of the changes have simultaneously underlined the centrality of SSLPs ... and at the same time have posed an additional challenge to their implementation. Indeed even the key terminology has evolved: whereas in 1999, the term “Sure Start” was synonymous with local programmes, ... since the 2002 Spending Review, the term Sure Start now covers the following :

- Early education and child care services (including individual programmes such as SSLPs; Neighbourhood Nurseries; Early Excellence centres) for children up to 14 (and 16 if the child has special educational needs) and their families;
- Out of school services through Extended Schools
- Promoting the integration of services for children to improve outcomes for all children, especially those who are the most disadvantaged.

(NESS report 10, Nov 2005)

Wincott (2006 : 299) describes a “chaotic set of policy outputs” explaining how Sure Start was not the only childcare initiative emanating from central government. He details how:

“...in the early period of Labour government, hyper-innovation produced a proliferation of ECEC ³⁵ "models" and initiatives at a rate of more than one major national program a year. In part, this resulted from a failure to reflect deeply on the purpose(s) of ECEC (Moss 1997) ...The years 1998 to 2001 saw the inauguration of “Early Excellence centres”, “Sure Start local programmes”, “Neighbourhood Nurseries”, “Children’s centres”, and “Extended schools”. At both the local and national levels, the administration of ECEC was also subject to permanent revolution.

This “permanent revolution” impacted on local authorities. As well as Sure Start, some authorities were also expected to deliver Neighbourhood Management Initiatives, Health Action Zones, Education Action Zones and so on, giving rise to a plethora of governance arrangements in “the community” where the boundaries of initiatives, often determined in large part by central government, were unlikely to be coterminous (Skelcher 2005). From my viewpoint in a social services department and then as an evaluation officer for three Sure Start local programmes, it felt like heady days with a frenetic pace of change as local programmes created an organizational identity out of partnership commitment from health organisations and voluntary organisations with more or less involvement from local parents on their programme boards. In the early rounds of Sure Start managers found themselves challenged to spend unusually large amounts of public funds quickly to achieve “quick wins”. Sure Start local programmes were regarded as generously funded. (NESS, 2005 Report 10). Alongside

³⁵ ECEC Early Childhood Education and Care. The neologism “educare” has recently entered the policy lexicon.

local flexibility, designed to promote responsive services, there was a centralised monitoring regime. On the one hand, there were targets and indicators, on the other hand, there was a concern to deliver “appropriate”, community sensitive services. By the last round “wave six” it was becoming clear that established Sure Start programmes would be expected to manage with less money and that future Children’s Centres would operate differently. Kara’s PhD thesis (2006) gives some insight into the emotional impact that this rapid change and uncertainty had on Sure Start managers.

While local authorities frequently found themselves taking the role of Sure Start local programmes’ “accountable body” for legal purposes; they were framed as being in need of modernisation. As Wincott (2006: 298) suggests: “Although ‘Third Way’ ideas offer a positive explanation for the turn to partnership working, this choice reflected senior New Labour figures’ distrust of local government.” In the early days of the programme, monies were “passported” to Sure Start local programmes, by-passing the political and administrative systems of local authorities. Hypothecated funding regimes have been used by the Treasury in an attempt to secure policy outputs against inputs (Annesley and Gains, 2007). That is, local programmes are expected to report how their expenditure led to specific goals.

Part of the modernizing culture change was an assault on the perceived bureaucratic obstacles of “silo” working to be remedied by integrated, efficient partnership working and by “empowering” local people to challenge professional “producers.” The tensions between centralised control of policy and local “empowerment”, flexibility and responsive governance can be detected in Sure Start “public relations”.

Policy Branding

“The category icons have been specially drawn and should not be altered, redrawn or modified in anyway. The icons must always be reproduced from approved master artwork, available from the Sure Start Unit. Do not create your own icons. To deliver a clear and concise message the icons should be used at all times (see page 8 for further information on icon application).”

<http://www.Sure Start.gov.uk/resources/general/brandingguidelines>

This central government guidance to local programmes indicates constraint over local representation of Sure Start. The “clash of symbols, identities and images” in public administration is discussed by Miller and Fox (2007:111). Sure Start was a heavily branded programme with branding centralised by the Sure Start Unit. However, the programme was also framed as affording discretion in implementation at local (community) level and so programmes were also branded locally. The tension between what DiMaggio and Powell (cited in Aldrich, 1999) term “isomorphic institutional” tendencies (that is, institutional standardization, with governance based on mimesis or copying) versus local autonomy is reflected in this quote from Liam, a Sure Start Programme Manager I interviewed :

“But if you go round every programme in the country we’ve got our midwife, our health visitor, we do our healthy eating – its almost like walking into one of those themed bars “

Sure Start was originally intended to be rooted in the diverse experiences and needs of local communities yet the quote above from Liam illustrates the limited diversification amongst Sure Start local programmes. Themed bars brand the experience of drinking. Processes of branding, standardization, predicatability, calculability and control are referred to by Ritzer (2002) as “McDonaldization”. Famously Henry Ford pronounced that customers could have any colour Model T Ford they liked as long as it was black. Lury (2004) has analysed processes of branding to show how consumers may not be in control of their purchases as producers seek to shape their preferences using branding technologies. We might imagine that public services are or ought to be more than consumer commodities but I shall explore some similarities between consumer goods and policy products in my study.

The Sure Start brand is heavily stylized but the substance of what Sure Start *is* or *was* has proved very difficult to specify. (Rutter, 2006, Hey and Bradford (2006, p.64) note the effects of rapid policy change and cite Stronach and Morris (1994) who use the term “policy hysteria”. One local authority manager I spoke to told me “ And um you asked earlier on – ways in which government policy changes. And government policy hasn’t changed but the mood music changes constantly”(LA54). My study suggests that recruiting policy implementers “moods” or “hearts and minds” to support the policy shift to Children’s Centres relies in part on them valuing the Sure Start brand or signifier and linking this metaphorically to “new ways of working” in Children’s Centres. Many Children’s Centres are likely to be “virtual” or “campus models” rather than stand alone buildings, although they may still utilise the Sure Start logos. The Public Accounts Committee received a report on Sure Start

Children's Centres in 2007. The record of the meeting where MPs questioned civil servants provides a fascinating insight into the complexity of accounting for public expenditure with civil servants apparently unable to provide a plausible narrative account of where all the money went. I suggest that some of the complexity is due to the ambiguity of the Sure Start brand - Children's Centres *are* and *are not* Sure Start. As a member of the committee, Austin Mitchell MP refers to "image":

“ But Sure Start told you what it was all about. Mothers can go there and learn life skills. The achievement has been wonderful — in Grimsby, it has been brilliant. But children's centres are another thing — another image ... “(House of Commons 2007, oral evidence, question 42)

Later in the Public Accounts Committee meeting, Richard Bacon MP asks a civil servant:

“ Mr Bell, roughly how much of that [£20 billion] do you think has gone into Sure Start, going back to 1998?” and he replies :

David Bell: “I do not have that information to hand because the focus of the Report, and its title, is on children's centres and I have come with the data relating to the programme of children's centres.”

Mr Bacon “The title of the Report is *Sure Start Children's Centres*.” (House of Commons 2007, oral evidence questions 84-86)

This exchange illustrates the ambiguity of the Sure Start brand. It also indicates that, despite MPs' responsibility for scrutiny, their ability to hold decision makers to account for complex

community based initiatives is not straightforward. Implementing “what works” is rarely a simple matter of picking a policy product off the shelf. Both image and substance appear indeterminate. I present here a policy related commodity: an artefact that is likely to have been procured with public funds.

Fig. 6 Sure Start policy artefact 4. A Playful Semiotic Interlude



Boje (2001:440)” I think a new role of public administration is to demonopolize and decolonize the corporately dominated spheres of public discourse being appropriated by corporate spectacle.”

An object of desire or a strange reliquary of Sure Start: modern or retro?

This alien yet strangely anthropomorphic figure emanates from Sure Start. A colleague sent it to me, having heard of my interest in similar branded policy artefacts. Like other promotional commodities, the object performs a minimal function as need satisfier, in this case for clock watching. Its digital clock-face shows its *use value* is time limited and historically bound although it does not indicate its sell by date nor a point of origin. Its rubbery constitution displays its symbolic longevity designed neither for fashionable obsolescence nor organic decomposition. Promotional items are generally not designed to have *exchange value* (except for collectors of kitsch) but they *are* intended to have symbolic value as brand recognition carriers. Sure Start is an *overdetermined*, malleable brand.

The object doesn’t hold much play value for naturally curious young children but could playfully distract adults by squatting on their desks, ornamenting their work places. Who knows what brand loyalty it inspires or who its target audience is? Postmodern citizens in their aestheticized, hyperreal polities?

I argue that we should pay attention to “policy give-aways” as hyper-visible manifestations of policy. These promotional items are not usually studied in public policy. Apart from Tschirhart, Chrstensen and Perry (2005) I have found no empirical study using these sorts of artefacts as data in policy studies. It is as though their existence has gone unnoticed. I suggest that what may appear to be the most ephemeral data may turn out to be highly significant. Policy analysts with an interest in “spin”, ideology or discourse usually analyse texts. Vilnai-Yavetz and Rafaeli (2006) insist on including artefacts as interesting organizational data. I shall pursue my analysis of more artefacts gathered from my study of policy implementation in later chapters.

5. Evidence Based Policy?

The investment of almost three billion pounds in Sure Start was accompanied by a £20.3 million budget for evaluation and the contract for this awarded to Birkbeck College.³⁶ As the programmes became established and opened childcare provision, criticisms of Sure Start began to emerge from private sector providers (Butt et al, 2007) A private nursery manager told me in interview “I mean now we’ve been drained of all the best staff with all your Sure Start programmes. A lot of which have achieved nothing in the end. And that’s a fact, isn’t it?”(LA 24). Given the timing of the interview, it is likely that this nursery owner was referring to the national evaluation of Sure Start (NESS, 2005a) whose findings she interpreted as a “fact.” The NESS evaluation was unable to report significant difference between outcomes for children and their parents who were living in Sure Start areas compared to those living in non-Sure Start areas (NESS, 2005). For some outcomes, things appeared to have got

³⁶ This National Evaluation of Sure Start is referred to NESS

worse. This thesis does not examine the NESS methodology but critiques the notion that policy decisions are based purely on scientific “evidence”. There were various media responses to the NESS findings, from Polly Toynbee (2005) arguing in the Guardian that “we must hold our nerve” to right wing media playing on New Labour’s apparent inability to deliver. At around the same time the EPPE study³⁷ found positive improvement in children’s development for those who attended Early Excellence Centres – especially in the case of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The *positive* EPPE findings were incorporated into Sure Start rhetoric as “evidence” that childcare was beneficial for children (Sure Start News 4, April 2003). These positive findings from the EPPE research could discursively align this benefit for children with welfare to work policies aimed at parents and in particular, lone parents on benefits. However, even this research contained confounding results as there was a small increase in behaviour problems amongst three year olds and this negative finding was also disseminated by hostile media, many of whom castigated working mothers without referring to the role of fathers (Ward, 2005) My conjecture here then, is that what counts as “evidence” is a matter of judgement and the way in which evidence transforms (or does not) policy is subject to values as well as “science”. Rutter (2006) writes as someone involved in NESS. He argues that the methodology couldn’t have been improved but that the basic problem was that nobody knew what Sure Start was.

“... it makes little sense to ask whether Sure Start ‘works’ or is effective. That is because there is no such thing as Sure Start in the sense of a defined programme with a definable intervention strategy (despite government implying the contrary). Instead, it constitutes a large ‘family’ of programmes that involve as much diversity as

³⁷ Effective Provision of Preschool Education

commonality. It is obvious that SSLPs [Sure Start Local Programmes] include a host of useful initiatives and a wealth of good ideas but, equally, it is likely that they will include many well-intentioned elements that are ineffective or even counter-productive. It is essential to be able to determine which is which, but the government-imposed research design makes that next to impossible to achieve What should the Government do now? ...

Their dilemma is that clearly they hoped that research would provide a ringing endorsement of the value of Sure Start, and it definitely has not done that. The right wing media are already claiming that the Sure Start programme has been a failure, and should be abandoned forthwith – but that too is mistaken. The research is, in fact, inconclusive. There are suggestions that it includes things of real value, but also the research gives indications that it is indeed failing to reduce social inequalities. The Government would be exceedingly foolish to ignore these warning signs. Government has already stated that they intend to incorporate Sure Start into existing provisions. That is problematic because it assumes that Sure Start has been shown to be effective and it has not. The incorporation of Sure Start into existing provisions is surely premature, given the fact that the evaluation findings are both preliminary and inconclusive? In what sense can it be claimed that the Sure Start policy is evidence-based?”

Rutter seems to bemoan the inability of government to adopt a fully randomised experimental research design and to wait patiently for research findings to emerge. Some might argue, however, that it is unethical to prevent certain communities from receiving social interventions

simply to satisfy social scientists' need for hygiene in their social "laboratories". Rather than complain about politics frustrating social science, it would seem to me to be more useful to acknowledge the "real world" nature of social research and to replace or at least complement the privileging of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) as the gold standard with more illuminative methodologies (Gale, 2001).

A civil servant based at a regional Government office who had been seconded into the local authority told me how she took the NESS (National Evaluation of Sure Start) findings with a "pinch of salt" and about how *she* disseminated good practice:

The NESS evaluation of Sure Start is difficult - knowing that Sure Start was based on Head Start which proved its value twenty years on. I took it with a pinch of salt and wasn't surprised at the negative findings. You can't change communities overnight. It takes almost a generation."

This reference to social change and longitudinal evaluation illustrates the complexity of attempting to hold still "society" in order to study it. The civil servant went on to explain her use of locally generated knowledge to inform policy:

I was always glad that in the regional team they flagged up good practice and kept everybody going. We knew from individual families on the ground. We have a bank of case studies... We cross fertilise at a number of levels. I worry if we don't have a local authority shouting about good practice. {X local authority} wouldn't take the initiative

and shout about good practice. We give local authorities that opportunity. Lots of information is in peoples' heads. If we get a call from a Minister who wants to illustrate something, we use case studies in the briefings file. We meet with policy teams and feed back what's working. If it's unique we might invite policy teams to visit – it helps them understand. (LA 21 *recorded with pen & paper not taped*)

This epistemology appears to rely on a form of *verstehen* (understanding) that can come about through first hand witnessing – inviting policy teams to visit - perhaps a more ethnographic orientation than a privileging of RCT methodology. Some managers questioned the validity of the NESS research methodology and insisted that their own local experience of Sure Start was positive. Given that several new Sure Start Centres had been built around the County and were to be rebranded as Children's Centres, it would have been difficult for implementers to frame Sure Start as a "failed experiment." I found that people framed the change either as a smooth transition or as a worrying disjuncture or appeared to experience some cognitive dissonance as they expressed both. I asked Liam, a Sure Start Children's Centre Programme manager:

Pam: Can I just ask what you made of the NESS evaluation? At a national level what do you think its saying about Sure Start? Do you think it's had any impact?

Liam: Well there were so many different streams of NESS evaluation. I suppose it's which bit 'cos ... I think some of the stuff that's come out nationally, around, y'know 'Sure Start hasn't had an impact' hasn't been helpful. And when you hear ministers sort of reiterating some of this that can have quite a negative effect. But having said that , it was always supposed to be y'know, the big thing was this longitudinal ten years and

actually if that's what you were setting out to do that's really what we should be waiting for and I think its y'know, waiting for that element to come through. But having said that, actually the Children's Centre agenda has taken over.... So I can't see in a way how you're going to be able to sort of really do that longitudinal study nowSo you know I think sometimes we go to a meeting and say well "did Sure Start not work?" we'll say "well actually there's a lot about the ethos of Sure Start - that actually - things around Sure Start - around multi-agency involvement, around community participation in service development, these were very positive things." And looking around other things, around the multi agency and the Every Child Matters, those things have almost superseded in a way where that's going to." (LA06)

Rather than a conclusive answer to did Sure Start work or didn't it, this manager exercises his judgement and critically appraises elements of Sure Start that he found valuable (multi agency working, community participation) and transfers these lessons to his contemporary concern with *Every Child Matters*.

An Early Years manager in the Council told me :

"But I think y'know the outrageous stuff that the press got hold of – oh you know, Sure Start harms toddlers' and – it became very, very politicised. I mean it was always gonna be political actually because it was social engineering, lets be honest, that's what it was about." (LA36)

A social engineering model of policy implies an engineer pulling policy levers and instruments to exert control over passive policy subjects. More participatory approaches to policy emphasise discursive openness and opportunities for democratic dialogue (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2006, Cropper and Goodwin, 2008) My study explores how both tendencies are in tension in contemporary policy aimed at welfare reform.

6. Virtual Children's Centres, Every Child Matters, Child Poverty

Children's Centres have morphed out of Sure Start and are now presented in policy terms as a major delivery vehicle for the umbrella *Every Child Matters* policy. In 2006, despite the equivocal reception of the NESS evaluation, government announced the intention to "mainstream" Sure Start. Sure Start changed from being a deliberately designed time limited intervention to an ongoing open ended commitment by central Government. The brand now stretches elastically to cover Children's Centres as in "Sure Start Children's Centres". The aim is to extend the coverage of Sure Start and resources are proportionately spread thinner to meet the oxymoronic policy goal of "targeted universalism". Rather than being restricted to disadvantaged communities, Sure Start Children's Centres offer more services in these particular areas but a universal "core offer" across the whole of England, with a promise of one centre for every "community" by 2010 (DfES, 2006). They nest within, but their objectives also go beyond, the ten year child care strategy. Local authorities have been advised by DfES to join up their Children's Centres and Extended Schools strategies and these are expected to relate to Children's Trusts. Sure Start has mutated into Children's Centres which may be "virtual" or "campus model" often incorporated into school sites, rather than stand

alone physical centres with their own building. Where Children's Centres are new (not re-branded Neighbourhood Nurseries, Early Excellence Centres or Sure Start Local Programmes) they are likely to be campus models or virtual centres comprising a nursery, parent / community room in a school, web-site information with some projects to deliver the core offer of family support, child and family health services, a base for childminder services and childcare which is provided either on site, in partnership with a nearby nursery or is a signposting service for parents to their local childcare market. The core offer also includes formal demonstrable links to JobCentre Plus.

Every Child Matters is the government's umbrella policy for children comprising five "outcomes". I include the outcome framework in the appendix. In my study I tried to pay particular attention to the fifth outcome – achieve economic well-being. The aim of eradicating child poverty in a generation was announced in 1999 (Dornan 2004) with Gordon Brown poetically referring to child poverty as "A scar on the nation's soul" (Lister R 2003). Local authorities are not expected to monitor child poverty at their local level but they are expected to work "in partnership" to achieve the policy goals of eradicating child poverty. There are performance indicators for local authorities around a range of indices that relate to child poverty such as the number of lone parents in paid employment and the new measure to reduce the gap between educational attainment of poor children at the foundation stage of first year in primary school. However, children living in poverty are not the immediate responsibility of any one service and child poverty has been defined as a "wicked issue" – one that crosses over organisational boundaries and that seems to defy simple solutions.

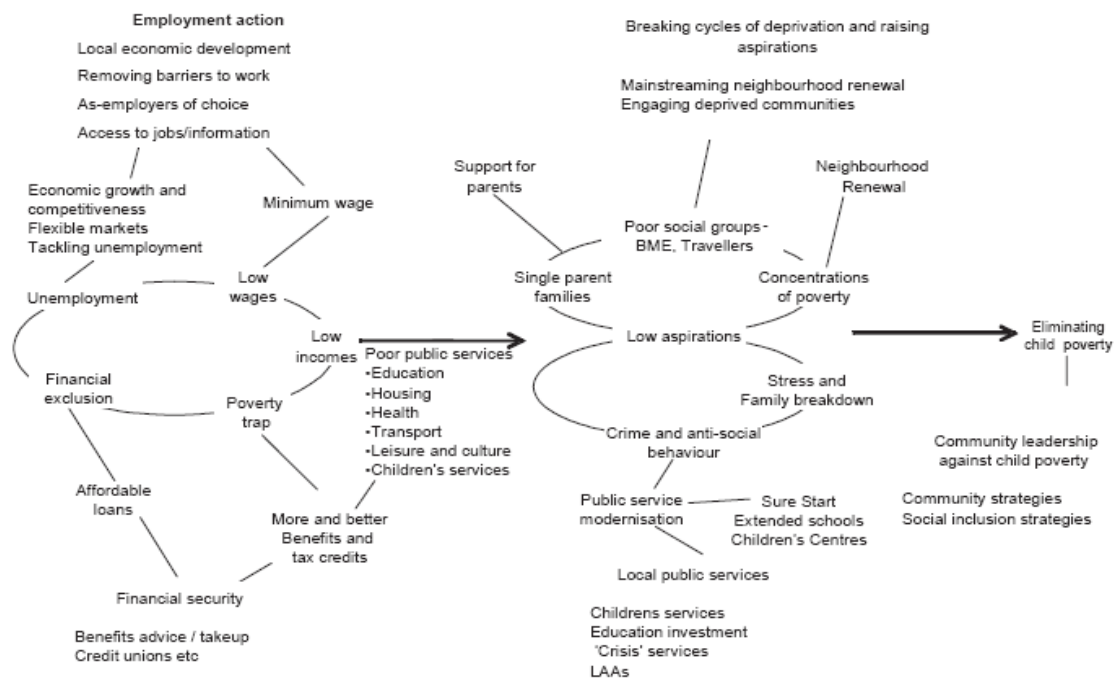


Fig. 7 child poverty the local government contribution diagram reproduced from LGA (2003)

This complicated diagram depicts Sure Start, Extended Schools and Children's Centres as part of local government's contribution to eliminating child poverty. Cropper and Goodwin (2007:30) write:" In wicked problems the pathways may be circular – poverty leads to poor health, which in turn feeds back to continuing deprivation." This diagram represents a cycle of low wages, unemployment and the poverty trap linked to poor public services and frames Sure Start, Extended Schools and Children's Centres as part of public service modernisation which is depicted as part of Local Government's contribution to solving the wicked issue of child poverty. New Labour fell short of its target to reduce child poverty by its first milestone of 2004/5. (Harker, 2006).It became apparent that the second milestone, the half way mark, would be much more difficult to achieve and there have been recent campaigns and

commentary surrounding the April 2009 Budget. The Treasury review of child poverty (2004) referenced Sure Start and the emergent Extended Schools initiative as contributing to increased child care capacity that would in turn lead to more opportunities for parents to obtain work and therefore reduce their children's poverty. This is the causal narrative that is used to justify the welfare to work strategy (Bacchi, 1999, Roe, 1994). Childcare policy has also been framed by New Labour as part of its social inclusion agenda which Fairclough (2000) analyses as a discourse to show how New Labour is attempting to shift UK social policy from a rights-based discourse, often framed as "something-for-nothing" to a contractual "something-for-something" discourse of deserving, responsible citizens (Butler 2001; Carney 1999) Oppositional narratives are those that point out that poor children also live in households with at least one or both parents in work, that the supply side approach to employability ignores the fact that citizens have no rights or entitlement to guaranteed jobs (Alcock, 2000) and work by CAVA that points to rational choice economic theory as a "rationality error" in assuming that parents prefer to do paid work and use childcare rather than care voluntarily for their own children (Barlow and Duncan, 1999).

There is a two tier system of local government in the particular County where I conducted field work. The County Council has responsibility for education and social services which, for children, have recently been joined up into Children's Trusts. Children's Trusts are partnerships, (a networked form of governance) not authorities and so they have governance arrangements that are more horizontal and complex than the institutional hierarchical relationships that may characterise the individual "member" organisations of the Children's Trust (Hudson, 2005). An integrated inspection framework is designed to ensure that statutory

partners to the Trust such as Primary Care Trusts can be held to account for their contribution to the *Every Child Matters* umbrella policy. However, as Hudson (2005) has pointed out, there are no legal requirements for schools or G.P.s to sign up to Children's Trusts. Nor can statutory organisations hold voluntary organisations to account formally for the services they provide to children and families independently, other than through contractual arrangements. Similarly, second tier Borough and District Councils have no authority over children's social or education services but they are expected to work in partnership with the County Council.

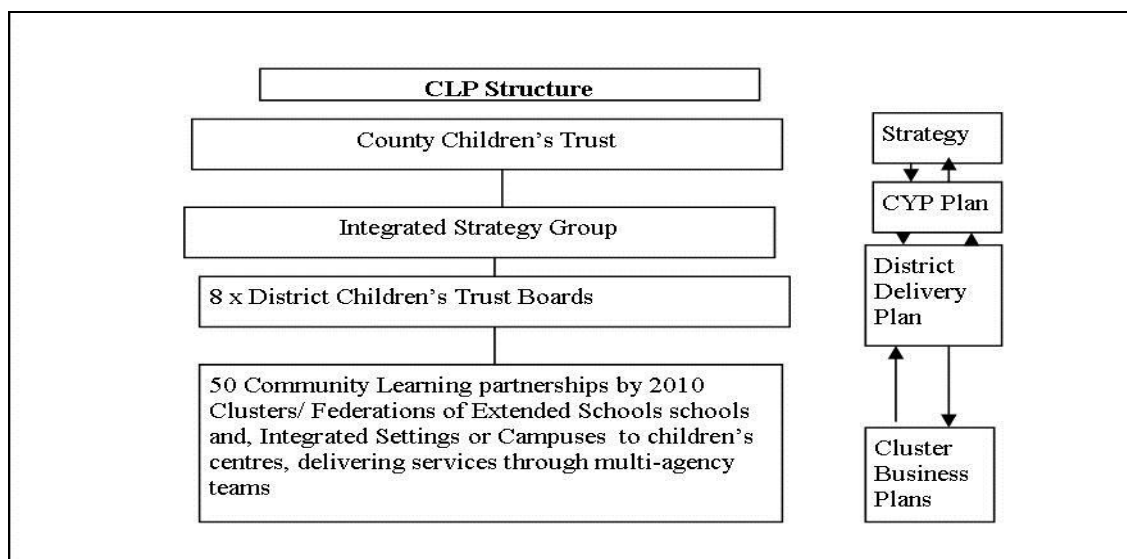


Fig. 8 CLP / Strongham structure

The County Council I studied took the decision not to devolve funding down to the Districts or to individual schools. They created an infrastructure of Community Learning Partnerships to administer Children's Centres and Extended Schools and a large element of my ethnographic data is derived from a study of one of these CLPs .

8. Conclusion

This chapter has contextualized Jane's story in time and space by examining childcare policy antecedents, and introducing some limited comparative international data on social policy as it relates to childcare. I have introduced Kingdon's concepts of agendas and alternatives to show how policy ideas may swim around in the policy "primeval soup" (Kingdon, 1995) before they get the opportunity to become aligned with political and other interests. Some feminist interests *are* being addressed by childcare policy but these are sensitive issues raising spectres of morality tales about deserving and undeserving parents. I have shown how the last few years have witnessed a policy proliferation of childcare initiatives and modernisation programmes that are not necessarily coherent at a national level but are expected to be implemented "successfully" by local authorities and their private and voluntary sector "partners." I demonstrated a variety of epistemologies including randomised controlled trials and local knowledge about policy carried in peoples' heads that needs to be understood through case studies and visits. The dissemination of research findings around childcare appear to be inherently political. This chapter has shown how childcare is a protean policy capable of being framed to suit a multiplicity of discourses. I analysed a policy artefact to illustrate policy branding and commodification. This chapter, in conjunction with the next that reviews the literature on modernisation and welfare reform should set the scene for the main empirical focus of the thesis.

Chapter Four
Childcare and Welfare Reform

Contents

1.	Introduction	134
2.	Inter-disciplinary Insubordination	135
3.	Ideas of Progress and Policy Research	136
4.	Welfare Reform and Modernisation	140
5.	Implementation	143
6.	From Government to Governance	146
7.	Markets, Hierarchies, Networks, Families	150
	Markets	151
	Hierarchies	163
	Networks	165
	Governmentality and the Family	173
8.	Towards Community Governance	171
9.	Conclusion	173

“Well one thing I thought about was that if we were able to set up an out of school club it would help many of the parents that I knew wanted to work but weren’t able to because they a) couldn’t access training because of the children, b) because they hadn’t got the money and they were only doing little jobs you know, perhaps a bit of cleaning in a pub or something in a shop or whatever and I felt that that was the way to help them just come out of that poverty trap.” (LA 27, Norma, Playscheme Manager)

(LA27)

1. Introduction

In the last chapter I outlined a variety of ways in which childcare policy has been framed and interpreted within academic literature. In this chapter I consider academic literature on governance to explore further how childcare might be interpreted and articulated with welfare reform. Debates about welfare reform and modernisation are in large part debates about governance (Newman, 2005). I briefly return to methodological issues in sections one and two to situate my inter-disciplinary literature review against political science but within the discipline of social policy and to surface the ambiguous concept of progress. In section four I discuss the literature on welfare reform then in the next section I go on to examine literature on policy implementation. This exposes the limitations of research that interprets consequences from policy texts and highlights the significance of ambiguous policy and the role of discretion in relation to the “implementation gap.” In the next section I engage critically with debates about a shift from government and examine the literature for what it has to say about childcare (generally very little but see Donzelot 1979 and Evers et al 2005). In section seven I draw on Thompson et al’s (1991) typology, adding a Foucaultian insistence on

governmentality and a feminist perspective on the family. As in the previous chapter, I include a small selection of illustrative data from my empirical study, partly to lighten the somewhat more abstract content of this chapter and partly for reasons of clarity for the reader. The final section reviews literature on communitarianism and localism to move towards my empirical study.

2. Inter-disciplinary insubordination

While I acknowledge the relevance of political science as an academic discipline, to answer my research question about how sense-making happens in implementation my focus is primarily on *sociological* understandings of governance (Newman 2001, 2005, 2006) that allow insight into new configurations of what John Clarke describes as: "... the imagined boundedness of the body politic and the body social." (Clarke, 2004). As I explained in chapter two, I have found myself negotiating academic boundaries in the course of this research. There are live debates about New Public Management, public administration, welfare reform, governance, policy making and policy implementation taking place within and across what sometimes feel like arbitrary academic disciplinary boundaries. (Frederikson , 2004, Hill and Huppe ,2002) as well as in policy networks and think tanks. Much of the governance literature comes from the disciplines of political science and economics (Davies et al 2005). In the UK, social policy is the sub-discipline of sociology that has paid most attention to the analysis of welfare (see, for example, Alcock et al 2006). Local Government Studies provides a useful focus for understanding local authorities' relative autonomy from central government and how they relate to regional governance and interface with the

European Union. (Goss, 2001, Stoker, 2004). Women's Studies has made a major contribution to understanding the specificity of women's experience of welfare, highlighting the ways in which policy analysis has often obscured women's reality by focussing on the household or the family as a key variable (Daly and Rake, 2003, Williams, 2004). Clarke J. (2004:3) analyses the subordinate nature of the academic enterprise of social policy:

“...social policy ... is often understood as a ‘junior’ subject – an ‘applied’ subject, indeed – that exists below the high table of ‘real’ disciplines and receives their wisdom gratefully. This position is the result of processes of feminization and infantilization through which social policy is subordinated. Its ‘applied’ character predisposes it towards a ‘feminized’ identity: the useful rather than the academic; the ‘handmaiden’ of the state or government rather than an actor in the realm of pure knowledge (where the big boys play). But its subordinate status is also infantilized: the ‘knowledge’ provided for it needs to be ‘predigested’ and turned into simplified but usable gobbets, rather than the ‘difficult’ knowledge of real disciplines. I think of this as the ‘Heinz baby food’ model: the creation of pureed and reduced knowledge that can be easily digested. “

In asserting a relationship between the “feminine” topic of childcare and “big boys” theories of governance,³⁸ I take heart from Clarke's insistence that “subordinations exist to be contested and resisted.”

³⁸ In an edited collection of chapters on governance (Bang ed., 2003) 12 out of 13 chapters are by men.

3. Ideas of Progress and Policy Research

Policy is inherently teleological. I showed in the previous chapter however, that there is no straightforward link between research, policy and practice. A naïve view of social policy and social change might assume a trajectory of enlightenment with social science contributing to policies that, in turn, improve the human condition. Burton (2006) provides a useful review and critique of this assumption and Giddens (1984) dismisses such functionalist or structural accounts of history. One local councillor I interviewed explained his view of progress in relation to social and technological change:

Cllr: As society moves on there are different demands and expectations of each generation.

Pam: Mm. So um do you have any awareness of the national evaluation of Sure Start ?

Cllr: No I'm not too familiar with that.

Pam: OK. But you mentioned about these sort of time-limited initiatives where money's pump primed, so in terms of the sort of long term aims of changing this sort of family patterns, what do you think would be a long enough time scale to achieve that sort of change?

Cllr: A generation. Er in, in a statement – a generation. And perhaps for those who need more support it may well go on into the next generation. Because the way society has developed it's a generational thing and so the values that my parents had, I've carried a lot of those with me but I've also picked up newer values that society has changed into. An example is when I was born back in nineteen forty five there were fewer people that had televisions, there were small twelve inch screens if you could afford one it was

black and white. Society has then developed that it's gone into colour. Families sat and watched the television, it went on, it went off, there was some form of control. Now of course most children appear to have a television set in their bedrooms, parental control over the choice of the programmes is weakening because you don't know what the children are doing in their bedrooms or what they're watching so therefore society changes and the rules and norms move along. (LA 13)

This narrative of modernity, generational and technological change makes no reference to media or family policies but notes the comparative affluence (in material terms) of families who can now afford a colour TV which goes hand in hand with a "weakening" of parental control over their children. I ask: "So I mean you mentioned things like the influence of the media and then there's been other significant family changes hasn't there?" The Councillor goes on to discuss divorce, noting that Henry the Eighth got divorced several times and that leads him on to changes in attitudes: "... getting divorced does not carry the stigma that it used to carry. Having a child out of wedlock doesn't carry the stigma it used to have. "and he explains that :

"half of the current house of Lords, well certainly the erm - the non-elected – those who have got large places in the countryside, the lords and ladies, the hereditary ones ... most of them wouldn't be there if it wasn't for the fact that their mother did a favour for somebody else. That's how it was. Their children of course got rewarded. They are now sitting in judgement over the way the rest of us work. Not a system I support but that's the nature of it."

Things appear natural in common sense - “that’s the nature of it...”. Crotty explains “We tend to take ‘the sense we make of things’ to be ‘the way things are’. We find ourselves to be victims of the ‘tyranny of the familiar’” (Crotty, 1998 : 58) It is easy to forget the hereditary patriarchal system of monarchic power and its role in policy making but we saw in Jane’s story the continuing symbolism of the crown. This symbolism of class combined with imperialism cropped up in another interview when the manager of a voluntary organisation told me about her award of the MBE³⁹. Lash and Urry (1994) write about temporality speeding up in modernity but they would do well to pay attention to a genealogy that might reveal some of the remnants of history buried not far below the palimpsest of modernity. Hans-Klijn and Skelcher (2006:594) recognise this. They point out that “...new agendas are superimposed on the earlier cleavages in society...” noting that the “constitutional arrangements in advanced liberal states” may not have evolved sufficiently to cope with new forms of “cleavages in society” that are based around religion, sexuality and so on.

The Councillor went on to discuss gay parenting :

“...Er we have of course got the area whereby children can be brought up either by two males or two females. Er and that’s an area of social development that has been a recent phenomenon. Whether that continues or not is a matter for society as it moves forward in its development.”

³⁹ Member of the British Empire

The “nominalisation” (Fairclough, 1992:25) of “society” avoids recognition of the potentially different interests of lesbian and gay families and, as Giddens (1984) points out, rests on functionalist sociological assumptions. The reification of such an unstable concept as “society” is, I suggest, an example of the governance of meaning (Law, 1994) and is mirrored in the homogenizing noun “community” and, as feminists have argued, functionalist notions of the patriarchal family (Young, 1995). The idea that “society moves forward in its development” has been seriously undermined by Foucault (1984) and other critical theorists. The radical indeterminacy of history (chance events) threatens the discipline of sociology that theorizes patterns and regularities, often using the metaphor of “structure” to describe power relations that exert influence over individuals in ways that are relatively stable over time and space. Foucault has cast serious doubts on attempts to engineer the good society (what Aristotle called eudaemonia) for at least the following three reasons: because (as Weber understood) new policies carry inherent risks of unintended consequences, because knowledge itself is not impartial, functioning as an inherently disciplinary truth regime and also because new technologies of power appear in unanticipated ways.

4. Welfare Reform and Modernisation

Randall (2002) discusses childcare in relation to the restructuring of the welfare state. She responds to Pierson (1994) and others who have analysed neo-liberal attempts at dismantling welfare state regimes, pointing out that, in the case of childcare, there was little to retrench or privatise. She shows how “childcare [takes on] a new significance within a wider restructuring strategy of reducing welfare dependence in a context of changing employment patterns.” (p.

236). Theories of neo-liberalism relate the modernisation of welfare to the “active investment state” (Lister, 2006) whereby the rationale for investment in welfare is not an ethical commitment to redistribution with equity as a good in and of itself but a cost benefit justification such that time limited investment in assisting unemployed individuals into work reduces the longer term cost of supporting them out of work (see for example Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 2003). This managerialist “business case” justification, as well as a belief that work is the best way of achieving “social inclusion” discursively underpins current Government welfare to work policies, at least as these are presented in official policy texts (Levitas, 1998). New Labour’s modernisation agenda is orientated towards a vision of social inclusion that rests on political assumptions about rights and responsibilities and new forms of governance (Levitas, 1998). The recent and continuing UK programme of welfare reform has legislated to reduce entitlement to welfare benefits for a range of claimants including lone parents (Clarke, K. 2007). There are clearly specified targets to shift these categories of people off the welfare rolls and into paid employment with tax credits deployed as a policy tool to incentivise work – to “make work pay.” This rightward shift towards a *fiscalization* (Lister, 2003) of social policy has been accompanied by a discourse of “tough love” (Jordan and Jordan, 2000). Links between, welfare reform, “modernisation” of governance and processes of neo liberalism are discussed by writers such as Clarke J. (2004), Newman (2001) Levitas (2001), Dean (1999) Peck (1998) and Rose (1989). At the level of the *individual* New Labour’s concern is to re-orientate an imagined dependency culture towards a something-for-something contractual approach to welfare (Newman, 2001). Drawing on Foucault’s concept of governmentality, Clarke J. et al (2000) term this attempt at governance of the individual subject “responsibilization” (p.89 and p.211). At the level of the *organisation*, partnerships are

endorsed as new forms of governance beyond traditional statutory authorities. The state has divested itself of a range of responsibilities for direct provision of a range of welfare services, promoting marketisation, privatisation and quasi-markets at the same time emphasizing contradictory expectations of collaboration across horizontally aligned network or partnership governance. At the level of the *family* as we saw in chapter one, we see profound ambivalence and tensions between the neo-liberal agenda to shift from the Beveridge breadwinner model of welfare to a worker-citizen model alongside conservative tendencies that protect the idea of the family as immune from government interference (Clarke, J. 2005).

Esping-Anderson's (1990) work on welfare regimes demonstrates variation in states' childcare policies with the UK categorized along with other "Anglo-Saxon nations" as a "liberal, residualist welfare state". (p.33). However, governance theories suggest that analysis moves beyond government, i.e. states, to look at governance at different spatial levels and to research *process* as well as structure (Pierre and Peters, 2000). As chapter one demonstrated, the *cash* elements of welfare are mainly governed at a national level but the *childcare* element, needed to suture together the cash and care elements of the welfare reform, is dependent, since the 2006 Childcare Act, on local authorities' duty to manage their local childcare market as well as on the processes and interpretive practices of local implementers of national policy.

There is plenty of academic research and commentary on "welfare to work" policies including feminist analyses, but much of this literature reads off policy intentions from texts or conducts secondary research on existing data sets. For examples see Etherington and Anderson (2005) Peck and Theodore (2000), Lewis et al (2008). Theories around the regulatory state

demonstrate how hierarchical mechanisms attempt to steer policy outcomes through the use of performance measures and indicators (Power, 1997). This input-output model of policy research assumes a coherence that may not exist and cannot access the processes that occur inside the “black box” of policy implementation.

5. Implementation

While there are regulatory elements to the Sure Start Children’s Centres programme that relies on the Ofsted regulatory regime; the policy goals, framed within the umbrella of *Every Child Matters*,⁴⁰ are not as clearly specified as, say, the policy to reduce the harm from road traffic accidents through seat-belt legislation. Barrett (2004:255) expresses this more succinctly:

For some types of regulatory policy (for example, health and safety), conformance or compliance may be an essential objective. But much public policy is couched in more permissive and discretionary terms; the objective being to permit and encourage innovative courses of action within a frame-work of procedural rules. Here output targets or performance criteria are harder to specify in advance ...”

The ambiguity of output targets and performance criteria carries particular implications for the implementation of policy and for the modernisation agenda (Newman, 2000). The National Evaluation of Sure Start team (NESS) has published a series of reports and one in particular from the “implementation module” stimulated my research enquiry with the finding that local

⁴⁰ See Appendix for the Every Child Matters outcome framework

programmes exercised discretion and effectively ignored the employment targets for lone parents because of community understandings and traditions:

“The emphasis given to support for employability by programmes reflects different local perceptions about the appropriate role for mothers in the early years. In many Sure Start areas there is a strong community emphasis on the importance of mothers being at home in their children’s early years.” (Meadows 2004)

The implementation of childcare policy is dependent then, on the interface at the local level both with longstanding professional practices of traditional welfare and, as the above quotation and research by the Centre for Care, Values and the Future of Welfare, CAVA, has demonstrated, the existence of cultural norms that structure what constitutes responsible parenting and mothers’ duties and responsibilities (Williams, 2004). This is an example of governmentality – childcare is assumed by some to be women’s responsibility and this challenges the gender neutral employability policy discourse. Influential work by Lipsky (1980) on discretion, demonstrated that policy can be made in practice through the influence of street-level bureaucrats (such as social workers) whose discretionary decisions may ultimately determine the fate of their clients. In their study of social workers and teachers, Taylor and Kelly (2006) found that discretion has been eroded: ” ... for the time being, the street-level “policy-making” discretion observed by Lipsky is, for the most part, over.” (p.639). However, while I acknowledge the constraints of policy tools and instruments, including legislation and regimes of funding, as well as the impact of new Public Management and the audit culture, the NESS implementation study provides sufficient evidence of an

“implementation gap” in childcare policy to warrant further investigation into the exercise of discretion in the practices of policy implementers.

Drawing on Weick, (1995) amongst other organization theorists, I have previously analysed the ten year childcare strategy as a text to demonstrate that, rather than presenting policy as already formulated in Westminster and Whitehall, it reveals gaps and absences. For example, the foreword states:

The ten year strategy set out a long term vision ... There has been significant progress since the strategy was published. A major milestone was the publication in 2005 of the Childcare Bill which, subject to Parliamentary approval, will set the framework of local responsibilities which will be fleshed out in detailed documents over the coming months.. This action plan builds on that progress, and marks an important shift from developing policy to working with our partners on delivery. We hope it will help all involved understand what will be expected of them by when; ... Central government must continue to clarify essential requirements, through regulations and guidance, and also make clear the scope for local flexibility.” (DfES, 2006a:4)

We see here then, that at this stage, the detail of “local responsibilities” was still to be “fleshed out” and delivery is to be “with our partners” – responsibility is framed as shared and as offering “local flexibility” - although it is still up to Central Government to set regulations and produce guidance. The gaps in the ten year childcare strategy document signal that implementation is not a separate phase but that policy proceeds recursively, developing even

in the “delivery” phase (Carter, 2006). The “policy-action relationship” is analyzed by Barrett (2004:253). She draws on the work of Strauss to show how “Policy may thus be regarded as a statement of intent by those seeking to change or control behaviour, and a *negotiated output* emerging from the implementation process.” [my emphasis]. The conception of policy as negotiable in implementation clearly carries methodological implications as I explored in chapter two. With specific reference to *Every Child Matters*, Churchill (2007) identifies:

“five key implementation concerns - competing policy agendas, realising the outcome-led approach, accountability gaps, joining up services and developing partnership working and resources and capabilities for implementation and development.”

My ethnographic account of implementation reflects all of Churchill’s concerns and more.

6. From Government to Governance

Hill and Hupe (2002) claim that policy implementation is now synonymous with governance (see chapter eight, Governance and Managing Implementation). Frederickson (Frederickson 2006) cites Strange who observes that :

Much of the governance literature is "a rehash of old academic debates under a new and jazzier name--a sort of intellectual mutton dressed up as lamb--so that pushy new professors. . . can have the same old arguments as their elders but can flatter

themselves that they are breaking new ground by using new jargon" (Strange 1983, p. 341).

This cynical quote illustrates struggles over fashion, the micro-politics of the academy and problematizes the notion of cumulative social science⁴¹. In my view there *is* something new about governance in that politicians now appear to expect responsibility for policy outcomes and often policy *making* to be shared beyond the polity with their “partners”. Responsibility for policy now appears to extend deep into civic society, raising questions about the specificity of the political sphere, about where accountability lies, how accountability mechanisms happen and the nature of privacy, the public realm, the social sphere or what Clarke J. (2004:2) has termed the “extra-governmental”. Traditional understandings of principals and agents in the Westminster model of representative democratic government convey the idea that Ministers establish policy direction and legislative decisions then Whitehall administrators devise and implement technocratic solutions to achieving policy goals (PIU, 2001). This fits with models (referred to by Goodin, Rein & Moran (2006:4) as “high modernist”, that assume that policy proceeds in phases from conceptualising and refining policy problems then devising policy solutions, through an implementation phase to an end point when policy becomes embedded in practice, policy outcomes are achieved and thus can be evaluated. Osborne and Gaebler’s influential *Reinventing Government* (1992) excoriates public sector bureaucracy, advocating markets as efficient mechanisms that allow consumers choice and recommending the public sector to specify desired outcomes and then leave it to charities or to the market to decide how to deliver services to meet those outcomes.

⁴¹ Davies et al (2005 : 14) contains a useful critique of cumulative social science.

Governance theories move on from state-centric analyses that focus on traditional forms of power assumed to operate in zero-sum fashion. The sovereign power we saw exercised in Jane's case has been traditionally associated with state bureaucracy, the rule of law and what Klijn and Skelcher refer to as "*the primacy of politics*". (Klijn & Skelcher, 2007). They argue that network governance undermines this primacy and runs the risk of generating a democratic deficit. A research report for the Department of Communities and Local Government (2006) titled *All our Futures: The Challenges of Local Governance in 2015* shares this view suggesting that:

“Too much of the current framework ignores or homogenises politics. Too often, for example, local area agreements and comprehensive performance assessment are treated in a managerialist way and are seen as “matters for officers” rather than politicians. Local political differences are fudged rather than celebrated.” (p. 27).

This suggests that empirical research should focus on elected politicians as well as managers to explore management practices that might be in tension with political processes. Wincott supports this (2006:306) arguing that “Theories of welfare state retrenchment and reform need to allow more scope for politics and policy entrepreneurship.” Governance theories in my view, ought to be capable of distinguishing what is distinctive about public, rather than private (and indeed voluntary sector) management – namely democratic accountability formalised through the rule of law, professional codes and/or ethical practice, with a commitment to putting the public interest and human rights before the pursuit of profit (Corry and Martin, 2005, Klijn & Skelcher, 2007, Moore, 1995, Newman, 2006)). There is a growing consensus

in the literature that governments are in a new relationship with governance. While some (Rhodes, 1996) claim that government has *given way* to governance through processes of the state hollowing out, decentralising and being subject to supra-national pressures, (including the EU and globalisation) others argue that government remains a major source of power, authority and legitimacy (Hill & Lynn, 2005, Newman, 2005) while Exworthy and Powell (2004) describe the state not as hollowed out but as “congested”, involving “... a plurality of forms of governance, multiple layers, and inter-organizational networks of decision-makers (p.264). I agree with Newman’s assessment that government and governance are co-existing in tension. Paradoxically, at this point in history, childcare has achieved recognition as an issue worthy of public investment and a national strategy at a time when the state is relying on what it terms the “PVI” (Private, Voluntary, Independent) sectors to work in partnership with local authorities to deliver the policy outcomes. These contradictory processes again support my claim that childcare policy is unsettled, unfinished and challenges the notion of clearly identifiable authors of policy, authorizing a coherent childcare policy.

Newman’s distinction between open and closed systems in her model of governance is useful for recognising and distinguishing rational, project management-type techniques (closed system) and more indeterminate, humanistic, fluid, symbolic and cultural understandings (open system) that affect the meanings of inputs, policy goals and outcomes. Newman’s model is an ideal type and she explains that in practice, a usual pattern is:

“... one of oscillation between these extremes, with the centralisation of some forms of power (e.g. the management of schools) is matched by the recentralisation of others (e.g. control over the curriculum).

I find Newman’s insistence on contradictory pressures operating on and amongst New Labour’s modernisation programme a useful antidote both to those critical theorists who put forward a more linear narrative of neo-liberalism (Miller and Rose, 2008) and those who might uncritically adopt the modernisation policy rhetoric of partnership and “new ways of working” (Collarbone, 2005, Eisenstadt, 2002).

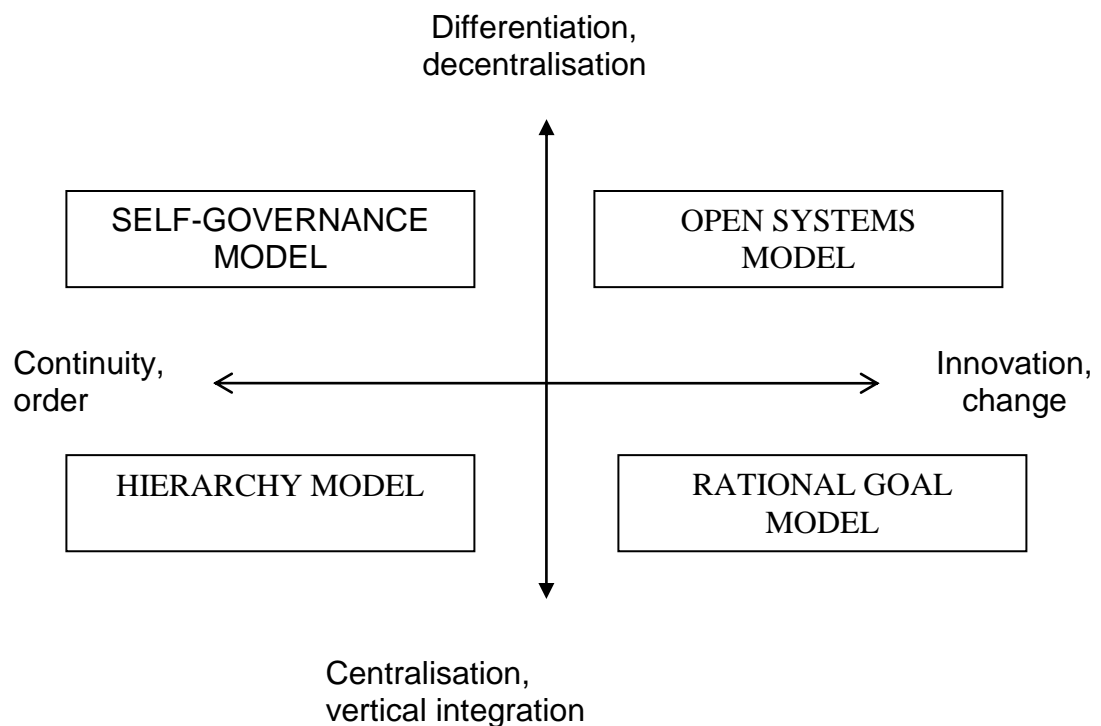


Fig. 9 Model of governance Reproduced from Newman (2001:34)

7. Governing Through Markets, Hierarchies, Networks and Families

The well-known typology from Thompson (1991) distinguishes three ideal types of governance arrangement and has been combined with Hirschmann's "voice, choice and loyalty" trinity (Clarke J. et al. 2007). I discuss these separately, showing how contemporary childcare policy relies on all three. I suggest that the addition of "families" to the triptych, when viewed through a feminist theoretical lens, enables further analytical purchase on the governance of the private and the public which is critical to any analyses of welfare reform as Jane's story demonstrated.

Markets

I use the term *marketisation* rather than *privatisation* to highlight the significance of the internal market for welfare reform (Clarke J. et al, 2007). New Labour declared their intention to protect public services and draw back from the Conservative administration's clear preference for the market to deliver public services. Blair came to power vowing to reform public services, not by uncritical reliance on the market (as he claimed the Conservatives had) but by playing down any historical "ideological" allegiance to labour or capital through a pragmatic emphasis on "delivery" - "what matters is what works" and rhetorical commitment to a "Third Way". Temple (2000:303) describes this apparent pragmatism as "*output politics*." This technocratic discourse frames modernisation *as* rationalisation, which goes along with an attack on professional discretion with managers asserting the right to manage. (Clarke et al 2000). Writing about what they call "market ideology", Balle Hansen and Lauridsen

(2004:491) refer to “neo-liberal ideas of the supremacy of the market as a modern rationalized myth”. This myth, propounded by advocates of the “New Public Management” (Ferlie et al., 1996) presumes that choice is a human right, that individual autonomy is an inherent good and that, as public choice theory claims, bureaucracies restrict individual choices through provision of standardised services and maximize their own power bases rather than serving the public interest (Du Gay, 2005). Market mechanisms position citizens as consumers and insights from political economy reveal the ever expanding nature of the market logic. The market is an open system with the potential for ever changing supply and demand⁴². Research by Hochschild, (2005) has shown how increasing areas of domestic life, including caring for adults and children are commodified as the pressure on time increases (see also Runte and Mills 2004). Pricewaterhouse Coopers produced a report on the “Market for parental and family support” for DfES in 2006. This analyzed “supply and demand” based on the government’s own policies and concluded that the market “remains relatively young” (p.10) and “In addition, there are significant challenges associated with appropriately and adequately defining what high quality outcomes should ‘look like’.” Despite this difficulty of defining the outcomes of a family support service, Pricewaterhouse Coopers contributed to a further HM Government publication: “Industry Techniques and Inspiration for Commissioners” (2006). This document contains advice from business gurus such as Charles Handy and presents models and “tools” such as “Business Process Reengineering, the 4 Ps Marketing Mix, and Lean Manufacturing”. Case studies in the document are drawn from car manufacturing, (“We focused on our key product, Life Shine, which is a vehicle care kit comprising 24 components”), the airline industry and the construction industry (“building a gas

⁴² In my professional experience I encountered at least one Sure Start local programme that considered borrowing the business concept of a loyalty card to increase uptake of services and ensure its “reach” targets were met.

pipeline”). This *equivalising* (Fairclough, 2000b) of public and private sector management techniques results in a shift away from the ideals of public service with a commitment to a shared public interest (with differences reconciled in agonistic public and political arenas) or a professional concern with meeting human needs effectively and ethically, (Derhardt & Derhardt, 2000) to a situation whereby “commissioners” manage the market for children’s services using technocratic solutions that seem to frame social care “outcomes” as “policy products” – as equivalent to any other marketised commodities (Malone, 1999). The difficulty of contracting for “outcomes” was explained to me by a manager with Sure Start experience who was employed by the County Council and expected to work in partnership with the NHS:

R: we had a service level agreement ... And one of the things was about reducing the numbers of mums who smoked during pregnancy. And the target that was set by national government was ten percent. Well where it came from I couldn’t tell you, but that’s what it was set at. And so this was in the contract. We got to the day before signing and it was suddenly ‘I can’t sign that!’ ‘Why can’t we sign that?’ ‘Because we can’t possibly sign up to something that we’re not sure we can do. Because otherwise we will be failing in our duty and we will be made to look like we haven’t performed, therefore we can’t say we will do that.’ So I said ‘so you’re telling me that something we have been charged with doing and you as full partners and board members and the employing body of three members of staff don’t want to do what the national targets are?’

Pam: And was this a legal type of person?

R: No Oh no, oh no. This was this was somebody who was in charge of the public health section of this particular primary care trust.

Pam: But it would match their own organisational targets?

R: You would have thought so, yes. So in the end we had to put that they would ‘work towards’ reducing it by ten percent. Not that they would ‘do it’.

Pam: But were they worried in that instance about payback if they fell short of the target?

R: It may have been. Well no, because it wasn’t. Because the service level agreements were written in such a way that we could adjust, develop, we were monitoring them on a quarterly basis, looking at milestones that they agreed to and actually helped to construct. It wasn’t that we handed them an SLA ⁴³ and said ‘there you go sign up to that.’ We had all these negotiations prior to that about ‘if we divide this up into quarterly milestones, y’know, during this quarter you’ll be doing some sort of audit activity du-du-du. If there’s a difficulty you can come back to us and we may adjust some of the targets ... So it wasn’t that we were saying that’s it. And if you don’t do this we will withhold funding. Not that at all. (LA 36).

This extract illustrates the prevalence of centralized targets but also the difficulty of contracting for “outcomes” (in this case fewer pregnant smokers) as though they were widgets or any other commodity to be purchased in the market place. It seems that the health service provider was unable to guarantee “delivery” (that pregnant mums would quit) and so the contract was weakened to a service level agreement that amounts to an input – an agreement to use professional expertise and to negotiate around funding and targets – more of a trust-based mechanism than a straightforward purchaser-provider market mechanism. Commissioning has

⁴³ SLA Service Level Agreement

become a “keyword” (Williams 1976) in the discourse of public service administration. It partly replaces the “bidding culture” that pitted local authorities and other local bodies against one another in a competition for central government or EU funding although in the internal market, providers still compete and local authorities are mandated by the Audit Commission to ensure “contestability” (Kelly, 2003).

Rational choice theory from the discipline of economics suggests that where information is freely available on price and quality that consumers will exercise choice in their own best interests. Choice regulates the market through the power of “exit” – i.e. dissatisfied consumers take their business elsewhere and businesses risk extinction. (Le Grand, 2003). The local authority in my study had a service formally known as a Children’s Information Service and recently re-branded as “Parent Direct”, described to me as like a “dating agency” to match customers and suppliers of child care. The service promotes information via a website and uses marketing techniques including campaigns to get information on supply to customers. The discourse of market efficiency assumes that through competition, supply grows to meet demand, quality is enhanced and prices stay competitive through the mechanism of choice and the option of consumers to exit from particular providers. However, markets are rarely “free”. With supply subsidised through free part-time entitlement for three and four year olds and demand subsidised for some families through Working Families Tax Credits, there is a clear intent to achieve government goals through what should more properly be considered a *quasi-market* (Ferlie et al., 1996, Le Grand 2003). The UK childcare market is now estimated to be worth £3,525 million with increasing numbers of nursery chains such as Busy Bees that are capable of wielding significant influence over policy (Penn, 2007). The National Day

Nurseries Association has been an active contributor to consultation on childcare policy and might be regarded as an “advocacy coalition” (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999) at a national level⁴⁴. While the notion of consumer interest assumes an autonomous purchaser, a centred, rational subject who knows their own mind and has access to full and free information, the childcare market has been described by Ball and Vincent (2005) as a “peculiar market” that rests on “multiple ambivalences”. (p.565). They suggest that “Choice of childcare is both very rational and very emotional”. A recent paper “Defining a Local Childcare Market” produced for DfES, includes sections on “The Role of family” and “Relationships in formal and informal care” demonstrating the huge significance of these long running social traditions for parents making decisions about childcare and the interrelationship between the social forms of the family and the market. (Corlyon 2004).

With the passing of the 2006 Childcare Act, local authorities now have a duty to manage their local childcare market. They have been guided to be “providers of last resort”, that is, where the market will not provide childcare or where it fails and voluntary or community providers can’t fill the gap, only then are local authorities expected to directly employ childcare staff to meet the need of working parents or parents who are undertaking training. Here we see a clear hegemonic intent to privilege the market rather than relying on the public sector for childcare provision. Penn (2007:193) suggests that

⁴⁴ NDNA produce policy papers including the Development of the Market a childcare vision for day nurseries (2007) that argues for a level playing field

“Many academics and advocates in the field of early years ignore this political shift by the Labour party, ...Or else they hope ... that the ...concept of universal early childhood services is by some miracle still achievable.”

A Children’s Centre Manager told me how he interpreted the policy message:” And government are increasingly saying now for God’s sake don’t put the private sector out of business. “(LA 6). This creates serious challenges for the strategy of targeting deprived localities where private nurseries struggle to generate profit and where Neighbourhood Nurseries and/or Sure Start local programmes have already been established by local authorities. A National Audit Office report on Sure Start Children’s Centres (2006) found that local authorities were “concerned” about their ability to manage a “sustainable childcare market”. In allowing the pre-school childcare private sector to expand to meet demand during the 1970s and 80s, the policy signal to the public was that childcare is a private matter to be left to families and the market and this reliance on the market appears to have significantly influenced, if not wholly determined the policy trajectory. In their comparative study of childcare policy in the UK and Germany, Evers et al (2005) found that Germany’s more localised welfare system had relied less on the market and so the expansion of childcare had been slower than in the UK but was more likely to be sustainable over the medium to long term. The authors have a helpful analysis of governance, arguing that:

“specificities of governance are strongly rooted in the political culture and configurations of social provision in each country. The differences between the strong tradition of subsidiarity and corporatism that characterize the (German) ‘Christian

Democratic' welfare states (van Keesbergen, 1995), and the much greater centralization and, since 1979, reliance on marketization, in the UK – a so-called 'liberal welfare state' (Esping Andersen, 1990) – tend to be underplayed in the literature on new governance, even though such continuities find strong recognition in the literature on policy change. "(p.196)

Unsurprisingly, my study found evidence of contradiction in the practice of market management. Nursery owners, some of whom had been in business for years, found themselves in competition with well resourced Sure Start schemes yet expected to work in partnership to deliver the childcare strategy. I interviewed two private nursery managers together. Sam was a qualified nursery nurse who had been a foster carer and had several children of her own. She told me that she had started her business originally for toddlers to attend until they reached school age, believing initially that younger children were better cared for at home. She found an irresistible demand for care of babies and so expanded her business. Sam believes that her business reputation rests on word of mouth recommendation. Sam's colleague, Rosemary, also an owner manager (whose business was located in a different area and so was not in competition with Sam) explained to me how she faced competition from a local primary school to run out of school care:

R: a new headteacher who comes ...he goes to this Y first school as the headteacher and has got it fixed in his head I'm going to do all these things And he didn't give not a toss about my nursery and out of school club being across the road. And he got all this extended through this Community Learning stuff. All this money went through to this

school. No consultation with the private sector at all. We make a few waves and he sticks an advert in the paper. Offering it up to anybody to tender. So I thought well I'm in Catch 22 here. He could shut me down – my out of school club down. But we're locked into a lease on that. We've got to pay the lease £17,000 for five years whether we're in there or not. I thought I'd better ring up and find out. So I rang and he said 'oh he was delighted to get my call and I was the only call he'd had.' So I said 'well look'. So I discussed what the problem was and I said 'look Mr A' I said 'I do have a really good out of school club that's just across the road from where you are and the nursery's served you really well all these years. Do you really think that there is a need to create one in the school? Couldn't we just come to some agreement, you know what I mean where we'll give your school priority? Or y'know what I mean? Or something? You could do something I'm sure. 'And he said 'oh no' he says 'I'm going to do it. Regardless (you know) whether you are interested or not.' So I said 'well OK then.' I said 'well in order to do it I'd need to put a business plan together. Can you tell me who has to provide all the equipment?' 'You do'. Ok then. So I said 'how much rent?' 'Oh I'm not telling you that'. He says 'I want to base the rent on your profit.' So I said 'well I'm sorry Mr A but I said, 'y'know a good business plan starts and finishes from the market. And I truly believe there is not the market for out of school. We have always served YY school. And we have only ever collected about eight or ten maximum children from there. And they don't come every night and your predecessor always said to me there was a high input of grandparents and whatever go to that school and pick them up. 'Oh so are you saying I'll be guaranteed to get ten or eleven from you to start mine off' sort of thing ? I said 'if you only take six from me you

could close me down. I said 'that's the point I'm making.' And he wouldn't tell me what the rent was going to be and he said I would need, based on this scant information, I would need to go and do a full presentation in front of the governors and I'd got to show him how I was going to get my quality award and goodness knows what ! Now you tell me he made that so *onerous* that not just me but anybody was going to say 'go away'. But on the surface he'd consulted hadn't he? Now I find out afterwards through the early years people that he had all the funding for the equipment . For the y'know, for the toys, for the equipment and everything. And he got revenue funding as well! But as the private sector going on campus under this same extended schools there was no funding for me. It's not a level playing field. And it never will be, it never will be. You know the rates in nurseries - we pay enormous business rates, absolutely enormous and y'know they're getting it at such a preferential rate if at all in some of them, they're so low. Now that's not a level playing field to start off with is it?"

Pam: And are there differences in VAT?

R1 Yes they claim all their VAT they can claim back through the Council. We pay VAT on everything. I mean if we buy a new minibus twenty odd thousand pounds, seventeen and a half percent's VAT. That's dead. We sell the vehicle we don't get that back. And we can't VAT register and we wouldn't want to anyway because we'd be charging the parents seventeen and a half percent on the fees. But all they have to say is that childcare is zero rated. And that way we'd be able to claim it back but not charge it out. And it would encourage us to buy things wouldn't it if we thought we could claim it back. But in terms of a level playing field it's a little bit better. I think it

is a little bit better You know we've got equality with special needs we've got advisory people coming in and access to special needs for children that desperately need it and there was nothing like that was there F ?

R2: And we've got training.

R1: You know you have to fight for it sometimes to get your girls [sic] on it but nevertheless.

This lengthy extract shows how the headteacher sought to reverse the capitalist logic of accumulation, seeking to charge Rosemary for the rent of his school premises according to her profit. There is a clear conflict of interests between Rosemary and the headteacher with both competing to attract children to their out of school clubs – Rosemary in the interest of profit, the headteacher for his own reasons – possibly connected to his school budget, his Ofsted league table rating and status with local parents. The reference to V.A.T. demonstrates the prosaic nature of governance that entails consideration of organizational liabilities and legal and fiscal responsibilities that more abstract theories of governance or postmodern theories of organization do not acknowledge.

I found other instances of primary schools competing with one another and with a community based charitable project delivering out of school childcare in a very deprived ex-mining area that struggled to get established on a sustainable business footing. I found a High School headteacher also determined to market his school and prepared to poach pupils from outside his catchment area. These market mechanisms mean that even in the not-for-profit or public sector, the idea of a public good delivered through a shared commitment to public service is

difficult to sustain. The modus operandi of public organisations has shifted understandings of welfare provision such that it may not be easy to detect difference between public and private providers of childcare. I interviewed David, the manager of a Children's Centre:

Pam: I'm interested in – the local authority's now got this duty to manage the market so presumably that's the challenge – if you've got twelve other providers – you're in a competitive market situation for childcare?

David: We find ourselves in an irony there in a number of ways. That's one key irony. The other is that – on the one hand we are presenting ourselves as a beacon of excellence, as a training organisation, a development organisation, a support organisation; for all other providers including those people you can describe as competitors. And actually in a sense they are. Because part of our make up is we sell places and we do so in competition with other providers. And yet we're setting ourselves up as their supporter which is critical or its ironic isn't it?

Pam: Well I would think its challenging! (ironic laugh)

David: "The only way you can do it morally and ethically from my point of view really is to compete on quality. So we don't negatively market. There's nothing we do can be described as putting any other provider down. That would be outrageous actually, given what I've just said. But what we do try to do is just to compete on quality. So we sell what we've got um and we do our best to do a good job and market that good job and publicise it. And we put a lot of effort and energy into the children's centre I mean, y'know, we produce high quality materials, um we're just in the middle of having a DVD produced by the children's centre. And our web-site's quite good and, y'know,

we just try to keep our boat afloat really. And y'know, word of mouth is powerful people are getting a sense that we're special. And we don't really have a problem filling places here. The first few we did but now word's out and we're OK. We're pretty much full and that needs to be the case.

When I interviewed Judy, a childcare partnership officer, I asked her:

Pam: And have you had any experience of where private providers have complained about children's centres and unfair competition?

Judy: (laughs) Yes, yes, very recently and this is at umm a stakeholder meeting ... I had about five phone calls from private providers in the area and they were just very disappointed in the hypocrisy of the local authority.

David explains that the *raison d'être* of the Children's Centre, its "make up", is to "sell places". In addition to being a "beacon of excellence" its governance structure enables it to operate in the childcare market place. The Children's Centre combines market and non-market functions. Judy's reference to "hypocrisy" contradicts the idea of partnership working with its supposed reliance on trust, good will and common shared interests.

Hierarchy

Hierarchy has traditionally been associated with military metaphors of command and control. Weber's classic sociological analysis of the "iron cage" of domination through bureaucracy

focussed on standardisation, routine, rule-following and task separation. with discretion controlled to enhance organisational efficiency (Runciman, 1978). Weber pointed to the ideal-type distinction between the person and the office – the latter being a career position, the former being the messy, emotional, individual with characteristics and interests that might interfere with rule following (du Gay 2007:104). Principal-agent theory positions the civil servant or the public sector official as the agent of the politician and thereby as accountable to the public through the political mechanism of “voice” (Stoker, 1998). However, a zero-sum model of a unitary state is inadequate for explaining the power of the professions that may themselves be organised hierarchically and are part of the public sector bureaucracy. Lipsky’s (1980) seminal work on street-level bureaucracy showed how welfare workers were caught in contradictions between rules dictated by bureaucracy, demands from their clients and insufficient resources to meet demand. Their discretionary practices negotiated rules and therefore made policy at the level of individual practice. Jordan and Jordan’s work (2000) permits greater insight into discretion in relation to welfare reform. They show how a “new tier of practitioners” including “street workers, support workers and project workers” have been introduced into the welfare state (p.37). These workers are not necessarily bound by professional codes of practice but are practising within the welfare state, often working across the boundaries of public, private and civic spheres. Power’s (1997) work on the “audit society” demonstrates a massive increase in audit regimes since Lipsky was writing. The modernisation agenda attacks this bureaucracy for being “producer dominated”, inflexible and constrained by red tape. (Brodin, 2006, Du Gay, 2005). Davies et al.’s literature review (2005:63) of the use of governance mechanisms to incentivise outcomes showed that “informal organisation was as important as the formal.” The informal “rules of the game”,

therefore may be as much a part of governance and have the same effect as “red tape” as the well recognised phenomenon of “working to rule” demonstrates. This is my rationale for studying such informal rules that may structure childcare policy implementation.

Networks

The modernisation agenda, has entailed a full scale assault on bureaucracy in favour of management as leadership with “flexibility” a key value (Clarke et al, 2000) but this is in tension with the plethora of cross-cutting initiatives issued from central Government as Barnes et al (2007) show and as the last chapter demonstrated, with the welter of initiatives presenting implementers at the local level with the challenge of joining up what may be experienced as contradictory policies. While partnership working is expected to overcome the bureaucratic inefficiencies of silo working, it creates the need for co-ordination of the proliferation of partnerships and so does not automatically reduce the transaction costs associated with purchaser-provider market-like contractual relationships (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). Despite a concern with “strategy”, “control” metaphors rarely appear in the more facilitative language of network governance. Partnership, like community is a highly normative term, linked to New Labour’s Third Way governance (Schofield, 2002). To be against partnership is to be inflexible and un-modern. Davies et al (2005: 67) cite Goodwin et al (2004:12) whose definition of a network is:

“Any moderately stable pattern of ties or links between organisations or between organisations and individuals, where those ties represent some form of recognisable

accountability (however weak and however often overridden) whether formal or informal in character, whether weak or strong, loose or tight, bounded or unbounded.”

Rhodes (1996) defines networks as self-steering and this mirrors Kooiman’s (2003) use of the term “autopoiesis” and Jessop’s (2003) “heterarchy.” Research on governance often explores the difficulties of partnership working resulting from inter-organisational misunderstandings and tensions between contradictory goals or working practices but rarely extends this critique of administrative functionality with a discussion of democratic process and accountability (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007). This may be because of the difficulty of defining the term democracy and it may also be due to the disciplinary separation of political concepts from public administration and management and organization studies. Penn (2007:193) criticises Anning (2006) as well as the Daycare Trust for what she calls their pragmatic acceptance of the “status quo” – that is, delivery of early childhood services via the quasi-market and the belief that:

” Inherent conflicts can be overlooked, and difficulties and differences between organisations or partners can be minimised if sufficient care is taken to mutually work out goals and procedures in the interests of clients.”

As Jones and Bird (2000) show, much network governance turns out to be state sponsored partnership designed to facilitate the engagement of the private sector and “community sector”. New Labour has made a commitment to tackling “wicked issues”, such as child poverty. These are deemed to require extra-governmental effort. Where Government can draw

on the resources of its citizens and the “Third Sector”, then it can achieve goals through “enabling” government that release social capital synergy to allow win-win solutions. (Newman, 2001, chapter 8). We saw in the last chapter how the policy target to abolish child poverty rests partly on the childcare strategy and mainly on “making work pay.” In 2004 an “Accord” was signed, documenting the mutual agreement to reduce child poverty between HM Treasury, DWP, DfES and the Local Government Association.⁴⁵ This “Accord” is a tool of governance applied to an apparently trust-based network. Unlike other forms of management associated with hierarchies, there are no formal sanctions. Similarly, there is a “Compact” between government and voluntary organisations that documents agreed mutual respect and expectations.⁴⁶ Networks are presumed to rely on mechanisms of trust, loyalty, association and affect rather than formal rules (Hirst, 1994, Kickert et al 1997). The desire to minimize the bureaucracy of welfare administration is clear in Hirst’s work (1994). He makes a plea for a citizens’ income alongside a minimal state comprising associations, such that governance would operate through club-like mechanisms of belonging, membership and trust resulting in closer, more direct accountability and greater responsiveness of services. Hirst distinguished his interest in “membership power” from the New Right emphasis on consumer power. He suggests that

... “ the experience of building a community from choice ... From that governance, from participating in running the season-ticket holders’ association can come a schooling in the arts of freedom and an enhancement in the political capacity of the individual as real as leading a major strike or being a bishop.” (p.54).

⁴⁵ See <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/17C6FFBF-BCDC-D4B3-11900D3572731A2D.pdf>

⁴⁶ www.thecompact.org.uk

Dissenting from the normative celebration of clubs, networks and partnerships, McDowell and Court, (1994:515) highlight the disadvantages accruing to women with responsibility for young children who are excluded from “informal networks of male power situated in the after hours, bars, gyms and informal spaces of communication.” This raises questions of identification and belonging – who is in and who is out of a network. I explore the theme of membership in chapter seven.

Governmentality and the Family

I am adding families to Thompson’s “market, hierarchy, network” list of governance mechanisms as a provocation to those who theorise the family as private and beyond the realm of governance or who simply ignore childcare as an issue, even in discussions of neo-liberal welfare reform (for example, Miller and Rose, 2008). Hirschmann’s conceptual tools of “voice, choice and loyalty” are applied by Hobson (1990) who argues that women have had restricted voice, choice and exit options within the family due to their economic inequality relative to men. There is a rich feminist literature on the subordinate position of women in the institution of the family, governed historically by law, customs and practices that aligned women with nature and the domestic sphere while men are associated with culture, politics and public life (Scott and Keates, 2004). This biological determinism or “ideology of motherhood” affects women who are not mothers as it spills over into the labour market, shaping the sexual division of labour (Chodorow cited in Mansbridge, 1993). According to the Daycare Trust, the childcare workforce is 97.5% female (www.daycaretrust.org.uk). The fact

that this workforce is, on the whole, extremely low paid, has led some to suggest that this is due to the naturalising of women's care work and lack of recognition of care *as* labour. Second wave feminism conceptualised the family as the arena where not just biological but social reproduction takes place in ways that are functional for capitalism and the state. Historically, women have had ascribed caring roles in society on the basis of their biology. Their ability to also perform waged labour allowed a reserve army of flexible labour within a welfare state structured on the breadwinner model. Writing about "regendering governance" Newman (2005:91) points out:

"It is here that the interaction between the commodification of women's labour and the fragmentation of state services is felt most sharply. Just at the point where women are being addressed increasingly as the degendered, adult workers of the modern state, so those same processes of modernisation, with the managerialisation and marketisation that they produce, are exacerbating the need for informal care in the home and the community."

While feminist campaigns successfully achieved legal recognition of equality in the labour market, maternalism as a discourse still influences policy. In the UK health service, maternal and child health services bracket together women's biological reproductive role with their cultural child rearing family practices. Writing about childcare in Belgium, Vandenbroeck (2003:141) refers to "mothers milk and mothers' affection" as "...similar and complementary discourses among physicians and ... psychologists". Normative, gendered assumptions about the responsibility to feed and nurture children abound. For example, there is a campaign to

promote healthy eating “Top Tips for Top Mums”

<http://www.5aday.nhs.uk/TopTipsForTopMums/>) that says nothing about the role of fathers.

Donzelot (1979) has drawn on Foucault’s concept of bio-power linking hygiene with moralization, mothers and social control for his analysis of “Government Through the Family” to show how welfare developed the “search for a procedure to discriminate between ‘artificial indigence’ and genuine poverty.” I suggest that these long standing debates about the deserving and undeserving poor (Levitas’ moral underclass discourse) are resurfacing in the neo-liberal target to shift single parents (mainly mothers) into the labour market, their moral duty becoming reframed not just as unpaid care but as providing economically for their children (Dean, 2001, Millar and Ridge, 2008) . This shifts to Levitas’ “SID” discourse where inclusion in the labour market is equated with social inclusion. As we saw in Jane’s story – there has been political reticence around being seen as interfering in the lives of families. Rather, the discourse in Children’s Centres and Extended Schools is one of “support” (Gillies, 2005).

Some of the tensions inherent in supporting families while protecting children at risk of harm have recently resurfaced in the widely reported “case of Baby P”.⁴⁷ Before the death of Victoria Climbié and the high profile “*Every Child Matters*” policy response, an electronic surveillance system was being designed to prevent children “slipping through the net” of welfare services. Parton, (2006) shows how processes of surveillance are spreading ever wider. Identification of needs or problems is widening beyond those families who have current need of help and assistance to trying to assess future risk. One governance tool introduced

⁴⁷ See <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article5140511.ece> accessed 15/12/8

following the Laming Review is the Common Assessment Framework ⁴⁸ which is designed to pass information on children and families between professionals in different agencies. Some of these themes about childcare, family support and governance surface in my study of a CLP as it implements the policies of Children's Centres and Extended Schools.

8. Towards Community Governance

As duGay (2007) notes, bureaucracy is mainly presented in pejorative terms within the modernisation discourse but partnership and community are, in contrast, both warm fuzzy descriptors (Schofield, 2002). Continuing with Newman's theme of contradictory governance processes affecting welfare reform, this section explores some contradictions associated with community as localism or what Swyngedouw (2005) has termed the "glocal". In the UK there has been much interest at a policy and academic level in "new localism", often drawing on communitarian literature and bringing the notion of social capital into governance debates. (Stoker 2004) Communitarian discourse infuses New Labour's Third Way (Schofield, 2002). There have been increasing attempts at centralised control of policy alongside conflicting attempts at local citizen participation. New Labour has created an Office of the Third Sector and promotes communities as sites where rights and responsibilities are exercised (Fuller and Geddes, 2008). Some authors refer to "participatory democracy", to "deepening democracy" (Fung & Wright, 2001), "associational democracy" (Hirst, 1994), "community governance", "citizen-centred governance" (Barnes et al, 2007) others to "deliberative democracy" (Hajer, 2003) to theorise the attempt to engage citizens actively in policy processes.

⁴⁸ This is colloquially referred to as the CAF – see <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/>

When Jane told her story she alluded to the postcode lottery. Postcodes clearly relate to geographical place but more awkwardly to “community”. Debates about welfare reform and subsidiarity concern the correct spatial and scalar level for decision making and arenas for democracy (Taylor, 2003:23). Aside from sociological theories of “*gemeinschaft*”, there are inherent tensions between administrative economies of scale and efficiencies that may be achieved through the responsiveness of localism. This raises the issue of what a geographic community might be and how this might fit with existing local authority boundaries as well as with non-geographic communities of interest and what Janet Newman calls “imaginary publics” (Taylor 2003, Newman, 2001). Currently, in England, the programme of Children’s Centres is framed with the trope of oxymoron as “targeted universalism”. The “core offer” applies everywhere but in the 30% “most deprived areas” the core offer is extended with additional services. The oxymoron then straddles Levitas’ RED or redistributionist discourse and SID, the social integrationist discourse. The range of “area-based initiatives” (ABIs) proliferated from the late 1990s, producing an often bewildering range of opportunities for people to get involved in local governance. Skelcher (2005) notes the difficulty of maintaining “jurisdictional integrity” in the face of these overlapping administrative boundaries. In the area where I carried out my fieldwork there had been several Single Regeneration Budget programmes, a Health Action Zone and several Sure Start local programmes targeted on areas with high indices of multiple deprivation. Skelcher (2005) argues out that while, on the one hand, central government calls for increased transparency and accountability of elected local authorities, on the other hand, it is stimulating the creation of a dense web of new governance forms that lack many of the basic democratic safeguards of local councils (Skelcher, 2005).

There is also tension between an approach that seeks solutions to social problems using tools and techniques of change management derived from the private sector, while at the same time seeking to enrol citizens in governance via participatory democracy (Taylor, 2003). This brings us back to the theme of *time* that Jane's story introduced. Short term policy implementation timetables and the modernisation agenda appear to be in tension with long running family and community practices, with the historical sexual division of care and work, with professional sensibilities and traditional welfare bureaucracies. (Pollitt, 2008, Bryson, 2007). My literature review suggests that an exploration of how these tensions might be experienced by policy implementers could prove a fruitful area for research investigation.

Whether we view the policy goal of Sure Start Children's Centres as protecting children or supporting families to find solutions to their work-life balance, or whether we view it as designed to meet the needs of the neo-liberal social investment state or a more complex mixture of political rationalities, depends partly on a methodological orientation. Policy might be regarded as a rational solution to the needs and problems of society – based on a methodology that Schneider and Ingram terms “policy science” (and as was explained to me by a civil servant at a conference *fieldnotes*) or policy might be viewed as serving hegemonic interests that may be detected by critical theorists. My own alternative methodological orientation is towards the use of theory to *inform* but not to *determine* the outcome of empirical investigation – to allow space for surprising data such as Jane's confounding case and the circus project that I present in chapter eight.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed a range of academic literature in order to situate Jane's story that we read in the first chapter in relation to theories of welfare reform and governance. The literature review points to tensions between traditional representative democracy and ideas of network or partnership or local governance. Newman's model offers a way of thinking about governance as an open system – capable of achieving policy goals through drawing a range of non state actors into positions of responsibility but operating in tension with closed systems of hierarchical, bureaucratic rational planning and management control. The extracts of data I have presented support Pascall's claim that, in relying on market mechanisms, the national childcare strategy "relies on the unreliable" (Pascall, 2008:222). I have shown how policy encourages the marketization of childcare, how schools might compete in this quasi market, how the discourse of child protection does not fit a consumerist policy frame and how communities are becoming new spatial locations for governance. Rather than being formulated and finished in Westminster and Whitehall, policy is being remade in time and places, and local policy actors find themselves charged with suturing a variety of policies, agendas and discourses into some kind of plan (that I suggest may be analogous to a palimpsest) that can demonstrate policy implementation. Policy implementers are caught up in a complex interaction of hierarchically imposed targets with deadlines for policy "deliverables" to be implemented in non-hierarchical partnership with "communities" while collaborating with private businesses. Rather than a technical approach to policy analysis, judging "progress" may depend upon one's values and on where "before and after" time frames and boundaries are drawn.

SECTION FOUR EMPIRICAL THEMATIC CHAPTER

Chapter Five

Framing and Re-framing Childcare Wants and Needs

Contents

1.	Introduction	176
2.	Policy Interpreters Governing Meaning	177
3.	Child Poverty Accord: Reforming Welfare, Re-framing Policy	184
4.	“Tough Love”: Family intervention as social control	194
5.	Educare: Neologisms and Epistemic Communities	202
6.	Framing Community Wants and Needs	206
7.	Conclusion	216

“To deliver truly integrated services in the hearts of communities, will require radical changes in the way we currently utilise premises and arrange our services ...Our aim is to improve access and place the customer; child, parent, carer or community member at the heart of our services” (*Foreword to Community Learning Partnerships strategy*)

1. Introduction

This chapter begins the main empirical section of the thesis. Data is analysed thematically before moving on in the next chapter to a chronological account of policy implementation. As I showed in the last chapter, the gendered nature of care work, the inherent inter-dependency amongst workers and carers and the persistence of professional forms of welfare alongside the market have been well researched (Pettinger et al, 2005, Land, 2002, Sevenhuijsen, 2000). What is less well understood is how policy implementers go about making sense of contradictions that are inherent in welfare reform (Levitas, 1998). This chapter shows how policy from central Government is interpreted by local implementers and how dialectically, experience from local implementation informs policy makers through a range of practices including the “soft governance” of the Child Poverty Accord. It is also well recognised that inter-organisational collaboration may be difficult because of the challenge of translating specialist language (jargon) across professional and organizational boundaries. (Huxham, 1996, Robinson et al, 2004). It is often assumed that this challenge can be overcome if such jargon is translated across partnerships, (for example Robinson et al, 2005). In this chapter I

examine how policy entrepreneurs engage in discursive exchange and policy re-framing in three particular policy arenas. I show how various childcare discourses or policy frames are presented and promoted by policy actors to illustrate how welfare reform is not a single coherent agenda that can be implemented in a straightforward, linear process and to show how implementers shape policy through their meaning making processes.

2. Policy Interpreters Governing Meaning

There is a large cast of stakeholders involved in local policy implementation (Page, 2000). In the course of my study I encountered people working in traditional public services roles such as teachers, social workers and childcare workers and others working in private nurseries or in traditional voluntary sector organisations but I was especially interested in people with boundary spanning roles who have been described as “reticulists” (Friend et al, 1974). These people may or may not have a professional background and they may or may not have responsibility for managing staff. What they *do* take responsibility for is making sense of central government policy across organisational boundaries and across what Haas (2004) has termed “epistemic communities”. Alice explained her role as an Early Implementer Project Manager to me:

“Well the first task that you have is bringing people together y’know and ensuring that there’s a clear message of what this is - what the core offer for extended schools is, this is what the function of a CLP is, this is how it can fit into the bigger picture this is – I mean some of it has been kind of um nebulous ...“ (LA04)

I saw Alice in this role of bringing people together and presenting them with the “bigger picture”. When she presented the CLP strategy at the annual general meeting of a local children’s charity and included the charity’s work into the “bigger picture” of the CLP strategy, at the same time framing a smaller, more personal picture (with words) explaining how the charity had helped a family member of hers. Her own version of policy – what I want to call her palimpsest, shifted between macro policy and the micro individual level as she represented “nebulous” CLP policy. I asked Linda, another Early Implementer Project Manager, about her role:

Pam: Because have you got any staff that you directly manage?

Linda: No ... I do have some admin support for two days a week. But it’s the – y’know ... basically it’s a selling thing. It’s selling and it’s identifying where the collaborative targets are and how by doing this and working together we can all actually move this forward. (LA51)

The resources that Linda has to manage are, I suggest, discursive. It is her job to relate targets to a narrative of collaboration (Roe 1994) and to “*sell*” her version of the policy story – her interpretation, to others that she needs to work with. The selling metaphor cropped up regularly in the data. Judy, a childcare development officer told me how she persuaded a CLP to allocate funds to a special school by “selling” the concept to them. (LA22). I asked Lily, an Early Implementer Project Manager and CLP mentor:

Pam So do you think schools' response to CLPs is key?

Lily It is, I definitely think and in X Town I've been a mentor supporting the CLPs and we've had numerous meetings with head teachers and it's been wonderful to see the shift from quite early - hmm - disgruntlement and 'what will this mean for my school that's in special measures ?' to – 'wow ! This is all we've ever wanted and now we'll have an opportunity to link in with partners' and y'know, its that sort of collective power. If you get a champion in one of your CLPs and they can sell it to their colleagues its very powerful.

Lily's quote shows how ideas circulate in the policy market place and can be sold. The metaphor of "buy-in" also occurs regularly in my data set. Lily explains the need to carry out strategy consultation in-house "And if we keep putting sticking plasters over and getting companies in to do the consultation for instance we're not gonna get that buy-in". Pat, a manager of health visitors, reflected on her role working in partnership on children's services and how she attended a lot of meetings:

“. And basically you did an awful lot of meeting with people and spending time talking about what you believed and what you didn't and basically there was a lot of sort of – not going at it head on but underneath, behind, over y'know. All those kinds of things – brokering skills, encouraging, enthusiasm about things. (LA36)

Here Pat illustrates the significant discursive work that goes on – talking about what she believes and what she doesn't. Her list of things that her job requires includes "enthusiasm

about things”. This “can-do” mentality could be regarded as a form of governmentality, (MacKinnon, 2007) encouraging a managerialist, uncritical compliance with policy change rather than enabling professionals to judge for themselves whether to feel enthusiastic.

David’s metaphor of the Pied Piper is a parable:

“And I mean you’re just singing to the tune of the piper without actually really working out whether it’s a good thing or a bad thing and I think that’s what we’re starting to do. “ (LA18)

While compliance assumes following rules, “what is to be done” may not be so clear. Most of the people I interviewed and observed were “policy entrepreneurs” (Beland, 2005), dealing in discursive governance and exercising their discretion to influence policy at a meso-level of policy implementation, rather than “street-level bureaucrats” working with individual clients (Lipsky, 1980). Andy used a cake metaphor to describe his responsibility to fill in the substance of policy beneath the “gloss”: “what they’ve done is they’ve given us a lot of icing and said you’ve got to put the cake to it yourself if you like.” Here implementation functions as a means of substantiating otherwise nebulous policy statements.

Manjit pointed out the need for him to exercise discretion in his role as manager of Strongham’s Parent Direct service:

“Generally I’ve found that you have to be very proactive about these things. You don’t have to wait for guidance to come along. If you can see sort of challenges and

opportunities, you can take them. And just because something's written in legislation, doesn't actually mean that people will give it any priority sort of over other initiatives.

It does help a little bit but not as much as you'd think it would.” (LA50)

Manjit refers to “guidance”. This is one of the ways in which central government hierarchically communicates policy intentions and expectations to local authorities. Legislative changes are not necessarily required to support policy change and when legislation is changed, it may still require interpretation as Liam explained:

“What we get coming down are drafts and paper exercises telling us the broad outline of what needs to be done. And I'm not critical of that 'cos sometimes that's the way it can be done. But basically within that they have to almost interpret, like case law, y'know at ground level and decide. And it's a bit like with the private providers. [of childcare services]. We've been told broadly to work with them if there's enough there. But we're not told how” (LA06)

Brenda, a legal officer pointed out that there can be contradictions between guidance and legislation: “in fact yeah, I would never ever accept a DfES guidance note. It's not law. In fact if you get into it sometimes it's actually against binding law. (LA30) The “how” (the devil of the detail) defines the scope of implementers' discretion then. Guidance regarding Phase Two Children's Centres and Extended Schools had been issued previously but as I showed in chapter three, it contained gaps, particularly regarding governance arrangements for Children's Centres and Extended Schools. In my study I found that this uncertainty opened up

spaces for some policy actors to exercise their discretion. I asked a senior manager working in a youth organisation whether he felt he could exercise discretion in his role:

Pam: What level of discretion do you feel you've got in your role?

Rod: I don't have any discretion in that we are performance managed to death. More than, I would say, than any other part of the Children's Trust. We are scrutinised – my staff have to log into a computer to say how often they've seen someone.

Pam: This is Home Office targets?

Rod: Youth Justice Board on behalf of the Home Office, yes. We have to tell them how many parents we've seen, are they satisfied with the work we do, we have to demonstrate that we've worked with at least ten per cent of parents in a way that's more specialist... (LA08)

At first glance this centralised control of tasks to meet quantified targets supports a view of hierarchical policy making, directed in Rod's case from the Home Office. A senior social worker also told me about his role in relation to the use of technology. A new I.T. system was being installed and he would be monitored on how often he logged on, with the assumption that use of the system itself constituted good practice and effective management. Surveillance systems can be manipulated however. Ted explained the system by which he was held to account and monitored on the implementation of Children's Centres. There was a passworded I.T. system in place for local authorities to post up progress reports, accessible to civil servants for them to monitor successful implementation. Ted explained that he was regularly posting

reports of activity, including photographs to ensure the appearance of busy-ness. This “performative” element of policy implementation will be developed further in chapter seven. Despite Rod’s comment about being “performance managed to death”, he went on to let me know that he had used his initiative in leading the development of a parenting strategy that he hoped the Children’s Trust would support and so his role could not have been completely constrained.

With the policy change from Sure Start to Children’s Centres and the new imperative within Strongham to quickly establish CLPs, several job roles were re-directed towards mentoring some of the emergent CLPs. Some people were employed on permanent contracts but others were working on fixed term contracts, uncertain whether the new funding that was available for phase two children’s centres would translate into an extension of their employment or whether their jobs would remain insecure and so these public sector workers are far from Weber’s notion of civil servants with lifetime careers guaranteeing economically secure futures (duGay, 2000). By the time I met up with one of the mentors, Linda, to interview her, she had been working as a mentor for around twelve months and appeared exhausted. She still did not know whether her existing contract that covered her role as an Early Implementer Project Manager would be renewed nor what the details of her pay and conditions would be for her work as a CLP Co-ordinator. If she did not get this formalised then she could be out of work in another two months. Debbie – a Parent Support Worker, explained the effect this type of uncertainty had on her work of supporting a parents’ forum in a Children’s Centre:

Pam: So the parents' forum was already in place and when you applied for the role was it clear what the aims of the forum were, what it was supposed to be achieving?

Debbie: I found it quite difficult to be honest. I was, I was kind of getting mixed messages that this parents group would become independent of Sure Start because nobody knew exactly what was going to happen, exactly when we were moving into the children's centre, exactly who was going to have a contract. Because everybody's contract was pretty much on a temporary basis it was quite hard to encourage the parents forum and say y'know in two years time you could be doing - when we didn't know if we were going to be here anyway. So it was a bit confusing, it really was and obviously when we knew we were moving into the Children's Centre the Sure Start parents' forum were kind of saying 'what's going to be happening to this group? Are we still going to get the support from you?' etcetera... (LA31)

It seemed to me that some of these people were working under stressful conditions as they deployed their discretion and developed local strategy in the face of policy ambiguity, contradictions and uncertainty. The "initiativitis" associated with welfare reform that I analysed in chapter three, thus has stressful effects on employees that in turn impacts on the people that they are trying to support – the intended policy beneficiaries.

3. Child Poverty Accord: Re-framing Policy, Reforming Welfare

In chapter three I showed how child care and the strategy to reduce child poverty can potentially be framed as part of the same policy, depending on the narrative construction of the

policy problem. However, as Jane's story illustrated in chapter one, this is by no means a guaranteed policy outcome nor do "cash and care" policy elements easily join up (Glendinning and Kemp, 2006). The national strategy to abolish child poverty does not translate easily into a coherent narrative at the local level (see figure 6 in chapter two that tries to represent the strategy). As I explained in the last chapter, I took advantage of opportunities to study some national policy arenas that related to local childcare policy implementation. In chapter four we saw how governance mechanisms linked to the modernisation agenda entail "steering and not rowing", "hands-off" governing at a distance through stipulating performance targets to achieve policy goals but leaving the means and processes by which these targets are to be achieved to the relative discretion of those with designated responsibility for policy implementation. Despite incentives and sanctions deployed by central Government to hold local authorities to account for "delivery", an uneven mutual dependency is inherent. (Cooper, 1998, Midwinter, 2001, Newman, 2001). Local authorities are heavily dependent on central government for most of their cash resources. I found instances where the apparent hands-off, contractual approach to governance, was complemented by networking and "partnership" between the otherwise hierarchically distinct levels and across party political boundaries. One instance of apparent partnership across hierarchical levels is the "Child Poverty Accord". This "accord" brought a network of policy actors from voluntary and statutory organisations together to steer the course of policy implementation and to receive feedback about the course the implementation was on – how it was going "at the sharp end".

I attended a free event to discuss child poverty held at the Treasury⁴⁹. The event was advertised briefly via the Sure Start web-site. I registered for the event as a postgraduate student from Keele University. I felt quite excited by the idea of being inside the Treasury building – it seemed as though this could be an instance of “open government”. As I pointed out in chapter three, the Treasury has been at the heart of New Labour’s welfare reform agenda, fiscalizing social policy, with control exerted over policy in Ministerial departments by financial measures linked to strictly defined performance targets.

It was a very hot summer’s day. I travelled on the train and eventually worked out which was the entrance I needed. Inside, the temperature felt freezing as air conditioning blasted out. Approximately eighty delegates including myself were offered name badges and invited to sit around tables with around ten people per table. There was a dais with a podium along one side of the somewhat sterile meeting room. Glancing at other name badges I noticed people from a variety of local authorities with what seemed to be a reasonable geographical spread. The opening address was a speech by Stephen Timms, Chief Secretary to the Treasury in which he explained how the Child Poverty Accord had been set up. At the lunch break I attempted to go outside into a courtyard with my coffee but was prevented by an armed security guard so I milled around inside with the other delegates. A free lunch was provided, followed by the familiar workshop session in which we broke into smaller groups, going off into side rooms to discuss issues surrounding child poverty. I chose to go into the group discussing “work.” I found that, as usual in the hegemonic policy discourse, work meant “paid work” in the formal economy. The session was facilitated by an eager young civil servant from the Department of

39 http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/speech_cst_200706.htm
accessed 30/309

Work and Pensions, keen to share ideas using the familiar scribbling-on-the-flipchart technique so that we could all discover “what was working” in relation to tackling child poverty. There were local government workers and children’s charity representatives in the workshop. My field notes record that issues raised included problems with the tax credit system, difficulties with sustaining Children’s Centres because of uncertainty around finance, Sure Start local programmes were regarded as valuable (the NESS evaluation did not enter the discussion), there was reference to local authorities attempting (with more or less success) to work with Job Centre Plus⁵⁰. There appeared to be no lack of enthusiasm for the strategy to reduce child poverty with an array of projects and initiatives described by local authority delegates. These may not have been *designed* ex ante to reduce child poverty but could be framed post hoc as part of the agenda to encourage lone parents into the labour market within an intertextual narrative of welfare to work. There was reference to Local Area Agreements as administrative processes holding the potential to strengthen policy links and provide coherence but there was also some frustration expressed about “not enough data” available locally to support action. There was talk about developing local unemployed peoples’ “soft skills” through work in Intermediate Labour Markets and the paradox of local authorities’ seeking to secure value for money in their outsourcing procurement processes while recognising this might in itself depress wages.

Following the “break-out” session, we reconvened in the larger, cooler room for the plenary session. One rapporteur from the audience suggested that better leadership from central government was required. He pointed out that “*work doesn’t always pay*”, that there could be disincentives for people moving from benefits into low paid work. He remarked that

⁵⁰ Arms-length agency outside local authority jurisdiction, created from what were separate state institutions of the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service

government targets for children to achieve five GCSEs seemed to be a higher priority than reducing child poverty. Parmjit Dhanda, MP for Gloucester, who introduced himself as a “new dad” said that he had “seen at first hand” the positive effects of Sure Start and he explained that he himself had opened three Children’s Centres. A civil servant from the DfES reported what she described as a “*flavour*” from the sessions. Referring to the fifth of the *Every Child Matters* five outcomes, she noted that the Government needs to “explain economic well being” and to keep “raising awareness”. There is a well-publicised performance management framework for the five “outcomes” of *Every Child Matters* but it seems that the technological policy frame with its raft of Key Performance Indicators and measures of inputs and outputs was apparently regarded by this policy actor as insufficient to explain and to solve the problem of child poverty. Additional explanation was necessary to achieve further “*verstehen*” or “awareness”. Giddens (1987) discusses “practical consciousness”, arguing that “knowledgeability is expressed in practice” so that speech – “...temporally and spatially situated conversation, not the text, and not writing, which is most essential to explaining language and meaning” (p.65). Despite the written *Every Child Matters* policy text, it seems to me that the “awareness” raising that the DfES civil servant was pleading for ought to entail a measure of consciousness raising or political awareness and practical value commitment (*praxis*) to tackling child poverty. As I showed in chapter three, the Government defines child poverty in relative terms and this may be a difficult concept for some to grasp. In interview a nursery manager told me:

R2 “But this is what annoys me. I read it in the paper all the time – parents, modern parents have got a high mortgage - but they choose that . They choose to have a different lifestyle to what we had. We were really poor. Well in comparison. I mean I

got a little vet's job in the evening with four children and it was just the shoe money for the children 'cos I didn't know where the next pair of shoes was coming from. But that would be unheard of now. That would be unheard of because people haven't got the same sense of - money's so easy. Even those that are single parents the government give tax credits. They're not poor are they, any more?" (LA24)

New Labour has attempted to measure child poverty in relative terms so that part of the composite measure is made up of children living in households on 60% below median incomes. (DWP, 2003). This nursery manager, however, relativises poverty over *time* as opposed to between classes or between the increasing contemporary divide between rich and poor. Her reference to tax credits demonstrates her awareness of government subsidy for her private business. Social and political values are thus inherent in policy connotations, called up, symbolised, even as statistics appear to denote the concept as a "fact", amenable to technical solutions.

The civil servant from the Department for Work and Pensions who had facilitated the group that I had attended said in the plenary that his first point was "a philosophical point." He had anticipated that there might have been "ideological barriers" preventing local authorities from fully engaging with "the agenda" but had found it "very refreshing" that this was not the case. I was very surprised to hear this reference to ideology as the term has been excised from Third Way discourse and from the evidence based policy and practice movement (Clarke, 2004:133, Newman, 2001:69). Despite the apparent harmony of the Accord, this slippage seemed to me to be symptomatic of buried political suspicion of "unmodernised" Councils.

Newman, (2001:76) suggests that:

“A sub-text of the official view was that the modernisation of local government was a necessary part of the modernisation of the Labour party itself, tackling some of the bastions of “old labour” at a local level ...”

Another instance of mistrust came up when I interviewed Sue at Strongham local authority about Children’s Centres:”

Sue: “But what is happening within this bit is that it smacks of very much still of the early days of the current administration in 1997 where you couldn’t spend a penny without having to jump through an inordinate amount of hoops because they didn’t trust local authorities to do what they wanted to do. “ (LA 36)

The Child Poverty Accord summit day was “summed up” by Stephen Timms. My field notes record that it was said that at the Treasury “*we sweat our assets*”. This phrase did not make it into the public report of his speech but this latter does report an acknowledgement of problems associated with tax credits and the written text exhorts local authorities to offer support

“... it is crucial that authorities continue to help out where possible, targeting families who they know are eligible, providing advice where possible – sometimes through other means, such as Children’s Centres.” (HM Treasury, 2006)

In this way, Children’s Centres are incorporated into the policy frame of tackling child poverty which in turn is linked intertextually with the neo-liberal discourse of “work first” (Fairclough,

2000). This Accord meeting did not make decisions and so did not push policy implementation forward in that conventional sense. Instead, my interpretation is that the meeting provided an opportunity for central government ministers and senior civil servants to meet face to face with people responsible for implementation. This allowed them to work out how policy actors at the local level were going about making sense of and interpreting the child poverty strategy, *Every Child Matters* and, in particular, whether they were able to make discursive and practical links between the child poverty strategy and the welfare to work agenda. Allen (2003) explores spatialities of power and writes that “... there is a sense in which the more direct the presence, the more intense the impact of relationships such as trust, recognition and authority.” This meeting provided an opportunity to feedback to policy makers effects (such as the problems experienced with the tax credit system) but it was also an opportunity to assess “ideological barriers” that might exist within local authorities that might have militated against the Government’s welfare to work agenda. Rather than waiting for the results of academic research or findings from evaluation research to inform policy makers what effects policies were having, the meeting gave a more immediate opportunity for Whitehall and Westminster policy makers to reach out, to see the whites of the implementers’ eyes as it were, and to “suss out” (if not root out) ideological opposition.

I discussed the fifth outcome of the *Every Child Matters* Outcomes Framework,⁵¹ “achieve economic well-being” with Ian, an officer responsible for implementing the Common Assessment Framework element of *Every Child Matters* :

Pam: I suppose what I’m interested in is where this issue of economic well-being ... how those needs are assessed or recognised.”

⁵¹ See Appendix for ECM outcomes framework

Ian: Yeah I mean there's .. it's a really interesting one 'cos, for example the pre-assessment check list [used in the Common Assessment Framework] ... one of the questions that asks is something like 'is the child a young person free from poverty ?' And it's worded something like that. When I first saw that I thought y'know, blimey, what a question.

Pam: Yeah

Ian: How do you answer that ? Y'know its such a – it's a relative concept and um ... well y'know phewhh (breathes out) what on earth does it mean? I don't know if I can say more about that really.

Despite a raft of key performance indicators designed to measure policy progress on *Every Child Matters* and the policy intent to eliminate child poverty, these do not translate easily into the *practice* of assessing whether children are poor, nor do they ensure that the meaning of policy to eliminate child poverty is understood at the level of local implementation. When I interviewed two partnership managers from JobCentre Plus they explained to me that child poverty was high on their organisation's agenda but they had difficulty getting this across to "partners" in the local authority. They seemed very aware that their organisation could be perceived as coercive by people working in organisations such as the NHS who were more used to caring for people than "encouraging" them into the labour market (LA16 & 17, interview untaped by agreement).

The objective of "sharing good practice" seems to allow policy makers insight into local level implementation in order that they might use examples of already existing projects grounded in

local experience to illustrate otherwise vague policy statements. This is a retroductive process of reasoning whereby policy solutions precede a framing of a policy problem (Weick, 1995). I asked Brenda, a legal officer, “do you ever find that they’re picking your brains to get sort of bottom up? She replied:

.

Brenda: Oh absolutely, the ASBOs ⁵²were the biggest example - the first example I ever had of that, absolutely! Oh and the Sure Starts, yeah, they had all these big events we went down to Birmingham yeah, yeah absolutely.

Pam: So they’re trying to learn from how you’re tackling things on the ground?

Brenda: Yeah, yeah, yeah and that happens time and time again. It’s fair comment isn’t it really they have to get the legislation right and the interrelationship?

(LA 30)

Rather than attributing responsibility for getting “legislation right” to legislators, Brenda acknowledges the “interrelationship” between legislation and implementation. Newman (2001:68) describes the strategy of an apparently inclusive policy process noting that:

“Such strategies can be viewed as designed to strengthen the legitimacy of decisions. They enabled the government to bring those responsible for implementing policy into policy formation....As such they contribute to the building of a broad support base for Labour in office. Conflict over policy choices may be minimised where key interests are incorporated into the policy making processes.”

⁵² ASBOS Anti Social Behaviour Orders

I observed this process of incorporation and re-inscription of the policy palimpsest at work during another policy meeting, a Respect Agenda Health Showcase.

4. “Tough Love”: Family Intervention as Social Control

I attended a Respect Agenda “Health Showcase” meeting in March 2007. The meeting had originally been planned for Autumn 2006 but had been postponed. I and another attendee speculated on whether it would have been politically risky to have held the meeting at a time when the NHS was in financial crisis whereas by March, the Health Minister was claiming that the NHS budget was back in the black. The meeting took place at a central London hotel. It was free to attend. Joining instructions for the event stipulated a dress code which was “normal business attire”. Used to dressing “appropriately”, I selected “smart casual” from my wardrobe. Many people wore suits ⁵³ nobody came dressed in a hoodie ⁵⁴. While I was there I casually picked up a couple of freebies ⁵⁵ – a pen and pencil branded with the Respect logo – a near virtuous circle with arrows pointing in the same direction around the capitalised brand “respect”.



Fig. 10 Respect pen

⁵³ Lurie (1992) has written about the “language of clothes”.

⁵⁴ David Cameron, leader of the opposition made a speech that was widely reported in the media as “hug a hoodie” . <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2006/jul/09/conservatives.ukcrime> accessed 6/2/9

⁵⁵ Freebie – noun *Informal*. something given without charge or cost, as a ticket to a performance or sporting event or a free sample at a store.



Fig. 11 Respect logo and brand

Potter (1996) tells us: “Reifying means turning something abstract into a material thing”. As I have been arguing, policy statements can be extremely abstract. For example, chapter five of the Respect Agenda action plan begins with the gnomic “Everyone is part of everyone else”. The Respect brand strap-line is the repetitious homily “*give respect get respect*”. Similarly to Sure Start Children’s Centres, the Respect web-site has a section on “brand guidelines” that specifies: “We want to ensure that everybody recognises and values the Respect mark whenever it is used. “ It continues:

“Dos and don’ts: The logo must always be produced in approved colours. (See the brand guidelines for details.) It must always be scaled proportionately. No modification can be made to the logo, as any deviation will undermine the status of the campaign.”⁵⁶

If the concept of public policy in a democracy entails some notion of government by the people for the people, with campaign groups traditionally regarded as being outside of government in civil society, a campaign by the government to change citizens’ behaviour

⁵⁶ <http://www.respect.gov.uk/members/article.aspx?id=8312>

might seem to reverse this logic of public service. The near virtuous logo does not refer to Government as a potential source of “anti-social behaviour” nor as a target of, or originator of, disrespect. Lister (2004) insists on adopting a respectful attitude towards people living in poverty, noting their right to participate in politics and policy making as integral to social justice. The framing of Sure Start Children’s Centres as a crime prevention programme sits awkwardly alongside the welfare to work agenda. Levitas (2004) writes:

“...early years intervention is predicated on the assumption that at least part of the problem is the parenting skills of poor parents, that is, poor parenting, rather than parenting in poverty: the programmes provide, among other things, ‘advice on nurturing’ (DWP, 2001, p. 42). When first outlined in Supporting Families, there was explicit reference to an expected decline in anti-social behaviour as a result of improved parenting skills. ‘By investing in Sure Start now we will be able to continue reaping the benefits of improved social adjustment and reduced anti-social behaviour in twenty years time, through better success in employment, better health and reduced crime’ (Home Office, 1998, p. 15).”

Sure Start was intended to bring together separate Government departments and integrate workers in multi-agency working arrangements but in my sample of interviewees, NHS employees were conspicuous by their absence. The financial crisis and the accompanying organisational restructure were referred to frequently by interviewees. For instance, Liam told me:” it’s just an unfortunate timing we have the PCTs throughout the country in a state of flux

and a state of financial crisis” (LA06). A Lib.Dem. Councillor who sat on a health scrutiny committee said:

”There’s a seven million pound debt that was supposed to be repaid over a number of years but because of the reorganisation that’s why they’d suddenly got to repay it in the financial year. It wasn’t their fault it was a directive again from central government that no you’ve got to repay that seven million pound now, this year”.

There was a view that health services for children, traditionally delivered by health visitors, were a “Cinderella service” marginalised by the focus on targets for higher profile acute medical services, as this extract from Katy’s transcript illustrates:

. “... actually the children’s agenda might get sidelined for other, you know, pressing targets. Because actually, you know, while we can see that prevention is the goal, our targets are around referrals and cancers and that’s the difficulty. (LA02)

Sandra, a manager of health visitors and school nurses, told me:

“Last year there were proposals put forward for de-commissioning health visitors and de-commissioning school nursing services. They were seen by some as an expensive luxury. Now you cannot imagine that proposal being put forward for community matrons or district nurses. It would never happen in a million years. But children’s services have always been seen as a soft target though because children traditionally

have not had a voice. And their services are always one of the first ones to get cut. ...

Children's services have always been like that. (LA29)

At the local implementation level, the NHS reorganisation impacted on some peoples' ability to network with colleagues from health and to get them to commit resources, as a Councillor who was involved with her local Children's Trust explained to me:

Pam So are you expecting to see a big commitment from health within the children's trust?

Cllr. I would love to see a big commitment from health but we haven't seen a big commitment so far. Certainly not financially. On the Responsible Authorities group they rarely attend meetings and even when they do, even though they have a statutory place there, they say 'well we haven't got any funding that we can put into things' We're always in reorganisations aren't we? And the primary care trusts have just been reorganised again 'Well we can't put any money in 'cos we've just been reorganised and ... they're saying well we don't know how much money we've got ...

Lily told me about a proposed community peer health project that was briefly adumbrated in the health policy palimpsest before it disappeared into a black hole – a sort of “now you see it, now you don't” policy initiative :

“I forget what they're called now but sort of community peer health workers..... But of course that was all before this crisis in finance within the health service. So a lot of that money has disappeared. Choosing health ring-fenced money has disappeared into a big

black hole so I've been told. So whether it'll emerge again as the Primary Care Trusts settle down and the as the commissioning arrangements settle down y'know, who knows?" (LA09)

Diane reinforced this interpretation of financial crisis in the health service:

“ the traditional complaint from education as you're probably well aware is that health is difficult to engage, particularly in the political climate at the moment and the issues of budgets and staff cuts and everything else.” (LA39)

The subtitle of the Respect Health Showcase was “The importance of health services to Family Intervention Projects” (referred to by speakers by their acronym FIPs). There were at least a hundred people in attendance sitting around circular tables that had glass bottles of water and dishes of sweets. The format of the meeting was split between speakers addressing the audience from a platform, presentations of case studies from people who were involved in implementing FIPS, discussions between participants with facilitators roving with microphones and a plenary session. The objective, apparent at the meeting from the platform speeches, was to enrol senior NHS managers into the Home Office dominated Respect discourse of “tough love”, (Levitas' MUD discourse) to demonstrate by example from case studies how this could be achieved on the ground and to persuade these senior managers to commit their resources in the form of staff (such as health visitors and community psychiatric nurses) to working in partnership with the FIPs. It became apparent that top-down hierarchical policy implementation had failed to direct Primary Care Trusts to commit fully to the FIPs. In

addition, the complexity of NHS organisation meant that local implementers of FIPs did not necessarily know who to talk to, who constituted their local health partners or how to gain commitment from them. In my local study, Katy told me how she had learned to negotiate the labyrinthine complexity of the local NHS in order to engage health partners in Strongham's Children's Centres:

Pam: So you, you'd had to get to grips with I guess lots of other agencies' ways of doing things?

Katy: Yes. (laughs) I think health - the health organisations you just basically need to go in there with a compass and a map and just hope somebody points you in the right direction you know !

Caroline Flint who was at that time the Minister for Public Health appeared on the platform to display her personal commitment to tough love: "as a mum myself I sometimes have to be unpopular". She talked about the work of a charity working with "challenging families" and said she had to be "honest and blunt" about some families' "filthy homes". She wondered how hard it could be to "pick up a broom". This brings to mind the long running distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor and mothers' responsibility for moral as well as physical hygiene that I discussed in chapter three (Donzelot, 1979). A Councillor told me:

Cllr. A: There are two things that I do religiously – one is, when I've been to the toilet I wash my hands. The other is if I crack an egg into a frying pan for cooking I automatically wash my hands. My mother told me that's what I must do. I know it sounds a bit

simple and naive but ... y'know if you wash your hands, cleanliness is next to godliness.

Pam. Yeah.

Caroline Flint went on to explain how there are “carrots and sticks” to ensure “what is normal and acceptable”. FIPS projects are intended to provide support for parents, and diversionary activities for children and young people as carrots. The sticks are the threat of eviction from social housing or the threat of children being taken into care. No need here for Rose’s subtle thesis of “governance of the soul” (Rose, 1989). Unlike the ambivalence of the Paymaster General who wrote to Jane’s MP (chapter one), there is no squeamishness here about intervening in family life. It seems clear to me where the Minister locates power and where potential sources of resistance lie. One man sitting at my table who was working on a Family Intervention Project had brought along a photo of a client’s home with what he described as “five inches of compacted dirt.” This was not a formal part of the meeting. It seemed to me that he had been so shocked at finding people living in squalor that he wanted to share his experience. This voyeurism and “Othering” or exclusion (Lister 2006) of people living in poverty was directly referred to by a showcase facilitator in the plenary session. “Although people affected by the policy were not invited here today, I think we can all agree that they have been spoken about very respectfully.” There were no dissenting voices.

Despite having two of the most deprived wards in the country, the local authority that I studied had not been assigned a Family Intervention Project by the Home Office. Nevertheless, similar processes of enrolment and policy re-framing took place amongst policy implementers. The

centrally controlled Respect brand could not guarantee that local NHS organisations could afford to buy-in. Discursive governance was deployed because hierarchical government had failed to secure local NHS commitment to FIPs.

5. Edu-care: Neologisms and Epistemic Communities

The policy neologism “edu-care” tries to reconcile professional understandings of education and childcare. The local authority in my study faced the challenge of joining up across its own existing initiatives. In the local authority I studied there was an Early Years annual conference and I requested an invitation. The conference was organised by Strongham County Council and attended by about two hundred private sector nursery staff, independent childminders, and local authority “edu-carers”. Surveying the large conference hall, it was obvious that the majority of delegates were women, many of whom wore jeans and hoodies (in contrast to the smart casual of the Respect meeting) and were relatively young. The conference included a “free” lunch. There were Powerpoint presentations, including “Community Learning Partnerships” and “Quality in Childcare”, optional workshops on “business planning” and “running a happy team”. The conference afforded a shopping opportunity in the break times with suppliers of educational toys enticing people to view and purchase their wares. It was also an opportunity for the local authority to promote CLPs by means of a whole conference, non-optional, Powerpoint presentation as well as a “market stall” open during break times and over the extended lunch time, displaying information, in effect *selling* the CLP concept.

While at the Early Years conference I picked up another freebie. I have anonymised the Local

Authority named on the teddy bear's vest. I explained in chapter three how Parent Direct is designed to match up nurseries and other child care providers with customers seeking childcare to meet their needs. The discourse is one of choice and this is a modern service that could be positioned against one-size-fits-all welfare state provision and the "oil tanker" of traditional children's social services as alluded to in the next chapter by one of Strongham's Deputy Directors.

The vest advertises a Children's Information Service (since re-branded as Parent Direct). Attempting to get the message closer to the customer, the marketing tool circulates information to rational, self-interested "consumers" (Newman, 2005). Stone, (2002 : 30) notes that the "analogy between compassion and widgets is blinded by the market model" yet the 10 year childcare strategy could be viewed as contributing to a commodification of care that is increasingly becoming a product or service to be purchased in the market place.



Fig. 12 teddy as policy give-away

Malone (1999) points out the moral hazards associated with using the metaphor of the market to describe policy processes that ought to be intrinsically concerned with ethics and visions of the good society. She analyses the way in which “policy as product” commodifies and offers “euphemisms” “to help us keep the experience of suffering safely at bay...” (p.19). I am not arguing here that nursery care for children is necessarily about suffering but child protection work is and I would argue that the policy of abolishing child poverty certainly is and so it seems to me imperative (to borrow from Yanow,1996 one more time) “how the policy means”.

Semiotics offers a means of analysing artefacts but in order for me to arrive at my interpretation of this particular souvenir of my ethnographic sojourn I found it necessary to transform my data. Statisticians write about transforming data when they code and re-code their variables (deVaus, 2004). In this case I removed the teddy bear’s vest to transform it from a promotional item into a more commonplace but potentially more precious commodity than the freebie. I suggest that this common symbol of love represents compassion, security and an “ethic of care” (Williams, 2001) contrasting with the work ethic promoted by the dressed bear, by Parent Direct and by the welfare to work version of the policy palimpsest.



Fig. 13 teddy as toy

At the conference, I did not observe anyone else undressing the teddy or appearing to pay much attention to it at all. It was dropped casually into bags along with other conference information and policy ephemera. However, I did overhear conversations amongst what appeared to be some dedicated nursery staff and playworkers getting excited about their work responsibilities for playing with and caring for young children. One group had been to a workshop on the natural environment and were excitedly discussing the possibilities of teaching children about colours through daffodils and grass. This sense of vocation and professional commitment to young children's education spills over the idea of care as a commodity to be traded in the market place or a service to be contracted. The neologism "educare" incorporates childcare into the disciplinary regime of Ofsted regulated provision and as Jane showed us in chapter one, it is only this official form of childcare that allows parents to claim tax credits.

6. Framing Community Wants and Needs

This section moves on from national policy arenas to analyse data related to a CLP. A document produced by the nascent OldTown CLP stipulates that “The CLP emphatically agrees that resources should be deployed to improve the life and progress of the child, not meet parental convenience.” Here the CLP policy palimpsest is shifting away from childcare for “parental convenience”, which is what we might imagine busy parents (whether or not they are in paid work) might value; towards an educational purpose, with the child as the main focus and object of policy. As Lawler (1999) writes: “children need but mothers only want.” We saw in chapter three how mothers and children have traditionally been bracketed together as policy objects, especially within a health frame of “maternal and child health”. The difficulty for welfare programme administrators is that individual families may not identify themselves as “in need”. Despite the raft of data available to CLPs on smoking rates, breastfeeding rates, fear of crime, anti-social behaviour, low birth weight babies etc. , these statutorily defined problem populations do not leap out of statistical charts and maps and walk into a Children’s Centre – they must be *reached* or “engaged”. I found that “reach” was seen as a problem that remained to be resolved. Sure Start Children’s Centres, as I showed in chapter three, are both “universal” and “targeted”. The core offer applies everywhere but in disadvantaged areas there are additional requirements to provide health and family support services and quality day care. Lynne, a community artist who had worked in partnership with Sure Start local programmes gave me her understanding of the shift from Sure Start to Children’s Centres:

... again I see that disappearing, it is all kind of going. Cos I think Sure Start was very much about you come you be a member what do you wanna do? What d'you need to do? And now it's just now we're back to very much which box do you fit in? Ca we get the child booked into the crèche for one hour fifty four minutes. What can you do in that time? Y'know, I can access the what? The little services that are left and I actually don't *quite* need the breast feeding support service and I don't *quite* need the smoking cessation service but I *fucking* need something y'know. (There you are I swore). And it's kind of, we've lost that. Y'know we've lost that. That was when it was good. That was when it was working. It was, y'know, it was about those women - they felt validated and were back to this - they felt that someone was recognising them for who they were and that they needed - and that's kind of what anybody that's really in the world isn't it? Somebody to be bothered you got out of bed. (LA33)

Lynne notes the importance of crèche, alluding to the “game playing” of running an unregulated crèche at under two hours. She also regrets the loss of a holistic approach to women's needs for “validation”, pointing out that the “little services that are left” following the reduction of funding seem to pigeon hole women's needs according to national strategies with their performance targets to increase the uptake of breastfeeding and get more smokers to quit. At a meeting of OldTown CLP, Peter put forward his view that “we are supposed to be inclusive. This is for children who come to school having had breakfast, who get dropped off by car as well as the others”. Other CLP members seemed to feel that their duty was to those in most need and so there was unresolved tension between principles of inclusion, equity and equality that communitarian discourse elides, as Levitas has noted. (Levitas, 1988, chapter 5

“Community Rules”). It often felt like there was a romantic urge to do away with red tape, to focus on “outcomes” and to have the kind of unmediated direct government that Rousseau pleaded for so that people could determine and satisfy their own needs. (Frazer and Lacey, 1993). Liam told me:

“I’m not saying you don’t need a focus, but I remember having a chat with some guy way back at the beginning and saying wouldn’t it have been interesting if they had have taken one Sure Start programme and actually said to the parents there’s your £500,000 how do you want so spend it ? Or better still, in another one you could have said there’s your £500,000. There’s only so many families. Do you want so many hundred pounds each? Just sort of said there’s your hundred quid each just do what you want with it. And that wouldn’t have worked cos they’d have spent it – hundred wouldn’t have gone far. But it would have been interesting if we’d have said lets do this and let’s see how you can get on as a community. “ (LA06)

There was no such radical devolution of funds in CLPs. They could not offer “carte blanche” empowerment as Alice describes it:

“You know and we talk about community empowerment – we’re talking about community empowerment, we’re not talking about giving carte blanche doing what y’know - .There has to be certain guidance and steer to match y’know the outcomes we need to achieve for children and young people. “

Empowerment is within limits – outcomes are prescribed, steered, and they are designed to address children and young peoples’ needs, not their parents. Someone who appreciated the politics of women’s need for childcare was from a national organisation concerned with out of school care. She explained to me

“ ... the essence of the organisation came from childcare provision in order to support families to be able to go back to work, y’know, economic independence and it’s a feminist organisation if you ask some people. (LA39)

This framing of an organisation concerned with providing childcare as feminist is marginalised within the hegemonic policy discourse of gender neutral parenting (Williams, 2004b) yet Sure Start programmes had had the capacity to deliver crèche provision. In interviews I asked people about crèche provision to enable parents to participate in public life. Katy, an ex Sure Start manager, now working to develop Children’s Centres, told me:

“and I think there’s the potential tensions around the fact that we want to really promote the skills of our childcare workforce and in places like sort of New Zealand its an all graduate profession, but then you have to pay at that level which raises the costs even more because when you’re looking for sort of you know looking at care of babies it’s a ratio of 1 adult to 3 babies well that becomes very expensive it’s not, it’s not cheap ...” (LA2)

Katy points out the comparative international approaches to pre-school childcare and associated costs. She notes that crèche provision has been central to Sure Start and explains how crèche allowed parents to access services but also to have time to engage in group support:

Pam: But you were saying that the crèches – that they were valuable in the Sure Starts – because they were enabling people to, to get access to other things.

Katy: That's right. Because you'd find that you'd have a speech therapist would do a group session with parents and then move on with the parents into the crèche. So the parents had time away from the children to sit and reflect about what they were talking about and then have time with it. There were things around parenting – if you've got issues with your stroppy toddler it's almost impossible to do a parenting session with your stroppy toddler about! So you need the crèche to give parents the time frame to have that and from the ability to do group work you've got the group support dynamics coming in and then –

(LA 02)

A male Councillor I spoke to seemed to understand in practical terms the way in which women's childcare responsibilities might affect their independence or, as Sevenhuijsen theorises, their "relational autonomy" (Sevenhuijsen, 2000:22).

Pam: So thinking then about childcare and public and private provision, does the Children's Centre offer childcare?"

Cllr X "There are some childcare facilities there, yes. Which gives, in some cases, some respite to young mothers to go out and actually be – themselves. Rather than have er a pram or a pushchair along with them so it gives them a chance to er refresh themselves. Er ...in being themselves. (LA09)

Petra, a voluntary sector manager, didn't understand my question at first:

Pam: Does child care ever come up as an issue in supporting people to access meetings for example?

Petra: Um, just explain that to me a bit more, sorry I m struggling with it.

Pam: Well I'm interested in the provision of child care to enable...

Petra: OK.

Pam: access, for involvement really and engagement.

Petra: Oh right, OK.

Pam: Where do people find a resource for that?

Petra: Do you mean the crèche type facility?

Pam: Yes.

Petra: Is that what you mean? Um that's quite difficult I think probably, I'm pretty sure that where we've got Sure Start going on , we've still got that work going on there are facilities there to enable people to participate and I suppose that that will be one of the things which comes part of the extended schools and children centred provision but I don't know. I think it would be an issue but thinking of myself as a parent of very grown up children now they still keep coming home even at thirty one...

Pam: Don't tell me...

Petra:. Yeah, I know it just gets worse. Um, if I'd wanted to...um access parenting-type classes, ok I'm going back years and years and years I couldn't have done 'cause what would I have done who would I have left my children with? I had no extended family locally we'd moved away with work and things you know there wouldn't have been anything.

I asked Stacey, a health service manager :

Pam: So when you've done any of the consultation and community involvement on that sort of thing, um , has it ever been thought that it would be necessary to provide a crèche for that sort of meeting ?”

Stacey: I think there's two types - I think there's a realistic list of what we've got the money to do and there's a wish list. I think on everybody's wish list is – y'know we need to provide something for children so that we can help those children and y'know help their families. And ... give them somewhere to take the children so they can then think about what it is they might want. So yeah that's on everybody's *wishlist* and I think it has been for a long time I think it's come up time and time again.

(LA42)

The “modernisation agenda” focuses on renewing local democracy, emphasising “engagement” in civic life, but rarely is the need for crèche provision to enable parents’ (or

more particularly women's) community participation recognised. Despite the national childcare strategy, entitlement to childcare is highly conditional (Butt et al, 2007).

Interviewees in my study recognised that childcare was fundamental to the ability parents of young children to engage in any activity outside the private sphere of the home, yet the "core offer" of childcare in Children's Centres is not an entitlement, other than where it can be linked to the tax credit funding regime to support parents in the formal labour market or where they are engaged in formal training programmes. In its original policy incarnation, Sure Start promoted a participatory "ethos" but it also had plenty of resources to fund crèche. From parents' perspectives this gives them some respite but then "respite" enters an alternate policy frame of "family support" for "vulnerable" parents assessed by professionals such as social workers or health visitors as being "in need". I have suggested in previous research (Carter, 2006) that "parenting" is becoming a "psy-discipline". Often, when I asked interviewees to be honest about whether the majority of parents they worked with were mums, the question provoked a defensive reaction to the effect that yes they were, but that dads were the focus of special efforts. I asked Bev:

Pam: So back to thinking about the childcare, I mean you've mentioned it as something that enables people to get involved, and presumably that would be mostly mums, you think?

Bev: Well yeah. I mean I suppose maybe from my point of view, if I had to think about that then yes I would think that it's probably mums. (LA32)

My observational data turned up a handful of males working in childcare, one of whom was the manager of the Children's Information Service, one a voluntary sector worker and one a young man working in a crèche gaining work experience before he commenced his teacher training. For the most part, gender, like class, appeared to be subsumed under the terms "community" and "partnership".

When I talked to Peter, a secondary school head who became Chair of OldTown CLP about his role, he appeared to distinguish "real need" from policy advertising. He explained:

"We just haven't got the time to find the actual point of real need so you know. I dunno the mum that needs a push chair at the bottom end of the street should be getting a push chair not a fluffy sticky bun and a t-shirt that says 'Every Child Matters' she doesn't want that. She wants a pushchair, or we want a push chair, or those sort of things. She might want a counsellor for half an hour, she doesn't need twenty of us sitting round the table discussing her needs. She needs one of us talking to her and that's where I think sometimes initiatives like this can get bogged down in their own existence and concerned about their own delivery model without really going on and saying how is this going to impact on, at the point of delivery again?" (LA28)

Guidance on planning and commissioning services for children and families presents needs assessment as a technocratic fix and management responsibility. (see framework below)

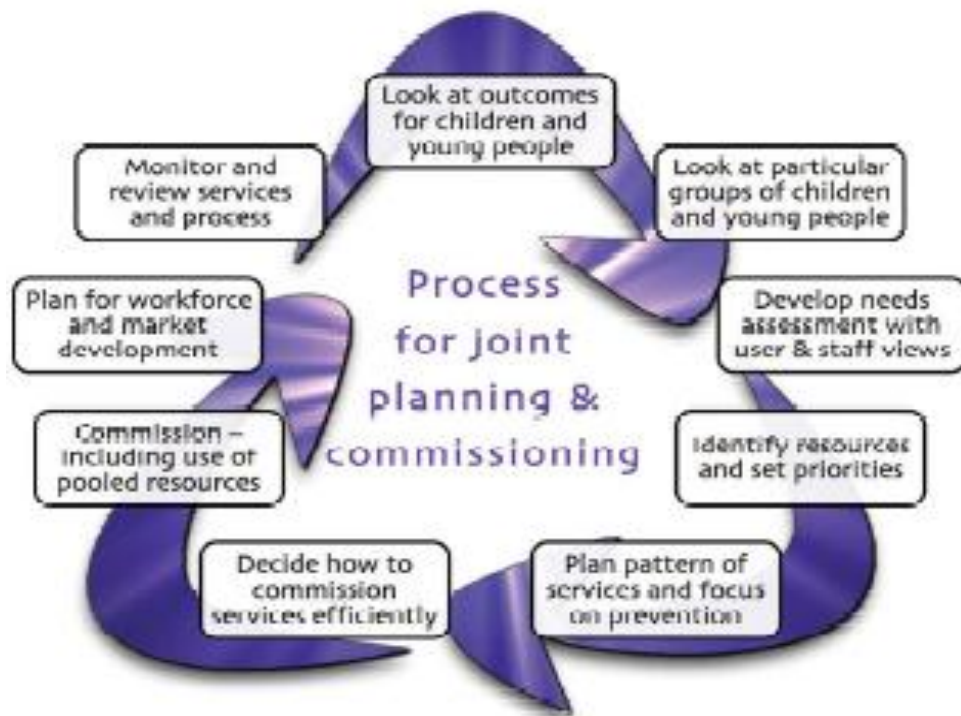


Fig 14 Planning and Commissioning Framework DfES / DH (2006)

This managerialist process contains no mention of political accountability. Nor is there space for reconciling “user and staff views” with the views of citizens. In 2001 a Sure Start newsletter (Upstart, 2001) contained a special feature on “reach”. Under the heading “a model of wants and needs” is the following table:

	Wants YES	Wants NO
Needs YES	A	C
Needs NO	B	D

Fig. 15 Sure Start wants and needs

There is an acknowledgement that “Analysis of need has many dimensions and a simple four-slot box will not solve all our problems.” but there is no representation of need as a “*politically contested concept*.” (Fraser,1989). Rather the box is supposed to function as a management “tool”. My study of how childcare is framed variously as a private concern, as a communitarian policy, as a service for “clients” to facilitate their uptake of services but rarely as a public good or as a feminist issue, supports Newman’s claim that “... the boundaries of what is a matter for public concern and what is a private or personal matter ... is deeply political.” (Newman, 2005,96).

7. Conclusion

This chapter has built on my argument that childcare policy is “protean” and shown how it is interpreted, framed and discursively governed. These policy frames construct problems and solutions and call up a range of subject positions from families “in need” of tough love to consumers *wanting* information about childcare. This chapter showed an attempt by the Treasury to link the strategy to tackle child poverty with Children’s Centres and the discourse of welfare reform and their attempt to govern local authorities and civic organisations via an Accord. While studying policy texts is important, a study of implementation at the level of *practices* identifies how actors attempt to govern meaning through discursive exchange. This chapter showed policy branding, advertising and commodification processes, with policy entrepreneurs bargaining for resources as they reframe childcare to suit various frames or agendas, all of which entail value considerations. While Sure Start Children’s Centres may be

presented as modernised, joined up services, it is important to understand competing policy frames that cannot easily be reconciled. A child poverty strategy that depends on welfare to work may not be easily understood at a level of practical consciousness by practitioners more familiar with traditional nurseries, health visiting or social care services. The Respect Agenda applies a policy brand that labels a broad brush moralising campaign, while Family Intervention Projects find themselves competing for funding with other childcare initiatives. Community governance may offer some of the flexibility that bureaucratic rules restrict. The next chapter examines how this form of governance might be understood as childcare policy gets translated at the local level of implementation.

SECTION FIVE: CHRONOLOGICAL EMPIRICAL CHAPTERS

Chapter Six

Consulting on strategy, translating policy

Contents

1.	Introduction	219
2.	Policy Translation	220
3.	Consulting on the Strategy May 2006	223
	Attitudes to Change	228
	Achieving Buy-in	236
5.	Consulting on Governance	241
6.	Authorising Policy, Rubber Stamping Strategy	248
7.	Conclusion	250

... it is important that any consultation is clear and defined with realistic aims and objectives, this will help to ensure that parents and carers feel valued and will not be disillusioned, thinking their involvement in consultation and steering groups merely tokenistic, consultation is at the moment, the hot topic of the month, it is the popular thing to do at the moment. (*extract from Strongham Community and Learning Partnerships: A strategy for integrating services for children and young people Consultation Response Analysis* (July 2006))

1. Introduction

This chapter analyses what happens when central Government announces new policy initiatives such as the latest phase of Children's Centres and the development of Extended Schools which are to be implemented by local authorities and their partners. In this instance, a local authority responds with an organisational re-structure, developing a strategy of Community Learning Partnerships. This begins the chronological section of the thesis building on the idea of a palimpsest and showing how policy implementation happens through a range of practices, including playful implementation workshops as well as statistical representations. I show how ideas about policy circulate with people continuing to frame and re-framing the policy. A Director looks back to recoup historical commitments to a public service ethos in order to frame future moral imperatives but his Deputy blames the past for present misfortunes, looking forward as she presents her case for welfare reform. Future horizons for the CLP strategy are both short and long term. Using observational data I analyse

implementers' attitudes to policy change and I show how the formal routines of local authority representative democracy are in sharp contrast to the informal "adhocracy" of network governance.

2. Policy Translation

Strongham Council took the decision to combine the DfES policies of Children's Centres and Extended Schools. These contained a similar "core offer" that Central Government expected the County Council to provide. Strongham decided that, rather than devolve the funding that it received from Central Government directly to schools, it would combine three separate revenue streams into one CLP strategy. In the draft strategy document, presented for consultation under the subheading "Children's Centres" we read:

The Government's aim is to develop a network of centres across the country that by 2010 will ensure every community has access to a package of provision including :

- ❖ Early Years provision
- ❖ Information, advice and support to parents / carers
- ❖ Child and family health services
- ❖ Family support and parental outreach
- ❖ Links with Job Centre Plus and employment advice and training."

Under "Extended Schools", "services will include"

- ❖ Childcare between the hours of 8am – 6pm all year round
- ❖ A varied menu of activities for children
- ❖ Parenting support and family learning
- ❖ Swift and easy referral to social care and health services
- ❖ Wider community access to ICT, adult learning, sports and arts facilities

The next paragraph states that “The intention is that Children’s centre services are developed and delivered with the active involvement of parents/ carers and the local community. “ On page eight we find:

“Children’s centres will provide a range of services reflecting local need and parental choice.... Services will not be the same everywhere as needs and communities will vary greatly. Services should be determined by the needs of the communities they serve. The intention is that Children’s Centre services are developed with the active involvement of parents / carers and the local community.”

Any potential tensions that might arise in this distinction between “local need” and “parental choice” might be expected to be resolved through governance mechanisms but the governance arrangements for CLPs are not yet clear.

The forty seven page CLP strategy document went through several iterations during the course of my fieldwork – the final version is labelled version nineteen. It was referred to explicitly as a “translation” of DfES’ Children’s Centres and Extended Schools policies. (fieldnotes).

Despite the existence of a specified “core offer” for both Children’s Centres and Extended Schools, the Council found itself making decisions in conditions of some complexity and uncertainty regarding the governance of these new institutional arrangements. Andy, an officer, responsible for the Extended Schools strategy referred to the recent policy guidance from central government as “not a fat lot of help” (LA01). As I showed in chapter three, there are several areas of uncertainty and some mismatch between central government’s responsibility to provide timely guidance and their expectation that rapid progress will be made locally towards implementing the strategy.

The CLP consultation document produced by the County Council, states that there is “no blue print” (i.e. no definitive guidance) available for implementers to understand how they are supposed to move from Sure Start local programmes to Children’s Centres and Extended Schools (page 6). Some local policy implementers were able to make sense of the change as challenging, containing inherent “issues” and yet “clear”, as this quote from Andy illustrates :

“I think the issues come around the fact that they’re still looking at the funding the existing Sure Start local programmes and the issues around long term funding for the Children’s Centres. That’s where the actual implementation has its issues. But in terms of policy I think there’s quite a clear direction of travel.” (LA01)

Andy is able to frame the policy as progressive. However, as I spoke to Karen, working in the voluntary sector, managing a community project, I sensed her scepticism. I asked “So in terms of these Children’s Centres and Community and Learning Partnerships do you feel sceptical

about what they've got to offer? And she answered "Yeah, I think it's a load of old quangos to be honest." As a "wrap up" question, I asked most interviewees whether they felt optimistic or pessimistic about the policy implementation and they responded overwhelmingly in the positive to my question with its inbuilt social desirability bias (Mason, 2002:64). Peoples' self reports, however, sometimes varied from their practices.

3. Consulting on the CLP Strategy May 2006

I commenced my main fieldwork as Strongham County Council embarked on a consultation exercise on its CLP strategy. At first I congratulated myself - I couldn't help feeling smug that I had managed to negotiate access to the field at the beginning of strategy development. However, I soon realised that months of effort had led up to this stage and many decisions had already had to be taken in order to produce the draft strategy document. Andy revealed:

"We did quite a substantial consultation period. You know we ran twenty eight teachers meetings and then we ran those – What we did we put two in each district basically and then we did four overflow meetings and then we did eight district events which you came to - six. So we did a lot. We've also spoken with health people separately, we've spoken to social services department heads and managers. "(LA 01)

The reference to health and social services indicates that, although children's services are by now expected to be integrated across council departments and across health and local authorities, despite the newly established partnership structure of Children's Trusts, historical

organizational dividing lines internal to the council remain in place. In structuration terms – the formal structure may have changed but the many established working practices remain in place, culturally embedded in “communities of practice” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, Robinson et al, 2004, Blackler and Regan, 2006). Andy worked in the section of Strongham Council that was responsible for early years and community and adult education. He needed to communicate with teachers and social service department heads in advance of the formal consultation to gauge their support for the CLP strategy as he had no direct authority over them. It seems that “silo government” remains, with reticulists such as Andy responsible for joining them up. Strongham had recently been subject to a Joint Area Review ⁵⁷that concluded that its services for vulnerable children were not of the standard expected. The JAR was referred to by Ted as a “bit of a mauling”, with the JAR team being “all over us like a rash” indicating the uncomfortable experience of being held to account by a team of external inspectors and found wanting. There was an expressed need to respond positively to JAR criticisms to ensure a better inspection next time around but also to “get things right” for children in Strongham. (fieldnotes).

The CLP strategy is embodied in an official written text. At a consultation event Ted, the head of department with responsibility for the strategy, mused over what the strategy represented and how policy is made manifest: “I find myself reflecting and I’ve had conversations with my team about this on what strategy is... Is it this forty seven page document (he holds up the CLP strategy) or is it the conversations that have gone on and that are embedded in it, fossilised?” It seems to me that the conversations may or may not have been “fossils” but that

⁵⁷ Joint inspection by Ofsted and CSCI contributes to local authorities star rating by the Audit Commission (Hudson, 2005)

some conversations were likely to be extant and salient, that is perceived as relevant and acceptable so incorporated into official representations, while others might have been silenced. Ted's rhetorical question remained unanswered as he proceeded less dialogically with his exposition of the CLP strategy, the core offer, how it was to be achieved, Strongham's vision, the ambition to empower local communities and so on.

The front cover of the draft strategy document displays Strongham County Council's logo and the Sure Start logo, although this latter disappears from the final version, suggesting the weakening policy currency of the Sure Start brand. Version twelve was presented at a series of eight district consultation events, of which I attended six. These districts comprise the lower tier district and borough councils that the County Council needed to work with to ensure joined up policy. Besides these bodies, the County was keen to consult with and "engage" a range of other bodies including health organizations, voluntary bodies, the police, youth agencies and so on, including "the community". I went along to these events as an observer. It would have been impossible to be completely overt about my research, not least because I was uncertain what direction it might take. I had an ethics committee approved information sheet that explained my research to hand in my bag and I set out in a state of some trepidation as I was unsure whether my presence would be welcome and whether I would be able to gain acceptance, to "blend in".

After signing the attendance register, I climbed the wide, thickly carpeted staircase in County Hall. As I glanced down I noticed the brass stair rods keeping the carpet in position and as my gaze moved upwards I noticed the painted portraits of past civic dignitaries seeming to stare

down at me. I am not sure whether these were past Council leaders or former Lord Mayors, and how many might still be alive but they were all white males. Rather than being intimidated by this patriarchal setting, in a strange way I felt like I belonged, the setting was familiar from previous work history and it was good to be back in a known environment rather than the lonely liminal space and experience of being a PhD student, seeking admittance to the less familiar academy. Someone handed me a draft copy of the CLP strategy, together with a document titled “District Consultation Event” and a Consultation Response Form. Tucking these under one arm, I collected a cup of tea from the help yourself flask on the table and mingled with other tea and coffee drinkers. The meeting was due to start at two o’clock so five minutes before this I moved towards the Council Chamber carrying my cup and saucer. I was stopped by someone who seemed to be an employee, an official, who knew their way around: “Sorry, no drinks allowed in the Council chamber.” Feeling only slightly awkward, I placed the almost empty cup on the table and made my way into the chamber. Tiered, polished and upholstered wooden seating fanned outwards and upwards around three sides of the room. At the back of the room was a gallery intended for press and the public which was empty. At the front there was a platform with high backed, carved chairs placed to face the chamber. There were microphones permanently positioned by the seats from which future important delegates might be expected to speak but these were switched off for today’s less formal meeting. I recognised some people and sat next to a man I knew. The meeting got underway with a Deputy Director from the Council dressed in a business suit addressing the invited audience of approximately forty stakeholders who appeared to be employees from various departments of the County Council and some Sure Start Local Programme managers. She introduced the purpose of the meeting which was to explain the current Council policy marrying together

Sure Start Children's Centres and Extended Schools by means of CLPs that were to become the "*delivery vehicle*" for the County and Borough and District Children's Trusts. She referred to Victoria Climbié whose tragic death prompted the Laming Review. I encountered Victoria's "ghost" in various other meetings. It seemed to function as a synecdoche for *Every Child Matters* policy and as an affective enrolment device, hovering around the Council Chamber and other policy arenas. Symbols are discussed by Stone (2002, chapter 6). She explains "Synecdoches are figures of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole" (p.138) with "typical instances" or "prototypical cases" are used to frame problems and policy solutions (p.146). "Victoria" symbolises the bad policy of the past that seems as though it must be recollected in memoriam in order to exorcise public service inefficiency that is equated with immorality. I could not help but be affected. Researching the background to *Every Child Matters* I had been shocked to read the section of Lord Laming's report entitled "Victoria's story" and to see the police diagram of her multiple injuries juxtaposed against a photo of her smiling innocent child's face ⁵⁸.

The officer goes on to remark on how fitting it is that "we are sitting here at the heart of democracy". There are no councillors at the meeting. It is not clear whether they have been invited. Similarly it is not clear whether the Council chamber was deliberately chosen as fit for purpose for this particular meeting or whether there were no other large enough conference rooms available for this – a meeting of street-level policy implementers, who are being encouraged and exhorted (but not exactly ordered) to take on responsibility for successful policy implementation. The man sitting next to me whispers sotto voce "this isn't an appropriate place for this meeting – we should be out there in the community". It seems that

www.victoria-climbié-inquiry.co.uk

community must be equated with informality, with bureaucratic spaces imagined as antithetical to community. He has come along today to participate and to find out more. His “day job”⁵⁹ is a Sure Start Children’s Centre Manager and he is accountable to a board made up of various policy entrepreneurs together with representatives of the local community. As we saw in chapter three, this was the Sure Start “ethos” – working together with parents and all relevant children’s services organisations in partnership (Pemberton and Mason, 2009). Presentations over, people are encouraged to move into a separate room where they will go into small group workshops. It is the birthday of one of the facilitator’s so everyone (including those who don’t know her) sings to her. This informal tone is continued in the playful workshop.

Attitudes to Change

Three small groups each of about four or five people were given a sheet of brown paper, coloured pens, scissors and a facilitator. The task for each group was to produce a representation of the CLP strategy. One workshop group produced a snakes and ladders game. It was obvious which were the strategic challenges (snakes) and which the opportunities (ladders). A rapporteur from the group giving feedback said that when the players reached the end game (the last square) the government would change its mind about policy and all players would be back to square one. This here-we-go-again, plus ça change sceptical attitude to announcements of new policy change was shared by a primary headteacher :

⁵⁹ By “day job” I do not mean that he moonlights but that he has dual accountabilities in terms of his job description as well as looser, partnership accountabilities to this and various other networks

“And also you take the view, whether I’m right or wrong, is that you’re going to soak up information as you go along and what’s written at the beginning won’t be what’s going to happen in two years’ time. So sometimes you’re reading stuff that’s going to be out of date within a very short space of time maybe” (LA 53)

Peter, a secondary Head was also sceptical about the “new agenda” and the *Every Child Matters* “brand”:

“I don’t think there’s anything that they’ve come up with that’s new, I always thought it was quite amusing when they said y’know our new agenda is ‘Every Child Matters’ and the reply was ‘they always have done’ and they haven’t come up with anything new.” (LA 28)

Another group produced a Monopoly™ game. There were Community Chest cards face down in the middle that the group explained symbolised for them the unknown resources yet to be gained and face down Chance cards that represented the unknown risks and benefits and unintended consequences of the CLP strategy. A third group drew a picnic to which all brought food to share. We were told by the facilitators that our 3-D outputs would be represented on the County web-site but this did not materialize. I can only speculate on whether this was because the results were deemed unfit for wider distribution and public consumption. My interpretation is that these games symbolise attitudes towards change. When I asked people whether they were optimistic about the developing strategy and future of Children’s Centres and Extended Schools, they replied overwhelmingly in the affirmative. The

snakes and ladders game however, revealed a considerable degree of scepticism about policy direction and progress. The representation of community chest symbolises to me an attitude of opportunism with chance cards indicating risk, uncertainty and a lack of control. The picnic represents the win-win solution with sharing of food symbolising collaborative practices and a commitment to joint solutions.

PowerPoint™ presentations, taking part in facilitated workshops, and making one's mark on a flip-chart are routine practices in this type of policy - practice environment. All but one of the six consultation events used flip-charts. Workshops are designed to take place in small groups – that is to say, small enough for people to gather physically around a sheet of flip chart paper and talk to one another as a group. They *can* feel like democratic rituals, participative and informal – people lean their elbows on the table, sometimes squat on a floor. They use low-tech paper and coloured felt marker pens. They elect a scribe and a rapporteur in order to feed back their work to the wider group. Status associated with job roles in a hierarchy are not usually displayed. Participants may joke about who can draw, (at one workshop I find that I am the one who can draw a pram so I dutifully accept my role as a member of the group and make my mark) The culture is that of *play* rather than work but they interpret and represent policy and so engage in the work of meaning making. As a facilitator at one consultation event remarked “the process is more important than the outcome”.

Kallinikos (1998) regards play as important for its own sake. It defies instrumental means-ends rationality and as the game representations show, play can result in policy parody, subverting with irony those who would represent policy seriously, playfully pointing out that

successive governments often change direction (back to square one) or that despite strategic planning attempts at social engineering, outcomes might be perceived as much as a game of chance as one of skill. March (1988:262) has described the “technology of foolishness”, arguing that

“ ... many of the most influential, best-educated, and best-placed citizens have experienced a powerful overlearning with respect to rationality. They are exceptionally good at maintaining consistent pictures of themselves, of relating action to purposes. They are exceptionally poor at a playful attitude toward their own beliefs, towards the logic of consistency, or toward the way they see things as being connected in the world. The dictates of manliness, forcefulness, independence, and intelligence are intolerant of playful urges if they arise.”

There is now a wealth of literature on the use of play to release creativity at work, however, this strategy of deploying play to meet instrumental goals does not necessarily secure management objectives of compliance “buy-in” as the Snakes and Ladders example illustrates.

One of the consultation events I attended adopted a different format. The agenda had previously been set by the district Council rather than Strongham County Council. The district had arranged an event to promote its Community Safety Partnership strategy. Staff from the County Council took the opportunity to “piggy-back” its CLP consultation onto this event – another instance of a policy palimpsest. A private golf club was hired and a free lunch provided for approximately ninety delegates who were seated theatre style in a conference

room. The first speech was by Strongham's Director of Children's Services. He talked about the JAR – "the County Council had had a telling off about Looked after Children"⁶⁰ "and he incorporated his audience into a shared collective, talking of the JAR judgement as "our responsibility" which presents a "moral challenge". He advocated going "back to our romantic roots", noting that "we often feel coy in the public sector" about the aspiration to "change lives" which could be regarded as "worthy and old-fashioned". He suggested that we had all met "certain people" in our lives who had "opened up vistas" and he expressed his commitment to "social inclusion", the opposite of which for him was symbolised in "gated communities". Needham (2007:76) has written about the "public service ethos" and cites Perry and Wise who discuss the emotional and affective aspects of the "self-esteem that comes from working in the public interest." This example of the Director's commitment to a public service ethos seemed to win him at least one admirer as Andy extolled the Director's virtues to me:

"...our director is absolutely committed to working with us. I don't think I've ever met anybody who's more, got more social commitment than our director. And he is really concerned, I mean his standard, his standard speech which I've heard several times is that, you know a child born in a deprived community stands – his life potential is about 10 years less in terms of life expectancy. If you take those life expectancies, the most deprived community people live 10 years shorter than the actual average. The economic viability of those young people is poor. And so he's been committed to tackling this. So he's really committed to the idea that we put all our resources what we call team around the child "

⁶⁰ Looked after children is a technical term referring to children in the formal care of the local authority

Andy appears to share his Director's "social commitment" to tackling health inequalities and social exclusion. The concept of public service ethos can be stretched, as Needham demonstrates, to incorporate the modernisation/ welfare reform discourse that seeks to restructure old-fashioned bureaucracies. A Deputy Corporate Director followed the Director's opening address. She explained how *Every Child Matters* is a "long term vision" not a "short-term fix", using the familiar metaphor of an "oil tanker ... set in its ways" to describe the Children's services department of the County Council. This "oil tanker" is to be shifted by means of pilots and tugs (fieldnotes recorded at the conference) that can develop "new ways of working" to improve "outcomes" for children and families. The Director seems to regard the culture of the past as a resource but his Deputy blames the past and in doing so, risks what Pollitt terms "... the idolatry of ceaseless change and constant modernization." (p.15). These contradictory attitudes towards the past suggests that the case for reform – the reason for modernisation, reform and change, the strategic starting point, is by no means agreed upon. However the problem is framed, (lack of "worthy and old fashioned" public service or an old fashioned public service resistant to change) the solution is provided by the CLP strategy.

Following the same Powerpoint presentation I had seen this woman give at other events, a district council officer with responsibility for community safety presented the Community Safety Partnerships Strategy and described her vision of how it linked with CLPs. She made a plea for investment by CLPs in "preventive activities" that will help young people steer away from "anti-social behaviour". This shows how projects and initiatives can be framed to suit a number of policy goals and illustrates the tension between reconciling quick fix solutions with

longer term causal narratives. The protean palimpsest of childcare policy is here being overlaid, reinscribed with a crime prevention discourse. Using clipart™ the community safety officer graphically illustrated the synergy that could be released by partnership working with pictures of partners sharing premises and other resources. The last slide ends with the plea “*please sign up*”, although, as at the Treasury Child Poverty Accord meeting, there is nothing to be signed off, no decisions are made here today. The illustration of policy in the form of Powerpoint presentations represented the CLP strategy and translated it at the same time. Following the community safety presentation, people in the audience are handed a PDA each⁶¹ and asked to take part in a voting exercise. They press buttons to answer “yes, no or don’t know” to questions that appear on the screen such as “How well informed do you feel about the work being done in Strongham to respond to Every Child Matters?” a few seconds after which, results in the form of statistical pie charts flash up on the screen. In a report circulated after the meeting, the pie charts are represented again alongside tables. Question 14 “Should the prevent and deter agenda be closely linked with the Children’s Trust agenda?” resulted in 88.16% answering “yes”, 1.32% “No” and 10.53% “unsure”. Given that the main theme of the conference was community safety, these answers are unsurprising. “Prevent and deter” is a crime prevention policy and the term would be recognisable to people at the conference working in that field but the phrase does not appear in the version of the policy lexicon of childcare as welfare or as enabling parents to work.

The voting exercise has an air of fun - it feels modern and technological and gives the illusion of speedy responsiveness. However, this restricted form of consultation with its quantitative method of closed questions and immediate responses is not welcomed by some members of

⁶¹ A PDA stands for Personal Digital Assistant and is a hand-held electronic device

the audience as I found later that day. Following the consultation event in the morning, I hurried off to the next one in another district held in the afternoon. Here again we listened to the Powerpoints then moved into a workshop. This took place in a public Council room with a stage. I perched on the stage close to a small group, hoping to be able to move around the groups and overhear their work-shopping and flip-charting conversations. This strategy didn't work. A member of the group beckoned me over and encouraged me to join in so I joined the group and explained that I was there to see what might be going on as part of doing my PhD. Despite the consultation events being locality based, some people's job roles overlap these jurisdictional boundaries and they have attended the earlier event. A couple of people tell of their relief at "getting things off their chests" in this workshop whereas they had felt silenced by the earlier "yes, no, don't know" voting procedure. I was told : "people don't want to be a consultee ... at the end of the food chain, they want to be further in."

The discussion focused on the theme of CLPs and the need for schools to work together with "the community". A member of the group who was a headteacher expressed reservations that she could be expected to find the time to attend extra meetings in addition to her work in school, her "day job". She explained that her time was valuable but this comment clearly annoyed other members of the group, including an officer from Connexions⁶² and a youth worker. I saw them exchange meaningful glances and felt the tension. The Connexions worker asserted:

⁶² Connexions is a youth organisation

“ *everyone’s* time is valuable but if we are going to make a difference in the long run, then we have to invest some of our time and energy now to make it worthwhile.”
(fieldnotes).

Achieving Buy-in

There is awareness at most meetings (backed up by the strategy document) that the CLP strategy comes with new resources. However, in terms of the public service ethos and in particular, partnership forms of governance, it is as though it were impolite, against the “rules of the game” to be seen to be opportunistically motivated by money as this interviewee, revealed:

“...what we’ve seen is people guarding themselves, guarding the funding that they’ve got, and I can perfectly well understand why they are doing that ‘cos we’ve all got one eye on that.” (LA 15)

Such “guarding” behaviour has been characterised as “bureau maximisation” which is attacked by Niskanen’s influential theory of public choice (Schofield, 2001). However, there is an “in joke” – a kind of policy vernacular, amongst street-level bureaucrats working in local partnership arenas that characterises partnership working as “mutual loathing suppressed for cash”. This is because often, as is the case with CLPs, new policy announcements come with resources that deliberately incentivise partnership working (Klijn and Skelcher 2007:600) Ted had told me that he suspected that some people were “slavishly instrumental” in their

approach to CLPs. Where I have interpreted some peoples' behaviour (such as the District Community Safety Officer) as pitching for resources, they themselves generally framed the purpose of securing additional resources, as we saw in the Director's speech, in terms of enhancing the public good. I am definitely not arguing that notions of the public good should be dismissed or that they are not in evidence in my study. Rather, my aim is to demonstrate the process of policy negotiation in implementation that is discursive but is linked to economic resources and goes some way to supporting theories of bureau maximisation.

The local authority in my study faced the challenge of joining up not only with external organisations but also across its own existing initiatives. I witnessed Manjit's attempt at policy re-framing and negotiation as he lobbied for resources at a mentors' meeting. This meeting was convened by Andy, the Extended Schools Co-ordinator and Katy, the Council officer with responsibility for implementing Children's Centres. This time there were no workshops or flip-charts. The meeting was scheduled to last for two hours and it started promptly. There seemed to be a mixture of County Council employees including youth workers and early years officers as well as school teachers. Andy thanked the people attending the meeting and expressed his gratitude to them for "stepping outside their comfort zones", noting that this was "very tough." Following "matters arising" Manjit took the floor for the next agenda item. Manjit is the manager of Parent Direct service which *he* sees as integral to Children's Centres and Extended Schools but he explained to me how his interpretation was not recognised, at least in the early stage, by Andy and Katy. Manjit explained to me how his physical location in the Council did not ensure joined up strategy:

“So although Andy for example he sits behind me quite often in the office and so does Katy; we’ve had to fight for our recognition as a partner. I think we have made some progress now.” (LA 50)

Sam, a manager from the Children’s Trust explained to me how this childcare service would be expected to integrate with Community and Learning Partnerships:

“So what we’ve asked is, because there are childcare development officers in every district, we’ve asked them to generally use their meeting to talk about community and learning partnerships. And in the September newsletter which goes out to every provider which is private, voluntary, statutory, independent and childminders we’ve put a piece in about community and learning partnerships saying that actually childcare is gonna be like a key issue for partnerships and for parents. Its going to be a hot topic and actually you know have you got a view on it?” (LA03)

Sam is attempting to get the policy frame of CLPs onto different agendas in different arenas. If people can be persuaded that childcare is “*going to be a hot topic*” then it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. There is a circular logic in suggesting that it is going to be a hot topic because it is being defined as such by Sam who has the upward accountability to DfES for delivery of the “core offer” and has the means to influence the content of meetings and newsletters. Whilst Children’s Centres and Extended Schools are the Government initiatives to be implemented, it seems as though the local CLP strategy, rather than being a metaphorical “delivery vehicle”, a *means* of implementation, becomes for Sam the policy “driver”, a goal in

itself at local level. Policy process and outcomes become difficult to disentangle. Gillies (2008:419) writing about “spin”, argues that people “... cannot be left to spectate, left to read: they must be told what they are seeing and told what they are reading.” Here Sam appears to be seeking views but has already structured the terms of the debate – she appears to be able to represent policy stakeholders interests (parents and partnerships) and claims to understand in advance that childcare is “gonna be” a “key issue” for them. Prediction is thus a form of control – a way of *structuring* or governing perceptions and policy frames through a process of agenda management, policy translation and thus discursive governance. Childcare development officers already have childcare as their sole job function. What they are required to do by Sam is to use their existing childcare contacts to *promote* the policy of CLPs as a “hot topic”.

Manjit made a pitch for resources from the CLP budget to support his Parent Direct section’s need for an improved database system. He explained that this would meet the needs of the “core offer” for advice and information to be easily available to parents. He said he would “like funding in the [CLP] business plans for a co-ordinator”. He acknowledged that “ideally this would come from the Children’s Trust” but that he “had been refused twice” by this network body that has no dedicated resources of its own. He divided up the cost (£25,000 plus on-costs) between the proposed number of partnerships to show that this would be “a fairly small sum of money”. Andy explained to him and the rest of the meeting that “CLP is an empowerment model. We couldn’t insist”, indicating that the CLPs would have autonomy over their individual budgets, (later I show how these budgets were in fact “top-sliced” or “creamed off” by the County Council). Someone told Manjit: “you must be mad to think

you'll get agreement from thirty two partnerships." David checked his watch and said " we're very tight on time for this meeting. We need to wind up by three thirty." During the course of my fieldwork Manjit got funding from a different budget and did manage to get textual acknowledgement in the final strategy that Parent Direct was integral to all the CLPs. He pointed out to me the tension between centralisation and devolution:

"Y'know with Community Learning Partnerships , Children's Centres the whole thing is very much about local working. And that's vital but the people who work in those partnerships and those Children's Centres, their focus is very much within the boundaries that they're working in. Whilst other areas, there needs to be an overarching approach because um – the local delivery supported by County-wide messages in terms of consistency of how initiatives are interpreted. Um we wouldn't want every Community Learning Partnership or every Children's Centre going off and doing their own thing "

(LA50)

Manjit aligns himself with "we" the County Council, juxtaposed with the "they" of the local policy actors who run the risk of misinterpreting his version of Strongham's policy and going off-message.

Strongham knows how much money DfES has allocated up until 2008 but beyond that it resorts to second guessing⁶³ central Government's intentions. Lily, an Early Implementer Project Manager, tells me about CLPs: "Um I mean for me it's about money. It's about y'know realistic support and because that's unknown after 2008 I think that is a concern."

⁶³ Steve Cropper calls this second guessing 'reading the runes' (personal communication)

(LA09). As well as the uncertainty about DfES plans and resources, what the County Council cannot do at this stage is predict which “partners” will join these CLPs, how they will be constituted and how the CLPs will go about their business of allocating funds to achieve the core offer and so there is an air of uncertainty about the consultation although, as we have seen, this ambiguity opens a space for agendas to be reworked and for policy interpretation.

6. Consulting on Governance

The consultation events raised the issue of governance. New Labour’s modernisation agenda presents welfare reform as a win-win with present expenditure justified through future savings on welfare as well as presenting the moral case for social inclusion as an end in itself. The “active investment state” seeks to add value to public expenditure through attracting private sector “expertise”, through “empowering” citizens to help themselves and one another through performing their civic duty in the voluntary sector or in “the community” (Lister, 2006). One of the consultation events I attended convened small break out groups to discuss a model for governing the CLPs. The difficulty at that stage was that, as one of Strongham’s legal officers explained to me “You can only have good governance if you know what you’re governing.” The resources that OldTown had to govern for financial years 2005-6 and 2006-7 were the existing resources brought to the table by “partners” and the amount of additional funding that Strongham had allocated. There was considerable uncertainty over DfES commitment to fund the policy beyond 2008 and yet local implementers were being urged to plan for significant structural reform to integrate schools, Children’s Centres and extended schools into collaborative governance arrangements. A representative from ContinYou, a national charity,

facilitated the discussion and circulated a document that presented models and case studies. The case studies featured primary and secondary schools and an Early Excellence Centre and described how schools were meeting the core offer and improving standards. None of the activity in the case studies refers explicitly to the needs of working parents or the welfare to work strategy. Hilary, a Community Outreach Worker from the college gave me her impression of the “original intention” of the CLP strategy:

Hilary: I mean ... the funding runs out in 2008. But the original intention was to try and set up each CLP as a charity and once they’ve got charitable status that does open up other avenues of funding. ...”

Pam: Would you be able, in terms of your employment, to be a trustee of such a charity?

Hilary: I don’t know. I would have to consult with colleagues about that, really.”

Pam: “But then some of the funding that you’ve mentioned in some of the projects, that isn’t charitable funding is it?

Hilary: No. Generally the college can’t apply to charities for educational reasons. The exception is the lottery. I’ve just made a lottery bid.

Pam: Is that the Big Lottery?

Hilary: yeah. (LA40)

Here we see a narrative oriented towards the future whereby CLPs are in an interim phase on the way to becoming charities. The distinction between charitable purposes and state policy and the boundaries of separate responsibilities are indistinct (Schofield, 2002). As Oliver explained, this ambiguity over what counts as service for

the public benefit has a long history: “I used to work in the voluntary sector in a registered charity and I could never understand why for example, Eton school is a registered charity.” It seems that the neo-liberal nirvana or Holy Grail of “sustainability” is the self-supporting community with a governance model that exhibits lean entrepreneurialism in contrast to the bureaucratic, “big government” state, yet is not-for-profit (DTI, 2002, Schofield, 2002). Where pump-priming investment in childcare can achieve self-sufficiency through tax credits, then public sector investment can justify a “business case”. Katy used the metaphor of a grown up organization that doesn’t need “nannying” or continued public investment when it can wash its own face: “But of course the emphasis now within Children’s Centres is the childcare offer, the provision has to wash its face – it has to pay for itself.” (LA02). Linda gave me her interpretation of the CLP vision:” The long term view is that every community learning partnership will become [an] established social enterprise as such.” (LA51).

Walker (2008) is sceptical about such enterprises:

“As for the claim that third sector bodies are attuned to users' needs, there's little in their governance, financing or management to give users any more status than they enjoy in conventional service delivery.”

In the main, despite encouraging local programmes to generate income for childcare through supporting parents to claim tax credits, this vision of a sustainable, community governed

enterprise had largely failed to materialise with the earlier, more generously funded Sure Start local programmes.

The way in which childcare has been expected to “pay for itself”, as we saw in Jane’s story in chapter one, and in the policy analysis in chapter three, is through parents paying for childcare themselves or claiming tax credits as public assistance. They can do this as long as the purpose of the childcare that they use is to enable them to work in the labour market and, as Jane’s story made clear, they use regulated childcare. Childcare that might be an “important component” of “family support” or “respite” for overburdened parents, is framed differently in welfare reform policy documents and is subject to interpretation as a drain, supporting a “dependency culture”, the opposite of “active welfare” (Fairclough, 2000). There are difficulties of operating childcare businesses and even a quasi-business in areas where jobs paying more than minimum wage might be scarce and parents may still be unable to afford the residual costs of childcare even after calculating their tax credits (Penn, 2007, National Audit Office, 2006). The Children’s Centre managed by David survives in the quasi market and he claimed that stigma was reduced as a consequence of combining provision for middle class and working class children:

David: We’ve got twelve social services places within the nursery that we ring fence for children that are referred to us by social services, basically.

Pam: But then within that nursery presumably families don’t distinguish who’s referring?

David: No. I mean our objective obviously is to de-stigmatise and to give children an equal field and families an equal field really. Obviously the staff know who are who but on

the ground y'know, you don't differentiate. I mean we've got children here from very middle class families, doctors and lawyers and we've got children from a very hard end of life. And they blend together very well. (LA18)

David's business model utilises social services money as funding for childcare to allow struggling parents some respite and combines this with income generated from "very middle class families". This may provide a temporary quasi-market solution for the Children's Centre as an enterprise in one local area but the families from the "hard end of life" are still dependent for their childcare or "family support" on traditional welfare of which there is a limited amount of ring-fenced provision as the conditions of the DfES grant prioritise the neo-liberal "work-first" version of childcare policy. In a different area of the County of Strongham, Judy, a Childcare Development Officer told me that there was not a culture of paying for childcare but that families looked after one another's' children informally as and when required. She explained to me that the childcare facility at the local school was struggling financially because of paying staff LEA wage rates £10 or £12 per hour with on-costs and employing them on LEA terms and conditions. In Judy's experience, these pay rates were twice as high as in the private and independent sectors and so the out of school care club's budget was in deficit.

The CLPs were seeking to work alongside, and potentially allocate funding to, such autonomous local bodies in the PVI (private, voluntary or independent) sector. I found that, in the case of several people I interviewed from such local organizations, their own personal as well as their organizations' financial futures were precarious. A manager from one family

support charity looking ahead to the future direction of policy explained her apprehension that the National Lottery fund usually expected to fund charities and welfare schemes, would be drained off to support the Olympics. There is an agreement called a “Compact” that is supposed to govern relationships between government bodies and voluntary agencies. Like the Child Poverty Accord, this is another “soft governance” tool (Sheaf et.al., 2003). Several people working in the voluntary sector told me that it had “no teeth”. For example, a manager from a children’s charity said “I just don’t think it’s worth the paper its written on, that’s my own personal view” (LA 32). The Compact is not referenced in the DfES guidance document on Children’s Centres and the CLP seemed unaware of its existence.

While there is a Derridean sense in which the process of consultation, speculation, and re-interpretation continues ad infinitum, there is also a need for policy makers to distinguish between a consultation phase of policy implementation and a time when policy materializes and effects can be realized. This can be represented as a move from “just” talk to action and it is “decisions” that create that split. Oliver a District Partnership Officer told me of his experience of consulting with the community:

“We’ve all been to meetings where we sit there thinking what am I doing here? ... I’ve got the sense sometimes where I’ve been to a meeting where a meeting’s been set up because someone’s been told to have a meeting. Not because they know what the meeting is for, because someone told them. Obviously for partnership you have to get people round the table whereas in actual fact, the Borough Council and County Council should be just getting on and delivering the service. And I’m reminded

actually of when, in my previous job in the voluntary sector, got quite keen on we need to consult the service users who were people who had experienced homelessness.... and a resident turned round to me and said ‘stop bloody asking me what I want to do and get on and bloody do it, that’s what you’re paid for.’ (LA12)

Similar contradictory faith in progress alongside feelings of frustration were expressed by a parent representative who explained to me how she was involved in the CLP consultation but also with a parallel process taking place in her neighbourhood, which was designated a housing action area:

“I think people are getting fed up with it. Cos its long term isn’t it? It’s dragging on and on and there’s no – can’t see anything being done, d’you know what I mean? So people are losing interest. I think it’ll all happen – I’ve every faith in things happening but I think because they’ve had all these *workshops* and *events* – I mean we’ve had em for nearly two years now! And we’ve not seen, people, well the residents have not seen anything.... it’s just on and on and on its just -. But I’m sure it will happen. It’s just that the residents get very frustrated.” (LA23)

Consultation is the “flavour of the month” as pointed out on the consultation response form sent to Strongham by a consultee but there is a risk of too much consultation being interpreted as a diversion from getting the job done – to use the vernacular - “paralysis by analysis”. Strongham must meet the DfES deadline and so they move the strategy forward.

6. Authorising Policy, Rubber-Stamping Strategy

The CLP strategy is on the agenda for the meeting, which was open to the public, with the agenda published in advance on the Council web-site. The Council cabinet meeting was preceded by a demonstration in the street outside. Council officials shepherded me together with approximately fifty or sixty agitators into the upstairs public gallery. There was not enough room so people were seated in the main council chamber behind Councillors and their advisers. The protest was against the proposal to close elderly people's council run homes. There had been a vigorous debate over this policy (which itself was a process of welfare reform) during recent months in the local media. The Council leader addressed the gathering in an authoritarian manner "be assured that I do not suffer fools gladly", pointing out that this was a Cabinet meeting not an opportunity for members of the public to have their say. Unlike the heavy emphasis on consultation with "partners" in venues outside the Council, the arena for traditional representative democracy is far more formal and prescribed. The leader's attention was distracted by unauthorised interventions including derisory snorts, requests for clearer speaking and angry shouts. The lead officer responsible for management and administration of the proposed change for older peoples' services presented her case, framing the need for change as being at least in part due to "demographic pressures." (field notes). There is much academic, policy and practice debate about how to engage people in "civic renewal", in politics and in public services. (Audit Commission, 1999, Clark et al., 2007, Lowndes et al, 2006, Newman, 2005). In interview, a local authority officer told me: "I mean it's like anything else if there's an issue you'll get the turn out." (LA 05). Findings from recent research on Sure Start Children's Centres by Pemberton and Mason (2009) indicate caution

regarding the likelihood of “user engagement.” Here people turned out to protest against this element of welfare reform. They were treated not as equal “participants” but as trouble makers.

When the agenda item on older people had been dealt with, the Cabinet took a ten minute break and reconvened in a separate, smaller room. The agitators left but re-grouped with their banners in the street outside so that, although the atmosphere in the new room was calmer, the protest outside could still be heard via the loud-hailer and so attentions were distracted. I sat alongside a local press reporter and watched proceedings, taking notes. The report recommending the establishment of CLPs was tabled and nodded through with approving comments, no dissensions and without any further debate – it took about three minutes in total before moving on to the next agenda item. There was new revenue for 2006 to 2008 flowing from DfES to the local authority to support the strategy and so, unlike the older peoples’ strategy, no immediately apparent public concern and therefore apparently few political considerations for local councillors to contend with.

Research suggests that women’s informal care work may be placed under further strain by the closure of the elderly peoples’ care homes (Rummery, 2007). The opportunities for women with childcare responsibilities to take up and remain in paid employment, however, *may* be enhanced by the childcare element of the CLP strategy, depending on how in the future Sure Start Children’s Centres can suture together the cash and care elements of the new policy in creative ways and whether parents can influence this. Some of this future gazing is beyond the scope of my present study but Butt et al’s study (2007) for the Daycare Trust points to

ongoing tensions in the national childcare strategy and as we saw in chapter three, the reliance on market mechanisms and the complexity of the tax credits policy does not bode well for a sustainable approach, particularly for families living in poverty.

7. Conclusion

The Council now has a formal strategy, codified in a text embedded in a Cabinet report but based around intertextual “embedded conversations” between many implementers whom my palimpsest analogy regards as policy authors. The CLP strategy text is significant and reinforces the “core offer” for Children’s Centres and Extended Schools but also significant are the social practices surrounding its presentation and translation. I suggest that while the CLP strategy is formally authorised and given procedural legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) by Cabinet, what I have termed “vernacular policy” is informally authored by a multitude of policy actors creating their own less settled versions (their uniquely structured palimpsests) from a mixture of DWP’s welfare to work policy, a crime prevention discourse, DfES’s *Every Child Matters* and Strongham’s “hot topic” CLP strategy. In translating DfES policy, the policy palimpsest mutates. Texts may appear to reify policy but the strategy is iterative. Time is “of the essence” but change is subjectively interpreted. In chapter four we saw that Hill and Huppe (2002) regard policy implementation as synonymous with governance that is, governing beyond the state and in CLPs we see how sites of democracy are contested. Interacting with the more traditional hierarchical bureaucratic modes of the local authority with its patriarchal environment are CLPs - as yet an imaginary form of governance, consulted

upon and planned for by the Council yet reliant upon partners for “buy-in”. Workshops take place, people pitch for money and ideas about child care are exchanged in the policy market place. Powerful discursive activity goes on in meetings that leads me to the conclusion that is is not wasteful and unproductive “just talk”. Playful implementation practices become key elements of discursive governance. Governance happens through processes of affect as well as through more rational logic. Welfare reform is significantly different for different demographic populations. The Council divests itself of the responsibility to deliver residential care for older people but the childcare element of welfare reform is welcomed. The discourse of efficiency, the power of central government to impose deadlines, and the commitment of local policy actors carries the policy forward. Financial year end looms.

Chapter Seven
Performing Policy Implementation

Contents

1.	Introduction	253
2.	Quick Wins and Re-branding	254
3.	Ticking the Box, Sensing the Quality	261
4.	Translating Competing Agendas	264
5.	Performativity and Managing Performance	269
6.	Towards Community Learning Partnerships	273
	Early Days	277
	Jurisdictional Integrity	289
	Elected Members and Select Members	291
7.	Shopping for Policy Products	300
8.	Conclusion	302

“but all this stuff about ‘oh quick win this and quick win that’, people are seeing it as a cash cow which then when the money dries up what will the interest be that’s left in it?.”(LA28, Peter, Headteacher, Chair of OldTown CLP)

1. Introduction

In this chapter my chronological account goes backwards in the first section to show how initiatives that were already in place before phase two Children’s Centres Extended Schools and CLPs were announced, became rebranded and incorporated into the CLP strategy. Then I move forward from the last chapter that detailed the County-wide Strongham consultation process, through to observing an instance of a particular CLP located in OldTown. This chapter covers a phase of approximately six months of fieldwork - the early days of the CLP inception, following the Cabinet adoption of the strategy through towards financial year end. As we saw in chapter three, the modernisation agenda is associated with hollowing out the welfare state as well with a proliferation of partnership initiatives and this chapter analyses how a CLP *is* and *is not* autonomous from a statutory local authority. I analyse the rendering of the “community” as an *object* of policy administration and as a governmental *agency*. A Management Action Group is formed and this loose network re-interprets the CLP strategy, makes decisions and spends money. These implementation processes begin to forge an organizational identity, although competing agendas emerge. OldTown CLP seems to be governing small amounts of finance to add value to the objectives of the policy “core offer” and thereby justify its existence as a productive network that can add value to the sum of its

parts and deliver the County Council's CLP strategy and in turn, DfES' Extended Schools and Children's Centres policies.

2. Quick Wins and Re-branding

In chapter three I presented an argument to show that, despite policy being presented by politicians and managers as new and improved solutions to social problems, policy often re-brands existing projects and programmes while overvaluing modernisation and “newness”, as David, a Sure Start Children's Centre Manager explained:

What's tending to happen is they're arriving and they say “what can we do new?” so instead of valuing what's going on they want to make an impact and their definition of an impact is “prove you're doing something valuable and new (LA 18)

David experiences policy change as imposed from the outside, his options for exerting his own managerial agency are constrained. He frames “they” as those to whom he must prove change is happening, irrespective of whether he himself feels that the “impact” is positive or valuable. I discovered that, well in advance of the formal consultation on the CLP strategy, Strongham had explored options for where new Children's Centre buildings might be located. Much of this deliberation was kept off the agenda of the CLP consultation process. Andy told me that “The childcare issue somewhat slews the actual agenda”⁶⁴. (LA01) While the market management element of the childcare policy, linked to the capital programme, contradicts the communitarian discourse of CLP, this contradiction is managed, in part, through agenda

⁶⁴ I think Andy may have meant to say “skews”. The Freudian slip may be symptomatic.

management. OldTown CLP is able to keep the contentious management of its local childcare market off its agenda as it already has an existing Sure Start and can, for now, tick the core offer box for the objective of providing sufficient childcare. Consultation on the location of new Children's Centres in other areas of Strongham is constrained by the "pragmatic decisions" of Council officers who decide to utilise existing buildings or available Council land, as David explains:

"I mean would I to have built a children's centre in this town it probably wouldn't have been here 'cos we've got twelve other providers [of childcare] within a mile of where we are right now. It was one of those pragmatic decisions that people make – this building was available."

(LA18)

Pragmatic quick wins are needed, not only to demonstrate implementation but also, as Ian, a children's services partnership manager tells me to : " improve our morale, y'know, feel that we're making more of a difference. "(LA11). Ben also used the term:

"When Lily came, things then started to become quite focussed in terms of right we needed some quick-wins, we needed some successes if you like. We needed to focus, rather than just talk about doing something".

(LA14).

Note the discursive split between "just talk" and "focus". Another worker, Lesley, asked rhetorically: "sometimes I think we should be doing more instead of talking about it. D'you know what I mean? But I suppose we all feel like that, don't we, at some point?"

The tension between quick results and necessarily time consuming processes is explored by Pollitt (2008:59). He draws on Adam (2004) to illustrate “struggles between different ‘times’, or rather between different interests which use their own forms of time as instruments with which to seek their own purposes.” In the last chapter we saw how the County Council needed to establish the CLPs quickly in order to meet the tight timescale that DfES imposed for creating extended schools and children’s centres. Page ten of the draft CLP strategy refers to “emerging opportunities with partners”:

“A number of opportunities for creation of phase 2 Extended Schools and Children’s Centres led by health are presenting themselves. These opportunities arising in [X Town and Y Town] present a pathfinder option, to build a small number of “test bed” Children’s Centres and Extended Schools.”

These are referred to by Andy as “quick wins”:

“...there are some quick wins. At the same time as this [CLP strategy development] has been going on, the PCT⁶⁵ in the X Town area has been looking to build by a GP clinic and they’re on PFI.⁶⁶ And what we’ve done in two of them is to put some money up front with the PCT to create a children’s centre out of a GP clinic. The same applies to developments in Y Town as well. (LA01)

⁶⁵ PCT Primary Care Trust an NHS body

⁶⁶ Private Finance Initiative

Quick wins perform the function of demonstrating successful implementation – moving from talk to action, from planning and consulting to implementation. It seems that Strongham’s “quick win” Children’s Centres, rather than stand-alone, clearly identifiable separate buildings, will be examples of what the policy guidance refers to as a “campus model” or “virtual” children’s centre, integrated with health facilities and developed in response to already existing “opportunities”. The passive sentence construction in the strategy document that has no subject or agent (“opportunities that present themselves”) belies the notion of policy as agentic, as purposeful and teleological and points toward a much more contingent and historically grounded notion of planning. The “opportunities that present themselves” are existing planned investments by NHS organisations and local initiatives that the Council is marrying up with its own agenda and drawing into its local policy palimpsest. Where already existing initiatives can meet the requirements of the policy core offer, they can be designated as Children’s Centres and Extended Schools and then apply the brand. The Sure Start brand guidelines of 2006 offer three options to any provider (private, voluntary or statutory) that can comply with the policy criteria:

1. “Using the Sure start brand as your main identifier”
- 2 “Retaining your existing brand and retaining Sure Start as an endorsement”
- 3 “Using the ‘Supported by Sure Start’ logo as an endorsement” ⁶⁷

The 2006 guide to branding is a directive for the use of the brand and logos:

⁶⁷ <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/resources/general/brandingguidelines/>

“These guidelines set out the Sure Start principles, who should use the Sure Start brand and how it should be applied. They should also help those settings which have turned into Sure Start Children’s Centres understand how to use the Sure Start brand, what they should be called and how they should describe their services.” The Sure Start brand is seen positively by parents and is a powerful asset which can help you promote your services. We encourage you to adopt the brand and actively manage it carefully. As the brand becomes more widely used it is all the more important that it is managed consistently in order to present a coherent image to parents.”

<http://www.Sure Start.gov.uk/doc/P0002206.pdf> accessed 29/4/08:

Moor (2008) writes:

“The uncritical adoption of commercial marketing and branding techniques by government departments and agencies is indicative of their faith in the capacity of market mechanisms and commercial techniques to deliver meaningful social change. Such faith in the power of commercial persuasion techniques is rarely shared by even the most ardent advocates of branding, so it is certainly worrying to see it become so central to social policy.”

Writing about “policy hysteria”, Stronach and Morris (1994) suggest:

“We are uncertain about whether the *apparent* valence of these processes and practices are any more than simulacra: the continuous making and remaking of style over substance “

I want to argue that the branding of multiple, possibly competing ventures with the Sure Start brand, in removing the organizational distinctions between publicly funded services and charitable or commercial enterprises is a barrier to transparent governance. As the Audit Commission (2005) found in their study of partnership governance, while complex partnership arrangements can bring benefits, “Working across organisational boundaries brings complexity and ambiguity that can generate confusion and weaken accountability.”

I encountered several examples of what Taylor (2003) might describe as “public policy in the community”. There was the community resource centre located on a council estate with high levels of deprivation that began with funding from Single Regeneration Budget matched with resources “in kind” from the Borough Council in the form of empty shops it owned. The resource centre had had European Regional Development Fund monies and Karen, the manager, had managed to managed to creatively interpret the outputs required by the funding regime and create childcare linked to a “capacity building” project. With the restricted availability of ERDF, linked to EU accession, the resource centre is now transforming itself into a youth project as funds become available for diversionary activities. I visited an out of school club in OldTown run by a local group on a tight budget with low paid staff on part time contracts. This project received funding from the CLP to refurbish its kitchen. These two projects both *looked* like community projects. The out of school club operated next door to a

drug support agency with which it shared an entrance hall. The outside of the building was protected by steel roller shutter doors. Paintwork was shabby. The advice shop was cramped. Cheap, low chairs provided a makeshift reception area surrounded by leaflets and posters. There were children's toys available. Local knowledge existed in these non-statutory projects. When I interviewed the advice shop manager, she told me about local families she knew “

“And people come in and tell you things. Because it's finally got through to them that we're nothing to do with the Council or anybody else. So people will come in and say things to us that they won't say to anybody else. So we do we do hear about what's going on. But we also have a lot of contact with the families where somebody's been sent down and their circumstances have changed and things like that. So we have a feel for the area. “

(LA05)

As I discussed in chapter three, this ability of locally based projects to reach and “engage” people living in disadvantaged areas or “communities” is recognised and valued by New Labour. Branding these existing initiatives incorporates them retrospectively into policy effects. Whereas unintended consequences of policy are unplanned surprises, these policy re-brands entail the intentional re-framing of history such that they can be claimed as part of the intended policy outputs and their success attributed to contemporary policy.

3. Ticking the Box, Sensing the Quality

In policy vernacular, there is a practice (usually framed in a pejorative sense) known as “ticking the box”. Ticking the box is generally considered to be compliance for the sake of it as opposed to purposeful activity oriented towards a worthwhile goal. This has been termed “satisficing”, that is in contrast to striving for an optimal solution. (Gergen and Thatchenkery, 1998). I attended a meeting of a group that had been convened to work on a plan for children and families in the area. There was a document on the table with columns and boxes to tick, designed as a local plan of children and families’ needs and services. The meeting consisted of the Chair working his way through a list of data sources delineating aggregate, objectified, target populations regarded as “socially excluded” such as NEETS (not in education, employment or training), teenage parents, etc. One of the boxes on the form concerned “community safety”. Norma, a manager of a playscheme, told the meeting that she knew where a “group of under age kids were hanging around drinking cans of lager” and she was concerned about who was purchasing the drink for them from which off-licence. The Chair did not pay much attention to this anecdote and moved on to the next box. Norma’s qualitative narrative did not fit into the boxes on the form and so her insights did not make it into the plan that treated target populations as objects. Deborah Stone, writing in the foreword to Schneider and Ingram (2005) has suggested that “If social scientists ever discover the molecule of governance, surely it will be the category.” A eugenicist theme emerged when Pat told me:

“And the mindset that actually y’know we have got, in certain parts of the County we have got a falling birth rate. And so people are saying I’ve got to stock my school because if I don’t stock my school we could go to the wall.” (LA36)

This idea of people categorised as “stock” – as commodities, was echoed by a worker I interviewed from JobCentre Plus who used the term “*stock customers*” to describe those unemployed adults who were “on the books”. I found a range of boxes that people ticked. Linda showed me a coloured chart pinned to the wall of her Sure Start office that graphically represented progress towards Children’s Centre designation. Ticking the box, like framing a policy (and like writing this thesis-palimpsest) inevitably leaves remaindered information and, despite the appearance of technocratic rationality, human judgement is required to interpret what is in the box. (Power, 1997). A regional worker with responsibility for the Children’s Centre designation process told me:

“And they’ve all got a trajectory of when their designations are due. And we gradually get them in the diary and they say ‘oh our Ofsted certificate hasn’t come through yet’ so it’s kind of delayed a few weeks and those kind of things really. It’s gotta *feel* – the one I turned down didn’t *feel* like a children’s centre. One of our ministers is really keen on it’s got to feel like a children’s centre.

A Partnership Development Officer told me how he convinced a management consultant about the value of community based projects:

“somebody who was brought in from a management consultancy to look at and help the development of the County Council’s access arrangements and he was talking as if he’d swallowed an MBA text and y’know I was frustrated ... and he’s talking, I said ‘I don’t mean to be rude but you don’t know what you’re talking about; ’ ohh’! I said ‘you come out with me I’ll show you how the one stop shops operate’ ... Any way he came out and had a Damascene conversion ’oh that’s the way to go we need more of these we need more of these’ ... so that was a measure of success really I think in terms of getting him to do a u- turn in terms of his attitude in approach to one stop shops.”

(LA20)

It seems the linear trajectory of time-tabled policy implementation relies not only on tick box designation processes and MBA textbook guidance for validation but also on more intuitive processes – on “sensibility” as well as *sense*. Structuration theory insists on taking seriously lay actors’ interpretative abilities and, as we saw in chapter two, this necessitates consideration of the fact-value distinction. We saw in chapter three that ministers or civil servants were sometimes taken on visits to witness policy in practice at first hand. Giddens (1987:66) suggests that “All social analysis has a ‘hermeneutic’ or ‘ethnographic’ moment...” The above extract illustrates that, despite the commitment to supposedly value-neutral, ideology-free, “evidence based policy and practice”, the Minister seems capable of distinguishing the “fact” of Children’s Centre “designation” from performative tick box implementation practices. In this instance they exercised their judgement according to less “scientific” and more humanistic principles, deciding how it “felt” before determining whether it “counted”.

4. Translating Competing Agendas

I attended regular meetings of OldTown CLP. One of the local high schools in OldTown could already have been classed as an extended school as it had an established company limited by guarantee that operated some leisure facilities, out of school activities and a parent and toddler group. The school has been through various transformations in its life-cycle from a failing “sink” or what Alistair Campbell ⁶⁸ might have classed as a “bog-standard” comprehensive to its recent reincarnation as a specialist science college. These policy re-brands may well have substantive effects but my point here is that rapid policy change and quick wins may not easily erase local memories and vernacular implementation practices buried beneath the CLP branded policy palimpsest. Besides the high school with its existing entrepreneurial governance of the company limited by guarantee operating alongside its more traditional school governing body, also in OldTown, there was an established but struggling out of school club, several of the primary schools had childcare facilities and the existing Sure Start Centre already met the requirements for the core offer, raising the question of what the “new” policy of CLP was *for* – what value it might add. The schools became textually incorporated into the County wide CLP strategy-palimpsest. The OldTown Sure Start Centre got re-branded and became a Sure Start Children’s Centre, widening its catchment area beyond its immediate deprived locality and so “spreading the jam thinner” with reduced resources. The high school preferred to promote its brand (derived from education policy) as a “specialist college”, replacing its former designation as a Community High School. Tensions between decentralisation of schools management, communitarian discourse, marketisation and the collaborative joined-up discourse of the *Every Child Matters* policy of co-ordinating

⁶⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/dec/05/schools.education1> accessed 17/2/9

services for children have been analysed by Hudson (2005). He points out that the policy of foundation schools [and academies] could lead to schools adopting a focus on a narrow constituency and competing with other schools rather than collaborating with the Local Education Authority or local communities. Priority “quick wins” for schools might be more about improving their GCSE results to demonstrate performance in the competitive education market (as the contributor to the child poverty Accord meeting noted in the last chapter) than achieving Extended Schools status or being seen to be part of a collaborative CLP. I interviewed Peter, headteacher of the specialist college (high school):

Pam: what are your main sort of policy drivers, what’s sort of on the top of your agenda?

Peter: Top of my agenda?

Pam: I guess a lot?

Peter: It’s very big, obviously it sounds glib to say it but I think teaching and learning underpins everything so our top line is that we provide a quality, a high quality, of teaching and learning and everything underpins that. Then obviously those things are measured and the league tables are the external viewpoint of that measurement and they are the way by which we are judged other than the OFSTED inspection. So it’s important to make sure that we balance high quality teaching and learning with the achievement of the government’s statutory targets with gaining grades at GCSE. So it’s no good having an excellent teacher teaching a wonderful art curriculum but actually not equipping the students to pass the exam, we have to have the end result as well. So there’s an underpinning of teaching and learning but we have to consider the end outcome. One of those end outcomes is to pass a qualification, to gain a

qualification. Also one of the issues here, a big driver here is attendance. Student's attendance here is not strong, we are currently running at about ninety per cent attendance which means that obviously one in ten lessons isn't being attended which is not good and we have a number of strategies in place to encourage attendance.

Peter's interpretation of his priority tasks appears clear. His reference to a problem with attendance points towards the difficulty of positioning all schools at the centre of policy aimed at reaching the "hard to reach". Schools and in particular, head teachers seemed to be regarded as a potential "advocacy coalition" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999) by many of the non-teacher policy actors in my study. David referred to the as yet uncertain future of CLPs beyond 2008, illustrating some of the tensions between time horizons, network partnership collaboration and individual organizations' own priorities:

I don't think they've got the economic longevity to give people the confidence to make those kinds of decisions. That for me is one of the flaws of CLPs. The other flaw is – with all due respect to the concept of partnerships – which I'm a total advocate for, people *are* going to be, understandably, their *first* priority is going to be looking after their governing body. If they're a school – the priorities of SATs results and achievements – y'know for their own organisations, health service the same, and everybody else will be the same reasons. (LA18)

Liam was also concerned about the fragility of partnership working:

“And we’re developing things as we go along. All we need is a couple of arsey head teachers and a few agencies not happy and it could all be -...”.(LA06)

One way in which childcare is framed by schools is as a product that adds value to and “stocks” their school by capturing their segment of the education market early as Liam explained:

“Schools are wanting breakfast clubs and out of school clubs. Whether they’re sustainable or not, they’re still finding that they need them so people are taking their children here because there’s a breakfast club and not to another because there isn’t one. So there’s a real competitive nature in that. And they recognise it – they’re quite open about it. So we’re trying to keep the schools on board. And then you’re asking them on top of that to come in and jump into bed with all these other agencies.”(LA06)

Published policy sees Extended Schools as part of a solution to a problem of social exclusion that *Every Child Matters* is designed to solve. “Extended schools : Access to opportunities and services for all A prospectus” (DfES, 2005:4) describes inputs such as “Breakfast and after school clubs, high quality childcare, input from specialist services, parenting support programmes and a good range of beyond-the-classroom activities” claiming that these “all contribute to improving children’s skills, confidence, behaviour, health and achievement.” However, not all “partners” from the sample of local implementers in my study saw schools as the solution. Some saw them as part of the problem, as a *cause* of exclusion. Pat told me:

“y’know, any area you’d got lots of people had very bad experiences at school and they will not go through a school door. Because they remember what they were like and they left at fifteen and they never want to darken the door again and so if you put some services onto a school site some sections of a community just won’t go anywhere near them. “ (LA36)

Rod, a youth service manager, also viewed schools as agents of exclusion:

“I think there are tensions about locating services in and around school which y’know has different value for some people. Some young people we work with don’t go to school. Their parents did not go. They got excluded. They do not see school as an inviting environment and they are immediately in opposition to teachers. And that whole culture.” (LA08)

The Extended Schools goals relate to the policy frame of the child poverty strategy only if we accept that we live in a meritocratic society whereby those who gain educational qualifications are less likely to live in poverty. Gillies (2005), insisting on retaining a notion of material class inequalities, critiques this assumption and Colley and Hodgkinson (2001) argue that there is a spiraling process of “*credential inflation*”. It is not immediately apparent how the Extended Schools core offer of childcare fits into the meritocratic policy frame. However, the policy text “talks” to Andy, the Extended Schools strategy manager. Andy translates:

“Now, you talk to a key stage three child, teenager they wouldn’t say two hours after school was child care. But it [sic] talks about stimulation - challenging and exciting after school. So it’s talking about sports facility, arts facility. One of the big pushes is underwriting the whole of this is raising school attainment. (LA 01)

Using the school policy discourse of “school attainment” and the subject position of “key stage three child” from an education policy dominated “interpretative repertoire” (Potter et al, 1990) the policy of childcare policy and Extended Schools is re-framed or translated from an objective of enabling parents to move from welfare to work through accessing additional out of school childcare, to an objective of raising educational attainment, in order to be incorporated into the CLP policy palimpsest. Childcare, in this narrative thread, becomes a means to the end of school attainment with Ofsted the judge of effectiveness. Andy attempts to govern the meaning of policy through his translation.

5. Performativity and Managing Performance

The process of “Ofsteding” has been researched by Ball (2006a) who relates this to “performativity”. In a response to the CLP consultation, an anonymous consultee noted that “consultation is the flavour of the month”. One interviewee told me “But there’s a very clear understanding that you have to evidence consultation. You know, in your business planning process. “The use of the verb “to evidence” indicates a performative process. It seems “evidence” does not exist until it is made manifest and visible through a particular set of sanctioned processes, what Foucault calls a “truth regime” (Foucault 1980,ch.6) and Clarke J.

(2005) terms the “evaluation / performance nexus”. We saw in chapter five that Ted was posting on a web-site to “evidence” that implementation was happening. Here we see a similar performative display of “consultation”, embedded in the textual “business planning process.” Butler (1990) develops the term “performativity” to conceptualise practices that deconstruct reality by privileging display. In relating performativity to education policy, Ball (2003) writes:

“Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentives, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organisations) serve as measures of productivity or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgement. The issue of who controls the field of judgement is crucial. “

Ofsted is the regulatory body responsible for controlling the field of judgement in the arena of childcare policy. The crèche at the High School ran for a short, time-limited session. The Head explained:

“I’ve told them not to step beyond the boundaries that Ofsted lay down at this stage. When that’s getting up and running and comfortable then we’ll get into the world of letting Ofsted inspectors, ‘cos obviously its an Ofstedable, once they get over a certain number of hours, it’s an Ofstedable facility so I thought they would be better to just

stay within the boundaries of time and numbers before we get the building in place then it will all be meeting the standards that are required. ‘Cos at the moment we’ve got a fairly small space that we are using. It’s probably just about big enough but Ofsted might not agree.” (LA 28)

Judy, an experienced childcare development officer explained to me how she felt that head teachers could be quite “creative” in with their use of language. (LA22) Hilary also knew how to be creative with accounting. She told me how she exercised her discretion and juggled her way around different budgets in order to produce outputs from different policy initiatives: I asked her :

Pam: And is that from juggling around budgets?

Hilary: Yes. And kind of sleight of hand, if you like.(laughs)

Pam: you’ve got to be creative?

Hilary: yeah it’s very creative.(laughs) (LA40)

Bureaucratic processes define “official”, regulated, “Ofstedable” childcare but as we saw previously, where systems were manipulated, performance can also be “managed” from the opposite end. In Chapter four in the section on framing community wants and needs Lynne described how a crèche could run for one hour and 50 minutes and so be managed outside of the regulatory gaze. Childcare can still operate outside bureaucratic boundaries. Unless performance management systems can see outside the boxes (to use a trite management metaphor) of their panopticons or limited policy frames, they are unlikely to capture the view

from elsewhere or recognise the way in which implementation is performed to achieve delivery. The performance management framework for *Every Child Matters* is dominated by quantitative indicators and is framed as a managerial, not political task. I asked Liam how he might manage a process of assessing needs in the rural community he worked in:

Pam Yeah so when you mention about value for money and a small village ... I guess that throws up quite a stark issue about balancing priorities then and what weighting to place on rural needs ?

Liam Well absolutely and you can't actually sit down with a piece of paper and think and actually work out – I'm sure you could if you got an accountant and a statistician who could do something, that would make it look good.

In my study I found not only the quantitative tools of accountants and statisticians representing policy, making it “look good”; stories, words and pictures did too.. I discussed CLPs with Alison, a manager from a voluntary sector organisation. She told me:

“And as you know, the whole thing about CLPs was about being community driven. It wasn't about education's agenda. It wasn't about Health agenda. It wasn't just about the community's agenda. It was about making sure that that executive group in any CLP or the Board or whatever you want to call it, who were pulling together that business plan, it was about everything, it was about understanding of the whole needs of a community. That's where it should have started from. And that's where the business plan – it wasn't just about schools thinking ‘oh this is my latest opportunity,

there's some money there, I'll ask for this that and the other just for my school.' It wasn't about that. And it isn't, it shouldn't be about that. But again that understanding about CLPs is very patchy." (LA37)

The moral of this "manager's tale" (Reedy, 2004) is that CLPs shouldn't be about the interests of individual organisations such as "education" or "health" but this understanding seems to be "patchy". The risk of CLPs being about "*everything*" is that they risk being about nothing. The value of the vague CLP signifier is that it can function as a generative metaphor (Schön and Rein, 1994) embracing bottom-up, already-existing initiatives. Its broad objectives and normative descriptor allow the partnership to embrace a range of "partners" agendas and reinscribe their individual performance management regimes and professional lexicons into the policy-palimpsest. In the next section I aim to give some insight into how a CLP seeks to manage understanding as it goes about its business of implementing Children's Centres and Extended Schools policy in OldTown.

6. Towards Community Learning Partnerships

When I talked to Andy, he told me about the policy core offer then added:" that's core business but the real, the real influence of this type of work is when we really tackle the realistic issues around communities." (LA01) The County Council decided where the boundaries of CLPs lie and it devised a formula for allocating funding to them based on indices of multiple deprivation and on whether there were existing Sure Start Children's Centres in the area. Scott's book "*Seeing Like a State*" (1998:80) explores states' "project[s]"

of legibility” – the infrastructure of maps and statistics that he contrasts with more historicised, practical and locally derived knowledge that he terms “*métis*.” Methodologically, it is difficult to study back-office functions ethnographically – partly because of access, partly because the practices are often more technological and less *apparently* social. Star (2002:108) writes

“... infrastructure is usually singularly unexciting as a research object for ethnographers. The human, symbolic, interactive aspects of infrastructure are terribly difficult for ethnographers to “open up” in the way that we may easily open up conversations, rituals or gestures. “

At one CLP meeting, a manager from the local Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder explained that her programme “has a system for data and the system does the analysis”. This technocratic assumption, attributing agency to an I.T. system, denies the human subjective work of data collection and interpretation and the political work of definitions. I found a Council officer who had responsibility for G.I.S.⁶⁹ mapping and went to talk to her about her work. She was working in a cramped office at County Hall, sitting at a desk with a PC and phone. She explained to me how she utilised the mapping software and gave me copies of some of the maps pertaining to CLPs. These have blobs, triangles, stars, population figures, etc (see below). As the key shows, it is a statutory, bureaucratic, mainly educational system that overlays this representation of a “community”, although it is combined with the “joined

⁶⁹ Geographic Information System

up government” technology of the Index of Multiple Deprivation ranking the SOAs (Super Output Areas).⁷⁰

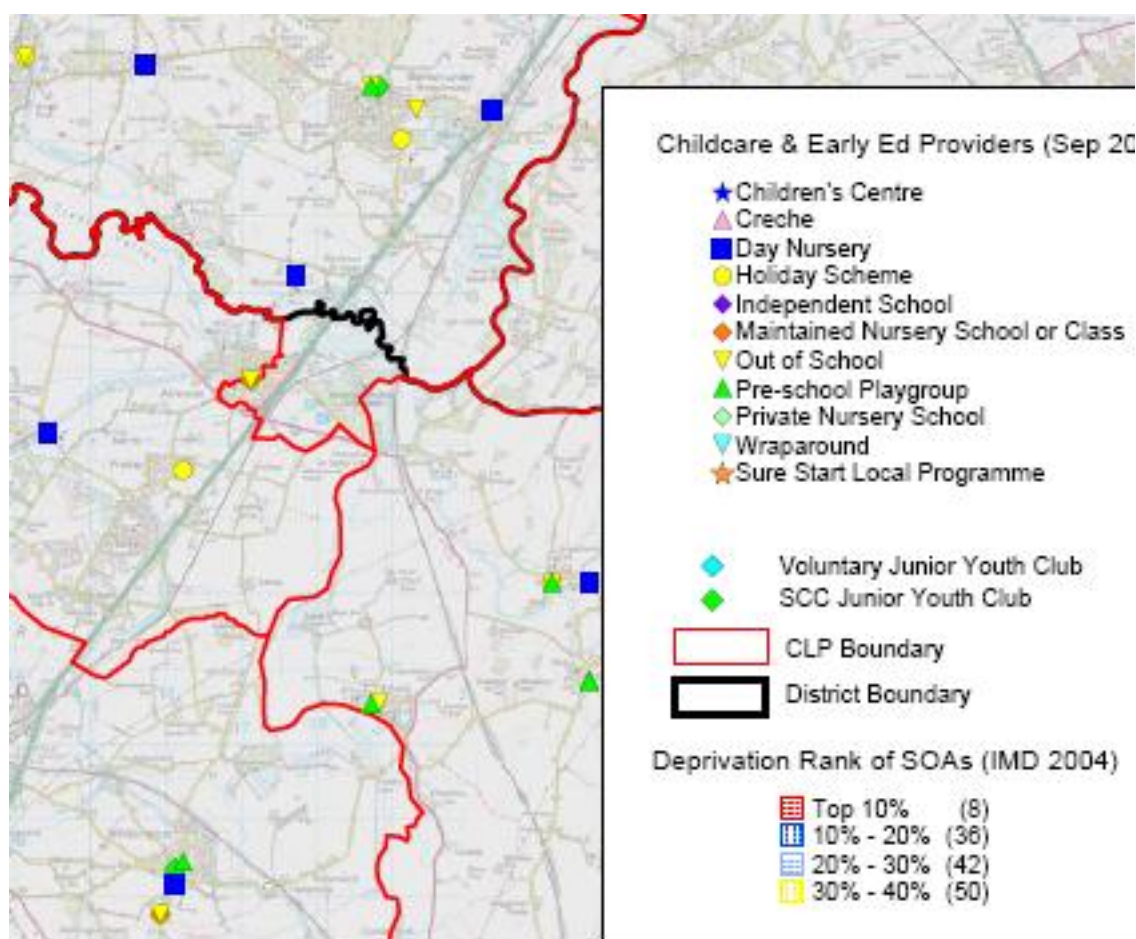


Fig. 17 section of CLP map

Sterling (2005:145) draws on the Foucauldian notion of governmentality to show how “... territorial identity is created deliberately through governance ... “territory is ‘rendered visible ‘so as to be acted upon.’” Rose and Miller write (1992:12)

⁷⁰ Super Output Areas are statistical boundaries defined at a lower level than an electoral ward.

“Programmes presuppose that the real is programmable, that it is a domain subject to certain determinants, rules, norms and processes that can be acted upon and improved by authorities. They make the objects of government thinkable in such a way that their ills appear susceptible to diagnosis, prescription and cure by calculating and normalizing intervention. ... government inspires and depends upon a huge labour of inscription which renders reality into a calculable form. Written reports, drawings, pictures, numbers, charts, graphs and statistics are some of the ways in which this is achieved. ... By means of inscription, reality is made stable, mobile, comparable, combinable.”

We saw how Norma’s knowledge about under age drinkers was not “calculable” and so could not be represented in a tabular plan. Despite the “spurious precision” (McLaughlin, 2006) implied by the G.I.S., data does not translate simply and directly into decision making. As we saw in the last chapter, “what is to be done” is specified imprecisely. At a local level, implementation or “delivery” requires a pragmatic judgement about “good enough” knowledge as Andy explained:

“...there’s an awful lot of mapping and auditing that can be done. I mean we could we could spend all the sums of money we’ve got mapping and researching but that won’t give you the delivery.”

(LA01)

McLaughlin discusses the "...gap between discourses of participation and democratisation in the arena of representative politics and practices of policy-making on the ground. " and she goes on to suggest that "The resolution of conflicting evidence(s) and reconciliation of conflicting influences on decision making largely proceeds behind closed doors." (p.40) Now let me take you behind the closed doors of an emerging CLP to take a look at "delivery", or "policy making on the ground" to see how implementation was achieved by spending money.

Early Days

I am sitting in my study about three months after the consultation events, contemplating fieldwork and how to gain re-entry. I've been interviewing in the morning and am pondering what to do about the fact that the interviewee told me about a meeting due to take place that afternoon. I'm thinking "*that should be an interesting meeting. Why didn't I ask Alice if I could go along to observe?*" "I sort of know why – because I'm nervous about my relationship with Alice, because other people at the meeting might not appreciate me turning up to observe them, because I know that I personally wouldn't like being observed like some sort of guinea pig, because I'm never going to feel prepared enough or experienced enough ? I decide to take a risk and telephone Louise.

Pam: Hi Louise. I've heard from Alice there's a meeting this afternoon and I wondered if I could come along – what do you think?

Louise: Yes I don't see why not – you might just want to check with Alice because she's chairing

When I get there, the meeting seems to be co-chaired between Louise and Alice. Knowledge of the densely woven network of the street-level bureaucrats in attendance is necessary for getting a handle on the power dynamics and an understanding of how the meetings are organised in advance behind the scenes. It becomes apparent that pre-meetings have taken place and lots of side meetings continue to take place in a range of different arenas, some of which are more or less accessible to me.

The meeting is being held in a community centre that used to be a high school. It is a large sixties-type building with what used to be classrooms, some of which are now converted into offices laid out along corridors used by the Youth and Community service and other sections of the local authority. I enter the large meeting room and scan for familiar faces, recognising one or two. I check with Alice: "Is it OK for me to sit in ? I phoned Louise to ask if I could attend. She said if it was OK with you..." Alice is welcoming – it doesn't seem to make much difference to her. There are around thirty people in attendance. I proceed to the kitchen off the meeting room where people are making tea and coffee and setting out biscuits before the meeting proper starts. Someone has been to a local supermarket for refreshments with petty cash from some or other budget. I help out then go to chat to a man I recognise – a working class guy "Wayne" who lives on a nearby estate and has some involvement with Sure Start and a Residents Association. I chat about the last time we met and discover that he was at school years ago with Alice. Alice remarks as she passes refreshments around – "typical community worker – knows everyone and knows how to muck in and make a brew!" I feel pleased at this endorsement of my practical credentials and social capital. I feel almost at

home and as though some of the isolation of being a lone researcher can be overcome in this kind of community of practice.

The meeting begins with the usual round of introductions where people say their name and their organisation. One woman is there in a voluntary capacity as Chair of the Sure Start Board. She, Wayne and another woman identify themselves as both working and living in the CLP area. They wear different hats as employees and as local residents who get involved in community initiatives. They are not asked to clarify which hat they have on for today's meeting. Also in attendance are representatives from the police, the local college, the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder programme, CAB, a local Community Development Association, Connexions, Sure Start, a nursery nurse from the nearby university nursery, the nearby high school headteacher and at least two primary head teachers. According to the written CLP strategy document (version 12), one of these head teachers, Kath, is not in the proper place. Her school belongs in a different CLP. Kath makes a case for belonging at this meeting and to this CLP, explaining that most children move on from her primary school to travel to the High School "down the bank" so she feels her school more naturally relates to the local schools cluster, most of whose head teachers are in the room today. Topographical considerations, as well as communities of practice come into play here, problematising the flat cartography of G.I.S. (Geographic Information Systems) or the tabular categorisation of CLPs contained in the Appendix (Community Learning Partnerships Proposed Districts) to the strategy document. The implications of belonging to *this* CLP are that it is defined as more deprived and so will be in the first implementation phase of Children's Centres and Extended Schools rather than the second phase scheduled for the next financial year. Also, it is apparent

that schools have working relationships and teachers have friendships that may cut across the administrative boundaries. By CLP strategy Version 18, the school has metaphorically shifted location and become included in OldTown CLP. The *administrative* CLP shifts and slides around the built environment and the community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) or *gemeinschaft*. (Schofield, 2002).

Copies of a three page A4 size document printed on yellow paper are circulated. The document is headed OldTown Community Learning Partnership but the paper is not letterheaded. The CLP does not yet have a corporate identity that it could reproduce on stationery. It has seventeen numbered paragraphs and at the end of the three pages of the document it has the date – Sept06 and Louise’s initials and so its provenance can be identified. It is clear that this is intended to be a record of some of Louise’s activity in advance of the meeting, a framing of the tasks at hand and an explanation of what needs to happen next; although Louise explains that her vision can only see clearly as far as the end of the financial year – March 2008. She explains that central Government has a strategy that runs until 2010 but they have only released resources for the current year (framed as “year one”) with year two resources known but as yet unavailable for spending and so March 2008 is the “nearest and next horizon that we have” by which time we need to have allocated the year one money and implemented a business plan for the following financial year.” The ephemeral policy document identifies itself neither as a formal report nor as minutes of meetings that might document decisions. It explains that “OldTown Community Learning Partnership met for the second time on the 7th of September 06.” This implies that, although it does not yet have its own stationery, there *is* an organisation with such a name. The document begins:

OldTown Community Learning Partnership

- “1.1 OldTown Community Learning Partnership met for the second time on 7 September 06. The purpose of this meeting was to work further on the core offers which we must reach to ensure the delivery of the Children’s centre and Extended Schools agenda, to map current services and identify gaps in provision.
- 1.2 At the conclusion of this meeting, the Head of OldTown Children’s Centre and the Headteachers of the schools which comprise our cluster requested that we now widen the meeting to include other local service providers who express interest in joining us.
- 1.3 We are required to submit an outline business plan by the Autumn, for the use of specific funding which is modest in comparison with Sure Start, Neighbourhood Management or SRB ⁷¹funding streams....”

Louise begins a Powerpoint presentation that explains the core offer for Children’s Centres and Extended Schools and the Community Learning Partnership concept. The slides mirror the strategy document that was handed out earlier in the year at various consultation events except that Louise has added her own slant with graphic images. One of these is a picture of interlinked metal chains. Louise explains that she has selected this image to represent interlinking bonds of partnership that demonstrate strength. She points out that we are *not* to see these as “tortuous chains that bind us”. She is directing the audience to see the image of

⁷¹ Single Regeneration Budget. OldTown had previously been in receipt of a 7 year SRB scheme

the CLP as positive and enabling, not constraining. She reinforces her semiotic governance, looking ahead to an indeterminate future: “eventually this is how much pulling power the partnership will have” but her rhetorical disclaimer reveals her own double vision and indicates that her alternative metaphor does belong somewhere in the realm of alternate, possibly subversive space – perhaps the one where the instrumental “mutual loathing suppressed for cash” or Karen’s interpretation of a Community Learning Partnership as “a load of old quangos” circulates. She explains in her presentation that the government aims to “knock child poverty on the head” by aiming to get “one worker in every household”. People in the room seem attentive and many are taking notes like me. They pay attention when Louise’s slide shows a graphic image of peanuts in their shells. She explains that this illustrates that there is not much money available to OldTown Community Learning Partnership. The Sure Start Children’s Centre that she herself manages is a flagship centre. It is a state of the art building with a child-friendly environment, plenty of modern glass space and an ecologically friendly grass roof. It cost approximately £2.2 million pounds to build when Sure Start programme was in its early phase. There is just over four times this amount available to the County Council to deliver 32 Children’s Centres by March and a further 18 the next financial year. Although the yellow document in circulation does not specify amounts of money, it indicates that it is “*modest*”.

Following Louise, the second presenter introduces herself as a Family Support Worker based at the Sure Start Children’s Centre. She reminds the meeting about Victoria Climbié whose ghost once more hovers around the assembly, enrolling empathetic participants into the *Every Child Matters* agenda through governing their emotions. As we saw, her tragic tale of neglect

has become inscribed in the *Every Child Matters* policy imagination, affecting “hearts and minds”. Butler and Drakeford (2003) show how policy is influenced by “scandal” with particular cases achieving iconic policy status. Victoria now joins Jasmine Beckford, Maria Colwell, Baby P and other subjects of official inquiries, all oriented towards improving the child protection “system”. While Victoria’s absence is invoked and the somatic effect lingers in the room, the presentation turns to the symbol of a net. The speaker presents information on the “CAF” – Common Assessment Framework and people listen attentively. This is the administrative net that is designed to systematically ensure that no child can fall in between the preventative *net-work* of state and voluntary agencies who are expected to intervene when family care fails children. The process entails significant administration and bureaucracy and carries major implications for privacy and security Parton (2006). There is a whole section of the *Every Child Matters* website devoted to CAF ⁷² and it interleaves with the proposed electronic database of every single child in the UK. The speaker reads out a poem that she has written titled the “*CAF without an E.*” This uses a more vernacular language (working class speech says “caf” not the more sophisticated French café) than official policy documents and seems to demonstrate the woman’s social care vocation as she interprets her function in the administrative bureaucracy with a highly personal aesthetic. I reproduce it below (re-framing it myself) with kind permission of the author.

⁷² <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/>

<p><u><i>"The Caf" without an e</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll up, roll up • It's the Governments scheme • To serve up a process • With a common theme, • The Common Assessment Framework, • It's formal attire • But CAF without an e • Is much more desired 	<p><i>Contd...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier support is what we know • Is requested by families • To support their children • As they grow and grow • So embrace the theme • And the communication chatter • To ensure we promote • <i>"Every Child Matters"</i>
--	---

Fig. 18 Caf without an e poem

I suggest that this intertextual inscribing of formal policy or “formal attire” with “what we know” which is “much more desired”, functions as a serving up of a public service ethos – impartial bureaucrats are meant to serve their political masters (the Government’s scheme) and implementers are frequently urged to “embrace” or “take ownership” of change. (Goss, 2001).

In structuration terms, the poet is “instantiating” the policy. I analyse this poem as an expression of the duality of agency and structure. Poetry is generally regarded as a very creative, aesthetic, personal enterprise and I imagine that it would have taken some self-belief on the part of this practitioner to have the confidence to represent her poem to an audience of her peers and some of her superiors. Amid the “communication chatter” of families, children and schemes, this author voices her own representation of “what is to be done” and includes her audience as policy-promoters with the collective pronoun “we”. Here we see the translation of an administrative technique for assessing (or assaying) as yet unknown Othered populations into a highly personal interpretation. The third verse is devoid of policy discourse and government schematics but replete with a practice based knowledge. Scott (1998) terms this “métis ” which is “what we know” – another instance of Giddens’ “practical consciousness”. The uniqueness of the poem lies in the fact that while many policy entrepreneurs and bureaucrats articulate the Common Assessment Framework as CAF (the three letter acronymn has entered their formal policy lexicon) the practitioner’s “Caf” sounds more like a place where folk (or families’) desires might be realised and welfare professionals might take pride in seeing them “grow and grow”. Unlike the GIS representation of policy in place, this poem is neither mutable nor immobile (Hetherington, 1997). I do not find it reproduced or disseminated in other meetings. Its fleeting effects are restricted to this particular performance time and space and yet I suspect that the personal commitment to supporting families is carried forward into practice, sustaining what Barrett and Fudge (1981) call the “policy-action continuum”. This poet-policy implementer-practitioner creatively authors her own version of the policy so that, for her, a “caf” becomes more like a *supportive*

place where families' desires might be realised than an instrument of governmental control. The meeting listens to the recital respectfully.

Louise then takes over the agenda once more and urges the gathered network of disparate people to share in some responsibilities for developing the CLP. She addresses "those of you who know this area" and, despite the ambiguity about the primary school over the hill, and recognition in the yellow document about "territorialism", Louise claims to speak for all: "we know which area we're talking about". Thus apparent consensus is achieved – temporarily at least. A slide shows autumn leaves and this is the time by which the CLP should have formulated its business plan.

A few weeks after the early September large meeting of OldTown CLP, a smaller group convened to set up a "Management Action Group" (MAG). I went along and found myself unwittingly nearly co-opted onto the MAG. There were two primary head teachers, Peter, the newly appointed head of the local high school, Louise, the Sure Start Programme Manager, Alice, Early Implementer Project Manager, Hilary, a Community Education worker from the local college and a worker from a nearby nursery. As a willing volunteer with no objections, Peter was appointed chair. He explained to me later in interview that Louise had approached him at the meeting "And I turned up and she sort of whispered in my ear 'oh and by the way we're desperate for a chair'." This casual selection of a Chair is like Jane's appointment as parent volunteer that we saw in chapter one and that leads me towards a definition of the CLP as an "adhocracy" rather than a bureaucracy. Applying structuration theory, we see how the CLP's rules-in-use such as the culture of consensus, while being enabled by Strongham's

bureaucracy, are not completely pre-determined or structured by fixed bureaucratic rules systematically governing procedure but operate through emergent social practices that become the way “things are done”. People were asked whether they would be willing to be on the Management Action Group and asked to raise their hands. As I didn’t raise mine, a concerned headteacher asked what my objections might be, at which point I explained my “outsider” status. Nobody signed up to a set of responsibilities, decisions continued to be taken largely by consensus; the group proceeded on the basis of apparent trust. At several meetings, diktats came down from Strongham, usually relayed to the group by Louise or Alice. The MAG for OldTown CLP began to discuss how they might allocate the sum of money that they believed had been delegated to them. However, it was not long before Strongham decided that each CLP was to have a half time paid co-ordinator and that money for this would be top-sliced from the CLP budgets. The MAG accepted this and went on to discuss a recruitment process. At around this time, an administrator at Strongham explained to me her impression that the CLPs were developing like a rollercoaster and Ted reinforced this sense of being out of control, using the phrase “growing like Topsy” when I met him. Due to the pressing deadlines of spending money by the financial year end, there was often a frenetic air of urgency at the meetings. Peter explained:

“But it does grieve me ... we’re being told ‘oh we’ve got some money here, it must be spent by next week’ and we’re coming up with exercises to spend money. which I think is a pity when there is need. “ (LA28)

A manager from a children's charity who was a "partner" in the Sure Start local programme and was hoping to get funding from the CLP told me:

"its been, like everything else when its been talked about for a while then all of a sudden the money came from government down to county and because of all the set up because you have to have it all set up at county and ... the main focus has been on spend, spend, spend the money, just spend it. (LA32)

The recruitment of co-ordinators became an immediate priority for all the CLPs. There was a discussion about the co-ordinator's job description with the female primary head teachers expressing concern that "if the co-ordinator had to work in school holidays" then there would be fewer applicants. Alice and Louise were clearly used to working outside of school term times and dismissed the teachers' concerns. Peter, the high school head did not comment. I inferred from the exchange that gender is an issue, with many women attracted to the teaching profession for its fit with family caring responsibilities but this aspect of gender politics was not openly discussed within the consensual partnership. OldTown CLP MAG decided they wanted to place an advertisement for the co-ordinator vacancy in the local newspaper and that they would prefer to recruit someone with "local knowledge" (field notes). At the next MAG meeting, Louise explained that Strongham had a freeze on recruitment due to their job evaluation process so that certain people already at risk of redundancy would have preference for the co-ordinator post. In this instance, Strongham's hierarchical structure constrained OldTown CLP's network authority over decision making.

The tension between the relative autonomy of the CLP and the hierarchical bureaucracy at Strongham began to create somewhat of an in-group/outgroup mentality (Hogg and Abrams, 1988) with loyalty to the CLP cohering around perceived bureaucratic obstacles to progress imposed by Strongham. The business plan was due to be approved during half term week in February. “Only Strongham could have made *that* decision” complained Peter, referring to the difficulty of working outside term time. Several times the issue of guidance on governance or “terms of reference” was raised, with Louise informing the Management Action Group that these had been promised by Strongham but were not yet forthcoming. “Oh God” moaned Alice – “we know what *that* means.”

Jurisdictional Integrity

CLPs were each allocated a reference number by Strongham. Their boundaries capture a cluster of one or two high schools and “feeder” primary schools. Despite recent policy shifts emphasising parental choice and undermining Local Education Authority planning, there seemed to be some tradition in Old Town of children going to their local school. However, the CLP boundaries did not fit into other “partner” organizations’ spatial administrations. CLPs are smaller and more local than all but the most local community based project. Primary Care Trusts, JobCentre Plus, charities, Borough and District Councils all had geographical remits that encompassed but were not necessarily coterminous with, several CLPs. OldTown was an area of housing renewal and this initiative also had its own boundaries that did not fit the CLP structure. Managers from JobCentre Plus explained to me that they could not send staff to CLP meetings as their own organisational boundary covered the whole of Strongham and so they

relied on other mechanisms to link with Children's Centres. In addition to the voluntary and statutory sector bodies, the private childcare market has no geographical restrictions governing its *modus operandi*, although Strongham County Council has legislative responsibility for managing its local childcare market. These logical contradictions in policy were not necessarily recognised by people at the meeting or others in my study. I asked the head of a local authority nursery:

Pam: And have you got a fixed boundary for that, as to what constitutes the local area?

R: Erm not really. Nursery schools don't really have a fixed boundary so we went with a two mile radius.

The debate about a distinction between communities of interest and geographic communities is well rehearsed (Bermingham and Porter, 2007). Catholic headteachers related to one another through their faith community as this head explained:

"I also am more linked to the Catholic schools ... than I am to the LEA schools here because we have a ...Catholic Partnership and we do shared in-service, we have head teachers meetings and the Catholic network is extremely strong in supporting one another's - I mean we organise our own head teachers training days, we do governors training together, and traditionally the Catholic sector is extremely strong. "(LA53)

Tensions around faith surface in a later CLP meeting. For now, suffice to say that spatial jurisdictions, interest representation and difference matter in public administration. The

attempt at reforming welfare through network or partnership governance frequently goes beyond traditional representative democracy and government jurisdictions (Miller and Fox, 2007).

Elected Members and Selected Members

I asked Cath, a primary headteacher, a member of the Management Action Group in interview:

Pam: So if I can move on to the Community and Learning Partnership – who do you think it is accountable to?

Cath: (10 sec pause) I really do not know. I think I would say as a guess I would think it was accountable in financial terms to the financial regulations of the LA who then would be accountable to. I presume the DfES because that's where the funding comes from. I think it should be accountable to the people in the local area. How you do that is a bit pie in the sky because really the money's been generated from taxes and obviously been put here or made available for the benefit of the local area. But I - it is one of the things that - I do not wish to be, if you like, spending money for the sake of money because I feel very bothered that any decisions made are accountable so I could put my, y'know, hand up for what was being decided. But as to ultimately who's accountable I don't know. One could say it's the committee but then sounds a bit tenuous because I don't know who's watching over the committee. Its like who's guarding the guards, isn't it?

Pam So – do you think it works democratically?

Cath: I don't know – I mean I don't know what democratic means in this situation. I don't know who the people if you like are entitled to vote. I don't know how many people who, because they haven't had opportunity to go to meetings - I don't know how many people are actually out there who should be in the meeting or involved and so in a sense they're outside the democracy of it because they've not been able to come for whatever reason or they don't realize the value of it. So I think that's a very difficult one to say. (LA 53)

It is difficult for this member to articulate the boundaries that might constitute the inside from the outside of the Management Action Group and to understand eligibility and accountability mechanisms – note her ten second pause before she can reply to my question. Kooiman (2003) uses the term “autopoeisis” to categorise autonomous, “self-steering” networks and often it appears as though the partnership is only accountable horizontally to itself. Kooiman also suggests that governance involves a process of “image formation”. OldTown CLP appears to be a self-steering, self-referential network. The first slide used in the CLP consultation events was headed “What is a Community Learning Partnership?” I represent an anonymised version here below:

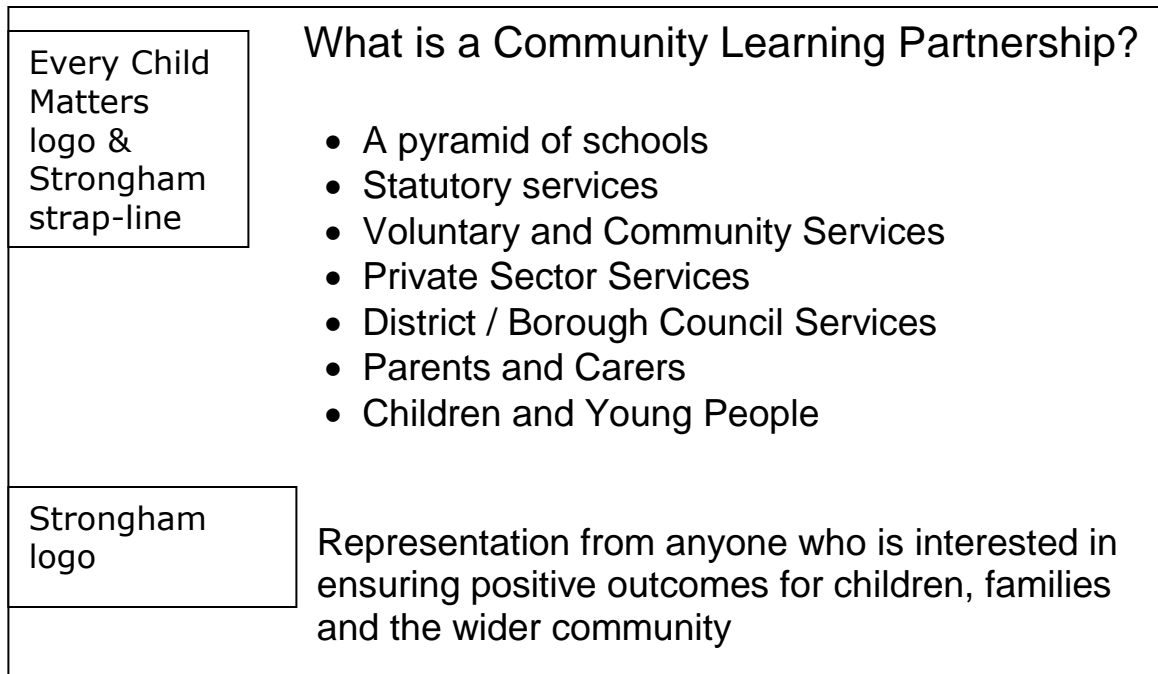


Fig. 19 slide from Community Learning Partnerships District Consultation Event

The slide above frames or represents CLPs as inclusive. As long as “representatives” are interested in “ensuring positive outcomes for children, families and the wider community” (and how could this normative goal be open to question?) then they are welcomed into the CLP. Unlike the diagrammatic G.I.S. representation of OldTown or the schematic, strategic tabulation of CLP boundaries (yet somehow like the life-sized map of the world in the story by Borges)⁷³ there seems to be no distinction between representation and the represented. Difference and distinctions are blurred within the normative, apparently holistic, community governance of the partnership – everyone is in it together. While OldTown CLP strives to form itself in its own image – as an autonomous network, a nominal and *particular* partnership, the *generic* representation of a CLP in the slide above offers a translation of what

⁷³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_Exactitude_in_Science

a CLP is in the image of Strongham. Andy told me in interview that they had adapted the Sure Start model of involving local parents in decision making.

Andy: The whole ethos is that er based around the advisory body which includes the local residents, local youth.

Pam: And are they likely to be appointed, selected - ?

Andy: They'll be selected. You know the Sure Starts model? It's the same as parents' involvement in Sure Start. And we've really taken the Sure Start model and in my words bastardized it for the CLP. ... you know what I mean?

Int: yeah – you've adapted it?

Andy: yeah OK does that make sense?

There were understandings amongst policy implementers in my study that they wanted to involve “the community”, especially the “hard to reach” and not just the “usual suspects”.

Katy explained to me:

“That, that's the thing isn't it? Once you start devolving work to communities you have to go at the pace of the community and I think that's where some of the tensions are in terms of deadlines for spend as well.” (LA02)

The reference to “deadlines for spend” indicates how the local authority had implementation targets to meet for Children's Centres. At the same time they were also expected to consult

with communities over their approach to the policy. Oliver, a District Partnership Officer told me

Oliver: "Cos obviously one of the problems is – at a borough wide level you work with community groups and you see the same people time and time again. And you know in some cases they are able to quite reasonably (albeit councillors would say not democratically) articulate issues for their local community. 'Cos they are as genuinely representative as it is possible to be. One lady from the area who claims to represent her community, nobody's ever seen anyone else from her local community at all. A woman called A . But she claims, for example, there's the fixed travellers' camp on S-. road. She says that she represents their interests. Now I'm told by colleagues who work with that camp – the one thing you can be sure of if you took her and put her in that camp she wouldn't come out alive. Now I can't stand her." (LA12)

When I met up with Ted, my "gatekeeper" at Strongham to discuss the progress of my research he made reference to some community representatives as "*zealots*" and I presumed in using this pejorative term he meant that these people were somehow not "genuinely representative". He also told me that during the course of developing the CLP strategy he had had the most contact with elected politicians, (Council Members) that he had ever had in the course of his professional career. They were concerned about CLPs in their areas. A voluntary sector manager gave me her view on elected members that was the opposite of "genuinely representative":

Petra: What isn't so clear when we - particularly when we get down to district level, is the extent to which elected members are aware. And I think they are the ones who have got to be kicked out of their comfort zones, I really do, because they see themselves as the guardians of the public purse the people who are accountable - and they, they don't really understand extended democracy at all.

Pam: That's really interesting because I'm interested in ... this issue of representative democracy and the formal structures and what did you call it?

Petra: 'Extended democracy', yes, which is about accepting as an elected person who might actually only have half a dozen votes that made any - do you know what I mean? Because when we get down to local level we know that the turn out at local elections is very poor and in the voluntary sector we get thrown back at us 'well, you know, you don't, you've got no elected mandate'. Well, actually, I would say 'neither have you' but of course I can't say that out loud. But they haven't. I mean if only thirty per cent of the electorate turn out and forty nine per cent vote for somebody else what does that mean? So it's really, really interesting. So I think I think the government's got it right to try and extend that democracy and have a bit more participation but the extent to which it will force elected members to go down that route I don't know. I don't know whether the White Paper ⁷⁴ goes far enough I haven't looked at it in sufficient detail.

(LA 15)

⁷⁴ Strong and Prosperous Communities The Local Government White Paper 2007

The community involvement discourse of the CLP strategy links to the Third Way social inclusion policy emphasis on engaging the “hard to reach”. David, a manager of a Sure Start Children’s Centre told me

“We’ve had to take this in bite-size chunks. We’ve got a lot of the community involved but you can never say you’ve done enough. We’ve still got masses of the community out there that can be accessed. So there’s still a lot of hard work to do.” (LA18)

I found that when policy implementers discussed “the community” they tended to distance themselves, regarding the community as “Other” although there were instances of people in meetings wearing different hats as local resident / community member and paid worker / policy implementer and so often “the community” was not hard to reach; “it” in the form of a multiple hat wearer was sitting around the same table unrecognised and so apparently absent. Conversely, elected local politicians were not recognised as representative of “the community” and so the process of establishing the CLP and holding it to account was depoliticized. The community was generally “nominalized” (Fairclough, 1992:25) although on occasion I found that there were distinctions drawn between the “school community” and the “wider community”. This is where tensions in the governance of Extended Schools have arisen because in providing the core offer of “wider community access” to school facilities, governors and staff have had to negotiate risks and their public liabilities with insurance against risk proving a key issue for caretaking and the use of school premises. This regulation is necessarily bureaucratic (Schofield, 2001) and in tension with the desire to engage and empower the community. Aside from bureaucratic barriers metaphorically barring the “wider

community” from school premises, Alice explained to me that there was a right *time* to involve the community in CLP decision making:

Alice: The parents who had been involved with the Sure Start programme were getting involved and that’s the same so y’know that can apply to, to all of the CLPs especially where there’s been a Sure Start programme already in existence but you’ve got to be y’know realistic and say right when’s the right time to bring the wider community in? If ... headteachers and the public sector deliverers haven’t got their heads around it then you don’t bring parents and wider community in at that point because it just looks like one big mess

Pam: Yeah

Alice: So you need to get a clear understanding and then widening participation to make it really work because – well obviously don’t go too far down the development line before you bring parents and carers in or else it then becomes like a *fait accompli* then and parents and community will never accept it. (LA 04)

The metaphor of *fait accompli* (that implies neither choice nor voice) is the opposite of the “*carte blanche*” metaphor symbolizing free choice that Alice used in chapter five. It contradicts the policy rhetoric of participation in public services and consumer choice. However, at another meeting Louise presented the MAG with a *fait accompli* - Strongham insisted that local authority Members – councillors had an automatic right to attend meetings and to be a member of the MAG. A liberal democrat councillor from a different CLP explained her view of democratic representation to me:

- Cllr: Yeah well the power is all with government office [region] or central government. Then responsibility is still there of the elected representatives but they have less say now in how things can be delivered. I'm all for involving local people but it's the elected representatives that have gone through the pain if you like of getting elected and who are pilloried if things go wrong but it looks as if you know can call for action and councillors can't. And there is a lot of dissatisfaction with that in amongst elected representatives. Because they feel y'know we put ourselves up for election, we get the grief and we've got our powers being diluted almost ...
- Pam. So would you go as far as to say that some of these partnerships, or quangos I think you called them, are undemocratic?
- Cllr. Well things like the health trusts are quangos because they're appointed by representatives of the government to serve in a local area they're not elected by the people of that area so oh well yeah they're not democratic because they're not elected in that way. But they can still have democracy about them but if you're looking at democracy as being about the voice of the people – no, they're not democratic at all because they're appointees and they could be and often are from a particular political party or a particular background they're not representative in the way they would be if people had to go and vote for them. ... but you know the power, the control is shifting centrally. There's a lot of talk about decentralisation and double devolution but its just words again, its just jargon. And again, because power lies where the money is and the money is controlled from the centre.

This councillor's assessment fits with Wilson's (2003) thesis that political power in England remains largely centralised, that local politicians have been emasculated while at the same time rhetorical policy emphasis on localism, partnership and community governance empowers policy actors working in partnerships. Walker terms these policy actors "quangocrats"(p.319). When I visited two Sure Start parents' forums, I found that, despite being presented with the "fait accompli" of policy shift from Sure Start to Children's Centres, they *did* seem to feel involved in decision making, could make some sense of the complexity of policy change from Sure Start to Children's Centres and at a minimum level of analysis, they continued to turn up to meetings. As we saw in Jane's story in chapter one, she valued being asked for her opinion but she was uneasy at being asked to represent a wider group of parents. Jane also insisted that the crèche was vital to her being able to participate. The parents' forums provided crèches so that parents could concentrate and join in discussion. However, neither the CLP consultation events nor the subsequent MAG meetings offered crèche on site.

7. Shopping for Policy Products

Partners around the CLP Management Action Group table were encouraged to consider the needs of OldTown families in relation to Children's Centres, Extended Schools and the broader aims of *Every Child Matters*. Early discussions focussed on the need to employ somebody to encourage reluctant or "hard to reach" families to attend school and to take up other facilities such as scout groups and swimming classes. Some time was spent working up a tailor-made project idea to suit the specific needs of the area. However, when the word came

from Strongham that they had to have a paid half time co-ordinator, this reduced the MAG's scope for discretionary expenditure. Rather than take time for further deliberation, quick solutions were encouraged. A letter was circulated to a wide range of organisations including community groups advising them that they could put forward proposals for money as long as they could manage to spend it within the current financial year. Bids came in to OldTown CLP from most of the schools whose headteachers were part of the Management Action Group. As Cath explained to me, they got their "share of the pie." (LA53). A range of initiatives were allocated funding including refurbishing the kitchen of the local charitable playscheme, a survey of needs on a particular housing estate and CCTV for several primary schools. Schools in particular succeed in getting a slice of the pie. Two of them are allocated money for CCTV. Ted, the strategic manager for children's centres at Strongham tells me that CCTV is not quite what was intended but he is happy to let the decision stand. In business terms this could be a "loss leader" with no immediate benefits but the longer term pay off in this case is the continued support of teachers for the local authority's CLP strategy.

Then, in addition to the CLP money, more resources appeared. The teenage pregnancy budget at Strongham had an underspend so CLPs were encouraged to become involved in delivering projects that would contribute to reducing teenage conception rates – another centralised strategy entering the CLP palimpsest. A menu of sex and relationships projects was put before the MAG for them to tick a box and make their selection (see appendix). This menu functioned as a heuristic – a policy framing device to reduce complexity and a means of speeding up decision making. The projects are packaged up ready for purchase so that the MAG does not need to spend time considering how they would plan and manage the projects –

this work has been done for them. However, the option is selected not on a technical or administrative basis. The Catholic headteacher said she could not agree to her pupils visiting a condom factory. Religious values (with a very long running tradition that structures beliefs and action) disrupted the CLP consensus. Malone (1999) argues in “Policy as product” that the “product-market metaphor for policy implies that our moral capacity toward others is something up for sale.” With agency “... reduced to rational choices made to buy or to sell, a matter of exerting preferences rather than of acting in accordance with constitutive values or concerns.” (p.19). The MAG did not debate religious values or consider collectively what its constitutive values and principles should be to inform the choice from the menu. It went ahead and selected the mother and toddler residential project and agreed that Louise would organise this through the Sure Start Centre. Peter asked “where are they going to? I wish I was a teenage parent.” There was some discussion around a couple of holiday camps as possible venues for the residential then Peter wrapped up the meeting congratulating the MAG : “Its good that we’re finally starting to deliver.”

Conclusion

In this chapter I showed how policy can re-badge or re-brand already existing initiatives thus problematising the teleological notion of “reform” with instrumental understandings of policy causes and effects. I presented findings on how OldTown CLP went about its business of implementing policy and how casual and informal the process of forming the Management Action Group was. Tick box performative processes formed part of demonstrable policy implementation yet seemed in some instances to also require intuition, value judgements and

interpretation. Despite the apparent consensual harmonious governance of Community Learning Partnerships, there were competing agendas with schools being framed both as part of the policy problem and part of the policy solution. Long standing faith communities structured both the apparently modern network governance and more traditional bureaucratic understandings of the public interest.

Representational procedures vary from administrative maps that may be immutable and mobile and appear to be precise, to a poem that is more ephemeral yet far more personal and humanistic. There is a variety of understandings about democracy with claims for extended democracy in tension with more traditional representative democracy. Just as social constructivism argues that there is no unmediated access to authentic reality, so it seems the CLP will struggle to find a way of governing the community without a means of recognising, categorising and mediating different interests (such as the woman who claimed to represent the needs of travellers). Democratic representation is always by proxy and therefore entails bureaucracy despite the human desire to overcome difference, to be embraced by community (Young, 1986). Although OldTown has some appearances of being a self-steering network, it is in large part dependent upon the back office bureaucracy of Strongham County Council. OldTown Community Learning Partnership operates like a club or network with a loose notion of membership. Elected councillors or “Members”, while they are presented as having privileged access to the CLP, appear to have no decision making authority. Action is centred on short term, expedient decisions that are administrative and yet political, informed not by careful consideration of evidence but by powerful traditions such as religion, by the affecting

ghost of Victoria Climbié and the postmodern application of signs and brands that add weight to my claim that discursive governance is key to the contested concept of welfare reform.

Chapter Eight

Gluing the Palimpsest: Reform beyond financial year end

Contents

1.	Introduction	306
2.	Policy Signification	307
3.	Black Holes, Accountability, and the Public Purse	310
4.	From Sure Start to Children's Centres: Spreading the jam thinner	313
5.	Active Welfare in the Social Investment State	318
6.	Enter the Carnavalesque	323
7.	Conclusion	343

“this phase is about the glue to support that re-shaping of services” (LA02)

Contemporary carnival is a polyphonic (many voiced) expression by those without power, sometimes sanctioned by those in power as a way to blow off steam. (Boje, 2001: 438)

1. Introduction

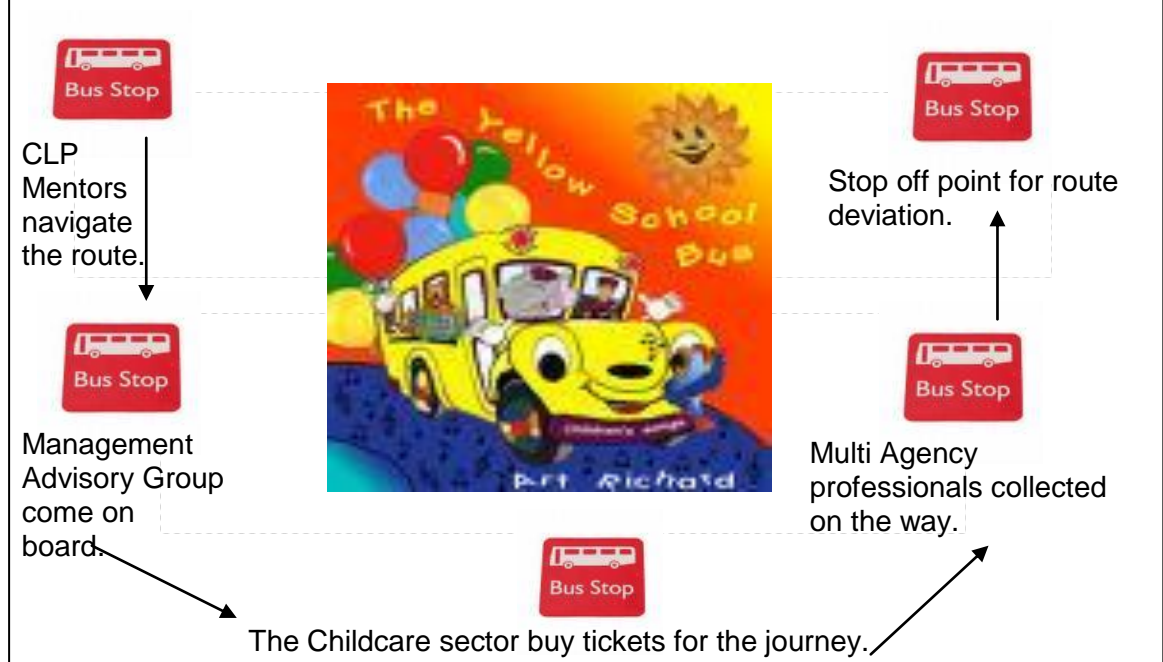
This chapter concludes the chronological account and introduces the final policy artefacts from my data set. “Quick wins” remain key elements within policy implementation but time and money get relativised and reinterpreted at different times and in different places.

Bureaucratic instrumental rationality and the marketisation of public service continue as strands in the CLP policy palimpsest but now a much *less* bureaucratic, de-commodified, more carnivalesque community circus project enters the frame as part of the CLP’s future activity, displacing the contentious issue of childcare from the policy implementation agenda of the CLP. A challenge to the validity of the circus project, and a rupture in the otherwise smooth circulation of a branded give-away threatens the Third Way partnership governance. The strategic vagueness of the in-house elastic-policy-project serves to glue the partnership together, carrying it forward beyond the financial year end into its uncertain future while the circus performance and policy implementation of welfare reform still remains dependent upon back office bureaucracy.

2. Policy Signification

The County Council produced a project plan for its CLP strategy, premised on a “rational goal” model of governance (Newman .2001:34) with finite understandings of time and money. As we have seen, policy goals are frequently vague and, despite the “core offer” of Children’s Centres and Extended Schools, the Community Learning Partnership concept is also imprecise. Strongham County Council used the opportunity of the Early Years conference to continue explaining CLPs to “partners”. At the Early Years conference attended by edu-carers from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors (where I collected the teddy bear) there were optional workshops on offer on “business planning” and “running a happy team”. The conference afforded a shopping opportunity in the break times with suppliers of educational toys enticing people to view and purchase their wares. It was also an opportunity for the local authority to promote Community Learning Partnerships by means of a whole conference, non-optional, PowerPoint™ presentation as well as a “market stall” open during break times and over the extended lunch time, displaying information, in effect *selling* the Community Learning Partnerships concept. I asked a childcare development officer about the CLP display and she explained that she herself had put it together. She kindly e-mailed me her slides. Her display consisted of a set of A4 Powerpoint slides that had been laminated and arranged imaginatively around a collection of bright and shiny toys as a table-top display. This linked the recognizable theme of early years childhood via three dimensional objects (such as a toy bus) to the less tangible concept of Community Learning Partnerships.

Picking up Passengers



Route 2 Terminating @ The Business Plan

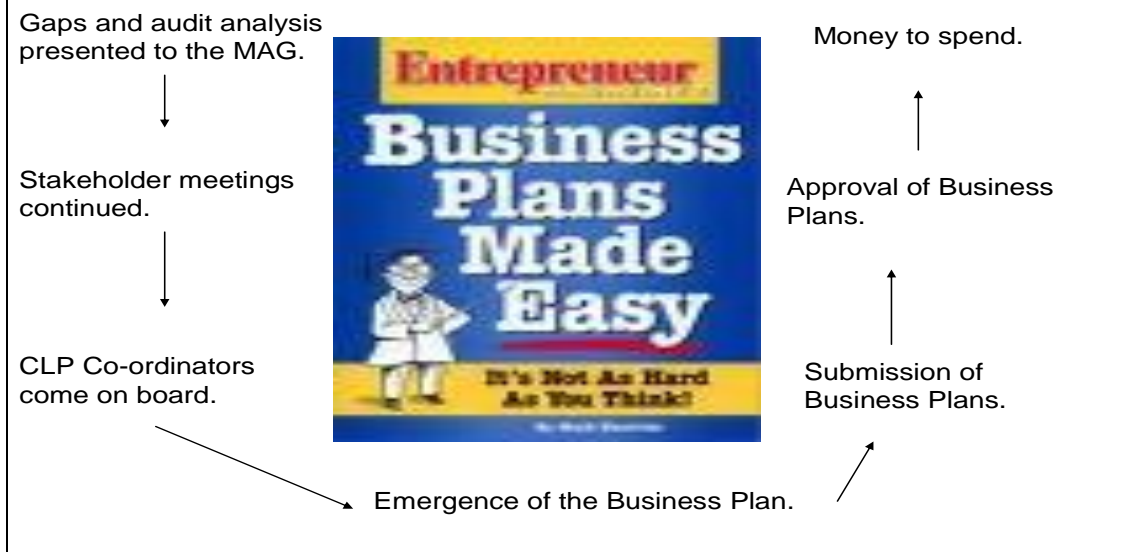




Fig. 20 the CLP journey

The representation of the CLP journey roughly follows the traditional understanding of policy implementation as linear, planned and phased, mimicking the central government representation of planning and commissioning of children's services that I showed in chapter five. Here, however, in this more localised, aestheticized version, we have a stop off point for some indeterminate "route deviation." The business planning process appears child-like in its simplicity with the "business plans made easy" text book recalling the management guru best sellers. Finally CLPs are congratulated for arriving at their destination somewhere over the rainbow and rewarded with an overflowing crock of gold. The journey continues but there is no reference to the end point – the policy *purpose*, or the children and families that we might expect to be the ultimate beneficiaries of the *largesse*, whose needs ought to be represented in the "gaps and audit analysis". The end game seems to be the display of the entrepreneurial process itself, represented in the business plan. The contrast between the image of plenitude and Louise's peanuts that we encountered in chapter five reveals not only the distinction

between Strongham's representation of generosity and OldTown's interpretation of meanness. It seems that, rather than hard currency, the resources that are on offer in this policy are subject to interpretation and translation. The material resource of hard cash becomes subject to the "foreign exchange" of policy entrepreneurs as the policy is translated in a variety of local practice arenas. Power (1997) has demonstrated how audit mentalities pervade UK public management with the assumption that cost accounting can be applied equally to public as well as private services. However, as Power argues, "value for money" ultimately depends upon value judgements. There are no ultimate technocratic solutions to measuring effectiveness and efficiency. While the money available to OldTown can be quantified, its *significance* varies from Louise's comparison with previous policy initiatives and her peanuts signification to the slide representing the crock of gold as a significant sum. As well as the *spatial* distribution and representation of money, *time* also devalues the currency as we saw with the emphasis on "spend, spend, spend" before financial year end.

3. Black holes, Accountability and the Public Purse

There was a determination to spend up to the limit to avoid having to return money from OldTown to Strongham as a finance officer explained to me:

"The other part of it is obviously ensuring the budget management side of it. Ensuring that people are spending the money. 'Cos obviously at the County Council we like to maximize our expenditure to the DfES. We need to ensure that we are delivering the

services and not handing back any funding. And obviously we have to report that back to the DfES on a quarterly basis” (LA47)

Quarterly management reports are expected to detail expenditure against the core offer so that achievement of objectives can be quantitatively monitored. However, there is a remaindering process, as the finance officer translated for me:

“Other is if it isn’t doesn’t fit into anywhere. Now I’ve been advising our Community Learning Partnerships about this just the last couple of days. Because the DfES found that over this last financial year, X millions numbers of pounds had been recorded as ‘Other’. Not just by our local authority but by a number of local authorities. And what they’re saying is they cannot match that to specific monitoring and evaluation data. “

(LA47)

Because expenditure on “Other” cannot be specified, despite it having been spent, it is as though in policy evaluation terms the money has disappeared into a black hole. A worry for OldTown CLP was that “their” money would be “lost”, not only clawed back by Strongham but in an apparent worst case scenario, would have to be returned by Strongham to DfES which seemed to imply a judgement of inefficiency – inadequate implementation or slow “delivery” which in turn was equated with failure to spend. This *impression* (as opposed to formal evaluation or audit) of inefficiency could impact on future relationships between Strongham and DfES resulting in potential delay of the PFI schools building programme,⁷⁵ as Sue explained to me. There is the need to spend up to budget then not only to achieve the

⁷⁵ Building Schools for the Future <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/bsf/>

goals of the CLP strategy but to be seen as competent *in general* at performing or delivering policy implementation. However, financial year end is an administrative timetable that seems to depreciate the value of the public purse as decision making speeds up. Oliver told me an apocryphal tale that expressed frustration:

“Because as [a colleague]’s fond of saying... (and I’m not sure this is apocryphal or this is an actual quote) ‘ why is it everybody thinks that all the problems have been solved on the 31st of March ?’”Cos obviously they haven’t. “

Andy expressed the subjectivity of time:

“ if we don’t hit those targets for DfES we get penalised. So - but I suppose my analogy is we’ve all done essays you’ve been given six months and you’ve done ‘em overnight so I mean, you know. And I also say to teachers when they go up in arms and say ‘I can’t spend this money’ and I say ‘I’ve never met a school that couldn’t spend its money’ like, you know.” (LA01)

To return to structuration theory, the experience of time might be subjective but some social forces or structures (in this instance, DfES) have the power to structure the actions of local policy implementers and impose deadlines on local action.

4. From Sure Start to Children's Centres: Spreading the jam thinner

. Norman Glass, widely regarded as the “architect” of Sure Start wrote in the Guardian in 2005:

“... in my only discussion about Sure Start with Alastair Darling, then chief secretary to the Treasury, before the programme was launched. Enthusiasm is not Darling's thing, but he asked a shrewd question - one that may yet come back to haunt New Labour. "How can you assure me," he asked, "that this programme will not lead in 10 years' time to a lot of boarded-up, fly-blown family centres such as I have seen in my own constituency and elsewhere?"

According to Glass, it seems that Darling could foresee future redundant “fly blown” buildings. To repeat Liam's quote from chapter seven :

“Well ... I think all we've been told at the top is ‘work with your private providers, work with your voluntary groups. Build on school sites.’ And that's largely a pragmatic decision by government ‘cos they can't afford to build stand alone Children's Centres.” (LA06)

Based on an analysis of the quasi-business model of the childcare element of the core offer, which is dependent upon income generation, and the difficulties of sustaining Neighbourhood

Nurseries, Sure Start Local Programmes and Children's Centres as they operate in the childcare quasi-market (especially those located in disadvantaged areas) (Butt et al, 2007), I agree with Liam's interpretation of the rationale behind the "pragmatic decision" not to build "stand alone" centres which fits with Glass's and Darling's suspicions and scepticism about the sustainability of Sure Start centres. This interpretation, however, is in contrast with policy rhetoric emanating from the Government whereby the policy is presented not as "stand alone children's centres are unaffordable", which narrative might risk exposing the financial fragility of the quasi business model. Rather, the policy is presented as "mainstreaming" the Sure Start initiative so that it translates from a time limited and geographically targeted initiative to a universal policy with long lasting effects. Bev, a children's charity manager told me in response to my question about Sure Start:

Bev: it was going to be long term funding... It was ten years, it was ten years. I have in my file; I can put my hand on it now, a ten year budget projection.

Pam: So that felt like a promise?

Bev: Oh it was ten; this was the way the future was going to be with Sure Start." (LA 32).

As Bev and many of the implementers in my study are aware that, as Glass (2005) has documented, the policy change entails "doing more with less" – that is more Children's Centres are to be built with proportionately far fewer resources. Andy explained metaphorically: "So we're trying to spread a few pennies across a hundred pounds worth of work. " Jane explained more specifically: "So we have a target of thirty two children's centres to be delivered with six million pounds. Strongham children's centre cost 2.2 million". Glass

(2005) has queried whether the policy shift means a substantively different policy with only the Sure Start name and brand remaining while the original principles of community based governance may be lost. With the move from Sure Start Local Programmes to the policy of a Children's Centre for every community by 2010, there is proportionately less money available per child although this material fact is unacknowledged in official policy rhetoric. The policy trajectory can be framed in broad overall terms as increased investment, whereas Glass (2005) estimates that the policy shift entails a 30% reduction in spending per child.

In the early days of the programme, many felt that Sure Start was generously funded. Some of the people I interviewed interpreted the spending of Sure Start resources as "profligate". Liam told me:

"I think where it fell down I think we had too much money given to us, I have to say. It was so investment intensive that we lost sight of really working together and every year, year on year, most Sure Starts were actually struggling to spend what they had.

David, also a Sure Start Children's Centre manager, reflected on his experience:

"As I say, I've not been involved in this business for a very long time but when I arrived from my parachute I arrived and thought woah ... What I perceived as waste of money was very evident". (LA18)

Anna said: “I managed one of the flagship (I won’t tell you which one) but I managed one of the flagship Sure Start units where they were a tad profligate. “ (LA44)

As I discussed in chapter four, in the modernisation agenda waste is associated with bureaucracy (duGay, 2005) which is to be eliminated or at least reduced through “efficiency”, and often this is linked to market solutions. The Government has produced a range of guidance to assist people working in children’s services, including a document available on the *Every Child Matters* website, “*Industry Techniques and Inspiration for Commissioners*”. This includes sections on “lean manufacturing”, “Business Process Reengineering”, “Just in time” and “the 4Ps marketing mix” (DfES and DH, 2006). Lean manufacturing and just in time processes are recent management techniques building on modernist, Taylorist forms of management control. In my study I found that bodily metaphors of “trimming the fat”, “tightening belts” and going on a “crash diet” were used by Sure Start local programme managers who were cutting their services at the same time as CLPs were forming and struggling to spend money. Outside of the CLP network but linked to the broader policy palimpsest of children’s services, other areas of the local authority were also concerned with “streamlining” bureaucracy to achieve mandatory “Gershon efficiency savings” (Leach and Pratchett, 2005) at the same time as creating new networks and partnerships. While OldTown CLP partners bid against each other and invited bids from “partners” for project money, Tricia, a senior social work manager told me that Strongham’s budget for vulnerable children was overspent. This is the traditional “oil tanker” professional social work section of the local authority that is responsible for supporting families and protecting children, taking them into local authority care where private family relationships fail.

Pam: And is that still where you have cost pressures?

Tricia: God yeah. Massive. Massive cost pressures. We've got - as we are today our predicted four million overrun. We're two thirds in [to the financial year] so we need – um the budget, I think the budget's fourteen, fifteen million. And we've spent nineteen million this year. (LA45)

OldTown's budget is peanuts indeed compared to this and the objective of the CLP flagships turning around the efficiency of the welfare system so that every child is happy, healthy, safe, contributing and achieving ⁷⁶seems to be a gargantuan ambition. David's discourse indicates to me that one person's flexible, entrepreneurial network (the CLPs as flagships for community empowerment discourse) is another person's red tape:

““Y’know you’ve got, from where I’m sat you’ve got community learning partnership, a community learning partnership management committee, an integrated strategy group across the area , covering all the learning partnerships, district children’s trust board that then feeds into a county children’s trust board and then feeds into a cabinet. That’s a lot of bureaucracy, a hell of a lot of bureaucracy and that’s gonna take away 25% of resources from the face. Y’know and – wipe that lot out and give me the money direct and I’ll give you what you want. I’ll give you government targets, I can

⁷⁶ See appendix for Every Child Matters 5 outcomes framework

read Every Child Matters and I can deliver what goes on. What we do here we do despite the bureaucracy, not because of it. It's true. " (LA18)

David's wish to deliver money to "the face" echoes the frustration that we saw previously in chapter five with Peter's desire to meet "real need." One way in which the paradox of investing in the infrastructure of CLPs at a time when other services were being rationalised, was resolved was through what I term a *duplication-inefficiency myth*. I was told the same apocryphal tale by at least three separate interviewees. The story goes: a parent is identified as in need of a parenting programme. This solution to her problem is offered to her by different agencies – for example her health visitor, a community worker and a youth justice agency. In one version of the story she is expected to attend a parenting programme in the morning delivered to her by one organisation then a different organisation expects her to attend the same day for a similar intervention in the afternoon. A similar apocryphal story of "families being visited by different professionals" was also evident in research carried out on a family support project in the North of England by Blackler and Regan (2006). Rod told me:

"And I've certainly come across anecdotally someone who was given two appointments in one day and they were both parenting groups and she turned up and she never went back"

(LA08)

The story was myth-like, rarely told with much detail but narrated with a conviction that if only such duplication could be avoided, by means of collaboration between agencies, resources would be released into "the system" to better aid families in the future. I am not

suggesting that the story was false. My interpretation of the *function* of the myth in implementing a “more for less” policy change, is that it prevents consideration of whether policy has been allocated sufficient resources, which is a policy decision that is largely outside the control of local implementers. It seems to me that several implementers “bought into” the modernisation discourse and internalised their responsibility for inefficient duplication. They pragmatically accept the resources that are allocated from central government along with the narrative of waste. Kevin, a member of OldTown CLP Management Action Group, suggested that meetings might be rationalised:

“I think there are talks or suggestions that instead of having all these partnerships everywhere that there is one area or district partnership that looks at all those issues we are trying to address so people aren’t going to twenty meetings.”

Kevin imagines that rationalisation can reduce wasteful meetings but I have argued that meetings are where the discursive work happens that contributes to policy implementation. The modernist efficiency discourse, represented in the Planning and Commissioning Framework⁷⁷ focuses on managing an apparently fixed system of welfare need and demand, with policy solutions devised by politicians. This depoliticizes implementation as public *administration*. Alongside this version of governance there is the rationale of the active investment state that promotes individual self-reliance (Lister, 2003) and *entrepreneurial* governance that demonizes bureaucracy and asserts managers’ “right to manage”.

⁷⁷ Figure 10

5. Active Welfare in the Social Investment State

The concept of active welfare moves away from professional-client relationships towards “empowering” communities, families and individuals to engage in “co-production” of welfare whereby people are helped in order to help themselves in a narrative of self-reliance. (Miller and Stirling, 2004). Here the metaphor for investment is “pump-priming”, the end goal of which is often framed in terms of “sustainability.” Rather than welfare as social protection and a public good in and of itself, in this policy frame, the investment is repaid with return (reduction in welfare spending through responsibilized earners contributing tax receipts). Alongside a discursive shift from “something for something” to “no rights without responsibilities” the Labour Government increasingly expects this to be enacted through non-governmental institutions such as the market and / or civil society (Clarke J. et al 2007, Rhodes, 1997).

Rather than tackle the complexities of managing the childcare market, we have seen that OldTown CLP decided that sufficient childcare was already available in OldTown, they ticked that box and focussed on achieving the goals of *Every Child Matters* through partnership synergy and efficiency. As well as “pump-priming”, the metaphor of short term finance as “glue” was used to represent the “sticking together”, the formation of the CLP partnership, in order to release resources through reducing duplication or through “re-shaping services”.

Katy explained: “but then this phase is about the glue to support that re-shaping of services.” (LA02).

We saw in chapter six that some of the policy implementers had a vision of the CLP becoming a charity and so functioning independently of the local authority. In order to move from a loose network or partnership to a stand-alone, independent enterprise capable of applying for charitable status or to become a social firm, an organizational identity must be created with written, stipulated powers that determine the “objects” of the organization in legal terms. While as I argued in chapter two, the discipline of social science has pursued an interest in the distinction and interaction between structure and individual agency, in simple legal terms, an institutional structure *is* an agency. That is to say, an organisation, whether it be a firm or a charity or a statutory body can take certain actions in concert as one entity, according to its legal powers (note these are powers *to* as well as powers *over*) and consequently be held accountable for the exercise of formal responsibilities (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). The rise of the internal market in the NHS and social care elements of welfare created quasi-market purchasers and providers. There is confusion over whether CLPs are intended to be purchasers or providers. We saw how Peter was pleased that they were starting to “deliver”, claiming responsibility for the sex and relationships mothers and toddlers residential project yet they had purchased this from the teenage pregnancy strategy menu. The provisional, liminal network status allows the CLP to perform both functions. However, this network status also allows the CLP as a body to shirk the question of liabilities. These are underwritten by Strongham County Council, the bureaucratic body as Brenda, a legal officer explained:

Pam “In terms of the extended schools, are there governance issues there around premises?”

Brenda:.”Yeah, there are. There’s bit and bobs of things I think that we need to worry about, we’ve been talking to the insurance people. We know, for instance, that one of the biggest problems is in allowing your premises to be used by other people you ask for insurance. The minute you start asking for a million [pounds] insurance people back off saying ‘no thank you. I’m not going to run the little football club now after all this that and the other.’ So we’ve been trying to agree now with our insurance people that if schools do that, it can be part of our insurance so we’ve managed to shift them to the use of the playing field at the moment. So you’ve got this conflict really, is it County Council doing it, is it an organised body, is it a body that’s already got its own insurance - because accidents will happen - and we know that children, children are not litigious but it can go on for years...., they can be seventy and still sue you. So we know that we’ve got to be clear about who picks up the tab for any of this stuff that goes wrong.”

This extract illustrates the issue of underwriting that, along with the question of where to locate rights and responsibilities for welfare, goes to the heart of who is prepared to underwrite the associated risks. Governance guidance for Sure Start Children’s Centres and extended schools (DfES, 2007) points out that “Whereas schools have a governing body with functions prescribed in law, Sure Start Children’s Centres have no statutory basis for governing bodies”

⁷⁸.I interviewed Peter, the Chair of OldTown CLP and asked him about written terms of reference that I anticipated might have been a first step towards “agentification” of the CLP, or

⁷⁸ In November 2007 DCSF launched a public consultation on proposals to give Sure Start Children’s Centres (SSCCs) a specific statutory legal basis, as part of the forthcoming Education and Skills Bill.

at least might provide clarification of its duties and the form and nature of its powers and responsibilities. He answered with an acknowledgement of his personal accountability for spending public money:

“I still haven’t seen them. I think that is really bizarre and I cannot understand how it is that they are saying we’ll send them to you soon, given that we’ve now met three or four times and have allocated something like a hundred thousand pounds of spend I mean I could have spent that on a Caribbean holiday ...”

It seems the CLP’s powers are derived from the *practice* of its constituent members – its “rules in use” (Ostrom, 1999) not from its organizational governing instrument that might detail legal powers or at least describe duties and responsibilities. To return to my themes of time and money, the CLP is not constituted in a form that allows it to operate a bank account in its own name. As we have seen, this has not prevented it from spending money. Whether it can govern its own timetable and whether it can govern its own future is as yet an open question.

6. Enter the Carnavalesque



Fig. 21 Child’s paper watch

This is a toy watch that fits around a small child's wrist. The colourful paper watch is decorated with images of circus clowns and the "face" has juggling balls and the text "OldTown Community Learning Partnership".⁷⁹ Like the bendy "martian" toy, the pen and the teddy bear, this was also produced with public money. The five juggling balls logo symbolizes a local circus idea planned by OldTown CLP. The logo is reinforced in another artefact that makes an appearance in this final chapter. Let Lynne, a community artist, tell us about the circus:

Lynne : "I had an overexcited conversation with Louise. As I understand it, Louise cooked this idea up with some other people. I'm not quite sure who now but there we go. As I understand it, it was - what I mean is - why we get on with Louise and why Louise kind of gets our work I think is that what she's always looking for how you can open that work out and say to a community 'this is what's happening' and she understands that part of the transformation of a culture within a community is about a community being able to look at itself and say 'oh are we like this? Oh, how are we?' Because I think people can tell a story about community that's very negative ,very damning, very - its completely unhelpful, other than for getting money and y'know we're all poor 'ere in [OldTown] send us money'; that's it, that's the only way its useful. OK, the rest of the time you need to be going' what's good, what's happening that's fantastic, how are people changing, how are people making different choices how are people reclaiming the streets how are people y'know dressing up in silly hats?' It doesn't matter what it is but it just - y'know. And also I think there's that other thing

⁷⁹ I have removed the actual name to preserve anonymity

which Louise also gets which is about contact which is about people making contact with different people. So it's not just y'know, 'I have my family in my street and that's who I see.' It's about being able to get people out and mix them up and go 'oooh look'. So as I understand it that's the sort of motivation and it's about displaying to ourselves what good stuff's going on. And I think she felt it would be great to take a theme of, for example, circus and kind of go 'well how could you translate that through all of these different sort of learning opportunities' and then have a kind of have excuse at the end and go 'right well we'll all show off well all do a big thing ' And I think its, I think its great y'know. Its absolutely right. It's a kind of cross community project that you can see, you can see where all the different interventions could be, you could see what all the different ... you know some people are doing something which generates masses of publicity or that they run the press office y'know . I mean 'cos its not just about being able to juggle –

Pam: - It's about the process - ?

Lynne: Yes I think that it is, it's very much about that. And I think its - um, that its also doing something that's not just internal I think. Which is the thing what we're very keen on, is that y'know, you do what you're doing here but then you go like that [*gestures performance with arms*] and say 'hello look what we're doing'. Cos I think that does y'know , it just changes stuff. There is a whole thing that happens I think. 'Cos we're from a theatre background really, all of us kind of come from - certainly we've all taken part in theatre, we've all done theatre and it's my kind of core practise if you like but is that there's a thing that happens when somebody stands up and somebody else looks at you and there's a *meaning* in that..."

Pam:. The performance?

Lynne:Yeah, but not even a performance. It's a tiny performance it's a tiny thing but it's enormous ...

Lynne makes a connection here between the universal and the particular – between a tiny and an enormous thing, bringing to mind Blake's "world in a grain of sand".

Lynne :...because there's an acknowledgment there of me and my being in the world which you are sharing in. It's not as if I'm peeping through the door and seeing you or I'm falling over the hedge and seeing you. Its kind of going this is me, this is me, this is, this is who I am...

Pam: And you get an audience response to that ?

Lynne:And somebody looks at you and goes, the audience looks at you and goes 'that's you then !' y'know. It kind of doesn't matter what happens next, all sort of things could happen next - they could, the next thing could be funny it could be sad it could be y'know just passing, it could be a different effect, it could make you think anything but there' s that moment where the audience looks at you, you've shown yourself to the audience and , dunno, there's a powerful meaning in that I feel..

Pam: Would you describe that as sort of something authentic?

Lynne:I would , I would and I think that's what we're always looking for is the authenticity of that experience and which is why were not kind of, we don't ever look like a sort of y'know a proscenium arch theatre (LA33)

This excited dialogue could be regarded as a performance in itself. Note that I ask the leading question about authenticity. The circus idea seems a long way from a discourse of managerialist evidence based policy with its insistence on delivering efficient, strategic outcomes or from the fashionable, policy relevant discourse of “social capital” and there is no mention of marketing (although clearly the circus concept is underpinning the brand depicted on the CLP freebie). Critical readers of this thesis may bring to mind a “bread and circuses” critique of mass culture. (Swingewood, 1977). Fox and Miller (1993) criticize the use of symbols representing this as “Let them eat the postmodern cake”. They draw on “... a long and rich tradition of critical theory” to offer “... an inoculation against false consciousness.” Yet Lynne’s promotion of the spectacular opens up the possibility of OldTown performing a positive public image rather than being subject to the policy gaze, specified as an object of policy as a “*very negative*” place through G.I.S. and other administrative other-ing technologies. Lynne does not deny the material aspects of geographically targeted welfare administration “we’re all poor ‘ere in [OldTown] send us money” but she turns public funds, not into individualised “outcomes” but into a different kind of *performance* management in a radically indeterminate community space and time. There is no “proscenium arch”, no clearly delineated detached observer perspective, through which to access the meaning of this very particular and yet quite abstract circus, scheduled to take place at some time in the near future but already producing juggling effects in the present. I discovered that Kevin was also already on the inside of the circus-circuit.

Pam: So have you had involvement in this circus project idea?

Kevin: Mm.

Pam: So how did that um – what’s the development of the circus idea?

Kevin: Well there was me, Louise and Peter sat in a room and thought it up really (laughs).

But I think originally it came out of a working group that was organising – it was supposed to be looking at – y’know the bits of funding that they’re trying to get rid of?

Pam: Yeah

Kevin: I think it was a funding meeting but they started talking about how we could engage –

Pam: Cos there’s not a lot of funding is there, for that group?

Kevin: Oh no, no. Anyway after that meeting we sat down and thought about this link of y’know, the circus, the events, the Olympics. Which actually is a really good stretch of time to put something into place, isn’t it? And I think the circus idea around developing skills, developing skills, building capacity, self-awareness is a real opportunity. And it’s something *different* that would encourage young people hopefully to take part.

Pam: So would you feel as though, again, there are overlaps there with NMP⁸⁰ objectives?

Kevin: Yes and no but they’re not overlaps as such cos I’m organising a conference anyway for young people. Its about giving young people a voice. I’ve now incorporated a bit of the circus into it. Again it’s about being aware of what’s out there and because I’ve been involved with the community learning partnership it seems a natural progression for us to look at our area.” (LA34)

See how Kevin incorporates and translates the CLP circus project into his youth conference initiative. Hilary from the local College also seemed to have been infected with the enthusiasm generated by the circus:

⁸⁰ Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, the partnership organization that Kevin works for.

Pam: So are you going to be working alongside the arts organisations to do the circus workshops?

Hilary: No we're planning to do it on our own. I've done some research into a particular kind of circus prop if you like which is based on a Maori tradition. Essentially it's a bit like a ball on the end of a string and initially Maori women used it to strengthen their wrists, ready for weaving. And then it was taken up by the men who used it in hunting and later used it as kind of play. Um but it has developed into like a leisure activity. Its in [unclear on tape] America and the South of England and quite a lot of groups actually practise it. So you can buy them commercially and it looks a bit like a pouch um with a ball in it um which has a swivel attached to it and a cord and a handle on the end. And on the other end of the pouch there were long tails –

Pam: I'm struggling but go on. (laughs)

Hilary (laughs) But it can be brightly coloured . And you have a pair so you hold one in each hand and you twirl them.

Pam:. So the pouch has got a weight?

Hilary: Yes . You can twirl them sort of backwards and forwards which is all I've managed to do for now.

Pam: So you've got the brightly coloured tails –

Hilary - yeah so it looks pretty. But there are quite a lot of complex moves that can be done with it so once you get proficient you can do things called [unclear on tape] y'know.

Pam: Yeah! So would you be planning to offer that to the schools?

Hilary: Yeah. The idea is that we go in and work with a group of children and their parents in school. So from the College's point of view we can say to the parents, y'know, did you enjoy this activity? Can you see why it's important to do things with your children? Try and encourage them to do things at home. But also, have you thought about doing a course y'know and just say just give us your contact details so we can let you know. So I mean that's all we would get from it just contact with hopefully different groups. But the children – well the parent first of all will make one of these things called a poi and then they'll help their child to make one. So at the end of the activity both the adult and the child should have a finished product and then we will show them how to use them.

Pam: So that would fit in with the sorts of things that have been discussed about the circus and outreach - ?

Hilary: Yeah. And what we'd want to do is if we can deliver it in schools, (and I have talked to a couple of heads about it) is make sure some of the school staff are there, perhaps a teaching assistant, hopefully a class teacher and then they can see how its done and we can give them the instructions and then they can do it, y'know.

Pam: And have you sort of had to take on board Every Child Matters agenda in order to be able to put forward some objectives?

Hilary To be honest Every Child Matters is just coming into college now in any case but we're calling it Every Learner Matters rather than every child matters. So yeah we are familiar with those categories anyhow. But yeah in my bid I've put how it meets the Every Child Matters agenda.

Pam: So is it clear to you what a bidding process would be? Is it a transparent process?

Hilary Mmm well I'm hoping that all I have to do is turn up with my idea. I mean I have mooted the idea with a couple of people and they seem keen on it, um, so I'm hoping it's a matter of saying this is what we want, this is where we want it and this is what the outcome is. I hope it's that transparent. If its not then I'll have to go back to the drawing board ! (LA 40)

Hilary's toy poi commodity allows the college to reach out and enrol learners and to work collaboratively with schools. She translates the policy category of child across to "learner". She is relaxed about bidding for CLP money because she has already warmed up collaborators, "mooting" the idea of the exotic *poi*, translating it easily across the local circus-circuit network into the prosaic, bureaucratic palimpsest of Every Learner Matters.

Fig. 22 Highlighter pen



This triangular shaped pen displays the same juggling balls logo as the watch and is inscribed “OldTown Community and Learning Partnership”.⁸¹ This is clearly the sponsoring body of the artefact but unlike the teddy bear promotional item that connects a customer to information about the childcare market, here there is no identification of location, no point of contact, no telephone number, physical address or web-site for a head office, no idea of the objectives of the organization, no mission statement detailing its “unique selling point”. As Lury (2004) discusses, there is no need for a brand to have a clear referent when the brand markets itself. The pens were handed out at a meeting of OldTown Community Learning Partnership. In a jocular manner, the pens were distributed as prizes for attending one of the CLP meetings. I accepted mine with alacrity.

As we saw from the transcript excerpts above, the circus represents a project aimed broadly at involving local families in a celebration with instrumental goals of engaging adult learners and young people and encouraging parents to play with their children. The branded artefacts also represent the circus as an organizational logo for the CLP, intended to link the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes to a possible five ring circus and to the five rings of the Olympics logo. However, governance of themes and decisions is risky and contested as I observed. Let’s visit OldTown CLP MAG meeting for one last time:

To get to the CLP MAG meeting, we go through main reception where there is a flat screen TV with looped images of nature – a waterfall, autumn trees, snow scene, etc accompanied by inspirational aphorisms along the lines of “When you leave this earth you won’t be remembered for what you earned but what you left behind”. The final slide on the loop

I have removed the actual place name.

consists not of pictures but of the textual command “no piercings, no jewellery”. The meeting takes place in the careers library of a high school. Around the edge of the large, airy room are posters and leaflets on racks promoting career opportunities, including a poster illustrating a young man working with children. A catering flask of coffee sits on a tray with cups, milk and biscuits on a table in a corner near the window. People are invited people to collect a drink as they enter the room before the formal part of the meeting starts. There are several large classroom desks pushed together to form a large table in the centre of the room. A year eleven pupil sits away from the table on a low chair. She is learning to take minutes. She distributes minutes of the previous meeting and an agenda. The places around the table soon get filled and more chairs are brought. I take this opportunity to get a coffee, withdraw from the table and sit on a low chair by the minute taker. I am using my self as my research instrument and taking field notes to record my observations (Hannabuss, 2000). There are faces that are familiar to me from previous meetings as well as completely new people turning up, some of whom, I assume are education managers from the second tier local authority. The chair of the meeting, Peter (the headteacher whose school this is) rushes in looking flushed and apologising for being late. He notes that there are some new people around the table and suggests that we do a round of introductions. People give their name, sometimes their job title and sometimes say things like: “this is my first meeting so I’m not sure what to expect”. The newcomers are put at their ease. Still in a state of agitation, Peter struggles to control his flushed demeanour.

This is the multi-agency group, sometimes known as a Management Action Group. The partnership includes Norma, who runs a local voluntary membership organisation that

provides out of school childcare through locally run voluntary committees (she was recently awarded an OBE), Phil, a youth and community worker (the only one in the room dressed in jeans) employed by the County Council, Ian, who works for the local out of school club, Sally a Connexions manager, Cath and Kath two local primary school headteachers , Alice, who has the ambiguous job title of Partnership Facilitator, Louise, the Sure Start Children's Centre manager, Kevin, a manager from the local Neighbourhood Management Initiative, (another community network form of governance) Lesley, who sits on the Management Advisory Committee of the Children's Centre in her unpaid capacity as a Parent – i.e. a policy beneficiary and an active citizen (although she is also paid to work part-time at the Children's Centre where she manages the toy library), Hilary, a community education worker from the local F.E. college and nine others including three elected councillors (two women, one man) from the local authority who are attending the partnership for the first time. It is apparent from the chats over coffee before the meeting starts that many of these partners are on first name terms, used to sharing common experiences of working together locally in different contexts and have established familiarity. Someone remarks that "*Health haven't turned up again*" referring to the fact that although the NHS is a signatory to the newly formed Children's Trust, provides services in conjunction with the Sure Start Children's Centre and a health representative is invited to attend the partnership, no health professional (such as a health visitor, midwife, school nurse nor a strategic manager) comes along to the meetings. No one from JobCentre Plus has attended either. The meeting proceeds to discuss the agenda items which include the production of a business plan and the circus project. The local councillors appear somewhat bemused and unable to work out the format of the meeting.

Cath: I asked for this next item, finance, to be placed on the agenda. I am concerned that decisions are being made such as the circus project and I'm not clear whether this is an actual project that will be going ahead and if so, how many days it is supposed to be for, and what exactly is happening at my school? When did this decision get made? Who agreed to it? Some decisions seem to be being made elsewhere, away from this group. And I'm not happy about the lavish buffet that was put on at the other meeting I attended at the community centre. I'm not sure it was really necessary – I'd already had my lunch. Where is all the money coming from and who made those decisions? I don't want to be awkward and I'm not saying I don't support what we're trying to do here but many of us are here in a voluntary capacity and we need to make sure we are effective ...

Kath: Yes and those highlighter pens that were given out –

(several people hastily rummage through previous minutes of meetings).

Louise : If you remember, we have been under serious pressure to spend money within this financial year and we all agreed that the circus project would be a way of bringing the community together and getting agencies to buy in. It isn't just about the money – it's about the needs of families in our community. A circus will appeal to families, young people, it can happen in schools, in youth groups, we could get local dance troupes to do five minutes in the ring, ... It could be a small or a large project according to what funding we can attract and which groups take part ...

Kath: I don't think we should be trying to replicate the [OldTown] carnival ...

Cath : Well in my school I am used to strict budgetary control. Our school governors authorise expenditure and there is a clear tracing of accountability.

Louise: We've been told we must work in new, partnership ways. A small group of us got together and realised that with this limited amount of money we could achieve a lot through the circus project, especially if we add value by putting in another bid for community arts money and then if we can link it to the Olympics we can ensure sustainability. This could be huge – it's an exciting vision. We'd probably be able to involve local businesses. The circus means we can achieve the Every Child Matters outcomes and if you remember we discussed how this relates to the Roberts Review of creativity and culture. We had some very warm, positive responses to the idea from partners. When we got together we got very excited – the idea just kept getting hotter.

Cath: Well, through the Chair, if I may, I just want to place on record my concern about the spending – which, after all is public money. You feel the same, don't you Kath?

Kath: Yes.

Councillor: What are the terms of reference for this partnership?

My ears prick up as I know well that terms of reference have been mooted at just about every meeting of the network but none have been formally presented, much less adopted and signed off. A buzz goes around the room as people recognise the phrase “terms of reference” but no-one is able to say what they are or to produce a copy. The partnership has simply been getting on with its business of allocating funds quickly to local projects who they are confident are capable of submitting an invoice within this financial year.

Louise: I hope we can go ahead with the circus project. The pens go with the circus pack. I took the liberty of ordering materials and some of the money can always be reclaimed

by the partnership if we make a charge to County against my time. We are a brand new partnership and I needed to spend some money on a quick win to buy our identity.

Education manager: Perhaps its time for us to have a clearer decision making processes and a finance sub-committee.

Anne: Yes, you're a strong enough partnership now to manage. I think what we've got here is a clash of incompatible systems. It's a shame, when we've just heard the announcement of children falling back into poverty.⁸²

This was the last meeting I attended as part of my data collection but I received the minutes of the following meeting by e-mail. They show that, despite the Community Learning Partnership being in operation for eight months and allocating approximately £100,000 of public money, people were still raising issues of clarity of objectives and membership of the partnership. I thought I had left the field but I remained on the mailing list for a while and added this "postscript" message to my dataset. It was sent from an OldTown Councillor (who had not been to any of the MAG meetings) in response to being circulated with the CLP minutes:

"i still don't know who you are..what organisation you are from and what's more my computer tells me that to open your attachment will damage my computer!!... all in all a very unsatisfactory way to email a data base"

[OldTown] Councillor

| ⁸² Unicef ,_2007 This report was released 2 days before the MAG meeting

It seems that the CLP organizational identity had failed to incorporate this particular local authority Member. The Strongham legal officer told me that the CLPs had “no legal personality”. (LA30). As we see, this formal lack of legal agency had not prevented them from acting together as a network and organizing a circus. Cath’s intervention: “Through the Chair, if I may” is a rhetorical move that draws on a discourse and practice of the rules of decision making as though there were formal rules and procedures in place. The bureaucratic suggestion for a finance sub-committee seems to miss the point if the Management Action Group isn’t yet clear who it is acting on behalf of and what its remit is. Decisions have been made by consensus up until this point (apart from the sex education project) but it seems now that trust is exposed as a fragile mode of governance. We witness the return of the repressed – both in terms of repressed bureaucracy hidden away in the back office and in a public service imaginary which cannot help relating to a Weberian “bureau” in its attempt to legitimate a public service practice.

My analysis suggests that the community partnership is coping with “initiativitis” but experiencing a clash of government and governance organizational systems in the maelstrom of welfare reform. This is symbolized in the “prize”. Prizes are usually for winners in zero-sum competitive situations. Here all partners are positioned as winners and power is dispersed. Some school teachers are clinging to traditional notions of public service, duty and responsibility in order to be democratically accountable through formal processes, while simultaneously being exhorted to work in non-traditional ways in partnership with “the community” and the private childcare market in addition to managing their “core business” of

education. Government policy expects them to compete for customers in league tables at the same time as working collaboratively to achieve win-win solutions with neighbouring schools, with the local authority and other “partners”. The public servants in this situation are able to exercise discretion – Cath feels that many of them are in attendance in a “voluntary capacity” i.e. they are not mandated to attend – a further reason why their loyalty needs “buy-in”, although the gift of the pen was clearly a loyalty gift too far, at least for one “partner”. I encountered a highlighter pen on a headteacher’s desk when I interviewed Kath in her office then a colleague told me about another that had turned up rhizome-like in an academic arena.

The ideological work of enrolment and identity performed by the artefacts is similar: these material objects are all doing work in the market place of ideas. Policy entrepreneurs package and commodify policy ideas. Their entrepreneurial accountability appears to be to one another in a horizontal, club-like governance model at the same time that hierarchical, bureaucratic governance persists in their relationship with Strongham (Kooiman, 2003, Kickert et al 1997). The network is both porous (some “members” come and go at their discretion) and closed, the meetings are not open to the public, the accounts are not open to public inspection. (Mathur and Skelcher 2007). The highlighter pen cannot represent its origins transparently. Its absent address brands the partnership as a virtual organisation.

Louise bypasses the known-to-be contentious issue of childcare in schools and reframes the circus project as a cultural initiative drawing on the Roberts Review⁸³ in an attempt to align with schools’ interests. The highlighter pen, bought to establish the identity of the partnership

⁸³ Government Response to Paul Roberts’ Report on Nurturing Creativity in Young People DfES and DCMS
<http://www.muscimanifesto.co.uk/assets/x/50364>

reveals the virtual nature of the partnership organization and seems unable to bear the weight of the identity work it has been purchased to do. Cath queries whether the buffet and the pens represented value for money. As I have shown, the partnership felt, and expressed itself to be, under intense pressure to allocate money by the end of the financial year so that it would not be “lost” and be clawed back by central government. This time pressure militates against deliberation and reflection and against the careful weighing of evidence to inform best practice. “Quick wins” seem to be a pragmatic approach to short-term strategy. There is a need to demonstrate an ability to act in order to mobilise partners’ support for the longer term. They are about being visibly seen to be dynamic through spending which is equated with successful implementation, rather than deliberating and consulting, which might run the risk of being identified as a talking shop.

Louise’s reference to making a charge against her time refers to the fact that she is formally an employee of Strongham, the second tier local authority, which administers the Sure Start Children’s Centre budget that she controls, as well as administering the partnership budget. While the partnership has nominally been allocated a finite amount of resource, the local authority has the capacity to move money around – to “vire” it between different budget headings. Louise can exercise discretion then in how much she might choose to “charge” against her time that has been spent on partnership business. Time and money function as finite in project plans and closed models but are relativised as they translate in between systems of governance. Louise’s strategy functions as a contingency plan - an adaptive institutional mechanism for coping with the high velocity environment, insuring against the dreaded “under spend” that might indicate inefficiency and thus a gap against implementation

“delivery”. In terms of value for money then, this presents challenges in identifying where public money “belongs” and which expenditure is set against which objectives (Ellison et al undated). To begin to assess value for money, which is what Cath’s intervention alludes to, would entail a translation of social outcomes and carnivalesque activity into comparative units of value – pricing up the value of purchasing an organizational identity and comparing this to the cost of projects aimed at improving outcomes for local families. As interpretive and critical policy analysis shows, the value of these outcomes can never be objectively determined outside of moral and political value judgements. The dilemma introduced at the meeting seems to be the governance issue of whose values decide what counts, whose budget is willing to pay what price and who authorizes the circus?

Quick wins are being juggled with “sustainability”. The budget allocated to the partnership is, at this stage, still completely unknown beyond 2008 and will remain unknown until the Comprehensive Spending Review (Hill and Oppenheim, 2006). In the face of such uncertainty, Alice has been mobilising a vision of the partnership becoming self-sustaining – i.e. independent of the local authority. This is a radical vision of devolution – the network would divorce from the sponsoring body (the local authority) and determine its own destiny. My contention is that within the Partnership the circus performs the function of an “organizing metaphor” (Yanow 1996) although it’s governance of meaning is enacted through a practice of “strategic vagueness” (Potter, 1996). The circus is an attempt to mobilize the commitment of the policy partners to an exciting, fun activity that, in elastic fashion, can be stretched to incorporate the whole community of policy beneficiaries and policy agents into an as yet undifferentiated utopian audience-community. Bryson ((2007:102) writes about “uchronia” :

“a non-existent way of understanding and using time” to open up a very helpful discussion of how “specific policy proposals need to retain the element of strategic thinking involved in utopian thought and balance short-term practical gains against ... longer term strategic interests.” Here the five rings symbol is intended to visually frame the very particular localized circus project and link it to the current national policy of *Every Child Matters* in the imagination of partnership members, offering a visionary fantasy of linking to the international Olympics taking place in 2012 and a universal enterprise of human endeavour and achievement. This futuristic notion cannot yet be even formulated as a plan. The function of the circus theme / project is to enrol members and glue them together through a process of affect – generating an emotion of excitement together with a sense of optimism and possibility to ensure that partners do not focus solely on getting their own share of the money but go beyond immediate narrow goals to establish a common direction for a common future. The child’s paper watch and the highlighter pen are “own brand”, in-house policy products. They symbolise with the logo of juggling balls what it feels like at the sharp end of initiatives. OldTown CLP did manage to break free from bureaucracy and from market imperatives, using its relative autonomy, to dream up an imaginative circus project that escaped the boundaries of the financial year end deadline, looked beyond the 2010 deadline for Children’s Centres towards the Olympics in 2012. Thus a global spectacular event is appropriated for OldTown’s local imagination. The CLP stretches the project elastically to incorporate the Roberts Review of Creativity and Culture into its own unique local policy-palimpsest. My interpretation of the circus project is indeterminate. I oscillate ambivalently between the “bread and circuses” interpretation of mass culture as ideological mass deception (Eagleton, 2000) and a celebratory interpretation of the refusal of the human spirit to succumb to the iron cage of

bureaucracy or to market commodification. In advance of assessing the impact of the project on children and their families, my understanding of the circus can only be based by my interpretation of the *idea* of it so I interpret it as an elastic project that served to suture or “glue” the Community Learning Partnership together, temporarily at least. Symbolic resources are invested in the circus project including a mutually reinforcing sense of excitement from those already enrolled into the circus-circuit loop. This enables the College and the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder programme to contribute their time and share in the policy outcomes. The circus project was not fully costed at the time I carried out my fieldwork but its elasticity permitted a vision of future revenue that might adhere to the partnership glue. Rather than buy in a ready made policy-product the CLP took time to consider how partners might contribute and how taking “time out” from schooling and childcare might enable families to play (perhaps using the exotic poi) and to explore their creative potential. The planned performance (that does not have a proscenium arch separating players and spectators) appears to be designed to allow people to get to know each other, to develop new unpredictable perspectives and so to recognise and represent themselves in new ways. I cannot substantiate this hunch but I believe that Louise was more than capable of translating this vague notion back into a project plan with measurable outcomes set against *Every Child Matters* performance indicators. Her highly developed experiential practitioner knowledge and her significant communication skills (including her control over the risky branding and marketing process) would seem to enable her to play and operate strategically across the boundaries of network, hierarchy and market governance.

7. Conclusion

Rafaeli and Pratt (2006) suggest that artefacts as organizational “stuff” have been neglected in research. I have tried to show how they enact the commodification of policy ideas and in this situation, despite their intended use value as tools for governance, produced tensions in social exchange. The community learning partnership verges on the definition of a self-steering autopeotic organisation (Kooiman 2003, Kickert et al 1997) but it is hybrid, as it carries traces of bureaucratic discourse and maintains links to the hierarchical local authority. It is often claimed that networks can reduce market transaction and bureaucratic costs through the currency of trust and social capital (Hirst, 1994). Rather than a hierarchically determined policy determining the purpose of childcare as enabling welfare-to-work, or for paternalistic family intervention, what my observation reveals here once again is that welfare reform is a contested arena. Bureaucracy is alive and well in the back office while “networking” is performed and contested in the local governance arena. Made from year end left overs with public money, these commodities short-circuit the performance indicators of *Every Child Matters* and trouble the modern policy palimpsest with a carnivalesque, discretionary “right performance”. The highlighter is a “quasi-modo commodity” (Willis, 2000) a “boundary object” (Star and Griesemer, 1989). Its equilateral triangular shape cannot stabilise the boundaries of the CLP as it metamorphoses public value, community co-optation/empowerment and entrepreneurial governance into a fetish artefact.

Louise discursively enrolls teachers into her CLP palimpsest through presenting the project not as a *childcare* project, not as a welfare to work policy but as “culture”. She draws

idiosyncratically on the minor policy, the “Roberts Review of Creativity and Culture” to suture or glue her palimpsest. This can be re-framed, translated, into the discourse of achievement and out of school enrichment activities which are less contentious and more aligned to schools teaching and learning “core business”. Together with colleagues she devises a logo of juggling balls and spinning plates and uses the circus as an elastic project and as a strategically vague organising metaphor. The logic of sustainability presents investment in CLPs as the glue that binds organisations concerned with children’s services together, supposedly releasing win-win resources to redress generational problems of social exclusion. The highlighter pen symbolises not governmental *transparency* but organizational opacity and it highlights the CLP as an adhocracy – a simulacrum of a public body with no legal personality of its own. The vague deployment of culture *performed* policy implementation – the CLP “delivered” but analysis of the artefact’s exchange reveals the risky give-away – the penetration of the connection between the economic and the symbolic (Willis, 2000) – between public money and decisions taken in private, between ideas of duty, service and the public good and market place, promotional, branded culture.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

Contents

1.	Introduction	347
2.	Third Way Governance of Childcare: How welfare reform does and doesn't happen	349
3.	Negotiating Policy Contradictions in Implementation	354
	Governing Time	355
	Governing Spaces	359
	Governing Money	361
4.	Governing Symbolically: Evidence Based or Iconic Policy?	363
5.	The Limitations and Contribution of this Research	369

This strategy will not have succeeded if, along with its other achievements, it has not helped more of this generation and the next out of poverty and worklessness. *Choice for parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare* (DfES 2004:91)

The money targeted on the children struggling most during the recession amounts to less each week than the cost of a pint of milk. It is disgraceful to give such a pittance. *Kate Green, Chief Executive of Child Poverty Action Group commenting on the Budget April 2009*

1. Introduction

In this concluding chapter I gather up themes from the previous chapters and re-present them in a synthesis. I find myself paraphrasing. I am re-writing the history of my research journey in the light of where my research now situates me. I set out to explore the policy shift from Sure Start to Sure Start Children's Centres. Rather than attempting to research more tangible policy outputs, I was interested in *understandings* – in how people responsible for implementation made sense of the policy shift and what this might reveal about welfare reform and childcare. I have tried to reconstruct what policy *is*, not through reading official texts (although these informed my research I rarely used them as data) or assessing outputs but through studying more locally produced representations of policy in process. I found myself adapting to the contingencies of fieldwork and studying a Community Learning Partnership that could quickly tick the boxes of the core offer for Children's Centres and Extended Schools. This helped me to see how policy implementers framed their purpose in a situation

when formal, technically specified instrumental policy goals had apparently already been achieved.

So what? Well, before facing up to a final conclusion and judgement, I shall take time here to rehearse and reflect on my research ideas and experience. Starting points for this PhD project were that tensions have always existed between the “janus-faced” nature of the state (Swyngedouw, 2005) between the “care and control” elements of welfare policy and practice (Glendinning and Kemp, 2006) and between statistical representations of populations and places with associated categorised assumptions of need, in contrast to particular families (such as Jane’s) with their lived experiences of wants, needs, desires and hurts. I had a hunch, a “theory-in-use” (Schön, 1983) derived from practical experience and reinforced by my reading of literature on power, on feminism and welfare reform, that these tensions (apparent in particular to critical researchers and related to fundamental values of freedom, equality and social justice) are glossed over in the policy rhetoric of “joined-up government” and the positivist assumptions that underpin the evidence based policy and practice discourse. A further assumption I worked with was that there is no outside of power – no pure realm of freedom. Foucault’s (1980) deeply ironic recognition of the productive nature of otherwise repressive bureaucracies and their truth regimes offers a way in to analysing public administration. However, the assumption that power is dispersed does not imply that it is nowhere. It is well recognised that Foucault’s analyses, in attempting to provide genealogies of truth regimes (how what is called truth comes about and what validation practices this entails) side step the normative “so-what” questions (Fraser, 1989). At the end of this thesis I find myself arriving at a position that I thought that I too could avoid. In eschewing evaluation

research, it seems my thesis lies somewhere in between the use-value of a public sociology (Burawoy, 2005), the never ending desire to conduct more research and what I see as the postmodern, irresponsible refusal to judge, to arrive at a conclusion.

2. Third Way Governance of Childcare: How welfare reform does and doesn't happen

Despite the policy rhetoric of joined-up Government (6, 2004) and the increased fiscalization of social policy (Lister, 2003), the cash and care elements of welfare are not easily sutured within local implementation. Childcare policy remains protean, with inherent contradictions between public and private unresolved by community governance and so welfare reform is a complex process. Market mechanisms are accompanied by contradictory claims about choice, voice, localism, democratic renewal and active citizenship (Milbourne, 2009). The national childcare strategy cross references a variety of initiatives and this is why I find the analogy of a palimpsest useful for understanding how implementers are faced with trying to make sense of and “join up” policy. Policy reaches them as a series of awkwardly aligned imperatives from central Government departments with complex funding regimes and challenging timetables. Despite a raft of targets and performance indicators attempting to steer policy direction, policy guidance to implementers is not definitive but contains gaps and contradictions. In chapter five I showed how implementers had to flesh out, add substance to, policy statements and fill in “the devil of the detail”. Policy has to be translated in order to be reconciled with already existing projects and initiatives that they can re-brand to achieve implementation “quick-wins”. I found, as Newman predicts in her model, and as structuration

theory would expect, an admixture between continuity and order on the one hand and innovation and change on the other and between centralisation and decentralisation. Weaving an eclectic range of theories together and “mobilising divergent lenses” (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008:199) in an eclectic but disciplined fashion has allowed me to explore tensions between rapid changes in childcare policy, the frenetic attempt to secure a new organizational identity and the enduring sexual division of labour as well as the stubborn persistence of child poverty.

Jane’s story introduced the complexity of what has been termed the “fiscalization” of social policy (Lister, 2003) with her explanation of her perverse, involuntary move from work to welfare. As I discussed in chapter three, New Labour’s “modernizing” re-structuring of state welfare for children and families attempts to shift understandings about rights and responsibilities, raising Bacchi’s (1999) policy analysis question “what’s the problem?” My study reveals a range of policy frames that construct a variety of problems and solutions with implied causal narratives. The welfare to work policy frame in evidence at the Child Poverty Accord meeting assumes that barriers to employability are a cause of child poverty and that Children’s Centres can solve this through the provision of subsidised childcare. I showed how central government ministers and civil servants tried to assess by means of a close encounter, whether local authority officers were unmodernised – ideologically resistant to welfare to work. In chapter five I showed the refusal by OldTown CLP to adopt responsibility for what it framed as the policy objective of “parental convenience” in favour of a focus on children and their presumed needs. The teddy bear artefact promoted the Children’s Information Service but like the CLP, educarers at the Early Years conference were more concerned with

children's development than with their parents' employability. The welfare to work frame or narrative was displaced by a crime prevention discourse at a Strongham consultation event. I showed how a youth officer pitched for project resources, translating the CLP strategy into projects for diverting children and young people from crime. One version of this crime prevention discourse assumes that certain families are in need of support or "tough love" to ensure their children are correctly socialized. At the Respect Agenda "Health Showcase" meeting I analysed an attempt to enrol health professionals into "tough love" welfare reform with childcare being explicitly linked to the carrots and sticks of family intervention projects. This proved difficult, partly because it seemed that children's services were seen by some in the NHS as a "Cinderella service", because the NHS appeared to be in financial crisis during that time and because some local authority managers found it difficult to engage in partnership, needing a map and compass to navigate the complex organizational terrain of health organisations. Children were framed instrumentally by some implementers as a solution to the problem of stocking competing schools that are experiencing problems with falling rolls. Schools were framed as "partners" within the published CLP strategy but in chapter seven one implementer referred to "arsey headteachers", suggesting that some partnership working might be problematic. I showed how schools' agendas are dominated by qualification league tables. In chapter seven Andy translates childcare as out of school enrichment, as a solution to the problem of under-achievement. However, schools were also framed by some as part of the problem, as a cause of exclusion. Professional understandings of welfare provision for needy families appear in a policy poem whereby the problem is not clearly specified but the solution is provided by the CAF. Tensions between these understandings of childcare as a public good with rights and entitlements for citizens or a

private commodity to be purchased in the market place are not resolved within the CLP but were kept off the agenda. When I interviewed Rosemary, she gave me her version of the market as an uneven playing field. My ethnographic study immediately revealed to me the gendered division of labour, showing that childcare work (whether paid or unpaid) remains largely women's work. However, understandings of feminist interests in childcare were largely absent as an androgynous policy frame was hegemonic. Finally the contentious issue of childcare disappeared, was neither a problem or a solution as the CLP strategy translated its objectives into a carnivalesque circus project taking place in the future within the vague governance arena of the community.

These various policy frames (Rein and Schön, 1993) call up a variety of "imaginary publics" (Newman, 2001). My study showed that Oldtown CLP's understanding of who it existed to serve, varied from families in need of support (that the poet-implementer's imagination called up) to those who the secondary school Headteacher, the Chair of the CLP, seemed to regard as equally (or perhaps more) deserving parents who drove their children to school with a full breakfast inside them. Sure Start local programmes targeted disadvantaged areas but the policy shift from Sure Start to Children's Centres is framed by Government as "targeted universalism". The oxymoron permits an *and / or* interpretation of a universal policy with redistributive elements – every child matters except also some may matter more than others.

I have argued that the *process* for delivering reform is invariably through "partnership working" which complicates understandings of the "primacy of politics" (Skelcher et al, 2005). The notion of democracy as participation in policy making challenges traditional

representative democracy and presents problems for jurisdictional integrity as organizational boundaries are not coterminous. We saw in chapter six that “carte blanche” in relation to local involvement in policy implementation was never an option. Rather, policy constraints may be experienced as a *fait accompli* and so implementers resort to rebranding existing projects in order to comply. This supports the analogy of policy as a palimpsest that never encounters a societal *tabula rasa* but must adapt in implementation to historical contingencies and the exigencies of *initiativitis*. My study demonstrates how the Community Learning Partnership found it difficult in its first year of operation to move beyond the policy rhetoric of modernising local democracy through community involvement, with the provision of crèche to enable participation remaining on a wish list. In chapter one we saw how Jane was surprised by the difficulty her Children’s Trust had in involving parents in their governance arrangements.

The slides on display at the Early Years conference represented the implementation of CLPs as a journey with potential “deviation points” but in drawing on a discourse and semiotics of marketisation and business-like planning this representation failed to connect with democratic accountability. While it may have had democracy “about it”, rather than a governance forum for citizens’ deliberative democracy, OldTown CLP found its first year at least, considerably constrained by expediency and the imposed DfES timetable. Alongside democracy and bureaucracy it also had elements of “ad hococracy”. The Chair of the CLP Management Action Group was not elected but selected. OldTown CLP failed to communicate effectively with all Council Members as the e-mail illustrated in chapter eight. In the last chapter we saw how local partnership network governance, intended to perform as autonomous and self-sustaining,

was dependent upon the backroom bureaucracy and hierarchy of Strongham and how in turn this was constrained by DfES. The adhocracy of the CLP's club-like rules-in-use confused Council Members and headteachers who were more used to being held to account hierarchically and externally than by and to one another.

Westminster and Whitehall retain significant ability to control local authorities and to intervene in family life but government also seeks to distribute responsibility for policy solutions across private and civic boundaries. Using soft governance tools such as the Accord and the Compact, local authorities and others are encouraged to “engage” in partnership with communities to implement policy. I conclude that the local welfare state should be regarded as *congested* in terms of policy actors, initiatives and networks (Exworthy & Powell, 2004) but as *hollowed out* in terms of democratic rights and accountability (Skelcher, 2000). Governance is not replacing government – DWP still remains largely in control of the cash element of welfare, but government is seeking to reform its rights and responsibilities through subsidising the childcare market and displacing policy responsibility for risky, complex governance arrangements onto local authorities.

3. Negotiating policy contradictions in implementation

Jane's story condensed all of my central research problematics in one case study. Then my ethnographic witnessing of policy implementation magnified some of the policy tensions faced by policy actors at the level of a Community Learning Partnership as well as in more

macro policy arenas such as the Respect Health Showcase and the Child Poverty Accord meeting. Many of the policy implementers in my study seemed to be experiencing work related stress. They had no control over the NHS reorganisation or the direction of policy as it shifted from targeted Sure Start local programmes to universal Children's Centres but they could and did exert some control over local meaning making (Weick, 1995). Often people understood how to comply with performance management regimes through ticking boxes and they frequently understood that these were processes of "making it look good" that I conclude is a process of performativity. Hierarchical processes of regulation such as Ofsted seek to control policy outputs but these are performance managed through local practices such as running a crèche for just two hours that resists under the regulatory gaze. Behaviour change is not a product but a policy target that is impossible to guarantee as we saw with the Service Level Agreement that could not promise to "deliver" quit smokers.

A community of practice, established through previous policy initiatives, allowed the partnership to build on some existing trust, on practitioner *métis* or practical consciousness and the experience of collaborative working, particularly amongst people on the inside of the circus-circuit. Deployment of the "circus project" seemed designed to enable broad coalitions to relate CLP activity to their own set of policy discourses such as the Roberts Review of Creativity and Culture or Every Learner Matters. The initial appearance of consensus subsequently became a fragile mode of governance at the meeting that debated expenditure on the circus project. At another time, when vagueness might have become a potential barrier to action, the use of a menu functioned as a heuristic, limiting a bewildering range of possible *carte blanche* policy solutions to prescribed choices to achieve "quick wins." The sex and

relationships menu shaped choice and decision making by offering a limited range of “table d’hôte” pre-packaged projects – a managerially useful means of “commissioning” given the tight timescale for decision making.

Governing Time

New Labour’s welfare reform agenda deploys an epochal discourse, seeking to separate contemporary Third Way Government from Thatcherism but also to differentiate Old from New Labour (Newman, 2001). I have argued throughout the thesis that policy is inherently teleological, presenting challenges to postmodern “end of history” debates as well as to more practically oriented policy evaluation that needs to establish a point of origin and an end point in order to assess progress. I have shown how the forward looking notion of policy is partially dependent upon instrumental means-ends rationality. Yet I have also demonstrated how at times history is experienced as the sheer indeterminacy of events beyond local control, such as the financial crisis in the NHS. In addition to the forward direction, I showed in chapter seven how policy’s arrow at times points backwards. Justifications for decisions are put in place and re-framed retrospectively, policy products get re-branded, history (and so “reform”) is open to interpretation. “Quick wins” in the “early days” of CLPs are justified with reference to future sustainability. Project plans assume time to be a finite programmable resource yet my study reveals some asynchronous time zones. OldTown CLP has already achieved the policy target of establishing a Children’s Centre through re-branding its existing Sure Start Centre. Rather than sign up to the objectives of the strategy to abolish child poverty by 2010, the CLP constructs its mission through focusing on the short time frame of financial year end and the

longer term vision of the 2012 Olympics. Time speeds up towards deadlines and yet one of my interviewees looks back to the time of Henry the Eighth to make sense of what he saw as “society moving forward.” In the UK there is a policy goal of eradicating child poverty by 2020 and another of establishing a Children’s Centre in every community by 2010. These time horizons seem like long *durées* when compared with the frenetic activity oriented towards the 2006 financial year end that I witnessed at most of the OldTown Community Learning Partnership meetings that were constrained by the velocity of expediency and the valorisation of new and different “policy products”. As I outlined in the policy genealogy in chapter three, the Early Excellence Centres programme started in 1997 and Neighbourhood Nurseries commenced in 2001. These initiatives are now both likely to be incorporated into the new (or not so new) Sure Start Children’s Centres policy. “Term time” is being extended as out of school activities stretch across the calendar year. Time speeds up when the financial year end approaches, and yet the traditional sexual division of labour persists over generations, a seemingly *in-ordinate* amount of time when set against quick policy fixes. Fast moving centralised policy shifts such as the NHS re-organisation and the move from Sure Start to Children’s Centres militate against the idea of local control of policy. I found that policy was being implemented under conditions of uncertainty. As central government was shifting from Sure Start local programmes to Sure Start Children’s Centres it could only give local authorities a two year guarantee of funding with promises of continued funding being vague and non specific. Implementers resorted to second guessing the future although we saw how the manager of a children’s charity felt that the Sure Start promise of ten years worth of substantial funding had been broken. We saw in the last chapter how time does and does not equate to money. Louise is able to make a charge against her time and so exert some control

over both these resources. DfES deadlines are perceived as challenging must dos. In the last chapter we saw how the anticipated Building Schools for the Future PFI programme influenced local implementers' desire to ensure that they had a reputation for delivery that would enable them to be selected for a forthcoming capital building programme. When consulted over "new" policy, as we saw in chapter five, some people experience it as "initiativitis" – as apparently meaningless and stressful change for the sake of change or as "plus ça change" – no change at all, not reform but a wheel turning full circle. Victoria Climbié's tragic death is recalled in memoriam in *Every Child Matters* policy and her ghost does not feature in the reformist discourse of welfare to work but invokes a longer running discourse of deserving, vulnerable children in need.

My analysis of OldTown CLP, as it implemented Children's Centres and Extended Schools over its first year of operation, is that a variety of values and time horizons are in operation that complicate what counts as progress. There are very long running attitudes regarding deserving and undeserving policy beneficiaries (parental convenience set against children's needs) and historical religious beliefs influencing practice. Documentary analysis of policy shows that the 2010 Olympics were never originally intended to be in the childcare policy frame and yet my study revealed how in implementation practice, the international sporting event functions as a point in the future to orient imaginations towards, enabling the CLP to progress as a partnership. The unbounded, futuristic circus project that lacks a clear project plan seems to provide an apparently timeless experience of carnivalesque creativity. Its embodiment in the CLP logo, repeated on the triangular quasi-modo highlighter pen and the artefactual watch, threatens to brand the contemporary not as modern, but as postmodern.

Policy analysts have long pointed out the distinction between the empirical and the imperative, between the empirical present tense “is” and the imperative future tense “ought” (Young, 1977). Using feminist theories I have shown how childcare policy mis-recognises the present (the “is” of policy – the empirical) in its assumption that gender conflicts over parenting and responsibility for childcare have been resolved. It seems that policy implementers forget or perhaps cannot afford to take time to remember that a Sure Start “empowerment model” took time and resources to build and develop. Those of us constrained by what Law (2004) terms Euro-American conceptions of time cannot help but experience time as linear in relation to our biographies and as Giddens (1984) notes, this entails an existential contradiction. So *if* God is dead ⁸⁴then what criteria are available to judge progress? I have some sympathy with Pollitt’s recent (2008) attempt to recover a sense of history, of time past, for policy but I would take issue with his neglect of time future. The abandonment of utopian visions (so often a motor of change for social movements oriented towards future generations, including the Women’s Movement) seems to me to lead to a very disenchanted, even selfish world and neglects the “ought” – the normative element of policy analysis. While I agree with Pollitt’s sentiments that new or “modern” is not necessarily better it would surely be depressing to abandon imagining the future. A backwards look that did not inform the future or a present that has nowhere to go seems meaningless to me. Karl Weick writes:

“Those who talk about pleasure in the process or about journeys being more significant than destinations ...understand that goals are crucial for their effect on the present rather than the future. They understand that there is more to instrumentality than meets

⁸⁴ Contra Nietzsche and Dawkins I am only prepared to suggest that she might be.

the eye. The present is not the means to a meaningful future. Instead, the future is the means to a meaningful present.⁸⁵

Governing Spaces

Criss-crossing the time zones of my study are the varying spaces of subsidiarity and the metaphorical, conceptual, ideal (in a Weberian *ideal type* sense) boundaries of public, private, domestic, market and civic. My thesis builds on Yanow (2006) to show how policy spaces can be analysed as arenas not just for subsidiarity, as locales for formal decision making (who decides who gets what) but culturally and semiotically. Policy spaces convey meanings in a dialectical relationship with customs and practices. The spatial environment of Strongham's Council chamber was structured by informal codes (rules about not taking drinks into the Chamber) and by longer running, more powerful traditions - the dead eyes of patriarchs staring down from their oil paintings conveyed to me a legacy of patriarchy that for a long historical moment restricted women's influence to the private sphere. Spaces influence hearings. As I showed in chapter five, direct action took place in the chamber but was met by a "dialogue of the deaf". (Scott, 1998). When protesters moved into the street their voices managed to invade the Council's business. The meeting at the Treasury, apparently designed to facilitate open dialogue about the Child Poverty Accord was strategically bounded, its outside courtyard heavily guarded with what I presume were live firearms. Jane's home was judged to be too private an arena to permit the use of tax credits to subsidise domestic, familial childcare. The G.I.S. cartographic

⁸⁵ This citation is undated. I accessed it at www.si.umich.edu/ICOS/Weick-final%20.pdf on 12/11/08

representation of the administrative CLP could not capture the fluidity of capital seeking profit wherever it is to be found nor could it define a local childcare market or represent the varied needs of “local” parents utilising childcare in complex time-space practices. The various public, private, voluntary and organizations that (along with JobCentre Plus) are supposed to be policy partners do not share coterminous organizational boundaries. Nor do they necessarily share understandings of “community.” In chapter seven I analysed tensions between the Community Learning Partnership’s understanding of an undifferentiated community and schools that shared a faith community. In chapter six we saw how a technology of representation - a Geographic Information System relies on data collated from official, mainly educational sources. This was supplemented by local, historically informed topographical knowledge and the CLP boundary was re-drawn. The global Olympics event is appropriated for the very localized space of OldTown. Space is real and symbolic. Cohen (1985: 219) writes “*the map is not the territory any more than the menu is the meal.*” Public, private and community conceptual spaces do not easily map across to the unfinished political concept of “democracy” (Stone, 2002) and so I conclude that the demarcations remain a political matter.

Governing Money

Public money seems to be losing its value as distinctly different from private resources. The symbolic and the economic are intrinsically linked as public money is spent on “public relations” or spin. We saw how Peter was concerned to be held accountable to make sure he couldn’t have spent CLP resources on a Caribbean holiday. The cash element of welfare

reform attempts to suture income subsidies for childcare in order to incentivise parents to move from welfare into work and responsibility for this part of the welfare state remains largely under the control of the Department of Work and Pensions. Hypothecated funding is used in an attempt to measure inputs against outputs but we saw in chapter seven how money was allocated to “Other”, denying this version of accountability. Access to childcare for pre-school aged children or for out of school care has been increased since the National Childcare strategy was introduced in 1998 (Butt et al, 2007) but it is a highly conditional and complex system, heavily dependent upon the state-subsidised quasi-market of childcare as well as multi-organizational partnerships working to operationalize Extended Schools and deliver the target of one Children’s Centre for every community by 2010. In chapter four I introduced Sam and Rosemary who gave me their interpretation of the childcare market, within which they had experienced large nursery chains competing against their own smaller businesses as well as state sponsored Sure Start programmes competing on what they perceived as an uneven playing field. The Sure Start attempt at parental empowerment and the generous resources that enabled crèche provision (that came with the initial waves of Sure Start) were valued but this does not seem to be a lesson that has transferred in practice to the much less well financed (proportionately) CLPs. In representing available resources as plentiful – as a crock of gold at the end of the rainbow, the slides on display at the Early Years conference failed to acknowledge evidence of the relatively reduced resources in comparison to previous rounds of Sure Start local programmes (Glass, 2005). Nor did this particular local representation incorporate evidence of the anorexic situation of Stongham’s budget for children in need. Despite the emphasis on joined up working, I found that the County Council far exceeded its budget for children’s social care while the CLPs struggled to spend their

allocated funding within the tight timescale. Because of fears about losing future funding, people framed underspend as going into a black hole, rather than as belonging to a commonweal of public funds that they might trust to another part of the public sector to administer wisely. There was a desire for unmediated governance that might entail directing money away from bureaucratic administration towards the “face”. However, I have shown how the CLP infrastructure was interpreted by policy implementers as an enabling mechanism for releasing resources imagined as locked in to the “system” and in my analysis I have termed this a “duplication-inefficiency myth”. The myth conjured visions of sustainability from limited resources and enabled some policy implementers to maintain their sense of public duty and faith in progress. Jane’s material resources were dramatically reduced by her work to welfare experience. Following Glass (2005) and as recognised by many of the implementers in my study, I assert that the proportionately reduced resources going into Children’s Centres compared to Sure Start local programmes will impact on the level and quality of preventative services they are able to provide. My study indicates that to eliminate the chronic persistence of child poverty requires more than technocratic policy solutions can provide, that it will take more than a spectacular circus can offer, requiring a recovery of political commitments to rights and entitlements to welfare delivered through public service informed by an ethic of care (Sevenhuijsen, 2000).

4. Governing Symbolically: Evidence Based or Iconic Policy?

Welfare reform is not merely symbolic. We have seen that local authorities have been told to be childcare providers of last resort, with, as Liam explained in chapter four, implementers

getting the message not to put the private sector out of business. The hegemony of the market was symbolised on the teddy bear's vest that advertised the Children's Information Service. This state sponsored "dating agency" provided information not to children but to their parents seeking to purchase their care in the market. My study does not provide evidence for market efficiency but reveals the contested nature of evidence, as well as problematising where policy is produced and when it is finished. Policy is often analyzed as though its language was denotative but my study has shown how policy *connotes* as well as *denotes*. Rhetoric is frequently positioned against "reality" but in chapter two I discussed the influence of the linguistic and cultural turns that deconstruct this distinction. Policy implementers themselves deploy rhetorical devices. I have shown how some of the tensions between competing agendas were displaced in implementation with the strategically vague organizing metaphors of "community" and "partnership" and how the circus functions symbolically as an elastic project that can be variously interpreted to suit a range of interests. The far reaching vision of inclusion and imagination symbolised in the circus project drew on affect, myth and mutuality (open systems in Newman's terms) so that time and money, if not infinite, become elastic in a way that allowed implementers to exert some sense of order and progress. There is a saying "what gets measured, gets done" and I showed how in the local culture, how things get done is partly through an instrumental process of performativity. This is a response by local implementers to managing the plethora of targets and expectations about their activity from central Government. Demonstrative quick wins were necessary for morale. Yet my study found that aesthetics disrupted instrumentally rational technologies of power, "governing the soul" (Rose, 1989) through accessing the emotions and the immeasurable aspects of human experience. Victoria Climbié's ghost elicits an emotion of pathos at every meeting it attends,

accompanied by various rhetorical statements about progress to ensure “never again”. The “Caf without an e” poem translates a banal administrative bureaucratic procedure into a deeply personal commitment to implementing public policy. The circus logo is a marketing device that symbolizes implementers’ frustrations as they juggle and spin plates but is also intended to symbolize hope for the future in that deeply symbolic space of partnership governance – community. As the last chapter showed, the in-house circus logo developed by OldTown CLP sought to brand the partnership as innovative and creative. The highlighter pen’s mode of production revealed the CLP to be a simulacrum of an independent, publicly accountable body. Rather than an independent organisation capable of defining its own institutional *raison d’être* and setting its own goals, mainly it is a brand carrier and a delivery vehicle for Sure Start Children’s Centres and Extended Schools policies. In addition to tick box performance management regimes, *reification* – the materialization of policy into objects is one way in which implementation is *performed* – providing evidence that public expenditure has happened therefore policy must have been “delivered.” The commodities are surely intended to function as “mere symbols” (Rafaeli and Pratt, 2006) as carriers for brand recognition. Promotional items, “give-aways” or “freebies” are not intended to have exchange value or instrumental use value. There is no return value for give-aways – no refunds are permitted. The version of public relations implied by this non-exchange relationship is not democratic deliberation, nor a Habermasian, egalitarian “ideal speech community” nor anything to do with the agonistic public, political sphere (Stone, 2002). Rather, the artefacts promote marketisation and equate policy administration and public governance with business-like practices and principles. In so doing they risk giving away the idea of public value as separate from the market. Public services such as family support are not commodities - they are also

non-refundable. The commodities symbolise for me the risk of squandering hard won citizenship rights to hold policy makers (whether politicians or public servants) to account and they brand citizens as symbolic consumers or even as voiceless quasi-objects (like the stock customers of JobCentre Plus we encountered in chapter six) of the virtual community-society-market-place. The fetishization of market values (lean manufacturing, business process re-engineering, etc) that equates public with private management authorizes those who produce and market the logos and icons to persuade us that policy is in our best interests, misrepresenting the sovereign people whose individual, joint and several interests ought to be formed in a dialectical ongoing societal and political relationship. For me the *fact* of the artefacts' public money provenance – their very specific relationship to the public domain (which ought to be beyond price yet is not currently free nor equal) means that, although their exchange value might be worthless, they could be priceless for critical researchers seeking points of intervention in a culture of consumption, a political economy of signs, connecting this theoretically to a situation in the UK today where, to return to one of my opening quotes from Rod:

“I’ve been to some pretty horrendous family environments where I’ve seen real suffering and poverty and er appalling degrees of hygiene and living and there are children in those environments and apart from the issues about value judgements and class, I think there are still issues there about how a wealthy society like ours allows that to continue really. “ (LA08)

I suggest that researchers as well as citizens, risk being consumed by *publicity* unless we are prepared to become iconoclasts – to translate symbolic policy into something meaningful, to disrupt and dis-Respect the policy brands and logos, recognising our implication in these hyper-visible yet grossly understudied manifestations of public policy. I am resistant to a postmodern consumption of signs that float free of history, especially where these are produced with public money. The legacy of a public sphere with a universal system of welfare from cradle to grave may have existed only in the imagination but its visionary symbolism is seriously undermined by a public sphere where everything is up for commodification and sale.

In chapter three I showed how, for a private nursery owner, evidence of Sure Start's "failure" was a "fact". However, my study found that some of the implementers charged with building on Sure Start to develop Sure Start Children's Centres were able to explain away the inconclusive findings of the National Evaluation of Sure Start. I found that people did refer to "evidence" but they exercised their own judgement. Some policy implementers were able to explain away the inconclusive findings of the national evaluation of Sure Start, preferring to draw on experiential, practice based knowledge. First hand ethnographic epistemology (the MBA manager who had a Damascene conversion, the Minister who saw projects at first hand) and intuitive forms of knowledge were in evidence although at other times local knowledge did not embed into the local palimpsest (Norma's story). Pictorial representations were facilitated by PowerPoint. The technocratic use of statistics and G.I.S. software produced "spurious precision" whereas practical consciousness was embodied partly in myth, ritual and apocryphal tales.

Amidst the proliferation of policy logos, signs and symbols, a distinction between wants and needs does persist for many implementers. Liam told us in chapter six that a child is unlikely to *need* a tee-shirt advertising and promoting “Every Child Matters”. In chapter three I illustrated governmental attempts to brand and commodify policy with reference to the branding guidelines for Respect and Sure Start Children’s Centres. I discussed how, paradoxically, research by Rutter, a member of the national evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) team, found it difficult to specify what “it” (Sure Start) is or was. This tension between clear specification and policy indeterminacy carries consequences for holding decision makers to account, for future development of policy and for policy research and analysis. If “what matters is what works” then surely it also matters to ask “how” policy works in practice and to develop *process* research questions about policy implementation. Otherwise the assumption seems to be that evidence-based policy products can be picked off the shelf and transferred across implementation sites without consideration of context, including the values, cultural perceptions, professional judgement and politics of those responsible for embedding new initiatives within or alongside their existing understandings of policy.

I hope that, in playing around with children’s toys and artefacts I have introduced the serious, grown-up topic of spin and symbolic or iconic policy. I am not prepared to be completely seduced by the *engaging* objects in my data set. As I showed in chapter three, the gender neutral Sure Start give-away (that I have interpreted for want of a better form of identification as a “Martian”) appears to lack a clear referent or point of origin, symbolizing in its indeterminate, rubbery, material form the inability to specify the complex community based

initiative Sure Start or how the brand might be mutating into the policy of Children's Centres. The policy shift, with the promotion of "virtual" centres seems likely to further complicate ideas of transparency and probity that relate to traditional modes of democratic accountability (Midwinter, 2001). Although the Sure Start *brand* may be recognizable, the *content* of the programme is amoeba-like, dependent upon central Government specification of the Children's Centres and Extended Schools core offer but shifting its protean, polysemic shape depending on the ideas and decisions that produce the particular local policy palimpsest.

5. The Limitations and Contribution of this Research

My research utilised a disciplined but eclectic range of theories that has enabled me to highlight the significance of historically patterned practices such as the sexual division of labour and the continuing significance of religion and to set these against contemporary policy signs and symbols without becoming mired in a relativist void. My study challenges the notion of evidence based policy that presumes a positivist logic of cause and effect and an instrumental, social engineering model of policy effectiveness (Coote et al, 2004). I have shown how the "core offer" and timetables for implementation do go some way to supporting a logical, rational, bureaucratic approach to planning welfare reform. The funding of Children's Centres in part through tax credits, linked to the target to shift single parents off welfare rolls into the formal labour market, supports neo-liberal theories of welfare reform. However, I have also shown how a variety of logics or discourses (such as the "romantic roots" of public service) are embodied in cultural practices. My findings illustrate some of the reasons behind how and why welfare reform might not easily be achieved because:

- the cash and care elements of childcare policy are not easily sutured,
- because of the dissonance of incompatible governance systems,
- the impossibility of holding still society while policy takes effect,
- the mythology of business-like efficiency ignores cultural practices,
- a-synchronous time frames complicate notions of progress,
- because a variety of policy frames construct different causes, consequences and solutions depending on how policy is interpreted
- competing values around childcare wants and needs problematise what counts as “reform”.

My study builds on a body of research on governance and welfare reform through contributing an understanding of how the tensions specific to childcare policy implementation are manifested and how they are framed, re-ordered, represented and worked with through the practices of policy implementers. One contribution of this research is the use of a metaphor to describe what contemporary childcare policy consists of, namely a palimpsest, made up in part of guidance documents, legislation, targets and performance indicators imbricating already existing projects, Children’s Centres, Extended Schools, Community Learning Partnerships, *Every Child Matters*, Social Exclusion, Welfare to Work, the Respect Agenda, the Compact, the Child Poverty Accord, Local Area Agreements and other localised initiatives and projects, such as Neighbourhood Management. While the NESS implementation study that I referred to earlier drew attention to qualitative processes affecting policy outputs, it confined its remit to the study of what, given the terms of its evaluation contract, it necessarily had to consider as a single, coherent policy. In developing the analogy of a palimpsest, this study demonstrates the

various ways in which “new” policy overwrites existing practice and shows how creative implementers combine a range of policy terminology, images and symbols to represent their own version of what policy is. I propose further work to develop the concept theoretically, building upon Newman and Clarke’s (2009:10) useful analysis of “assemblages” and “articulation” in relation to contested notions of “publicness”. Despite practices of governmentality that attempt to brand, commodify and materialize policy, childcare remains protean, shifting its shape according to policy initiatives and according to the framing and re-framing processes of implementation.

The life course of the policy artefacts in my data set is now one dead - the teddy bear that advertised the now defunct (though rebranded as Parent Direct) Children’s Information Service, one alive – (the pen that promotes the Respect brand) and one practically a chimera (the apparently indestructible Sure Start “martian”) with the remaining artefacts symbolizing my ambivalence about the elastic circus policy project. The paper watch is ephemeral, the highlighter pen’s meaning is neither transparent nor completely opaque.

This study focussed mainly on a Community Learning Partnership in an area with an existing Sure Start Children’s Centre and schools that already had out of school facilities. The manager of the Sure Start Children’s Centre, Louise seemed to carefully avoid being interviewed by me although she generously accepted my presence at meetings. I asked her directly if I could interview her and she indirectly refused. My study therefore misses her insights into how she perceived policy. I was also refused interviews by Directors at Strongham. The explanation I got was that they had delegated authority to Ted and that he would be able to assist me.

The assumption here seemed to be that their own broader, less detailed level of knowledge may not be adequately specific to suit my research needs. I struggled to contact more than two NHS representatives which for me was particularly frustrating in the light of the bureaucracy that was imposed on my research by the NHS Research Governance Framework. I negotiated my way around opportunities for fieldwork sometimes choosing not to attend some small group meetings for fear of being too intrusive and so running the risk of being excluded from the wider group. I also ran the risk of biting off more than I could chew. There is much that I cannot include because of constraints on my PhD word limit. Other limitations may no doubt be apparent to my readers but I trust that my study can make a modest contribution to knowledge. It could be interesting and useful to follow up this study with a complementary ethnography of a children's trust, a parents' forum, a social enterprise, or a forum where private providers of childcare are interacting with public and civic bodies.

Although I have evaded the positivist responsibility to specify what "it", childcare policy, is. I have done so in order to reveal the contingency of temporary policy settlements, to show how what counts as evidence or as policy can be dependent upon epistemic communities and on what feels right and is dependent upon the encounter between local interpretations of "new" policy, existing practices and imaginative visions. I conclude that welfare to work is clearly mandated within New Labour's fiscalized social policy, reinforced through conditions attached to welfare benefits. However, my research illustrates the limitations of reading off policy outcomes from stated policy intentions as expressed in official documents. I have revealed through ethnography a more complicated, less settled policy formation. My contribution is an understanding of how welfare reform and "modernisation" does and doesn't

happen – how change and stasis are in tension, how welfare to work may be difficult to get onto schools’ agendas, how child poverty may not be seen as anyone’s business, and how implementation re-brands and re-badges the old at the same time as it ushers in the new. My analysis of childcare policy in process contributes towards the body of knowledge on welfare-to-work policies. Through offering insight into implementation as a set of social practices, I show how these can nevertheless achieve a temporary policy settlement or palimpsest through the creative and strategic use of vague and elastic projects. My analysis of policy artefacts is unique and contributes to an understanding of policy translation, representation, branding and reification while the ethnographic study of two of these objects reveals how value for money is a public and political issue. Researchers who claim that we are living in a postmodern globalized age where signs and symbols can be only played with are for me too far ahead of my time in science fiction. On the other hand, qualitative researchers who neglect humans’ artefactual practices (including the materialization of policy in promotional objects) are too far behind the signs of the times. I maintain that childcare policy that addresses gender neutral “parents” is running ahead in assuming that feminist campaigns have been fought and won. I prefer a vision of the future that ought not to include compulsory workfare but could entail a fairer distribution of work and care, a re-estimation of what the work ethic is *for* with a higher value placed on principles of care.

EVERY CHILD MATTERS OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

Published 15 September 2015. This replaces all other previous versions.
There are 26 **5 star ratings** in total and 13 **editorial indicators**. For the PSA on a daily of blood after children the associated performance indicators are also shown under the **Article**
For queries please contact: everypoint@nhs.uk or call 01203 205050

Appendix B

Interview topic guide

Interviewee's employing organisation and policy beneficiaries

What sorts of services are provided to what range of beneficiaries.

Eligibility criteria

Describe how your work relates to Children's Centres

How does the organisation involve people in decision making?

To whom is the organisation accountable?

Policy framing

What problems are Children's Centres designed to solve?

Every Child Matters – how is it being implemented locally?

Partnership working

Experience of, or thoughts about, opportunities and challenges of working in partnership

Who is the partnership accountable to?

Prompt *who are the stakeholders?*

Does it work democratically?

Does the partnership distinguish between professionals and non-professionals?

How?

Is the culture of the partnership the same or different from your own organisation?

Parenting / family support

How does your work relate to family support and parenting?

What changes have you seen over recent times?

Prompt *changing nature of the family, governance changes, ethos, consumer involvement, citizen participation, rights and responsibilities*

How do you strike a balance between rights & responsibilities, support and interfering ?

Child-care

What are the main objectives of child care?

What are the benefits and / or risks of working with private, voluntary, statutory and community sectors to provide child-care?

Could you give examples?

Future gazing

Do you feel optimistic or pessimistic about Children's Centres?

Why?

Thank you for your time. Further reassurance on confidentiality.

Would you like a copy of the transcript?

Appendix C

Template Analysis adapted from King (1988)

1. Work	2. Parenting	3. Policy Implementation
1. Labour market supply & demand Neo-liberalism Competition state	1.Love tradition, lifeworld	1.Conflict - Interests, ideology, agendas Public-private Power, economic & cultural capital Status, bargaining, gaming
2. Work-life balance work ethic rational economic actors gendered division of labour breadwinner	2.duty burden of care double shift gendered division of labour unpaid work	2. Consensus - Community - Joined-up government Holism Imaginary publics Engagement Social capital, communitarianism Epistemic / community of practice Place , localism Network, membership, voluntarism Collaboration, trust, loyalty
3. New forms of welfare Third way Volunteering	3.Private sphere biology maternalism caring Interference, privacy Moral geographies	3. Participation, Empowerment political opportunity structure participatory democracy, Accountability Responsiveness , Voice Representation, modernisation
4. Link with child poverty workless households childcare strategy	4. Public service Wants & needs, Support, independence New forms of welfare third way Educare	4. Market Consumer choice Demand for childcare Competition Enabling governance Mixed market

5. employability de- commodification cultural capital economic capital status	5. Particularism Modernity changing family forms individualization	5. hierarchy Client / service user rights & entitlements Responsibilities Professionalism, public service bureaucracy Enabling mechanisms, Crèche, Transport ,Culture, Funding
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“Unlike the grounded theory approach, template analysis normally starts with at least a few pre-defined codes which help guide analysis. The first issue for the researcher is, of course, how extensive the initial template should be. The danger of starting with too many pre-defined codes is that the initial template may blinker analysis, preventing you from considering data which may conflict with your assumptions. At the other extreme, starting with too sparse a set of codes can leave you lacking in any clear direction and feeling overwhelmed by the mass of rich, complex data. “ p.122 :“Creating the Initial Template” :

Appendix D

Themes emerging from data analysis

Bargaining / negotiation

Child care – framing means & ends

Duplication / inefficiency myth

Epistemologies

Gender

Governance – modernisation – welfare reform – rights and responsibilities

Interpretive practices

Job roles

Palimpsest

Policy commodification

Representing the community

Spare theme for dumping remainder stuff

Time

Appendix E

Research Protocol produced for local authority

Research Proposal

Researcher	-	Pam Carter
Supervisors	-	Professor Steve Cropper & Professor Ian Butler
Funding	-	Economic and Social Research Council award
Timetable	-	2005-2006 Complete research training 2006-2007 Field work

2007-2008 Analysis and write up, submit for PhD examination

Research Aims:

- Analyse whether there are shifts in culture and attitudes amongst stakeholders and if so how these come about over time as the policy of integrated working in Community Learning Partnerships develops
- Contribute to local policy and practitioner knowledge by researching a variety of governance models and suggest which elements of these contribute to successful implementation

Working research question:

How is the national Children's Centres policy being implemented within complex local governance arrangements?

Academic Context

It has been suggested that there is a democratic deficit associated with multi-agency partnerships (Skelcher 2003) and yet other theorists argue that joined up working can enable more responsive services and community engagement. (Taylor 2003) This relates to

governance debates about “steering” versus “rowing” mechanisms (Clarke et al 2000) and the relative merits of market, hierarchy and network forms of governance. (Thompson et al 1991) Newman (2005) has shown that policy entails tacit understandings of “imaginary publics” and this includes imagining publics with a range of identities including “citizens”, “customers”, and/or “clients”. Often these may involve gendered assumptions, particularly, I would argue in relation to child care policies. and this is echoed by Schön and Rein (1994) who maintain that an understanding of “policy framing” is highly relevant to understanding policy implementation. This research will draw on such theoretical understanding and seeks to contribute knowledge to governance theory and practice.

Study Design

A case study of one local authority and their policy partners will enable a systematic investigation into implementation processes. The focus will be on individual and collective understandings of, and decisions about, child care and parenting. The strength of the case study approach is the ability to capture rich data in a complex natural environment through sustained involvement of the researcher over time. The design is intended to be flexible in order to respond to opportunities for further data collection and any practical constraints that arise during the course of the fieldwork.

Data will be generated by means of:

1. documentary analysis
2. non-participant observation
3. depth individual interviews

Documentation will include local policy documents, consultation literature, national policy guidance and statements and business plans with the sample restricted to the period 2005 - 2008. Non-participant observation will include planning meetings, consultation events and team meetings identified for relevance to the research. Individual interviews will be carried out with relevant stakeholders identified as policy actors by the local authority or via

snowballing techniques from other interviewees. It is anticipated that the field work period will commence as soon as ethical approval is secured and last up to 12 months. Informed consent will be sought in all cases. The case study will be anonymised and information collected via interviews will be confidential between the interviewee and the researcher. No individual will be identified in the research. Interviewees will be offered a transcript of their interview.

Analysis

A literature review will draw on existing academic work relating to governance, policy implementation, and childcare to inform interpretation of the data and produce robust findings. The qualitative software package N-Vivo will be used for the analysis.

Ethics and Research Governance

This research falls within the remit of the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care. An application has been submitted to Keele University's Independent Peer Review Committee and following their approval, will be submitted to the Local Research Ethics Committee. The researcher will also abide by Keele University's code of practice and endeavour to conduct the research ethically at all times.

Publication and dissemination

The local authority will be provided with a summary confidential report. The thesis will be lodged at Keele University library in accordance with academic conventions.

Appendix F

Sex and Relationships Education & Teenage Pregnancy Menu

Funding has been made available by the Teenage pregnancy Board to deliver additional activities aimed at addressing high levels of teenage pregnancy. Each C&LP is invited to select one of the activities listed below as appropriate to local need. Each of these activities costs approximately £1,000 which will be met by the Teenage Pregnancy Board funding.

7 Week Programme



Includes: Raising self esteem, contraception, puberty, infections, positive relationships and a visit to a condom factory. (10 x places)

Mother Toddler Residential



5 teenage mothers & toddlers residential experience.
1 night, including crèche facility and programme of positive parenting activities.

Dad's Parenting Skills



3 week programme including positive play, safety and the baby, hygiene, gender issues.

Media Diva workshops



2 Media Diva workshops for young people, exploring gender issues and sexual health leading to production of CD, Artwork, etc. (10 x Places)

Leaflet/Poster Design



Developing information about sexual health services within your local area. Young people designing and producing materials aimed at young people. (10 x places)

Resource Pack



A number of packs including: Peer Mentoring Package, sessional work-plans (ABC Guides to SRE/TP delivery) and associated worksheets and materials, SRE calendar.

(NB: This product should only be used by appropriately trained deliverers.)

Young Women on the Move



2 day confidence and personal safety training for young women. (10 x places).

Staff Training



2 days training on delivering SRE & TP outcomes.

Exploring attitudes and values, confidentiality, contraception, sexual health, and associated activities. (10 x places)

Theatre in Education



An external theatre company providing productions related to SRE & TP issues. Performances with associated workshop time.

APPENDIX G RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS QUOTED IN THESIS

Code	pseudonym	Role
LA1	Andy	Strongham Strategy Officer
LA2	Katy	Strongham Strategy Officer
LA3	Sam	Strongham Children's Trust Manager
LA4	Alice *	Early Implementer Project Manager
LA5	Karen	Advice Project Manager
LA6	Liam	Sure Start Manager
LA7	Anon.	Strongham Lib.Dem. Cllr
LA8	Rod	Youth Work Manager
LA9	Lily	Early Implementer Project Manager
LA11	Ian	Children's Services Manager
LA12	Oliver *	OldTown District Partnership Officer
LA13	Anon	Strongham County Councillor
LA14	Ben	District Partnership Officer
LA15	Petra	Voluntary Sector Manager
LA16 & 17	Anon	JobCentre Plus Partnership Managers
LA18	David	Sure Start Children's Centre Manager
LA20	Anon	Partnership Development Officer
LA 21	Anon	Regional Government Civil Servant
LA22	Judy	Childcare Development Officer
LA23	Lesley *	Toy Library Assistant/Parent Representative
LA24	Rosemary	Private Nursery Owner
LA27	Norma	Playscheme Manager
LA28	Peter *	Headteacher OldTown High School & Chair of OldTown CLP MAG
LA29	Sandra	Health Visiting & School Nurse Manager
LA 30	Brenda	Strongham Legal Officer
LA31	Debbie	Parent Support Worker
LA32	Bev	Children's Charity Manager
LA33	Lynne	Community Artist
LA34	Kevin *	NMP Manager
LA35	Jane	Parent Representative
LA36	Sue Pat	Strongham Manager responsible for buildings Strongham Early Years Manager
LA39	Diane	Out of school care Manager
LA40	Hilary *	College Community Outreach Worker
LA42	Stacey	Health Service Manager
LA44	Anna	Consultant, Former Sure Start Manager
LA45	Tricia	Senior Social Work Manager
LA47	Anon	Strongham Finance Officer

LA50	Manjit	Strongham Parent Direct Manager
LA 51	Linda	Early Implementer Project Manager
LA 53	Cath *	OldTown Catholic Primary School Headteacher
LA 54	Anon	Strongham Manager
Not interviewed	Louise *	OldTown Sure Start Children's Centre Manager

- Members of OldTown Community Learning Partnership Management Action Group

Appendix H

Fieldwork meetings referenced in thesis

Meeting	Artefacts gathered *	Chapter	Date
Strongham Consultation Events	CLP Strategy document	6	6 meetings between May – June 2006
Child Poverty Accord Summit Day at the Treasury		5	July 2006
Strongham Cabinet Meeting		6	July 06
CLP Mentors Meeting		6	September 2006
Children's Services Plan Meeting		7	January 2007
Strongham Early Years Conference	Teddy Bear Powerpoint slides	5 8	March 2007
Respect Health Agenda Showcase, London hotel	Pen & pencil	5	March 2007
OldTown CLP Meetings	Sex & relationships Education Menu Highlighter pen, children's paper watch	7 8	I attended regular MAG meetings between September 2006 – March 2007

* The Sure Start rubbery toy was posted to me by a colleague rather than collected at a meeting..

Appendix I

Glossary of terms

Child Poverty Accord		Agreement between organisations including local authorities and Government to work towards abolishing child poverty
Children's Trust		Governance structure for multi-agency working across children's services
Common Assessment Framework	CAF	Administrative process to enable professionals to assess children's needs and share information
Compact		Agreement between voluntary sector and Government
Community Learning Partnership	CLP	Network devised for organizing collaboration comprising schools, pre-school nurseries, primary health care, charitable bodies & others
Department for Children, Schools and Families	DCSF	At the time of my study DfES – the Department for Education and Skills was the central government department responsible for Children's centres and Extended Schools. In 2007 this was reorganised and the department is now DCSF the Department for Children Schools and Families .
Family Intervention Project	FIP	Intensive services for vulnerable families
Joint Area Review	JAR	Joint inspection by Ofsted and CSCI contributes to local authorities star rating by the Audit Commission
Local Research Ethics Committee	LREC	Administers NHS Research Governance
Management Action Group	MAG	Multi-agency group responsible for coordinating the CLP
NEETS	NEETS	Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training
Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder	NMP	Area based housing initiative

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