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1 INTRODUCTION

> There are persons who are endeavouring to situate their own lives in preferred stories and to embrace their own knowledge, but who are finding it difficult to do so because of the dominant and disqualifying stories or knowledges that others can have about them and their relationships.
>
> (White, 1989, in Billington, 2002: 38)

As we are urged to contemplate a new era of providing services to children and young people, what are the principles that will underpin new frameworks of professional practice and to what extent will any changes, at root, be either cosmetic or driven by economic considerations?

A particular view has been gaining popularity for over twenty years now that professionals need to find new ways of working together in order to address all the many and various needs of children and young people. The UK government, in particular, has been active in this respect and following its ratification of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989) has produced a vast number of related policy statements, of which the most important in recent years are *Working Together* (DoH, 1998b), *Safeguarding Children* (DoH, 2002) and especially *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003) which poses the possibility of change to institutions and professional systems in its calls for workforce reform. Most recent still will be the new *Working Together* document which is currently going to press.

Much of the drive for change has resulted from a steady procession of high-profile child protection cases (Laming, 2003) and clearly any horror we might feel in respect of individual cases and events will not be misplaced. As a result all recent governmental guidance has exhorted professionals to work together

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across disciplinary and institutional boundaries, primarily to develop professional practices that will prevent the worst kinds of miscommunication and misunderstanding that seem to characterize these individual tragedies. That working together is a *good thing* is a difficult concept to challenge, but developing such working practices on a day-to-day basis is notoriously difficult.

Professionals across different agencies (broadly speaking, Education, Health and Social Services) clearly adopt different practices with different emphases and responsibilities and are answerable to different employer demands. For example, education professionals are being exhorted to enhance the level of basic skills of young people and social workers are similarly exhorted to enhance the levels of protection afforded to vulnerable children. Delinquency and youth offending, however, are sites where the blame invariably falls less problematically upon the young people themselves (see Goldson et al., 2002). The sharing of a common language can be elusive, though as professionals we seem to be expected to achieve a kind of uniformity of approach. While developing a common language might be desirable in many respects, it would be of concern should such a project lead to a stifling of dissent and the discouraging of highly necessary professional debate (see for example Billington and Warner, 2003: 5–6).

Thus this book arises out of both a context and a history in which a government is making plans to change the ways in which professionals meet the needs of children. Many of the issues, however, (or discourses – see Burman and Parker, 1993) transcend national boundaries and globally there has been an ever-increasing scrutiny of young people during the last two hundred years (see for example James et al., 1998; Mayall, 2002). Currently, the focus may be shifting to a major re-evaluation of adult professional practices, systems and agencies, involving all those who work with children across post-industrial societies. To what extent though will any reforms more effectively expose individual children to scrutiny in order to provide better care, or will such benevolence mask the possibility that both government and regulations will be less benevolent? I would suggest that the recent history of professionals working with children reveals two competing and perhaps mutually dependent discourses: firstly, that a young person is in need of adult protection and support

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and secondly, that a young person is in need of adult instruction, control or even punishment.

> A discourse is a set of images, written texts, beliefs, metaphors (and anything else that can be 'read' for meaning) that shape, inform or construct a particular practice or phenomenon.
>
> *(Nightingale and Cronby, 1999; 226)*

It does not help matters that frequently young people are now spoken of as if they were members of some kind of alien race from whom we have become totally disconnected and at times it seems as though the category of childhood provides the most convenient site for human governance and investigation (Rose, 1985; James et al., 1998). This book is thus born out of current adult anxiety in relation to all our young and seeks firstly to provide a template for containing and processing some of that complexity and secondly, hopes to encourage practitioners to resist analyses which allow an individual young person to be cut free from broader social analyses and understandings. I will argue that current anxieties about our young are in part a smoke-screen for our own adult anxieties – about how we should be in the world, about normality and about our own futures and sense of mortality.

Children and young people as yet possess little political power that is free from adult sanction and they clearly share much in common with all those marginalized groups in society who can be subject to abuses of power (Billington and Pomerantz, 2004). They are subject ultimately to the control of adults and are frequently vulnerable to any adult in their family, school or other government agency who seeks unreasonably to impose their will upon them. Children contribute one of the last discrete categories of population to be formally disenfranchized within western democratic processes.

> Unlike other marginalised groups children are often not in a position to enter into dialogue with adults about their community needs and environmental concerns. Despite the current emphasis on involving communities in the regeneration of their own neighbourhoods, young people are still seemingly invisible in decision-making processes. (Matthews, 2003: 264)

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As adults it can be reassuring to hold on to or be reminded of ideas of childhood innocence and future potential, not least because we have each known childhood and have thus known something of hope, as well perhaps as that vulnerability to unreasonable adult authority. Currently, however, we seem tantalized by other discourses which demonize young people's resistances and challenges to adult reasoning and demands for good order, for example those manifest in adult anxiety about young people's anti-social behaviour. Many of the causes of adult anxiety in relation to young people's anti-social behaviour are not new, but what is more recent is the systematic targeting of young people as an isolated source of such disorder. Adult coercion or exploitation of people according to their allotted status of 'childhood' has been organized and institutionalized during the last two hundred years, for example in order to control young people's access into the workforce, whether in the nineteenth century factories and mines, or unfortunately in many more recent examples of low-paid, low-status employment. Sometimes institutional responses to young people in the workplace, in families or inside schools have been less than ideal.

Those readers who prefer unproblematic accounts of issues and dilemmas or who want detailed advice about symptoms or disorders are likely to be disappointed here. Similarly, rather than arriving at a simplistic 'how-to' list, my intention will be to tease out exemplars and principles which might be useful across disciplines. The specifics of current practice in different professional domains will not be the focus of this book.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE VOICE OF THE CHILD

A particular response, however, to the potential changes within the children's workforce is sought which will preserve an emancipatory theme in relation to children and young people and will endeavour to remain at the boundaries of social justice. This approach seeks to connect with a longer term historical context for the organized study of children which can be traced back to the origins of the social sciences during the second half of the nineteenth century (Spencer, 1861 [1932]); Galton, 1869, 1883; James, 1890). Indeed historical readings constitute a recurring theme but there

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are several other themes which are intended to provide a continuity of approach as they become manifest across the various chapters.

One such theme linked to the emancipatory intent is that of the *voice of the child*. Now this concept is a tricky one since it can rather too easily become yet another mantra akin perhaps to *social inclusion* or *working together*, all terms which would clearly in themselves lay claim to being good things. However, sometimes such terms can become opaque to the analysis of complex discourses of meaning and power circulating within them and the manner in which the voice of the child is heard in this book needs some initial clarification.

It would have been possible with this book to have provided an opportunity for various young people to have spoken out proactively. I decided not to do this for several reasons, each of which provides an example of the subtle deployment of (adult) power and authority in the lives of the young. Firstly, the selection of any young person for inclusion here would have remained within my adult gift. Secondly, so too would ultimate editorial control. Thirdly, I might have selected young people whose chosen means of expression would then not have been acceptable for publication and would have required (adult) censorship.

The point here is that at some moment or other I, as an adult professional, would have had the power to take control of the voice of the child. While there are, of course, published examples of young people writing about their own situations, at some point in the process an adult – whether parent, carer, childcare professional, researcher or publisher – plays an influential part in allowing that voice to be heard.

Much autobiographical work is, of course, not only admirable but hugely revealing and informative; vital even, if we are to alter fundamentally the nature of professional-client relationships and for this reason narrative work with young people is encouraged in subsequent chapters. However, notions of *partnerships* can sometimes obscure the crucial issues at stake (of power and control) and not least such approaches can lead us to place the focus once again upon the (individual) young person. It is for a combination of such reasons that I have unashamedly retained control over the voice of any young person who appears (anonymously) within this book. It is an important theoretical point that

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in making such representations it is the author's voice that is heard and the fragments of the young person that survive do so only with my consent (Derrida, 1975; Lacan, 1977; Genette, 1980; Cooter, 1992; Duden, 1992; also Goodenough et al., 2003).

Clearly, in all societies, adults exercise control of their young and this book does not seek to challenge such authority per se. Rather, what is sought here is to expose those particular ways in which the actions of adults can serve merely to impose a means of control as part of a web of governmentality (Foucault, 1979, in Billington, 2000a; 23) and these ways will either lead to harmful consequences or those which are at best unnecessary.

> Governmentality is the totality of the very particular ways in which the supervision of populations has developed beyond national governments permeating an array of institutions and practices.
>
> *(Billington, 2000a: 23)*

This book, therefore, is about what we do as adult professionals when working with children and examines the principles and ideas which underpin those practices. While the focus is on individual practices, the institutions and systems provide a context for the emergence of these professional practices and as such both will be considered.

There are various representations of individual children and occasionally their words are cited verbatim. These accounts will be used within a context of adult professional responses inside the childcare system, whether relating to education, health, the law or social services and will lead to opportunities for critical analysis. Such accounts will hopefully serve firstly as exemplars of resistance to practices that can be deemed oppressive and secondly will lead to alternative suggestions as to how we can extend democratic potentials.

SOCIAL INTERACTIONIST MODELS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

That young people and professionals alike operate within social and historical contexts is another major theme running through

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the book and attempts to isolate either an individual child or adult will hopefully lead to challenge, especially where these would lead inevitably to stigma or blame. An intrinsically *social interactionist* model, broadly conceived, thus underpins these chapters since a failure to locate firmly within this paradigm is doomed to supply an incomplete, isolated and unsatisfying human science.

It is for this reason that another of the major themes which offers continuity of analysis is the nature of the actual communications between adult professionals and the children and young people themselves (Billington, 1995; James et al., 1998; Leach, 2003; Warner, forthcoming). Once again, however, the focus will intentionally fall upon the possibilities for professional work and upon professional accounts as a resistance to the prevailing mode of practice, rather than seek to explore in detail any individualized child psychopathology, for example.

This book deals with issues in ways which are intended to provide trainee professionals from whatever discipline or domain with a healthy criticality which can be deployed in their work and it is for these prospective practitioners that it is primarily intended. In preparing trainee professionals to work with children and young people it is clearly important that new, and indeed already existing, practitioners are encouraged to examine boldly and reflect upon our own practices (Dominelli, 2004; Freiberg et al., 2005; Hoagwood, 2005; Parker, 2005; Goodley and Lawthom, 2006). The potential reorganization of the childcare workforce is an opportunity to consider the fundamentals of what it is exactly that we all do. For example, how do we perform our work? What ideas and theories do we employ? How are ideas upon which we base our advice or interventions constructed? What is the evidence base for our theories or chosen intervention?

Where children and young people are concerned it is especially relevant to consider the ideas we each have about the nature of knowledge, how we think and learn and indeed the nature of human experience itself, for it has been too easy to position a young person only as a potential learner without knowledge and an adult as the *knower* who has moved beyond learning. Scrutiny should also fall not merely just upon the children and young people, but upon ourselves as professionals and upon the bases of our professional practice. In particular, the

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professional reader is asked to reflect on their own practice by considering throughout the following five question-themes:

- How do we speak of children?
- How do we speak with children?
- How do we write of children?
- How do we listen to children?

And finally

- How do we listen to ourselves (when working with children)?

I would suggest that these questions can form the bases not just for simplistic checklist appraisals of individual professional practice, but also as a means of developing those reflexive and critical faculties which enable us to understand more of what we are doing and to open our eyes to the effects of our actions, for good or ill.

It would be hard to gainsay an argument that children and young people today are more subject to public scrutiny and assessment than ever before: 'Children are arguably more hemmed in by surveillance and social regulation than ever before' (James et al., 1998: 7). Some of this professional assessment activity can lead to immeasurable benefits for individual children; for example, via early health screening and subsequent checks, or else via the effective quagmire of social workers' child protection investigations, or through access to enhanced educational resources in schools. Many of the benefits are real and can indeed represent real social progress. However, there has been a recent explosion in the production of texts written by people who, in the past, have been merely written about by others – the pathologised (see Billington 1996, 2002) – and some of these suggest that there can be strains in the traditional kinds of professional-client relationship (that is, between knower and known).

These five questions I referred to earlier can be applied to all professional assessment work with children and young people for rather than the individual pathology, family presentation or manner of functioning, it is the quality of our professional approach and interactions for which we are responsible. It also involves our own assumptions and beliefs about children which, while apparently secondary, often influence the direction of our work,

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since they provide the first principles of our professional practice. Clearly we need to be able to challenge, and be challenged, in order to realize in our work with children – our *assessments, representations* and *interventions* – the first principles and values which fuel our investigations and interpretations.

THE BOUNDARIES OF LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE

The notion of 'evidence-based' practice has become a popular catchphrase for justifying professional activity, but any precise definition of this seductive term can be elusive since epistemology is not monolithic. Historically, there are at least two very different traditions of knowledge-making and truth in the social sciences – on the one hand those belonging to a positivist tradition of gathering (invariably numerical) data leading to facts that can be known, and on the other hand those which emphasize the impact of interpretation, process and hypothesis-formation. While the general public often seems to possess considerable scepticism in respect of science and scientists, the academic and research communities maintain their boundaries by according high esteem to positivist research. For example, in the United Kingdom, the National Institution for Clinical Excellence (NICE) suggests a hierarchy of research in which the *systematic review of randomized controlled trials* constitutes the so-called 'gold standard' in terms of research evidence.

> Positivism is the belief that the world as it is given to observation (experimentation, perception etc.) is the way that the world actually is. In particular, the questions that cannot be answered by scientific methods must remain forever unanswered.
>
> *(Nightingale and Cronby, 1999: 227)*

However, whether as teacher, social worker, health professional or psychologist, our professional trades are largely dependent on the exchange of language and there is evidence that communication

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via language is less than exact (Lacan, 1977). During the twentieth century, an exploration of the nature and function of language has given cause to question the assumptions about the reliability of word meaning and this raises the possibility that professionals working with children may often miss some of the complexity and variability of their own language use and could thus be accused of being non-scientific (see Billington, 2000a: 13).

> word meaning has been lost in the ocean of all other aspects of consciousness, in the same way as phonetic properties detached from meaning have been lost among the other characteristics of vocalization. Contemporary psychology has nothing to say about the specific ideas regarding word meaning. (Vygotsky, 1986: 5)

Another theme running through this book is a concern over issues of power and a belief that too many children suffer disadvantage unnecessarily in our society (Billington, 2003). Much of the clinical data are taken from the author's own practice as a psychologist working in childcare proceedings and prior to that when employed by a local authority as an educational psychologist and also as a specialist in ASDs (autistic spectrum disorders).

The five question-themes posed lead to approaches which rely heavily on the concept of narratives in our work with children and young people. Rather than the individual or their pathology, therefore, the emphasis will be on the way in which young people are represented in professional accounts, the ways in which these accounts are shared with other professionals or the extent to which they are related to the narrative chosen by the young person themselves. Three important critical 'distinctions' will then be made (see p. 158).

Thus the author seeks to build on a tradition of reporting professional case work which owes much in spirit at least to the legacy of such writers as Oliver Sacks (1985, 2004) and R.D. Laing (1960, 1961), or perhaps Donald Winnicott (1971, 1977) or Marion Milner ([1934] 1986). The challenges they made to extant knowledge at the time were important in many respects but were especially important in exposing the chasm between, on the one hand, the scientific knowledge of individual functioning and, on the other hand, the nature of lived experience.

This fracture that can exist between professional knowledge and client experience is a fault-line that will need to be addressed in the construction of new children's services. Time and again in

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my own professional work it has become apparent the extent to which services and practices have been created and sustained according to professional and governmental demands, rather than by using any sensitive analysis of the effects of our actions upon the individual who is meriting our attention. There will be references to some of this work but once again the reader should not view accounts of individual actions as factual but rather as representations, as they are a means only of bringing critical illumination to the social processes in which all our professional practices are embedded.

Certainly, there has been a 'shift in ideology and practice of the helping professions towards a partnership model which values the clients' perspectives' (Avdi et al., 2000) and recent UK government documents have continued to emphasize this trend (see for example *Every Child Matters*, (DfES, 2003)). The energy for such change was generated initially perhaps by the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989). This document is of particular relevance to all young people, especially Article 12 which specifies the right of the child to express an opinion on any matter concerning their welfare and to have that opinion taken seriously.

The demand that democratic principles be extended to all children and young people has continued to grow through research (Barton, 1989; Clough and Barton, 1998; Armstrong, 2003) and in the UK through important legislation (DfES, 2001; DfES/DoH, 2004). There is also a growing belief that knowledge is not confined to professionals but may be possessed by our clients, the *insiders* (Moore, 2000) who could often participate in decision making about their lives.

Whatever the nature of the childcare workforce, in the future professionals will need to be supported in developing practices which can be sufficiently robust to challenge the prevailing consensus in respect of what is known, for without such challenges knowledge itself will die. The new worker, therefore, must become equally competent not only as a practitioner but also as a researcher and critical thinker, capable of intelligently assessing not just clients but of analysing sensitively their own work, the systems in which they operate and not least the principles and foundations of their institutional and organizational contexts.

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The material sciences can perhaps more easily distance themselves from political circumstances, but I would suggest that it is vital that the social sciences remain alert to the dangers of overlooking political or economic explanations and replacing them with simplistic biological or psychological accounts. Worryingly, however, while the wider conditions in which a young person's difficulties can be identified, accrue and remain unchanged, it can be difficult for practitioners to connect the individual situation to distinct political alternatives and choices about solutions. Have we been seduced into viewing the divisions within our society as inevitable? I would put forward that a concentration merely on the psychopathologizing of individual young people can permit social inequalities or injustices either to remain invisible or to be viewed as irrelevant.

There will frequently be insufficient space to provide detailed analyses of some of the theoretical issues in the book and on such occasions the reader will thus be provided with suggestions for further reading as a means of achieving an enhanced sense of critical awareness. I would argue that professionals actually rely not just on 'gold standard' research but upon other forms of evidence – such as popular discourses or personal values, for example (Bailey, 2005). The ability to analyse our own theory building, therefore, is an important facet of our work – indeed, it is evidence.

A CHAPTER GUIDE

Working with Children is intended to contribute to the development of professionalisms in which criticality and reflexivity are emphasized in training as a means of developing good practice in accord with sound ethical principles. Not only this, in the future it is suggested that good professional practice will demand that the practitioner is also a researcher and the notion of a 'researcher-practitioner' model for working with children is also recommended. The model of practice implicit within the book, therefore, is of the critical and reflexive practitioner who engages with research issues as a fundamental requirement for evaluating and thus informing their work with children.

Themes operate along a linear axis inside the book and reappear at different times, although each chapter will have its own individual focus. *Thinking about Young People and Childhood*

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(Chapter 2) will examine the evolution of our ideas about childhood and will especially consider the ways in which different domains of study and institutional practices simultaneously both prompt and respond to that continuing evolution. The success of a reductionist model of child development will be considered together with those limits which it suggests for the normal and beyond of human functioning and behaviour.

Young People and the Children's Workforce (Chapter 3) will provide alternative accounts to such a reductionist model in which can be located forms of difference, for example, based around discourses of gender, disability, ethnicity, culture or economic disadvantage. The position of children and young people in relation to service policies and practice will be informed by reference to important literature and a template will be provided upon which the activities in children's services will depend.

In *Assessing Children and Young People in Social Contexts* (Chapter 4) it is argued that services often organize themselves around a *within-child* deficit model of practice and alternative arguments are made which emphasize interactionist ways of working with or of assessing children. The notion of assessment as intervention is introduced and the usefulness of the concept of closeness and distance is explored.

Chapter 5 entitled *Representing Children and Young People in Assessments* will contain a further challenge to simplistic models of *ability* or *diagnosis* that currently underpin many accounts of children's difficulties. Professional decision making and representations will be examined once again through reference to the author's own case work and as such the value of a researcher–practitioner model for professional practice becomes apparent.

The case will be further made in *Children Feeling, Thinking and Learning* (Chapter 6) for professional practices which regard as primary a child's well-being as accounted in their emotional life. Contemporary neuropsychological research will be used to challenge simplistic and long-held notions of thinking as an essentially mechanistic form of cognitive processing devoid of emotional investment. As in all other chapters, evidence will be related to case examples from the author's own practice in which a young person's ability to think and learn has been inextricably linked both to their emotional well-being and to their social and environmental circumstances.

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Chapter 7 provides a site for consideration of another specific population and will explore issues in relation to *Voices of Children and Young People in Assessment*. Further examples are provided of the richness of young people's accounts and analyses of their own situation. These will be used to expose dilemmas of power, human rights and professional responsibilities.

Working with Autistic Children (Chapter 8) provides an exemplar of the above in relation to a specific psychopathology – autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs). It will be suggested that professionals could use their imaginative and creative faculties in order to more accurately represent the child's human experience as a key to developing more effective and user-friendly services and practitioner responses.

In *Narrative Science* (Chapter 9) the effects upon services and service users of adopting such approaches are highlighted. The theoretical issues which are inherent within the model are utilized in relation to issues of rights, empowerment, child protection and special needs, and once again individual cases are presented. A model for encouraging inclusive practices in accord with the wishes of young people is outlined.

The overall trend in this book is for consideration of the social and historical contexts of professional work in the early chapters and then a gradual move towards discussion and development of practices in which potential oppression for the young person can be minimized. In the final chapter – *Ethics, Commitment and the Limits of Advocacy: Public and private lives* (Chapter 10) – the case will be made for developing practitioner roles which demand critical research and reflexive activities. It is suggested that the practitioner who is required to be an active and reflexive researcher at ease with the principles of critical thinking and evaluation of practice could begin to engage more creatively with children and young people.

OVERALL PRINCIPLES

This book, therefore, is especially intended for that group of people who are about to embark on their careers in any of the children's services (education, health, social), as well as those existing practitioners who are either responsible for continuing professional development within their particular service or are

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seeking to develop their own practice or indeed research. In particular, I shall attempt to address a specific concern that many current models for thinking about children's own thinking, intelligences and experiences might one day be considered primitive. I am sceptical, therefore, of contemporary professional positions which too easily lay claim, firstly to know and secondly to apportion blame, for a child's deficiency for example.

Our work with children and young people possesses a constant stream of possibilities and dilemmas and this book is intended to help face the challenges with greater confidence and understanding of our own limits within a demanding social world. Here are some of the principles which inform my thinking:

- critical examination of professional practices and relationships is vital;
- power relations exist within our professional practices with children and young people;
- exclusionary processes are embedded within professional practices;
- professional practices can resist exclusion and pathologization;
- pathologies/blame can be mobile, shifting from one individual/category to another, for example from a child to a teacher, psychologist or social worker;
- individual professional acts occur within collective social practices and thus pose ethical and moral questions at the boundaries of responsibility;
- the minutiae of everyday events can be imbued with many meanings and matters of importance;
- meaning and knowledge are not restricted to the concrete life of words;
- prevailing models of intelligence and ability are unsatisfactory;
- work or meetings between professionals and young people should be viewed primarily as relationships from which the adult cannot absent themselves.

Many of the theoretical principles of this book were explored and delineated in some detail elsewhere (for example Billington, 2000a) and so the reader will often be referred to other sources. In particular, the author is consistent in regarding theory and practice as

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one, united in the term *discourse* in which the idea and the act are inseparable.

One narrative which has been important in the development of my own understanding of the kind of discourses and dilemmas faced by those of us who work with children and young people is taken from an incident recorded by a teacher many years ago. A girl 'Sue' arrived at a school and for the first six months teachers could barely get her to say a word; she was clearly struggling with her work. One day she entered a teacher's office unexpectedly and stood motionless and could not or would not speak. She was asked whether she had something important on her mind and she nodded. The teacher had the good sense to say to Sue that they would like to telephone the (female) deputy head in order to take further whatever was bothering her. She again nodded her head in acquiescence. The teacher was later to find out that Sue had subsequently agreed to contact with local authority workers (in her case a psychologist and social workers), but the main thrust of this story was that she was never seen in school again. It was said that she had allegedly suffered serious abuse from a close family relative.

Now this was many years ago (pre-Cleveland) and the need for child protection procedures had not been fully realized or certainly not implemented widely in many organizations. Prior to the incident Sue had been thought by teachers perhaps to be just a weak student, her reticence a facet of an overall learning deficiency. In different circumstances an educational psychologist might later have diagnosed her as being an elective mute. Without suggesting that all children with either learning difficulties or elective mutism have been abused, it is clear with hindsight to see that the professional opinion at the time was incomplete and would have been dangerously erroneous. Working with Sue on the basis either of learning difficulties or elective mutism could potentially have been damaging to her.

Thankfully, much of our work with young people is not always so demanding. However, the story of Sue was seminal in my own development, reminding me often of the limits of my own knowledge and the need to appreciate and respond accordingly to the human consequences of the experience of the young person before me because

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> The art of understanding those aspects of an individual's being which we can observe, as expressive of his [sic] mode of being-in-the-world, requires us to relate his actions to his way of expressing the situation he is in with us. (Laing, 1960: 32)

Whatever position we take in the vast industry of the children's workforce, we cannot so easily be separated from the subjects of our inquiry.

FURTHER READING

Billington, T. (2000) *Separating, Losing and Excluding Children: Narratives of difference*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Burman, E. (1994) *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*. London: Routledge.

James, A., Jenks, C. and Prout, A. (1998) *Theorizing Childhood*. Cambridge: Polity.

Sacks, O. (1985) *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. London: Picador.

Reflexive Activity

Think of a young person with whom you have worked and jot down some persistent recollections and the feelings evoked. Reflect on the reasons for your response at the time and the reasons for your choice of that young person now.

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