The Research and Development Bulletin

Edited by Charlotte Desira

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Editors Comment

By Charlotte Desira, The Research Centre, City College Norwich

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the second edition of the Research and Development Bulletin. We would like to thank all who have contributed to this edition, students and staff both from within College and also from partner institutions. We are extremely gratified with the level of interest that the publication has already generated both internally and externally with our regional partners. As we intend this to become a longstanding medium for advertising the diverse research culture here at City College we are actively seeking articles for Volume 3. If you would like to either recommend a piece of work or submit an article you have written then please e-mail them to c2desira@ccn.ac.uk by 1st July 2002.

This edition contains articles that cover three main themes of, research methodology, history and education and training. The first group of contributions address *'Methodological Issues'* within data analysis, interviews and focus groups. Interviewing is the topic explored by John Cockburn, as he debates different modes of recording interviews as well as the practicalities of transcription, and the effect this has on the data. Tina Yates, presents her thoughts on the trials and tribulations of data analysis and explains how technology can support this process. The last article by Angela Steward, a Research Fellow in The Research Centre, explores the advantages of focus groups, and provides interesting considerations for those who wish to use this medium as a research tool.

The second series of contributions look at *'Historical Perspectives'* in the nineteenth century, of one man's impact on town regeneration, and on women in litigation. David Brown, provides an in-depth exploration of the contribution of Reverend William MacGregor to the improvement of Tamworth, a town in Staffordshire, between 1848-1937. The second paper by Michael Nash offers six interesting litigation cases, which debates the improvement of women's status and position between 1847-1911.

The last set of contributions relates to issues of *'Evaluation and Innovation in Education'* focussing upon work within the community, dyslexic students and curriculum development. The design and testing of a typeface for the dyslexic reader is the focus of Rob Hillier's insightful research proposal, which has been submitted for an MPhil with APU. Sally Rust-Andrews, from the Centre of Creative Arts, explores the impact on her teaching and her students, of specification changes in the BTEC National Diploma in Textiles. In the final article Sandra Rowney, a Research Fellow at The Research Centre provides an extract of findings from a project that investigated the effectiveness of education and training programmes within local regeneration programmes, targeted at local communities.

The Work in Progress section summarises the different areas of research currently being undertaken by The Research Centre, including Business Link Adviser assessment, the links between health and lifelong learning, and evaluations of the ESF project 'Extending New Deal' and the Great Yarmouth Young Women's Project.

Yours sincerely

Charlotte Desira

Recording Interviews

By John Cockburn, Centre for Professional Development, City College Norwich

This article is taken from "The Use of Interviewing in Social Science Research with Special Reference to Education, Volume II" submitted as a PhD thesis in 1983.

Introduction

To regard the form of recording the interview as simply a technical issue is to under-rate the social meaning of the recording mode. In a paradigm which roots epistemology in symbolic interaction, the way the discourse is captured has important methodological implications. The presence or absence of electrical recording devices, or the note taking of the interviewer affects the respondent's definition of the interview situation through the social meaning attached to the tapes or the note pad. To interview and take notes, and to interview and tape record is not to do the same thing differently; rather it is to do a different thing. This distinction is greater or lesser depending on the political salience of the content and circumstance of the interview. It is in this chapter that we address such issues.

Early effects on research of the electrical recording of interviews

While the earlier technical problems of electrical recording do not affect us directly, their resonance is still with us and it is instructive to pay them some attention. These early discussions on the problem of electrical recording machines generally centred around the limitations of the early technology. These limitations had two main aspects: flexibility and convenience, and the quality of the recordings.

Flexibility and Convenience

The very early recording devices were large, bulky and immobile; they worked only from mains power supply and cut recordings straight into perishable wax. Participants to the interview needed to speak directly into the mouthpiece if they were to obtain "a faithful recording of the natural interview situation" (Symonds, 1939). It is hardly likely of course that the natural interview was recorded as the obtrusiveness of that kind of equipment would be chronic.

During the 1940s and 50s tape recorders were developed which were more flexible and convenient than the earlier "wax cutters", though they were still much more suited to laboratory conditions than fieldwork. These used tapes on reels, mains power supply and external microphones. While a great deal of social science data was captured on these recorders they were limited by the length of spool, rewinding and advancing speeds and their weight. From the 1960s onwards researchers could make use of much more convenient cassette recorders with their great portability, internal power supply, cassette tapes and internal microphones.

Quality of the Recordings

The tape recorders of the 1950s were perfectly good at recording conversation but their use in research was still in exploratory stages. Early researchers seemed to take for granted that these large bulky machines had to be concealed and this led to awkward audibility conditions. Symonds (1939) with no mention whatsoever of ethical considerations writes: "In the first place there is the problem of the concealment of the microphone. This may be accomplished by placing it in a lamp base or screwing it into the socket of a lamp or hiding it in what looks like a book end." But it was not too important to hide the microphone because (in 1939): "it is the last thing to enter the minds of subjects that what they are saying in any interview is being recorded ... the microphone will be considered by them as part of the scientific background of the room."

Bevis (1949) describes a wonderful early use in field research with recorders and suggests some ingenious ways of improving the quality of the tapes. These researchers wanted to covertly interview 400 gasoline station attendants while they were filling the car. The machine was placed on the floor of the car and an adapter was used to adjust the car power supply so that it powered the recorder. A tape starter was fitted to the keyboard. Interviewers turned the tape on as they drove into the forecourt. The main problem was audibility. The converters emitted a hum which was transmitted by the body frame of the car "just as the rumble of a passing truck is transmitted throughout a house causing the windows to rattle". Bevis notes that mounting the converter on a rubber base would probably eliminate the problem.

Some ingenious schemes were devised to solve the audibility problem. By taping the microphone under the shirt and up the arm of the interviewer they got it close to the attendant's voice. They noticed that the respondent tends to pattern his voice after the interviewer's so interviewers were instructed to talk loudly. Bevis comments that the next time he does this research he will fit fake earphones in the interviewer's ear, which will encourage the garage attendant to talk up!

Ensuring good audibility is important for efficient transcribing. Both Symonds and Bevis note that microphones are completely indiscriminate and that generally we are quite unaware of the relative intensity of sounds around us and the great amount of selection we ordinarily make in listening to a human voice. Also we are aided by our visual interpretations of lip and body movements. These cues are not recognised by the technology, which captures everything in its range en masse. Therefore the acoustics of the room are important even with our more advanced equipment. This issue is particularly relevant for school based research in that school buildings often echo and background noise is quite likely.

Most of these practical and technical problems have been resolved by the use of small flexible and unobtrusive cassette recorders. These small machines possess their own internal power supply, they have index numbers which help with transcription and analysis, use high sensitivity microphones and convenient cartridge tapes. Rewinding and tape changing are speedy operations. Duracell batteries now guarantee that hour long interviews can be recorded without fear of power drainage.

Styles of Recording and the Implications for Data

Where papers discuss the mode of recording, they are likely to examine the implications on data of that mode. Hence papers by Maccoby and Maccoby (1954), Bucher, Fritz and Quarantelli (1956), Engel (1962) and Gorden (1971) generally assess the advantages and disadvantages of one mode over another. Stenhouse (1981) has addressed similar issues in educational research, and MacDonald and Sanger (1982) in educational evaluation. Cost-benefit considerations play a major part in these works but a number of methodological issues are central. Two salient dimensions concern the fullness and expressiveness of the data (with video recording conceived as capturing the fullest possible record); and the formality or informality of the interview as influenced by the presence or absence of recording technology. Here a synthesis of the literature is presented and some more original contributions examined.

Comparing modes of recording - tape notes and memory

The obvious advantage of tape recording interviews is that all the material spoken is captured. Of course the non-verbal channels of communication are missed as they might not be on video, but nevertheless the major section of the substantive material is documented. Consequently the data is susceptible to different kinds and different levels of analysis. The tapes or transcripts can be analysed not only in terms of content, but also of value and attitude. As a result interviews caught on tape can be productively analysed by an interdisciplinary research team. Linguists, curriculum theorists, social psychologists, educational ethnographers and psychoanalysts could all make something of the same interviews. The subtler the shades and nuances of meaning required for the analysis, the more critical it is for the interviews to be recorded. The more the data is reduced in the data gathering process, the greater is its confinement to addressing the immediate set of concerns of the interviewer, and the more analysis has to be simultaneous with its elicitation.

A second advantage of tapes is that they, or the transcripts eliminate interviewer bias by making it visible. This takes a number of forms. For example, leading questions or suggestive probes are revealed. And by listening to the tapes or reading the transcripts the analyst might be able to identify other features of the interview, which might affect its content, such as over-rapport.

Similarly by reproducing all the material, the interviewer's selectivity in noting only particular parts of the discourse is avoided. With recording by notes or memory, points in the interview which seem dramatic or significant to the interviewer are sharpened, while other points are dropped. Answers are likely to be written up as being more consistent than they actually are. Those areas of the interview which support the interviewer's hypotheses might be more readily recognised than those which falsify them.

Further, tapes or transcripts make possible the evaluation of the interview data in relation to the interviewer's performance. They reveal for example if comments are spontaneous or elicited, the degree of coverage, and intensity of questioning on the part of the interviewer and the chronological sequence of the interview. They reveal therefore the degree and extent of resistance by the respondent to the interview and certain parts of it, which might of course constitute data itself.

Depending on the style of the research these can be extremely critical considerations. As long ago as 1944 Covner was arguing that written reports of interviews do not provide information on whether responses were natural or elicited, whether statements were directly attributable to the respondent or were inferences made by the interviewer. He also demonstrates that in write-ups, the chronological sequence of topics in the interview is changed, largely to make the account more coherent and meaningful. This leads readers to incorrectly assume that direct causal connections exist between successive sections of the interview. It is for similar reasons of course that civil rights groups urge the police to tape record interviews with suspects.

Tape recorders can improve the quality of the communication in the interview by liberating the interviewer from the laborious business of note taking and allowing him to exercise to the full his professional expertise. By attending fully to the respondent the interviewer can better build rapport because eye contact is greater and he can convey a greater active interest in what the respondent says. The interviewer is in a better position to phrase questions carefully and to measure the climate of the interview. Important decision points are more likely to be recognised if the interviewer is free of note taking.

Further, for both the interviewer and the respondent there is an increased economy of time. Bucher et al (1956) observe that tape recorded interviews get more material in shorter spaces of time than written interviews. Obviously the speed of the talk is not governed by the speed of the note taking when the interviews are being taped.

When interviews are being physically noted the act of notation itself has an effect on the content. Note taking is intrusive and can weaken the respondent's confidence in the anonymity of the interview. Often it provides the respondent with a series of cues as to what the interviewer is defining as important. Where an area is sensitive the respondent will often refer to the note-taking activities of the interviewer and question it in some way. Quite regularly "things are off the record". When the notebook is put away the interview climate radically changes.

The effect of the tape recorder on the social psychology of the Interview

If even note pads are perceived as threatening by respondents when the topic is sensitive, then clearly recorders are even more so. The reasons for this are obvious: tapes are permanent and uncontrovertible, and they stand in the voice of the respondent himself. There is no room for second level slippage as in the case of notes, which the respondent could repudiate. Secondly there is a record available which could conceivably be used to the respondent's disadvantage by a third party. Given this situation, does the presence of the tape recorder increase the refusal rate, and to what extent does it affect the data it records?

The refusal rate

From a range of research carried out since the 1950s and from the case study programme at CARE it appears that the presence of a tape recorder does not increase the refusal rate for interview.

The Maccobys (1954) for example report that in a study by the Laboratory of Human Development at Harvard, 382 two hour long interviews were tape-recorded and there were no refusals. Bucher et al (1956) report that out of a strict probability sample of 362 cases in the Arkansas Tornado study only 2% of cases refused, and none of these on account of the tape recorder. Engel (1962) reports that in his study of birth control and venereal disease of over 300 respondents, only 2% refused to allow the interview to be recorded.

It is to be noted that these studies are survey orientated and respondents are disparate and politically unconnected units. Case study research on the other hand is different in that respondents are locked together in, as we noted earlier, an "historical web of interconnections". They are bound together by social, political and institutional relationships. Under these conditions we might expect a greater reluctance to allow tape recording because of the currency the transcripts might obtain if they were to flow publicly in the school. However it is the general experience of CARE that very few people ever refuse an interview or require the tape recorder to be kept off. This could be due of course in large part to CARE's code of practice which states that transcripts will always be anonymised and returned to the respondent for clearance before use. The ethical assumptions have been well articulated in earlier works (Walker 1974) and rest basically on the notion 'that respondents own the facts of their lives and can strike off the record anything they wished they hadn't said, and can correct any errors they made during the interview (Stenhouse 1981).

There are of course socio-psychological strategies that can be employed to gain acceptance of the recorder where necessary and reduce its threat value. The first is the style of introducing the recorder. Maccoby (1954) recommends that the interviewer begins by asking where the recorder can best be placed and goes ahead assuming the respondent's co-operation instead of asking for it. Engel (1962) recommends the recorder be introduced in a straightforward manner by stating something like "these little battery operated tape recorders are used a lot now. I am using one here just to help me get everything you tell me without missing anything". The fact that they are going to be recorded and that it is going to be transcribed is immensely flattering to some respondents. And within the interview itself threat can be reduced by placing the recorder with the controls pointing towards the respondent, having indicated to him the pause button before the interview begins.[1]

The presence of the tape recorder undoubtedly formalises the interview climate and in most cases changes the psychological level of the respondent. It can produce anxiety or self-awareness, features which

[1] This is a strategy employed by Barry MacDonald in evaluation studies. Verbal communication.

might be influenced by the prominence of the machinery. Some researchers prefer to place the recorder almost out of sight, while others emphasise its presence to maintain the respondent's awareness of the "seriousness" of the occasion.

Effect on Data

The earlier methodologists attended to the question of whether or not tape recorders changed the respondent's answers. By comparing 300 written interviews with 700 tape-recorded interviews Bucher et al (1956) concludes that there is no noticeable or significant effect on the interview data that can be attributed to the introduction of the tape recorder. However it obviously depends on the subject under discussion. He also notes for example that while community or organisational officials never refused an interview, they seemed to be more willing to talk freely on more sensitive topics like conflict relationships, blame and resentment when they were not being tape-recorded. But they qualify that observation by indicating that some officials gave very candid information in all areas even when they were being tape-recorded. Presumably whether or not an individual is intimidated by a tape recorder can be reduced to experiential or personality factors.

In interview both Wolcott and Becker were asked their views on recording interviews, and neither liked tape recording. Becker:

HB: Well I think there are hundreds of ways of doing it, they're all effective. What people do is discover the one that's best for them. Like the question of taking notes versus tape recording versus just keeping it in your head.
JC You do that, I understand.
HB Yes
JC You just remember?
HB Yes, lots of people do. It's very easy.
JC Do you actually remember it word for word?
HB No. I write it down verbatim. You look at the books I've done and you find verbatim quotations. It's not a difficult skill. People fuss about it interminably. I've just had it out with my class - objections in principle 'no one can do that. It's not possible. It will not be a hundred per cent accurate.' So, fine. It certainly will not be a hundred per cent accurate - so what? Will it be inaccurate in any way that makes any difference? Supposing I want to know how tall everybody in this room is. We have a yardstick and we measure. But it won't be accurate. Will it be so inaccurate that I can't trust the information at all?
It really is not a difficult skill. What happens is people are afraid they won't be able to do it so they invent theoretical reasons why it can't be done. But anyway you've done very well that way, because there wasn't any change when you turned the recorder on before and after. Some people you can listen to them, they'll sit and talk to somebody and then they'll say 'well I guess we'd better get the interview started' and then (pseudo-cough) ... that's completely different, it's a completely different person. That person is being very carefully neutral, asking questions in this kind of disembodied voice - it's very funny.[2]

Becker's comments on recording are controversial amongst many researchers. Some feel that the actual structure of the respondent's utterances must be preserved because they imply a refined meaning system which is important data for the research. Whether or not this is a critical issue obviously depends on the level of analysis and focus of the research. Those who do hold this view tend to be of a linguistic inclination.

Stenhouse (1981) rejects Becker's approach on other grounds. He claims that this style of recording makes problematic the authenticity and reliability of the data because it can be invaded by the researcher's sets of concerns. However he also acknowledges that respondents have been perfectly happy with write-ups of this nature as accurate representations of the interview even if not precisely accurate in every respect.

Harold Wolcott similarly does not use tape recorders:

> *"then I don't have that awful problem of sorting out huge quantities of taped material. Taped materials are a great nuisance ... Every minute that you are spending with me now you have to spend again listening, and then you may have to direct someone else what to do with it because they won't understand my pronunciation. There will be some proper names and things and all kinds of names that are technical. So you will have spent, what is it, for every minute here you are going to spend five in the future. All that time I might have been out observing someone, and taking notes in a shorthand way so I'd be getting rid of information. The other part of descriptive work is getting rid of information.*
>
> *There's one other intriguing phenomena that someone has talked about of turning off the tape recorder as a conscious part of their technique. That as soon as the tape recorder is off, something happens. And it's a sense of relief often on both people's part. Now the act is over. We're not going to be preserved for posterity ... now let me add a couple of*

[2] Becker, H. In Interview

> *things. I'm not sure how you get the recorder back on but one technique and this is what Bob Texter at Stanford is doing where he, for you to suddenly pick up, for you to suddenly say this is too exciting for me to let get by. Would you mind if I summarised your statements and then you could add to it a little bit if you want. So in a sense you take the burden for a while and get back to the tape recorder.*
>
> *Alternatively you could use it as a technique where you purposely turned it off, and left it off and then simply keep track of what happens. For some people When you press that button it's finished because they liked being on stage. My suspicion is most of us have back stage areas and if you're really interested well we']] take you back there. And the signal for doing that is when you turn that damn thing off. And then the question is - it's a strategy question you can be known as the guy who turns the thing on and off all the time and you can overdo it. But it's also a technique because you've signalled something, a threshold, and then if you can you work back, or as soon as you leave you write up some other notes and you should probably fill out the rest of the tape with some other things that were said afterwards. And again if you're wedded to those exact words you try and quote the informant's exact words if you can so they're just like part of the interview. Provided they are not told to you in confidence. I don't mean to be violating confidences. I mean what you trigger when you turn off the energy you turn on another kind of energy ..."*[3]

The points Wolcott makes are extremely valuable. Firstly he notes the economy of note taking over recording and observes that this mode allows him to get rid of irrelevant information thus releasing him for further fieldwork. This is of course an important point but assumes that the relevant material is recognisable at the moment of its manifestation. The discarded information cannot be examined at a later date.

Secondly Wolcott describes superbly how the psychological climate of the interview changes when the recorder is turned off. Once off the recorder loses its social meaning and the interview situation is redefined. The redefinition allows different types of information to surface (Gorden 1956). Wolcott appropriately explains the process by reference to Goffman's concept "on stage behaviour". When the interview is finished as signalled by turning off the recorder or putting away the note pad, the rules of the interaction change. The respondent is no longer on stage. Roles are discarded and replaced by selves. It is surprising how respondents assume that the interview is bounded by the overt recording process.

[3] Wolcott, H. In Interview

Stenhouse (1981) also addresses the question of the mode of recording interviews. His discussion orientates around the issue of formality and informality, nervousness and self-awareness. Maintaining a consistency with his theory of case study, Stenhouse argues that the clear formality of the interview is an appropriate psychological mood because the interviewer wants to capture the comments of the respondent when he is self-conscious. It is his chance to put his voice on record and make his views known. Certainly tape recording encourages the respondent to give consideration to his answers and not to respond flippantly. In this view Stenhouse differs from ethnographers who prefer the spontaneous and casual and who are less inclined to tape record formal interviews[4].

Transcription

The question of transcription has more commonly been dealt with as a matter of mechanics and economy than theory though it does raise a number of interesting research issues. Here we will review the information that we possess about transcription as a practical issue but also briefly indicate some other potentially productive lines of inquiry which treat the issue of transcription somewhat more abstractly.

Bucher et al (1956) emphasises the economy aspect of transcription when he writes:

> *"By far the greatest expenditure of time and money however is connected with the transcription process. The costs are so large the decision whether or not to transcribe the sound recordings into type written form must be incorporated into the original research design and budget; the decision cannot properly be deferred until after the tape recordings have been gathered."*

They imply that if transcription can be avoided then it should be. Under some circumstances analysis can proceed without transcription by simply listening to the tapes. For example it is not necessary to transcribe when:

(i) the qualities of voice and expressive behaviour (tonal inflection, word stress, laughing, crying, pauses etc.) rather than the symbolic content of

[4] Though they do this as well of course. Becker (1956) reminds us to note the serious 'idealistic' sentiments of participants and not to only take note of the expressed cynical remarks made by participants in the presence of their peers.

the interview constitute the basis for interpretation and analysis;
(ii) the interviews are highly structured and short;
(iii) the overall general impressions rather than specific details of content form the basis of the analysis.

They note that any research project that demands detailed or intensive content analysis of the interviews will almost certainly require the use of typewritten manuscripts. And, while it is possible to analyse parts of non-directive interviews straight from tape, this process is subject to great expenditure of time and frequent frustrating playbacks to locate and compare the relevant material. Even where recorders have accurate index counters this is hardly a feasible proposition for any substantial research.

Transcription is an expensive operation because of the length of time required to transcribe, and the cost of salary to a reasonably skilled transcriber. Bucher et al (1956) gives some detailed figures on the transcription ratio. He notes that in 1952 it took 4,200 hours to transcribe 700 one hour long interviews and a further 1,800 hours for proof reading and correction. Thus for simple transcription the ratio was 6-1 and for proofing and correction 21-1. He suggests that a realistic transcription ratio and one that should be budgeted for is 9-1.

However, a great deal depends on the quality of the recording, the expertise of the transcriber and the efficiency of the equipment the transcriber is using. There is a clear correlation between audibility conditions and the transcription time ratio. For example because of poor recording quality in Bevis' (1948) research the transcribers often had to replay the tapes to extract the discourse and that ratio worked out to 15-1. Maccoby and Maccoby (1954) report on a field research exercise where the ratio worked out between the range of 4/7-1. And Raimy (1948) recording in favourable office conditions reports on a transcription ratio of 4-1.

The degree of the transcriber's expertise is obviously a related issue not simply on the secretarial side but also as an individual who understands the nature of the discourse to be transcribed. Stenhouse (1981) notes that transcription is an active not passive process and is facilitated by the transcriber sharing the second record of the interviewer and respondent. In that way the technical terms (to which Wolcott alludes) can be transcribed less problematically.

The improvements in technology have probably been the greatest single feature for improving the transcription ratio from 9-1 in 1952 to 3/5-1 at the present time. Not only is the quality of the recording likely to be good, but also the transcribing equipment is likely to be efficient. The 1952 figure, which was obviously related to the equipment of that day, was probably very accurate for the time. The improved ratio is the result of the availability of quality dictaphones with foot control pedals and automatic backspacers, headphones and adjustable speeds. Also used are sophisticated electric typewriters with their own self-correct mechanisms. And the common availability of photocopiers eliminates the need for carbon copies.

Where transcription is built into the budget of a research proposal it must also be built into the design as a critical stage of research which can affect the analytic stage and other time schedules. It should be recognised that for practical reasons analysis might not directly follow fieldwork because of the backlog of tapes awaiting transcription. Procedures have to be maintained to allow the traffic of tapes to run through to transcribing at an even pace. Further considerations have to be given where respondents are given the opportunity to clear or amend transcripts before analysis. There are many areas in these procedures where delays are possible.

Transcription as a potential research problem

We have already seen from an earlier chapter that interview based case study research in schools often has practical and developmental effects in those schools. Interviews tend to encourage self-reflection and result sometimes in collective re-examinations of school processes. We know that as a heuristic, the interview is especially meaningful event in the lives of many teachers.

Further research in this area might obtain useful information by studying more precisely the meanings the interview transcript itself has for the teacher, and how different meanings might be distributed against the same or different sets of teachers. Such research would allow more penetrative examination of how teachers idealise their behaviours and orientate their professional lives. It would also be useful to study the conditions under which teachers amend and delete certain parts of their transcripts and why they do so. It would certainly be interesting to examine what sort of currency transcripts obtain in those schools in which they are allowed to circulate publicly. Elliott (1981) for example comments on the effect in a school when informal information (folklore) is written down[5] and Bailey has analysed the role of cultural mythology in schools as a form of social cohesion.[6]

[5] Elliott, J. Spoken comment at BERA Case Study Symposium 1981

[6] Lacey, C. 'Theory and Case Study' Paper presented at BERA 1981

Conclusion

We can conclude that tape recording, note taking and memory recording each have their own particular advantages and disadvantages. Researchers who work in the ethnographic style, and who value the observation of spontaneous behaviour are more likely to avoid the use of tape recorders. Recording by notes is quicker, more informal, and much more economical in terms of money and time. Tape recording on the other hand collects a much larger slice of verbal performance.

Whether or not the data is changed as a result of the recording mode depends on the threat content of the subject matter under discussion. Where threat content is high the presence of a tape recorder will, in most cases, affect and change the data that might otherwise be obtained. But under these conditions the note pad is also a factor which is likely to affect the data.

Thus the decision to tape record depends on the disciplinary inclination of the research, the problem being addressed, and the level of analysis expected. Not least is the availability of funds to finance the transcription process.

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Cool and Trendy: A few thoughts about computer-based methodological coding mechanisms

By Tina Yates, Education Studies, Centre for Professional Development, City College Norwich

> *"... but keep in mind the simple task you are trying to accomplish, and keep the task you are trying to accomplish simple."*
> (Wolcott H F, 2001:43)

This is a short piece with little in mind except, perhaps, to offer reassurance to those who like me, are, or will be, wallowing in data.

This paper has emerged as a sideline to my current study. As the main focus of the study is Information and Communications Learning Technology (ICLT) and its use within post-16 education it will not be a surprise that when I considered data analysis, using technology seemed to be a reasonable idea. However, what might be surprising is the fact that the data under the microscopy is qualitative data. I know that computers are great at number crunching, this does not help when the data are not numbers but words. Equally there are a fair few text analysis programs out there, for example NUD.IST, QUALPRO and Decision Explorer (Cohen et al 2000). I found it frustrating, therefore, that none of these were readily available. Not to be deterred I homed in on a research design software package that's on the network at City College, SNAP Professional for Windows. Some kind soul loaned me the accompanying handbook, which as far as I can see is a fairly good example as software handbooks go, and I was away. If only it were that simple. After several desperate attempts I managed to create a questionnaire, which I then transformed into a form to support structured interviews. Sixty-five students were interviewed and the forms completed. As the analysis began using the framework provided was wonderful, SNAP, quite happily churns out percentages, charts and graphs, locates similar responses and enabled me to identify themes. For instance, whilst a majority of learners think of computers in terms of 'cool' and 'trendy' a small but very significant cohort within the 16 – 19 year age group think they are 'boring', 'difficult' and a 'waste of time'.

A dream really.

On the other hand I also interviewed a fair few members of staff, using an unstructured free flowing interview technique. With the eloquent and confident participants I tape recorded and transcribed a fair few pages of dialogue. All enormously valuable but a great deal of it. How to begin the coding which would enable me to identify emerging themes to underpin any developing theory was a nightmare. But that's what research is about and I wasn't really surprised. I began manually trawling through, immersion in the data is essential whichever mechanism you choose but I was up to my ears and felt like I was drowning. One peaceful evening I sat reading (Richards and Richards in Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) and they mentioned using annotation in word processing as a way of coding. What a wonderful idea. It still, of course, requires immersion in the data but it collates the identified themes and prints them on a separate page to accompany each interview. Therefore, our task is easier as we now only have to trawl across the collated points identifying comparisons and contrasts.

Whilst I recognise this doesn't have the power of the true text analysis software it does have the advantage of being readily available, fairly easy to use, quite comprehensive, especially if you combine it with other mechanisms such as 'find' and 'macros'.

Coding data is still a very personal business and I don't feel that I have been a slave to technology in utilising the packages that have aided and abetted me in my task. Like so many researchers I am ever reluctant to give up on my data, it's taken a lot of getting and there's a sort of grim determination surrounding dealing with it all.

Most research texts now include a review of the use of computers to support the research process. It's important to recognise that, like me, they will be reporting the systems they are familiar with and might not, perhaps, have the space for a complete review of all the software that is currently available. However, I would recommend that anyone either considering undertaking a research project, or who is in the process of data collection and/or analysis, gives some thought to how technology can enhance and support the process.

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The Value of Focus Groups

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> *"... focus groups are basically group interviews..."* (Morgan, 1988:9)

If Morgan's succinct definition is the case, why is it that focus groups are not more widely used as a tool in academic research? Why have they only become the subject of interest in recent years? A typical argument is that they are limited to exploratory research, but this is to fail to understand the value of focus groups as an additional tool to consider when designing a research project.

The image of focus groups is tarnished in the eyes of many academics. This may derive from their origins as a tool to examine the persuasiveness of wartime propaganda efforts (Merton and Kendall, 1946). Perhaps it may be that the widespread use of focus groups as a market research tool in business has debased its image in their eyes. The problem may be the way in which focus groups have been hijacked by politicians, notably by New Labour before the general election of 1997, to help them shape future policy:

> *"Focus groups in particular seem to be 'the flavour of the month', mainly I think because they are relatively cheap and quick and give nice 'sound-bites' for politicians and advertisers."* (Silverman, 2001:268)

This rebuff by Silverman is not only because of the emphasis on instrumental factors such as cost or speed, but because focus groups generate researcher-provoked data unlike observation in the field. Alternatively, academics' concerns may be grounded in the element of unethical manipulation that is often linked with the running of focus groups and the ability of groups to influence the opinions and the behaviour of members. Or could it simply be that they are a tool more closely associated with an anti-positivist approach to research and thus have been largely ignored by those outside the field of the social sciences?

Whatever the reason for their limited use in academic research, there are without doubt practical and ethical limitations to using focus groups, but these have to be weighed against the advantages - just as with any other research tool being considered at the outset of a research project. The criteria for making decisions about research tools lay in judging their usefulness as a method of generating data, again just as with any other data collection method. In qualitative research it is highly likely that 'people' will be one source of data and the researcher's choice of method is usually individual interviews or observation. The researcher's choice of method to generate data must reflect their overall research strategy, and focus groups offer specific characteristics that should be considered alongside more widely used methods.

The value of focus groups is rooted in their fit with a researcher's choice of paradigm and methodology and how appropriate they are to the problem identified. To support this viewpoint, I will present three contrasting examples from my own practice. As a lecturer and researcher, I have undertaken both personal and contract research projects. The examples chosen highlight aspects of focus groups that are often considered problematic: the selection and composition of the group, the role of the moderator, the relationship with other methods and the location within the research design.

Example 1: Investigating the experiences of group decision-making

In a case study designed to reveal understandings about the development of a new strategy within an organisation, I initially analysed policy documents drawn up by the managers forming the working group. To gain insights into the reasons *why* the decisions had been made and *how* they had arrived at them, I invited the three members of the working group to take part in a focus group: a purposive sample selected because of their membership of the working group (Walliman, 2001). There was no need for an individual introduction at the commencement of the group as is the convention, and I was explicit at the outset that the purpose of the group was to generate data for my research project. As group leader, or moderator as it is generally called, I planned that my role would be to facilitate discussion between the three members on the chosen topic. I anticipated my own involvement would be low, as my goal was to hear the views of the members about the chosen topic, to generate data about *their* experiences, opinions and attitudes:

> *"... the accent is upon interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning."* (Bryman, 2001:337)

As there was a close match between my research topic and the members' ability to discuss it, a productive and free-flowing discussion ensued. The focus group lasted nearly two hours. The four of us sat around a small table in a quiet office and so it was relatively easy to tape record the proceedings, which were later transcribed.

Could I have generated data in a better way? I could have undertaken fieldwork and been an observer at the series of meetings that the working group held.

This would have involved attending meetings of between 1 and 2 hours once a week over a period of many months. As a practitioner undertaking research as part of continuing professional development and holding down a full-time job, this would just not have been feasible. More importantly, would the group have given me access to their private deliberations about a sensitive issue? It is doubtful. So, is my choice flawed and my data second best? I am aware that the focus group does not have the naturalness of qualitative research based on fieldwork, but it is more natural than, say, a questionnaire:

> *"It is important not to confuse the use of natural settings with the larger goal of naturalistic inquiries. In nearly all focus group projects, the goal is to collect concentrated discussions on topics of interest to the researcher, but the discussion of these topics may or may not feel natural to the participants."* (Morgan, 1993:8)

Not only was the setting natural to the participants, but crucially this topic would form part of the members' everyday conversation at work. I am aware that group members tend to frame discussion in terms of what they believe you want to hear – but that is the case in individual interviews too. However my interest was in how they reached the decisions *as a group* and the public setting of the focus group replicated this, whereas the private one-to-one setting of the individual interview would not.

The value of using a focus group: Example 1

- A strong match between the topic and the group's ability to discuss it - the simplest test of whether a focus group is appropriate is to ask how easy it would it be for members to discuss the topic
- The researcher develops an understanding about why people hold the opinions that they do – there is an opportunity for allowing members to probe each other's reason for holding a certain view

Example 2: Orientating oneself to a new field of study

The second example of a focus group that I can draw on from my own experience has some common features with the first, but also many differences which are of interest to address. The focus group was held at the outset of the project and, unusually, the moderator's role was shared. The contract research involved two researchers and we had enlisted each other's help to observe and record what was said. We allocated equal time in the focus group to two topics and we alternated the supporting role with that of an actively involved moderator. The group consisted of 8 members and was specifically convened. The sampling strategy was purposively to select practitioners in the same field who had expert knowledge of the topics and who were from different hierarchical levels. The data generated from the group were intended to provide a guide to the matters we needed to focus on in the project and the most pertinent questions to ask in subsequent interviews:

> *"The interaction of the participants should ensure that all the issues relating to the chosen topic(s) are covered, thus providing the boundaries of the study."* (Hussey and Hussey, 1997:156)

The overarching aim of this focus group was to orient ourselves to this new field. The issues were recorded on a flipchart as they emerged. The information was referred to throughout to keep track of the data. The moderators exercised a degree of control over the direction of the group by posing questions and clarifying meanings. Although the moderators were actively involved in questioning and seeking responses, they were also sensitive to the need to relinquish control at times so that issues concerning the group could surface and discussion between group members was encouraged.

The group meeting lasted about three hours with a break of about half-an-hour between the two sections. The group members were seated around a large conference table and the group was a large one and therefore tape recording of the proceeding was not attempted. The flip charts were used to capture the data.

The value of focus groups: Example 2

- Generates relevant data at the outset of a research project – enables the researcher to set the boundaries and scope of the project and refine the focus
- Orients the researcher to a new topic – the interaction provides a clear view of how others think and talk and exposes researchers to the reality of others

Example 3: Developing shared understandings

The final focus group that I shall discuss here provides yet more contrasts with those I have already discussed. This time the focus group was held at the end of the research project. Focus groups have traditionally been used with other data collection methods – most usually at the outset of a project to generate questions for a survey. In a pilot case study about changing professional practices based on one organisation, I used one-to-one open-ended interviews to gain perceptions of the respondents on the topic. Following analysis of this qualitative data, the purpose of the focus group was to provide a shared understanding of the results of the one-to-one interviews. This was a means of data triangulation, in which two different methods are applied to the *same* research questions. The focus group was held to generate data about the findings of the previous interviews and to get the members' reactions to the results. I was attempting to get a fuller and wider picture of what individuals had said in interviews:

> *"Another approach would be to conduct follow-up focus groups to discuss findings with either the original participants or a fresh set of similar participants."* (Morgan, 1993:233)

The members of the focus group were the original four participants in the pilot project, but they were not a pre-existing group who had prior acquaintance of one another. As a moderator in this group my plan was to be flexible and respond to the direction in which the members took the group. Discussion was wide ranging and I did not stop digressions because they often reveal something of interest. Going off on tangents may provide insights for the researcher into what the members see as relevant and important. My interest was not just in the members' point of view but the way in which they jointly came to that view:

> *"… the focus group has become a popular method for researchers examining the ways in which people in conjunction with one another construe the general topics in which the researcher is interested."* (Bryman, 2001:337)

Why had I not just used the focus group initially to generate date? I was aware of the fragmentation of practices in the organisation I was researching and the lack of any commonly held view of what a typical working day was like. Therefore, I was anxious to establish the nature of individual experiences before employing the focus group to develop a more general understanding of the nature of the practices.

The value of focus groups: Example 3

- Good where some analysis has been done before – helps to tighten up questions for the next stage
- Helpful in eliciting a wide variety of different views in relation to a particular issue - allow for digressions as they may provide interesting and important data

The focus group lasted only about one hour, but the data generated forced me to reflect on my findings from the initial one-to-one interview process and enabled me to sharpen up my approach to the next phase in the research project and ask new questions.

The case for considering focus groups

The use of focus groups has been growing in the field of media and cultural studies, with a particular emphasis on the notions of *audience reception*, i.e. how an audience responds to TV, films, news, etc, and *audience interpretation* of cultural and media 'texts'. These notions could be applied in other fields and allow the researcher to develop an understanding about why people feel the way they do.

Having used focus groups in different research projects my conclusions would be:

- The skills you will need for the role of the moderator are similar to those employed when working with small groups, undertaking group tutorials or running seminars
- It is important to recruit the people who will be able to generate the most data – those who can talk readily about your research issue
- Avoid pushing for consensus and using voting – encourage all to contribute
- Plan how you will record your focus group carefully and allow plenty of time for transcription of tapes – this is more demanding than facilitating the group
- You must address the same ethical issues as you would in any qualitative research project
- The criteria for evaluating, e.g. trustworthiness and authenticity, are the same as in any qualitative research project
- An hour is about the right length of time
- You would imagine larger groups generate richer data, but my experience is that small numbers, say about 4, generate richer data than larger groups

My experience of facilitating focus groups leads me to recommend that you consider focus groups alongside other data collection methods when designing a research project, but remember:

> *"Ultimately, it is our results themselves that will have to have value. Doing research that maximises our strengths and minimises our weaknesses is the best way to ensure the value of the results we produce with focus groups."* (Morgan, 1993:234)

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The Reverend William MacGregor (1848-1937) and the improvement of Tamworth, Staffordshire

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The career of the Reverend William MacGregor, Vicar of Tamworth from 1878 to 1887 and a Warwickshire County Councillor from 1888 to 1917 (with only a three year break) is a remarkable one. He played a leading part in the regeneration of the town in the late nineteenth century and in creating good class relations between the middle class and the working people of the town. He was a prominent educationalist who had great influence locally on the development of state schools. He continued to do all of this despite being forced to resign as vicar over his controversial support of the co-operative movement. This article will consider his contribution to the spiritual, physical, educational, civic and social improvement of Tamworth in the wider context of urban improvement in the nineteenth century. Before doing so, it is necessary to consider the political and spiritual position of Tamworth before MacGregor's arrival and the views of historians about the situation of towns at this time.

Derek Fraser identified the years around 1880 as being a watershed in urban politics. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 had not destroyed local oligarchies; their membership only changed and broadened. As a consequence, petty graft and economy rather than improvement tended to prevail. In the 1850s particularly, economist parties of shopkeepers and small traders were formed in many towns to oppose the introduction of costly public health measures whose efficacy could not yet be proven. It was only in the 1860s that the progressives started to overcome their cost-conscious opponents, following the lead provided by towns like Birmingham. The newcomers wanted to spend serious money as the only way to improve the quality of urban life and perhaps as an instrument of social control. This was also seen as a Christian duty in an age when religion was perceived to be in crisis due to large-scale non-attendance and lack of faith. The Baptist minister George Dawson, provided the Birmingham civic improvers with an ideology, the 'Municipal Gospel'. Dawson believed that the whole city formed a new kind of church and argued that the only mechanism for its redemption was civic improvement, especially through popular education. Dawson's 'Muncipal Gospel' was reinterpreted by later thinkers like R W Dale to encompass a wider remit including the provision of high-profile civic buildings, municipally owned utilities as well as a significant improvement in public health and thus the urban mortality rate, assisted by 'soft' government loans. The 1880s were to prove the high point in the influence of urban élites; thereafter, their influence gradually declined with the greater centralisation and nationalisation of British politics (Fraser, 1976; Briggs, 1968; Hamlin, 1988; Szreter, 1988; Fraser, 1993; Hennock, 1973).

In Tamworth the pace of change before 1880 was slower. The Municipal Corporations Act had changed little intrinsically in the borough. In particular its dominance by a single property owner (the Peel estate) survived. Peel agents worked closely with the family's supporters, the 'Manor Party', composed of the traditional urban élite of shopowners, professionals, small businessmen and property owners, to safeguard his seat in the constituency. Tamworth was not a prosperous town and had extremely high poor rates; therefore the 'Manor' party tried to reduce the other burdens on the ratepayers (of whom the Peel estate of course was the largest). Despite Peel's influence, the more liberal-minded rivals, the 'Castle' party, usually managed to elect the second M.P. Although there was a temporary rapprochement after the repeal of the Corn Laws, the two parties fell out in the 1850s and 1860s over the subject of public health reform. The Manor Party argued that the town's sanitary problems were exaggerated and that new sewerage and waterworks would be expensive and were not proven to improve life expectancy. As a result, Tamworth became a local by-word for backwardness and corruption especially in local elections; indeed the contrast between the two parties became stark, calling themselves the Ratists and the Anti-Ratists in a close parallel to Birmingham's Economists and Extravagants. While there are similarities with Birmingham, the situation at Tamworth was far worse and only improved after 1880. As B. Keith Lucas observed, small places like Tamworth tended to be even more lethargic in sanitary reform than their larger counterparts.

With Peel's support, the Anti-Ratists dominated the Corporation and blocked much-needed sanitary reforms, especially two applications for government loans. As a result, Tamworth still suffered a relatively high death rate for a small rural market town. This was due to poor sanitation compounded by the susceptibility of the low-lying houses and wells to inundation from the highly-polluted Tame. Moreover there was no charity hospital in the town so accident victims had to travel to Birmingham for treatment.

This state of affairs was starting to change. The Tamworth area started to prosper after 1850 due to the development of new industries. The new manufacturing élite allied themselves with the Ratists but could not overcome the Anti-Ratists even when they stooped to the same shabby methods of political malpractice. Although the financial power of the Peels was waning due to their extravagance, their town estate was only sold after 1880.

Unfortunately, this economic growth and consequent population expansion only aggravated another problem; the inadequate spiritual provision in the town especially by the Anglican Church. Tamworth was one of those places particularly susceptible to the onset of nonconformity and poor attendance at Church due to the size of the parish, the poverty of the living and the growth of industrial satellite settlements some distance from the church. These problems were compounded by the hostility of Peel and his party. The Church had become associated with the Ratists through an attempt to levy church rates in the 1860s which had been ruled illegal by the Court of Arches. The case increased animosity between the Church and the nonconformists.

The poor physical condition of the church was not only a problem in itself but aggravated other ones. The lack of a church rate increased pressure on voluntary giving to maintain and repair the building. One vicar James Millar, began a desperately needed restoration fund for the church and raised £3,890 to allow work to start. Unfortunately, the work was shoddy and the issue raised another problem as pews had to be removed to maintain sufficient accommodation. Millar's successor, Richard Rawle, became identified with the pro-pew lobby, partly because of the need to find money to maintain the church. The list of problems the Anglican Church faced in Tamworth when Rawle resigned in 1872 was long. There were practical ones - the rapid growth of villages within the parish, the poor value of the living, the lack of church accommodation, the poor condition of the parish church and the removal of the church rate. Then there were spiritual ones - the perception of a general lack of spirituality in the town (related by contemporaries to its poverty), the divisions over doctrine and politics and a purse-proud congregation reluctant to contribute to the church. These problems had been compounded by previous incumbents who had wasted money and exacerbated divisions. Taken altogether, the cure of Tamworth was hardly an inviting prospect. The problem of finding a good minister to regenerate the town's spiritual life, who were preferably single to prevent family pressures interfering with their mission and suitable curates, was now acute. The ministers needed to have experience of working with the poor and had to avoid local controversy and reconcile divisions. Two of the men they found were Brooke Lambert (1834-1901) who became the vicar and William MacGregor who became a curate (Mitchell, 1946;T.H., 1871-1872).

Lambert had many of the credentials essential for a difficult living. Unfortunately, he was a Radical Liberal, a rare philosophy among the leading people in a small market town in the 1870s. He also shared something of Dawson's 'Municipal Gospel'; he tried to appeal across denominations to all the townspeople and advocated civic improvement and especially his 'pet theory education' as ways of redeeming his parishioners. Although he tried to remain above local party politics, he alienated many townspeople by his policies. Some of his actions were unimpeachable. He supported church extension financially and continued to renovate the parish church employing local builders who took far more pride in their work. He introduced a parish magazine and introduced evening communion on the fifth Sunday of the month. He tried to avoid being drawn on local political issues despite his own strong views. He showed a concern for the physical well-being of the people of Tamworth by intending to use his own money to allow the establishment of a hospital for the townspeople. He also set up a penny savings bank. He was a member of a consortium of Ratists who took over the Tamworth Herald in 1877, pledged to political neutrality in an attempt to break the unsatisfactory system of local politics. He did intervene in town politics. Despite his Anglicanism, he led the campaign to persuade the ratepayers to establish secular-controlled board schools but had to step down from the board after his election because of his 'extravagant' views. He tried to make the church more democratic by not appointing the same churchwardens year after year and trying to establish parochial councils. In 1873 he was Chairman of the Tamworth Young Men's Christian Association with all the nonconformist ministers as vice presidents. This support of ecumenicalism greatly concerned traditional Anglicans. It resulted in a handbill in 1878 accusing him of alienating parishioners, promoting Nonconformity by his actions and Unitarianism by his preaching, the latter at least being a palpable untruth. A fall in West Indian interests in 1878 obliged Lambert to resign the living, eventually securing the living at Greenwich in 1880 (Montmorency, 1902; Kitson Clark, 1973; T.P.M, 1876; T.H.,1873 - 1878).

Repington now sought a successor with the means and enthusiasm to continue Lambert's work. His choice, William MacGregor, was an obvious one as he now combined local connection with many of Lambert's qualifications. MacGregor's grandfather was a successful merchant and banker in Liverpool and his father lived in a suburban mansion and was worth £100,000 at his death in 1863. This seems to have given him a lifelong commitment to Dr Temple's brand of muscular Christianity, combining spiritual and physical fitness. MacGregor graduated from Oxford in 1871 and after considering a legal career, he entered the church and became curate of Hopwas in Tamworth parish in 1872 under Lambert. There was not even a permanent dwelling for a minister there and the church was small and inadequate. He rented a house and became Hopwas's first resident minister. And started a scheme to build a new Church. After four years at

Hopwas, he returned to Liverpool becoming first curate and then vicar of the deeply impoverished parish of St Matthias but he had been deeply influenced by Lambert's efforts to improve Tamworth. Finally, he was a single man. Thus he combined wealth, spiritual drive and local connection; indeed it is likely considering the friendship between the two men that Lambert suggested MacGregor as his successor.

As the new vicar, MacGregor's priorities were to use his considerable means and energies to promote the spiritual regeneration of the town. This he undertook in a variety of ways. The most obvious was to alter the nature of services to make them more attractive to ordinary people. Instead, like Lambert, he made sermons relevant to everyday life, attacking the prurience of newspapers and advising about how Christians should make up their minds when voting in elections. Further, if the printed copies were adhered to rigidly, his sermons were relatively brief. He laid particular emphasis on singing in services; he wrote 'Singing in a man… is the natural way of expressing the feeling of joy and happiness.' Therefore he established a lengthy set of rules for the choir's more efficient operation. MacGregor's innovations remained the norm for the parish for the next century. (MacGregor, 1937; T.P.M., 1873-1880, Mitchell, 1935; Remington)

The new vicar believed in the importance of communion services. Moreover MacGregor wanted to encourage young people to attend. MacGregor also wanted to maintain the interest of young children until they were confirmed. Under Lambert's influence, Sunday Schools were already thriving; they consisted of four hours in total. The new vicar felt that the length of the afternoon sessions were 'barbarous' when the children 'are so wearied by three o'clock that it is impossible to keep their attention.' Therefore he shortened the afternoon sessions to half an hour each. By 1880, attendance at Sunday School had improved but MacGregor now commented about a recurring problem – the paucity of voluntary giving. The problem of funds was one that MacGregor took direct methods to address. He extended Lambert's practice of publishing details of collections and gifts in boxes and publishing the churchwardens' accounts from 1884. MacGregor was prepared to 'name and shame' to obtain funds; while he considered the payment of pew rents an 'odious arrangement' he threatened to name the few people who had not paid up in the Parish Magazine. While he continued to exhort greater giving, MacGregor seems to have shamed the wealthier members of the congregation into more generosity.

One area where this parsimony was acute was in finding the resources for church extension. MacGregor supported church extension but funding to complete Glascote and Hopwas Chapels and to restore Tamworth Church was needed. He tried to encourage fund raising by exhortations and fund-raising events. With these funds, he completed his predecessors' work on the parish church with several objects in mind. In part he shared the interest of previous incumbents in making the services more attractive by improving the beauty of the building. MacGregor stressed the ritual and mystery of services through singing and emphasising the importance of the altar and the communion (Remington, T.P.M., 1880; Mitchell). MacGregor's work in the Church had two other objectives. He now concentrated efforts on the essential work of repairing the fabric of the building and on fitting up Saint George's Chapel for daily services. In 1882 the chapel was ready for use and services were held twice daily. Evidently, MacGregor's emphasis was on regularity not length of worship (T.P.M., Kelly's Staffs Directory, 1884).

Outside the parish church, MacGregor helped to finish the two daughter churches which were both desperately short of funds. It is possible that MacGregor used his means secretly to complete the work. Like Lambert, he was successful in securing financial support from the new industrialists. Church extension also involved persuading the Bishop who had told Lambert that he was cautious of consecrating two further churches in the parish 'out of a desire not to encumber the poor living with extra expenses'; how he did so is discussed below. These new buildings helped to promote Anglicanism in the town's outlying settlements (Kelly's Staffs Directory, 1884; T.P.M., 1877-1886).

Apart from providing suitable accommodation and more attractive services, he had to find suitable clerics to assist him within the limited means of Tamworth Church. He brought two curates with him and to afford another curate, MacGregor forewent any stipend from the living. Any surplus would be applied to increasing the value of the living so that a good successor would be attracted. This generosity seems to have persuaded the Bishop to allow the two new churches to proceed. MacGregor's influence was extended when he brought a bible woman with him from Liverpool, Mrs. Weston, to visit poorer parishioners, give medical and religious advice and hold mother's union meetings. He used it as a direct mechanism to get the poor to attend church (T.P.M, 1879; Rathbone; Kitson Clark). MacGregor saw that the Church's contribution to overcoming the spiritual problems of Tamworth could not be restricted to the inside of the church buildings. He was an active ecumenical and continued Lambert's voluntary service to the town. He was a Poor Law Guardian who supported vigorously the adoption of a system of boarding out orphan or deserted children to foster parents in cottages.

With this emphasis, it was hardly surprising that

MacGregor's main interest, like Lambert's, was in education and the young. He continued Lambert's service as an unpaid secretary to the Tamworth Board of Education and was elected Chairman of Glascote and Bolehall Board, which demonstrated the improved relations between Church and Chapel. MacGregor took a very active role in support of Board Schools using both carrot and stick. He was also concerned about standards; he published an analysis of results in the parish magazine and opposed cramming preferring 'to try to make them [children] think for themselves.' His local influence over education was increased when one of his curates, R T Rolfe, was appointed head master of the Grammar School and MacGregor encouraged parents of poor children to take up free scholarships. MacGregor's interest was 'compassion with a hard edge'. He believed in a sort of radical liberalism in which personal morality and self help in particular played major roles. When he found that personal example and the existing law was insufficient, he was prepared to use his own money to help the poor children.

MacGregor believed in doing what he could to improve the education and behaviour of adults; 'education does not stop when school is finished'. While he failed to get the Lady Cleobury's Charity trustees to convert their land to allotments for the poor he was able to assist many other institutions to encourage self help among working people. However, MacGregor recognised that there was one area in which the poor had little possibility of effecting self-improvement; public health. Lambert had already attacked badly built new houses whose foundations encouraged the percolation of sewage. It was during his ministry that a burial board was established to deal with the dreadful problem of overcrowding in Tamworth's churchyard. MacGregor did far more. Apart from appointing (and paying for) the bible woman, he drew attention to the problem from the pulpit and the Parish Magazine which printed recipes for wholesome food and medical advice about antiseptics. He put pressure on the council and the local landlords by inspecting slum properties and reporting his discoveries. His gift of £1,000 enabled the town to establish a cottage hospital in 1880.

This was the one issue when he broke his self-imposed restriction on not intervening in borough politics. He always disavowed partisanship, taking over Lambert's shares in the apolitical Tamworth Herald and only giving advice from the pulpit about how Christians should decide to vote in the 1880 general election. He believed that while much needed to be done in the town, electors should not vote for 'who is best fitted to help in guiding the nation with the questions of the day' (T.H., 1880-1881; T.P.M., 1879). However the death in 1880 of a worthy poor parishioner due to poor public health conditions, led him to advocate voting for the Ratists. His advice had little immediate impact; the Anti-Ratist candidates were elected in 1880 but the balance of power was transferring gradually to the Ratists who soon introduced significant sanitary reforms. MacGregor had played an important part in promoting these life-saving changes (T.P.M, 1880; T.H., 1880).

MacGregor was a Radical broad churchman who believed in the Municipal Gospel and the traditions of the church, emphasising the role of church buildings and an ordained ministry. To fulfil these goals, fund raising was essential by whatever means were available. The situation worsened when Dale, MacGregor's leading curate was chosen as a school inspector but the Bishop vetoed the choice. This division of opinion became a critical factor when MacGregor fell foul of the town's old élite of shopkeepers on the issue of a co-operative store (Church Congress Report, 1880; MacLagan, 1882; T.P.M., 1878, 1881; T.H., 1881; Montmorency; Brooke Lambert; Chadwick, 1970). The success of the co-operative stores at Banbury described by Bee may have been due to a tradition of radicalism, but this was lacking in Tamworth. Therefore it was no surprise when in 1885 Thomas Hatton, a railway worker, failed to form a Co-operative Society. In 1886 after a letter to the Herald complaining of profiteering by local butchers, he tried again. The difference was that the vicar was unanimously elected treasurer of the society. He let the society premises at £18 a week and the store started to trade. It would become the town's largest single retailer. The response of the shopkeepers, many of whom were supporters of the Anti-Ratists, was vicious as they believed that without the credit facilities provided by shopkeepers, hundreds would be thrown upon the poor rate (Bee, 1998; British Museum Add, 1841; T.H., 1873, 1886, 1887; Harding, 1910).

Apart from any economic argument, the theological case against MacGregor was well expressed by 'Another Parishioner'. He believed the poor parishioners 'loved him [MacGregor] for what he was and I fear quite as much for what he did.' Clearly such people viewed his Municipal Gospel as secularisation, replacing morality by materialism (T.H., 1887). Engendered both by narrow self-interest and honest theological differences, Thomas Woolley instigated a boycott of the church and some actually left the Church. Although the shopkeepers could not force MacGregor to leave, their action clearly harmed the Church. Therefore MacGregor resigned, citing as his reason his poor health requiring winters abroad. He tried to ensure that his work was continued by recommending Wray Hunt as his successor. It was claimed that the former curate enjoyed the support of 80% of the parishioners. Nevertheless the Bishop used the pressure from the town's influential and vociferous shopkeepers to break up a group of ministers who were unsympathetic to his conservative evangelical views. The Bishop rejected Hunt and was accused of using a churchwarden, Masfen, to sabotage the popular campaign in support of Hunt. Instead the Bishop appointed Reverend F. H. Thatcher from another difficult urban parish.

MacGregor's success as vicar can be gauged from an address presented to him with 1,200 signatures. Further, at a meeting on the occasion of Dale's departure, the Bishop's behaviour was roundly condemned and MacGregor and his curates were eulogised. Tempest, a Ratist, said 'Perhaps since the time of Sir Robert Peel, no men have been so much beloved and respected in the town as the late clergy and certainly none have done so much to benefit the borough.' MacGregor received especial praise; little wonder when, during his nine-year incumbency, he had given perhaps £8,000 to good works in the town, roughly a fifth of his inherited fortune. MacGregor could easily have decided to leave the town; after all, he had suffered severe illness and, as a doctor reported, setting up the co-operative shop had 'incurred the bitter hatred of the old established traders.' However the former vicar was so committed to his ideals that he remained in the town, promising to assist his replacement. He had the means to do so; while he was a radical, he supported capitalism. This allowed MacGregor to support institutions, which benefited both the townspeople and himself.

MacGregor's main work focussed on the impoverished area of Bolehall, east of the town. He built a pleasant house, Bolehall Manor, and became the village squire, maintaining a close paternal interest in the villagers and lecturing them on public issues. MacGregor retained his interest in the young. His home and grounds were always open to the local young and he held Bible Classes there on Sundays. He gave the village the site of MacGregor Park, still a public open space. He maintained his involvement in the Bolehall and Glascote educational board. With such an interest in the well-being of his neighbourhood, MacGregor took an opportunity which presented itself soon after his resignation from the vicarage to exercise wider influence (Kelly, Staffs. Directory, 1896; T.H., 1892, 1904).

This opportunity was the formation of county councils in 1888 and MacGregor was elected to the Warwickshire body at its inception. The Council was dominated by Conservatives and the landed interest, which left MacGregor isolated. His frustration at how the Tories who tried to dominate local policy in Liberal areas and ignored the problems of industrial areas like Bolehall and Glascote led to his resignation in 1901. Another factor in MacGregor's isolation may have been that he was not connected to the local aristocracy. The Tories' centralising tendencies continued for a while, facilitated by the 1902 Education Act, which transferred control of elementary schools from elected local boards to county councils. Nevertheless, by 1904 the County Council had to admit that its centralising policy, 'taking away every shred of real responsibility from the local managers of school... has failed.' This realisation confirmed MacGregor's belief that local managers should run their schools as they saw fit. Therefore when a vacancy occurred at Bolehall and Glascote, MacGregor was elected to the county council. His election was welcomed generally in the county. With his practical experience on school boards, he became Chairman of the Elementary Education Sub-Committee of the main Education Committee and threw himself with enthusiasm into his new task (T.H., 1901,1904).

While Bolton King, the county's first Director of Education, has elsewhere received great credit for his visionary work in improving education in Warwickshire (Bolton King, Browne and Ibbetson, 1978), his fellow Liberal, MacGregor, deserves a share of the praise. Certainly under King's directorship attendance, staffing levels and school accommodation all improved considerably; but none of this could have happened without the political support of the head of the sub-committee who could extract greater funds from his colleagues. MacGregor campaigned hard for better wages for teachers and to end the system of exempting children from their last year in school under the fiction they were entering 'beneficial trades'. Advocating increased spending could be difficult; nevertheless he continued to argue to his case more regularly than his colleagues. MacGregor worked closely with Bolton King to combine the greater professionalism of a central authority with using the practical knowledge of local teachers far more in making policy, partly by experimentation. MacGregor was a strong advocate of lifelong education. Taken altogether, MacGregor made a significant contribution to the improvement of education in Warwickshire generally, a contribution recognised by his appointment as alderman in 1917 after twenty-seven years service.

Apart from his work in education and in public health, MacGregor became far more politically active as a radical Liberal. While he was vicar, he had subscribed to a miners' relief fund, not supporting directly the miners' claim against a wage cut but arguing that the employers should agree to arbitration. Now he was prepared to support openly the local miners' claim during a strike in 1890 and viciously attacked the 'immorality' of the Fair Trade Conservatism in 1904 which would have increased food prices by protecting British agriculture. This, taken with his obvious regard for the physical and moral improvement of the working class, made a major impact on their political attitude, encouraging moderation and compromise rather than confrontation and violence.

To evaluate MacGregor's work is not easy because it involved so many aspects of society. Perhaps it is best to start with his work as vicar of Tamworth. In 1887, the Mayor commented that despite its limited means, there was:

> *'no other town in the midland counties showing greater improvements than Tamworth … a Cottage Hospital and Dispensary, a Free Library and Baths… [and enjoyed] the grandest water that was ever known.'* (T.H., 1887)

Although the Mayor did not say so, most of these improvements and others were effected either by MacGregor directly or by his influence during his time as incumbent. In this regard he was one of several clerics developing the 'municipal gospel' to include broader notions of improvement than those considered by Dawson. Hennock argued that Dawson was the key person in the development of the civic improvement party in Birmingham; MacGregor played an even more significant role in Tamworth, contributing not only an ideology to the improvers but a financial lead as well.

The work of Broad Churchmen like MacGregor and Lambert, contributed to the resurrection of the Anglican Church in Britain's towns in the late nineteenth century noted by Gilbert. While the example of Tamworth confirms the 'pessimistic thesis' of the Anglican Church in the early nineteenth century, the resurgence promoted by the Broad Church clerics in the 1870s supports the view of the 'optimist thesis' of the Anglican Church in the late nineteenth century (Gilbert, 1976; Brown, 1988).

In his post-clerical career, MacGregor continued his valuable work, especially in improving education locally as well as in Warwickshire generally. In short, MacGregor made a considerable contribution to the spiritual, physical, educational, civic and social improvement of Tamworth. Further, the work of MacGregor and like-minded men contributed to the good class relations, which characterised British society in contradistinction to the more volatile ones found elsewhere in Europe. Their support of institutions to improve living conditions and opportunities for self-improvement while remaining advocates of capitalism convinced many working people that capitalism was not necessarily oppressive and could indeed be beneficial to their interests.

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Women in Litigation in a Discriminatory Culture

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During the period covered by these six cases, the position and status of women, particularly in litigation, changed greatly for the better, but it was slow in coming. It is certainly arguable that the position of women in the ninth century was better than it was in the nineteenth century, in many ways "the darkness before the dawn".

The first case, **Cummins v Ince in 1847** points up issues not only of intimidation, duress and exploitation, but also of lunacy. Among the minor reforms to the credit of Peel's ministry is the **Lunacy Act of 1842**, introduced by Lord Granville Somerset, which extended the metropolitan system of inspection to the provinces. Armed with larger powers, the Commissioners published a report two years later, in 1844, the so-called "Domesday Book", of all that, up to that time, concerned institutions for the insane" which disclosed the most flagrant abuses. At the request of the Government, Ashley on June 6, 1845, brought in two bills: the first "For the regulation of lunatic asylums", established a permanent lunacy commission with greatly widened functions, the second "For the better care and treatment of lunatics in England and Wales", provided for the compulsory erection of county asylums, with separate buildings for chronic cases, and for the medical inspection of lunatics kept under private control" (Sidney and Sanders, 1913; Solicitors' Gazette, 1988).

The case of Cummins v Ince brought together these developments at the Horns Tavern, Kennington, on August 29, 1846, and the unfortunate Mrs. Cummins must have been one of the first under the new Act to have figured in litigation. There Mr. Barlow, Commissioner in Lunacy, took evidence as to whether one, Mrs. Cumming [or Cummins] recent widow of Captain Cumming, should be further detained in a private asylum (to which she had been taken in May 1846).

She had the counsel of Charles Erdman Petersdorff, who had been called to the Bar in 1833 and who had written an Abridgement of 1841-44, the forerunner of modern legal encyclopaedias such as Halsbury's Laws of England. He took a particular interest in the case. Mrs. Cumming had two daughters, Catherine, married to John Ince, and Thomasine Catherine, married to Benjamin Bayley Cooper. As the law stood in those days the defendant representing them was John Ince, "husband and wife being one, and that one being the husband".

After an investigation lasting several days, it was agreed to abandon the Commission proceedings, on the understanding that an agreement should be executed by Mrs. Cumming with regard to her property. This was the property she had received from her late husband, and in order to get hold of it, her faithless daughters and their husbands had had her committed to a private lunatic asylum. Mrs. Cumming, who in her own words would rather have done anything than return to the asylum, signed the prepared document giving title to the property to her daughters and was then liberated. It was, so to speak, a conditional discharge from the asylum but it was of course extracted under duress and although Mrs. Cumming was described as "irascible and eccentric" she was not mad, whatever that meant in 1846, and she was far from stupid. She knew why she had signed the agreement: to obtain her liberty. She then began a case to recover the title deeds. Again, she was fortunate in obtaining as her counsel, Mr. Cockburn QC, (who will figure in later cases in this paper). He argued, quite logically, that a party entitled to an estate had a right to the title deeds. Mrs. Cumming was "in her sound mind, and entitled to have these deeds returned to her". The opposition, Mr. Watson QC, counsel for her daughters and their husbands, cleverly tried to turn around the timely assistance Mrs. Cumming had had from Mr. Petersdorff by saying:

> *'The agreement had been made under the sanction of Mr. Petersdorff, one of the most learned members of the Bar, and a gentleman in whose judgement everyone must place the greatest confidence",*

These oleaginous words cut no ice with Mr. Justice Erle who, with a common jury, was hearing the case. The judge, in directing the jury, had no doubt that it was a question of consent and whether the arrangement was a voluntary act on the part of Mrs Cumming. The jury almost immediately gave their verdict for the plaintiff.

Mrs. Cumming's daughters and their husbands gained permission for a new trial, which was heard on November 11, 1847, before such legal glitterati as Lord Denman, the Lord Chief Justice, and Lords Justices Erle (again) and Wightman; the issue was finally decided in favour of Mrs. Cumming. The case represented not only a milestone in the law of duress, as a vitiating element in contract, but an advance in the case of vulnerable and exploited women (New Law Journal, 1997).

The second case, chronologically, is **Ryves & Ryves v Attorney-General in 1866.** While all six cases became causes celebres of their day, this one riveted the general public for potentially very important reasons. It concerned a lady and her daughter, both of whom had called themselves Princesses, claiming to be the daughter and granddaughter of Henry Duke of Cumberland, the brother of George III. The mother was referred to as the "soi-disant Princess Olive of Cumberland", and so she remained to her supporters. Needless to say the issue of mental stability was raised in this case! The immediate cause in 1866 was under the Legitimacy Declaration Act and was heard before Lord Chief Justice Cockburn (now risen in the world since Cummins v Ince!) Chief Baron Pollock and the Judge Ordinary Sir James Wilde and a special jury (Solicitors' Gazette, 1988) [a higher property qualification was required for a special jury]. The judges were distinguished: this was not a case, which came before the courts every day. If there was a shred of truth in the claims, there could have been very important legal and constitutional consequences. Pursuing her claim to be the legitimate daughter of the Duke of Cumberland, the so-called Princess Olive, (also known as Olive Wilmot) claimed to have been left £15,000 under the will of George III, who, if the claim be true, would have been her uncle. She had already pursued this claim in 1822, before the Prerogative Court. Sir John Nicholl presided, and Dr. Dodson and Dr. Lushington were the Civilian Doctors. Sir Christopher Robinson, the King's Advocate, had then addressed the court at great length against the claim, contending that it was a matter not for the interference of that court. Dr. Adams followed on the same time. Sir John Nicholls said he should take time to consider the case, but on the very next Court day he gave judgement against the application, as not coming within the judgement of the Court (Gentleman's Magazine, June 1822).

This was not the first time that the lady had come to public note however, far from it. The first pretensions of this claimant had been set forth in a petition to the House of Commons on 14th July 1820, that she was the legitimate daughter of the Duke of Cumberland and entitled to certain property of her deceased father. Her so-called uncle had only been dead six months, so she was wasting no time! She prayed the House to institute an inquiry into her claims. This Petition was ordered to lie on the table of the House of Commons; but the subsequent session of Parliament passed over without the investigation having been instituted. The profile of Olive Wilmot had nevertheless been raised still further (Gentleman's Magazine, July 1822).

In 1823 the claims of Olive Wilmot were brought before the House of Commons again by Sir Gerard Noel and were completely exploded by Sir Robert Peel.

This then was the background to the case brought by her daughter, Lavinia Horton Ryves, and her grandson in 1866. Olive Wilmot had died in 1834, but the whole episode was given a new airing by this case thirty years later. The words of the court with regard to the evidence produced by the petitioners cannot be improved upon even at this distance: 'the tale...was woven into apparent consistency by means of an elaborate apparatus of documents and pseudo-historical records, which gave to the case a superficial aspect of verisimilitude'. Not least of the evidence were many famous signatures, examined by a graphologist in court, and whose veracity was still being questioned by Compton Mackenzie in 1938. During the case in 1866, Sir Roundell Palmer, the Attorney-General, set out, as he thought, to demolish all these claims. He began, quite rationally, to state that 'if the petitioner's alleged grandmother was a Princess of the Blood Royal, it was utterly impossible that her own parents could have been lawfully married, because the marriage was rendered invalid by the Royal Marriages Act 1772'. Impossible, that is, unless the King had given his consent to it. Some of the documents in the case were authentic, and the ostensible purpose of proving the legitimacy of the petitioners was admitted in court. But of course this was simply the vehicle to get the case to court and to give a legal airing to the claims of the female petitioner and her mother to be members of the royal family.

There was, as will be seen in the other cases, the common factor of finance, or lack of it, of family and sibling rivalry and quarrels. Like others before and since, those dissatisfied with their families and their lives, seek solace in a fantasy that they have been adopted and that they are really an offshoot of royalty or an heiress. This notion is so powerful, not only do they end in believing everything themselves in a story which generates its own momentum, but they can and do communicate this belief to others, particularly their own families. Thus, we ourselves can believe that Lavinia Jacquetta Horton Ryves, her daughter, herself like her mother divorced and abandoned, took solace enough in this extraordinary story, to go to court with it and because it had some shreds of truth, to cause a frisson of unease among the court, the government and to the judiciary, to the amusement of society at large at such a spectacle. As the Attorney-General said at the end of the case: 'it is possible that she, like her mother, may have brooded over the story till she persuaded herself it was true' What a pity DNA had not been discovered in 1866!

The plaintiff in the third case, Polly Frost, takes us to another scenario altogether, and yet several of the strands remain the same: finance, love won and lost, disappointment to the point of litigation, and in a way an image of improvement which was to fade. This case, **Frost v Knight in 1872,** received publicity because it involved important legal issues, even though it did not initially seem unusual. Polly Frost, a gamekeeper's daughter, and Josiah Knight, of Milwich Hall, were the protagonists in the case and their backgrounds added the extra element of class, to the Victorians always a frisson. Polly came to work at the Hall, attracted the attention of the son of the family, and began a relationship which was to last for six years, between 1863-69, what in those days was called a courtship. Apparently no sexual relations took place, which was later important for Polly. Josiah promised Polly marriage, but knowing his father would not approve, added the rider: 'when my father dies'.

A trip to Rhyl changed everything. There Josiah met his cousin, and she must have had some allure for him, because he decided to marry her instead, and when he returned to Milwich told Polly he was repudiating his contract to marry her. What had seemed to Polly to be a secure financial future now came crashing around her. Had she wasted six years of her youth for aught? This was Breach of Promise, and she decided to sue, the case being heard by Baron Martin in March 1870. Josiah had only promised her conditionally, but how could he marry her when his father eventually died, for now he was married to someone else? He had put himself in a position, which meant he could not then fulfil his promise. It was a clear case of anticipatory breach. Polly won her case, but her damages of £200 were put on hold while Josiah appealed. The Exchequer Court, consisting of Barons Kelly, Channel and Martin (again) heard the appeal in February 1871. Questions raised about the nature of the marriage contract proved of interest, one side contending that it was on a par with commercial or mercantile contracts, where damage and financial loss could result in a similar way, while the other side contended that it was a different kind of contract altogether. The "contract" or promise which Polly and Josiah had entered into, decided the court, was open-ended: anything could happen before Josiah's father died. Thus, judgement was given for the defendant. The **Law Times** opined strongly however on the part of the plaintiff. Polly went to appeal to the Exchequer Chamber, and the court decided the case in February 1872. The Chamber unanimously reversed the decision of the lower court, finding no significant difference between mercantile and marriage contracts. Kenningdale Cook, writing for **Woman** concluded: "This will tend to the better protection of women".

Women had a pecuniary loss when they were unable to marry. Gender differences became plain here. As Gillie has pointed out about the working class at the time: "Though supposedly the more romantic sex, the female actually had the more practical view of marriage". Women had very little freedom to marry for affection. Only heiresses and some widows found such liberty for the female sex. Frost v Knight also illustrates the understanding that juries and most judges had of the peculiar situation of working-class women, which may in itself, be a revelation. As the Appeals Court decision pointed out, marriage was more important to women. Frost's action also demonstrated the amazing success of lower, middle and upper working-class women in asking for redress, a welcome development at a time, which was heading for the Married Women's Property Act of 1882. Frost's experience showed that even a poor woman could win a complicated lawsuit and overcome exploitation (Frost, 1995).

The fourth case, **Allcard v Skinner in 1887** deals with a woman in very different circumstances, but nevertheless one who felt that she had been exploited, and who had lost her money when she should not have done. The mindset of Miss Allcard is important here. She was an heiress but she had an impressionable nature. Drawn into the High Church wing of the Church of England when it was experiencing a revival of monasticism and ritualism, she came under the influence of Fr. Nihill and Hannah Skinner, one the confessor and the other the founder of an Order of Anglican nuns, the Sisters of the Poor. Miss Allcard was so infatuated with both the Order and with these two personalities that she eventually became a nun and gave all her property, which was considerable, to the Order.

Both the personality and the experience of Miss Allcard herself are classic ones, repeated many times in the hothouse atmosphere of religious enthusiasm, what Monsignor Ronald Knox was later to describe as 'ultrasupernaturalism'. They were examples of the fatal confluence of family relationships, religion, money and physical attraction. Thus it was with Miss Allcard, whose fortune and religious enthusiasm sent her on a tortuous and often unhappy path, which the law eventually tried to untangle and unravel; but whether they really obtained what they wanted is another question, and whether they could obtain it at all in the religious climate of nineteenth century England, another question again. As Arthur Calder-Marshall rather cruelly put it, but with more than a hint of truth (with reference to another sister) 'she would have been happy- at least until the course of the menopause meandered elsewhere'. Miss Allcard's enthusiasm brought its own demise in due course. Like a guttering flame, it burnt out. Disillusioned, she left the order, and within two weeks had been received into the Roman Catholic Church. Yet it was not until seven years later, in 1884, when she found that another sister had left the Order and received her property back, that she decided to sue for the return of her own property. Interestingly, the court eventually decided that the evidence suggested she had made a straight gift of her property to the Order, and so questions of laches and lapse of time were secondary to this, although the question of undue influence and the lack of independent advice weighed heavily in the balance.

The First Instance case took place before Mr. Justice Kekewich on 20 August 1885, the judge giving judgement for Miss Skinner, alias Sister Monica, the founder and head of the Order. Miss Allcard appealed. The judgement of the court was delivered by Lord Lindley, in a case which was heard in May and July 1887. Lord Lindley dealt with the central issue: 'although the plaintiff was a religious enthusiast, no one could treat her as in point of law non compos mentis'. Religious influence was 'a very peculiar species of influence' and 'a confessor, or director of the conscience, a person to whom another trusted his spiritual concerns...cannot take any bounty from that person' (quoting the French jurist Pothier). Lord Lindley was in no doubt that it was 'right and expedient to save (people) from being victimised by other people', rather than 'saving them from the consequences of their own folly'. 'To protect people from being forced and tricked or misled in any way into parting with their property is one of the most legitimate of all laws'. Here indeed we see common ground with Mrs. Cummins in the first case.

Lord Lindley emphasised the policy of exclusion towards outsiders from the Order. There must be an opportunity for independent legal advice. The words of Lindley express the crux of the case again: 'When she had emancipated herself from the spell by which she was bound, she was entitled to invoke the aid of the court in order to obtain restitution...'

The sum of these cases is indeed woman emancipating herself from the spell of her legal restraint.

The fifth case, that of **Mighell v Sultan of Johore in 1894** deals with a woman who fell under another kind of spell, for which there was no legal redress. A man she had met in high society, who appeared gentlemanly, wealthy and plausible, and who called himself Albert Baker, promised her marriage. He promised marriage to her and then reneged on the promise, so she sued him, like Polly Frost in a rather different social milieu, for breach of promise. The case came on for hearing in the Court of Appeal on November 27, 1893. The case again attracted a wealth of legal talent: Lord Esher, Master of the Rolls, and Lords Justices Lopes and Kay. Apparently Miss Mighell knew already that her fiancé was not Albert Baker: this was a not very imaginative pseudonym for Abu Bakr, His Serene Highness the Sultan of Johore. The case revealed his secret life in the high society of London, a long way absent from his kingdom in the Malay Straits. The status of the defendant was important. Miss Mighell's argument was that he had originally presented himself as a private individual and a subject of the Queen. This pointed up of course the duality of a sovereign's status- that they are both public and private personalities. A distinction was drawn between private transactions and matters of sovereign authority. Had Abu Bakr, (who declined to appear in court) lost this privilege of diplomatic immunity by his deceit? An independent sovereign is entitled to immunity from jurisdiction, unless he waives this privilege, which Abu Bakr was not going to do. Did his conduct amount to waiver? Persisted the lawyers for Miss Mighell. No, it must be an active waiver was the uncompromising answer.

Ultimately, political considerations and agendas often decide the day. In 1894 the British Government was unwilling to offend a friendly foreign potentate to appease a private individual. In this sense, Miss Mighell was a victim of state policy, but the peculiar nature of breach of promise also meant she was a victim because she was a woman (New Law Journal, 1999).

The last and sixth case, that of **Chaplin v Hicks in 1911** brings the scene into the early twentieth century, although the Edwardian decade from 1900 to 1910 was in many ways the end of the nineteenth century. The two parties to the case were on the one hand, Edward Seymour Hicks, one of the most famous actors and farceurs of the day; and on the other hand, an aspiring actress, Eva Chaplin, who yearned and burned for a part on the West End stage. Eva Chaplin was one of 6,000 young women who sent their photograph to the Daily Express, in the hope that they would be one of the final twelve who, being voted upon by the readers, would gain a contract on the West End stage at the grand sum of £5 a week. Eva headed the poll in her particular district, and was invited to meet Seymour Hicks at the Aldwych Theatre (which he had had built and opened) on January 4, 1909. Eva Chaplin was however in a theatre in Dundee at this time and did not receive the letter until January 6. Despite repeated attempts, she could not gain access to see Seymour Hicks, and in despair she resorted to litigation. On March 4, 1910, she brought an action against Hicks and at the trial before Pickford J and a common jury, the jury found that the defendant had not taken reasonable means to give the plaintiff an opportunity of presenting herself for selection and assessed the damages at £100. Like Polly Frost, it appears Eva Chaplin persevered and was not overawed by circumstances. She was driven on, like the others, by what she considered the justice of her case.

In Simpson v LNWR in 1876 Chief Justice Cockburn made the authoritative remark that 'As to the supposed impossibility of ascertaining the damages I think there is no such impossibility; to some extent, no doubt, they must be matters of speculation, but that is no reason for not awarding damages at all' (New Law Journal, 1998). What distinguishes these women is that they persisted, despite a discriminatory legal culture, which, until 1882, even made it difficult, sometimes almost impossible, to pursue their own litigation. Mrs. Cummins was a widow, and had to contend with a family that was determined to get her property and to prove she did not have the mental capacity to have it. Mrs. Ryves had a particular fantasy that she had inherited from her mother and felt duty bound to publicise: she had some popular opinion with her and some against. The public is forever fickle, which is a constant factor in litigation. Polly Frost felt she had been betrayed, but she had not compromised herself; she sued as a virgin and a spinster, both appreciated in status-conscious Victorian England. She was convinced of the justice of her cause. Miss Allcard was the victim of both her own fantasies and other people's deception, but when she had come to, so to speak, she found her own voice, although she could not undo what she had done, the forces which obliged her to do it were revealed and evaluated. Miss Mighell aspired to high places; also feeling betrayed and cheated by her fiancé. Alas for her, exigencies of state conspired also to cheat her. Although breach of promise almost exclusively existed as an action for women, the cause of her failure in the case was not exclusively because of her sex. Her triumph, if it was such, was to publicise such cases. Finally, Miss Chaplin, no respecter of persons who were perhaps blinded by their own fame, a fame which she wanted a part of, did not hesitate to press her own claim for compensation for disappointment and a lost potential career. The others, like her, have their own niche in the footnotes of legal history.

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A Typeface for the Dyslexic Reader: The design and testing of a typeface for the dyslexic reader which would improve understanding and minimalise misreading of various texts – An MPhil proposal

By Rob Hillier, MPhil Student, City College Norwich

The following is an MPhil Research Proposal submitted to Anglia Polytechnic University (APU). As a submission to this Bulletin it is an example that highlights the diverse range of post-graduate research being undertaken within the 'Regional University' of APU.

Context of the Research

Dyslexia is a phonological deficit that influences an individual's ability to decode and encode language. Much has been written about the condition of dyslexia. The main focus of my research will be on visual perception and the processing of spatial information. "Visio / spatial processing involves both feature detection and pattern activation -or in other words categorical encoding and co-ordinated encoding, the what and where of visual enquiry", (Pagett, 1999). I will be specifically examining scotopic sensitivity, also known as Meers Irlen Syndrome, which refers to problems associated with the contrast between text and paper, and the "jumping" of letterforms when reading. Linda Silverman (of The Gifted Development Centre, Denver, U.S.A.) said at the 'Visual Spatial Learners - The Power of Images' conference at the London College of Printing (November 2000):

> *"Visual spatial learners are pattern seekers - their minds are wired to seek patterns!"* (Silverman, 2000)

She suggests that the dyslexic is more visual, pattern seeking and constructional than non-dyslexics, that dyslexics tend to be visual-spatial rather than linear-sequential learners. It is on this idea that my current research project, Typeface for the dyslexic reader, is based.

During the conference at the L.C.P., Silverman spoke about a diagnostic handwriting checklist, which included the following:

- unusual spacing strange letter formation
- combination of upper and lowercase letters
- combination of cursive and manuscript letters
- cursive letters disconnected
- lack of letter fluidity
- reversal of letters or numbers

The aim of the project is to ground the development of a typeface from the dyslexic viewpoint – visual-spatial rather than linear-sequential. All elements of the checklist were incorporated to varying degrees into the initial design. As the typeface is tested, all or some of these checklist features may be modified.

The design process is experimental and radical. The idea is to give each individual character a distinct and unique shape, thus overcoming the problem of letter reversal in characters such as c, u and n; and N and Z. In order to achieve distinct character shape the face has been designed as a monocase and includes a combination of multiple x-heights and multiple ascenders and descenders.

As Rosemary Sassoon in her essay, 'Through the eyes of a child - perception and type design', states:

> *"... many of the features of typefaces that are fashionable today are entirely adult-orientated, suited admirably to the fluent reader. The combination of fashion and the desire to pack as many lines as possible onto a page, has resulted in decreased ascenders and descenders. This tendency eventually erodes the shape of a word as well as the actual identity of individual letters "* (Sassoon, 1993)

This project will target the *less than* fluent reader and will attempt to achieve distinct word and letter shapes.

Contribution to Knowledge

Since Jonann Gutenburg invented his revolutionary system of moveable type in the middle of the fifteenth century, there have been innumerable typeface developments. The vast majority of these new typefaces have been developed during and since the later twentieth century. The development and introduction of digital image manipulation software programmes in particular have had a profound effect on the proliferation of typefaces. Digitisation has made contemporary typeface design quicker and easier. With the exception of studies undertaken by Rosemary Sassoon who designed Sassoon Primary as a text face to be read by children, there has been little or no research to gauge the legibility of these typefaces either formatively or during the design process. All other legibility tests on typefaces have been summative and retrospective rather than particular and formative.

> *"Little thought has ever been given to designing specific typefaces for those learning to read. No one considered that children might perceive letterforms in a different way. "* (ibid)

My research project reverses this trend. It will target the specific needs of the dyslexic reader, which has previously been ignored as a factor in the design and development of typefaces. Development will be informed by a formative *and* summative approach to the testing for legibility. The project will result in the only typeface to be developed, designed and tested on a targeted dyslexic reader group. It is by using this method of developmental, typeface testing (d.t.t.) that the project will make a significant contribution to knowledge, and inform contemporary attitudes to dyslexia.

Pre-design

As part of the pre-design process Ruth Smallwood, an educational psychologist, has assessed me for dyslexia. The outcome of the assessment indicates that I do have problems with visual processing and indeed have dyslexic traits.

Alphabet Character Breakdown

In order to establish similarities and differences between individual characters (both upper and lower case), an analysis was made of the typeface Helvetica. Helvetica is a sans serif face, which is widely used and generally accepted to be legible.

The grouped letters formed three basic categories:

1. Those letters with diagonals
2. Those letters with curves
3. Those letters with right angles

A monocase version of Helvetica was produced which attempts to make each character as distinct as possible. This analysis provided the basis of the monocase dyslexic typeface.

Initial Test Group

A group of eight dyslexic students from a range of courses at the Norwich School of Art and Design has been established. The group met in December 2000 to discuss visual processing and in particular the reading and misreading of various texts. The group also decided to test the initial typeface design and thereby comprise the first user group.

Initial Design

The initial design development of the typeface began in January 2001 and the first version has been designed and named Dine 1 (after my misreading of JIVE DANCES for the American artist JIM DINE!) It is awaiting an initial user test (planned for Autumn 2001) against the following suggested faces:

- Times New Roman (a serif face designed by Stanley Morison and Victor Lardent in 1932), Sassoon Primary (a dyslexic-friendly face recommended on the Dyslexic.Com website and designed by Rosemary Sassoon)
- Tiresias InfoFont (a face developed for greater legibility by the RNIB - Royal National Institute for Blind People), Arial (a face recommended by the British Dyslexia Association)

Ethical Considerations

The project will comply with the University Ethics Guidelines and the 1998 Data Protection Act.

Outline Plan of Study

A prototype typeface has been designed.

A literature search and identification of research questions has begun, and will be completed by Spring 2002. Research questions emphasise:

- What typefaces do dyslexic people find the easiest to read?
- What are the reading times of the various typefaces under pressurised and non-pressurised conditions?
- How frequent is the re-reading (or "jumping") of words within various typefaces?
- What are the key characteristics of a successful dyslexic typeface?

The typeface will be tested and then refined and modified depending on the findings of the various user tests, throughout 2002. The interpretation of findings and the writing of the thesis will begin early 2003. The project completion date is envisaged to be late 2003/ early 2004.

Research Methodology

The methodology is experiment based and is therefore action research. It is qualitative insofar as it involves user group and control group experiments, and quantitative in that it measures the findings of the experiments which will provide data for analysis. The research methods comprise of three distinct stages.

Stage 1

This stage includes a series of four pilot tests on the initial user group. The tests are designed to gauge:

- reader recognition and perception of individual characters (Pilot Study Test 1 - Characters)
- reader recognition of specific word pairs (Pilot Study Test 2 - Words)
- readability (the ease of the read) of specific typefaces as sentences (Pilot Study Test 3 - Sentences)
- readability of each typeface as extended texts (Pilot Study Test 4 - Texts)

The tests at this stage are designed to establish parameters and produce data which will inform the next stage.

Stage 2

The main study area of this stage will be to continue and modify the testing process according to the outcomes of Stage 1, and to establish a control test group.

Stage 3

This stage involves further testing as required, and includes the collation and analysis of data which will form the basis of the redesign of the Dine typeface. This stage will also provide the conclusions which will inform a written thesis.

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The impact of specification changes of the new BTEC (EDEXCEL) National Diploma in Textiles and how this impacts on my teaching and my students learning

By Sally Rust-Andrews, Centre for Creative Arts, City College Norwich

Introduction

I am currently teaching full-time both AS and A level textiles and the Btec (Edexcel) National Diploma in Textiles at Norwich City College. There have been many changes on both these programs recently, including the introduction of Curriculum 2000 and Key Skills. These impacted greatly on the programme as the AS and A level courses had to be rewritten in line with the new syllabus which has also impacted on my teaching as well as my students learning. I have found the transition from A Level to AS and A2 quite trouble free and the students have adapted well. I feel this is mainly because I was new to both my job at this time and the old A Level, so I didn't resent the change.

The biggest difficulty I have found with the implementation of Curriculum 2000 and the introduction of Key Skills has been in respect to the National Diploma full time course as the students have preconceptions and reservations about these subjects. Although there have already been some changes on the Diploma courses over the last two years, there is another specification change taking place, to be implemented by September 2002. Therefore, although Curriculum 2000 and Key Skills are very important areas for research and development, it is the more recent specification changes that I will concentrate on as the focus of my research. This article will explain some of the definitions of curriculum development and the links between this and educational theory. The reasons for the specification changes and opinions on this change from both colleagues and students will also be explored. I will then plan how I will implement these changes and how I foresee this will impact on my teaching and my students learning. Finally through the process of my action research project I intend to make conclusions and recommendations for the future.

The research is action research, which I feel is an important means of reflection for my teaching practice. McIntre (1993), as cited in Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck (2000:185) suggests that:

> *"Experienced tutors need to know how to reflect as a means to improve their practice, and novices need to know how to reflect as a goal."*

There are many different models of research on practice, action research is just one of them, according to Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck (2000:186) "Each step involves reflection, description, analysis and evaluation." Action research is an important part of curriculum development. Through this action research project, I hope to gain a greater understanding of curriculum development and the changes required to meet the new specifications outlined by Btec (Edexcel). The new National Diploma course is currently very successful, so I intend to work out how to best implement these changes, making sure that future students are getting an improved course.

What is Curriculum Development?

The curriculum for me is a prescribed umbrella framework that maintains the standards of learning for my students. I feel certain levels of study need different definitions. For example Curzon (1990:165) believed curriculum development to be:

> *"A series of planned events that are intended to have educational consequences for students."*

I feel that this is a definition of curriculum at a higher level and therefore is more applicable to my teaching on the National Diploma at City College. Rogers (1996) in teaching adults describes curriculum as the planned experiences that the learner is exposed to in order to achieve learning goals. There are certain limitations to these definitions, Rogers has a more structured teacher led approach whereas I think the curriculum has to be centred round my students. Therefore I agree with Reece and Walkers' (2000:570) more student centred approach of the curriculum as:

> *"A programme for learning and those factors which influence the quality of learning."*

The National Diploma in Textiles course that I co-lead and teach on is a very practical student centred course and so development should improve the quality of learning that takes place. Stenhouse (1975) outlines another view as he asks us to concentrate on the reality of teaching and learning for both teachers and students. As teachers working in post-compulsory education, although we all teach a variety of subjects we all work towards the common goal of helping our students to learn.

I have used the spiral curriculum as a model in the planning and development of the National Diploma in Textiles over the last year, and intend to continue using this model to develop the programme. I believe this model has many advantages, as there is a logical progression through the course, it enables the learners to be reactive and responsive. The spiral curriculum breaks the course down into manageable pieces and gives the opportunity to look at the sequence of learning and outcomes. The National Diploma in Textiles is a good example of a spiral curriculum, as the students learn progressively, re-visiting areas and building confidence. However, it can be time consuming, it takes effort to make it interesting upon re-visitation, so the programme may become limited, repetitive, and even de-motivating. I intend to overcome these disadvantages when developing my curriculum by delivering and interpreting material in many different ways.

There are four more consistently mentioned curriculum development models within the literature. The *Product* or *Objectives* model is closely linked to Tyler (1971) and has become one of the most influential models, it has a focus on behavioural targets for learning model. The *Content* model associated with Hirst (1974) has a focus on the 'what' of learning and adopts an objective and knowledge based approach. Stenhouse (1975) developed the *Process* model with a focus on the 'how' of learning which is student centred allowing the learner to use and develop the content not just receive it passively. The fourth model is the *Situational* model with has a focus on the cultural context of learning. This model is closely associated with Skillbeck (1976) and Lawton (1983) and emphasises the context in which the curriculum exists. All the ideas on these models can help me examine my own course in more detail.

For my practice, although there are certain areas from all four models that could be beneficial, the Process model appears the most useful being a student centred approach. The framework from the Objectives model could be used as a basis to incorporate elements from the other three, to develop my own model of curriculum development.

The link between educational theory and curriculum development

The educational aims and the link between educational theory and curriculum development are important areas to consider, as all teachers have their own reasons for being in education. There is considerable debate over whether there is a difference between learning and education. It could be argued that one could learn a skill, then perform and execute it. You don't necessarily have to be taught something to learn it, for example riding a bike or learning to walk, whereas education is said to be taught in some way, which could be seen as the difference between the two. It can be said that learning could be haphazard, whereas education can be more organised. In education there are many aims and organisations, teachers and learners need to understand these aims as may be considered that it is the process, not merely the result that is important in teaching.

Certain ideologies underpin the courses on which we teach. From my own experience, as a teacher, and as a learner all teachers are individuals and therefore could, and do teach the same subject in a very different way, and therefore variation exists. These beliefs that we have about education can be clustered into groups and can be called 'educational ideologies'. We need to know and understand our own ideals, ideologies and assumptions about learning and teaching in order to develop our curriculum. I find myself identifying with Dewey's theory of a community where students were encouraged to co-operate and work together and learn from each other, as well as from their teachers (Armitage et al, 2000:176). It is important then, that as I renew and develop my course, I am explicit about my ideologies so that my colleagues and the learners are clear about my aims and intentions.

The reason for development

I understand the necessity of course reviews and development and I feel that it should happen regularly and continuously. Reece and Walker (1997:579) describe curriculum development as "changing and responding to factors, so that the best possible learning can take place." The imposing factors that I need to change and respond to are external factors imposed by our National Diploma funding body Btec (Edexcel). There have already been major changes in the Btec course, although the course was written in compliance with the new specification so the transition, according to the external moderator's report was 'seamless'.

Edexcel have submitted a range of Btec Firsts and Nationals to the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) for inclusion in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). These qualifications are for delivery from September 2002. Edxecel are waiting for inclusion in the NQF to be confirmed later this year. According to Edexcel, offering a course consisting of eighteen units provides the opportunity for a greater range of specialism. These changes mean that the course will continue to run over the same amount of hours, and will have to cover more units. Edexcel are proposing eight very different diplomas, that should be offered as specialised courses, and units cannot be interchanged between courses. These eight Diplomas however will be nationally recognised, comparable and standardised. There are five common core units that all eight Diplomas have to cover three of them. I therefore need to work out how to develop the course curriculum satisfying the new Edexcel guidelines whilst continuing to provide a course of such a high standard.

Research approaches and methodology

In order to work out what changes need to take place and how they could be implemented in the least disruptive way I interviewed colleagues and students to get a wider view of the course as a whole. I also analysed my own processes in order to improve. Whilst teaching, we are continuously collecting data and researching how and why we need to improve. Stenhouse (1975) has a theory on 'teacher as researcher'. Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck (2000:3) re-enforce this idea as the reflective teacher. They describe this as:

> *"An active process of learning from experience and evaluating your ideas, feelings and behaviour in the light of supporting evidence and discussion… The critical point about reflective practice is that it requires a commitment to learning from experience and from evidence, rather than to learn certain recipes for action."*

We need to research and reflect in our practice to change and improve, not only due to external pressures, but also due to the basic idea that no two groups are ever the same.

The research methods that I used to collect primary data include administering questionnaires, which were completed face to face in a classroom situation. I informally interviewed colleagues for their opinions and feedback as well as some of my present students to give another point of view. The research methods used to collect secondary data include analysing evidence such as the external moderator's report and the existing course structure. It is important to use more that one research method for triangulation to bring "different kinds of evidence together for the purpose of comparing and contrasting different points of view." (Elliot, 1978 as cited in Ashcroft and Forman-Peck, 2000:198)

Implementing the Change

The changes made to the National Diploma should enhance the course rather than disrupt it. I have discussed and evaluated the course with both colleagues and students. All the staff are disappointed that more changes are being imposed on the course, so soon after the last ones, and are apprehensive about changing something that works so efficiently. It is my task to implement these changes and to re-assure and inform my colleagues that it can be done in a positive way.

The results of the questionnaire illustrate that the specialists units the students have enjoyed are the ones that are currently on offer such as Surface Pattern and Fabric Manipulation. The course needs to be varied and should cover subject areas that will also be beneficial to students in the future. In order to make a decision about which units to deliver, I discussed the possibilities with the course team. As I am keen to keep the programme running as a spiral curriculum, it is important that these units would integrate well with the others. The other area of discussion at one meeting was the other three core 'exam' units. The word exam usually puts fear amongst students and staff in Creative Arts and is not something that usually works well with such creative subjects. However, after attending an Edexcel conference, I found out that the exam is purely a practical activity that takes place in 'controlled conditions' and forms the basis of a Final Major Project. In order to make these changes to the curriculum, the whole timetable will have to be reviewed.

Foreseeing the future impact of these changes

I foresee that the change will be good for everyone involved and could breathe new life and excitement into the course. Although I recognise it is often thought easier if the projects stay the same each year I feel change is needed for both the course and students development. However there are disadvantages, as my workload will increase impacting on my teaching and the amount of contact time I will have with students. I do feel there new units and material will inspire extra enthusiasm amongst staff, however there is a concern that the replacement and withdrawal of certain may result in some staff having their hours cut. I hope that future students will be unaware of the changes that have taken place on the course and will be as successful as past and present students. I believe that the variety of units, projects and lecturers will motivate the students to learn. This appears to be working so far, as current students made positive comments in the questionnaire.

The exam element of this new syllabus will have a huge impact on my students if it is not handled in effectively, it needs to be fully integrated into the course as the Final Major Project. The students will also be effected by the Diploma becoming equivalent to three A levels instead of two and no longer being offered an extra A level alongside the Diploma, as although they will have extra time to develop their textile work it may limit their choices.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion I have drawn up a course structure that I feel satisfies the new syllabus criteria, as well as the changes outlined earlier, whilst keeping the ethos and underpinnings of the present course. The course team are less apprehensive about future changes and the way this will be implemented. The course hours will need to be addressed as some of the students commented that they need more studio and contact time with lecturers and questioned whether there is enough time to allow for more units to be incorporated, therefore this will be considered when the new timetable is planned. The wording for 'exam' brings with it certain connotations so I feel it should be replaced with 'Final Major Project' (FMP) and not used at all in connection with course literature.

This action research project and using the National Diploma as a focus was extremely beneficial to my teaching and development, and has given me an insight into dealing with the changes that are being imposed. After looking in more depth at the change and development of this curriculum, it is clear that certain changes will be made, but they are not as daunting or as threatening as first thought. I feel because the course is already strong, change will be positive, easily accommodated and will enhance the existing structure.

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Norwich Learning City Group Research Project

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The following is an edited extract from the Final Report of the above project, as prepared for the Economic Development Officer of Norwich City Council, on behalf of the Norwich Learning City Group in February 2001. A full dissemination conference was held in the Spring 2002 to discuss findings and further action.

It is contributed to this Bulletin as it provides a useful insight into the complex issues within community-based partnership working and project culture. Although the findings are essentially context specific, many of the issues highlighted are interestingly applicable to other project environments in similar such programmes and localities.

Terms of Reference

The aim of the report was to assess how effectively education and training programmes for the local communities have been embedded in the local regeneration programmes. *"an assessment of what works and what doesn't in terms of engaging local communities in lifelong learning"…(Economic Development Officer)*

> *"There are people who are always overseeing projects from whom so much could be learnt – what worked, what didn't. All that information is incredibly valuable but it's not shared. It is crazy to treat each project in isolation. In all the funding we have been involved in there has never been a sharing event, "what we found that worked was", never. Knowledge is power I suppose."* (From case study interviews, Norwich Feb 2001)

Methodology

A small number of in-depth case studies were made during February 2001. These were constructed from a series of structured interviews with a representative from each of the diverse organisations involved in providing some form of education and training opportunity across Norwich. The organisations were of different sizes, (hundreds of staff to less than a dozen people) and at different stages of the bid and project process. The project officers were granted anonymity and felt able to express a range of opinions concerning both their positive and negative experiences together with some sound ideas for improvement.

This research aimed to take the interviewee through the project process from bid preparation to exit strategy. Each respondent was given a series of short questions in order to provide a quantitative comparison and analysis between the organisations. Each was asked a series of "open" questions as they went along, to enable them to expand upon the ten main themes provided in order to contribute towards a qualitative analysis of the themes.

Bid Information

Findings showed that some local organisations are only stumbling across funding possibilities. Although this may be addressed at a very local level the understanding of opportunities and brokering of links is an ongoing process that can develop in ever widening circles in order to take advantage of further Regional, National, and European level funding. [*"It was luck that someone in the organisation knew about redevelopment plans in the area and was familiar with SRB funding opportunities"*]

Smaller community groups often have excellent knowledge of what is needed and what is workable but not always such good access to funding possibilities and mechanisms, whereas the larger organisations often have excellent information and expertise but not such clear access and proximity to the client group in question. [*"This was our fifth year of running such a project so we knew what was wanted and what worked… As we were already part of the system, and already had the crucial networks set up we could match client need."*]

Bid Preparation

The Cabinet Office Policy Action Team report (1999) on Community Self help lists this problem nationally as a barrier to community self help, "the complex application procedures for many funding programmes are a particular obstacle for community self help organisations applying for small sums of money" (PAT report 1999).

There was a high level of dissatisfaction and disillusionment within organisations concerning bid preparation. Even the experienced respondents whose working lives revolved around this type of activity were rueful. [*"It was good staff development"*] said one interviewee, arguably a poor compensation for a process that is perceived by some as inexplicable and time wasting. It was constantly pointed out that help was needed and that people were working in isolation, either not wanting to be seen to need help, or not knowing who to ask for advice, [*"…there was an assumption that the organisation should be able to* *cope with designing a programme and constructing a bid when the reality was far from this."*]

Reaching out to the Client Group (promotion)

Most of the respondents thought low key ways of reaching the clients were the most effective. Despite this it was interesting to note the amount of respondents looking to some high profile marketing and even employing telemarketing. [*"Our client group were disadvantaged, afraid and lacking in basic skills so therefore we knew we needed to access them by word of mouth.*]

Findings showed different skills that could be put to mutual advantage between experienced bid writers, who knew for example, which boxes to fill with desk research information, compared with experienced community workers who knew the exact location of the mother and toddler groups and when was the best time to go and see them.

Progression of the Project (support)

Although some projects were straightforward it did appear that active and impartial support at all times was rare. The majority of the respondents ranged between feeling that at worst they were left to get on with the projects while at best they were regularly monitored with help available if it was needed. [*"We were left to get on with it, the only contact we had with the monitoring authority was when the monitoring forms were late."*]

When listening to the project officers it appeared that often the very people they worried about in a bureaucratic sense (forms in on time, explaining slippage, statistics etc) were the very same people they felt they needed to contact if things were not going according to plan. What came across in the interviews was a need to have a different advice and help mechanism based between the groups with a mix of experience. [*"There is nothing in the paperwork to say what will happen if you get behind or if you only partially meet the targets. We are left not knowing if its OK to partially meet the targets or whether all the money will be taken away."*]

The Target Client group (definition)

Given the nature of the funding and its target groups it was not surprising to find that respondents appear to have difficulty in getting the clients to participate. However, some respondents had difficulty in identifying their clients. Some of these difficulties came after projects started which raises an interesting question concerning the scoring and acceptance of the bid proposal. [*" 'Unemployed' was a difficult one. What if they just did two hours work as a dinner lady?"*]

The geographical boundaries imposed caused problems for some. It was difficult to tease out any clear ideas about how geographical boundaries were arrived at and there was considerable confusion as to what constitutes a "community". [*"There were grey areas in deciding between living inside the boundary, working inside the boundary or training inside the boundary.*]

Client Group needs

'Knowing the target group' had different meanings for different people and organisations. For some it was simple; [*" We made sure we thought of everything by talking to as many community groups as possible."*], whilst for others the knowledge of practicalities was poor, [*"We were aware of the target group but not through physically talking to them, we didn't talk to them."*],

Defining a Successful Project

Project Officers appeared fairly evenly balanced in their views on whether their projects were successes or failures, however they all appeared to be wiser after the event - with their own organisations learning from the experience rather than learning from each other before and during the process.[*"All that information is incredibly valuable but it's not shared."*]. Project Officers welcomed the chance to explain positive qualitative outcomes to questions and wanted the chance to disseminate these to others. [*"There should be a broader view than just meeting targets"*]

Additional and Hidden Costs of Project

There were pleas for sharing of good practice. Respondents felt isolated and needed assistance. There appeared to be a rather macho culture of 'finding out the hard way' and 'suffering in silence'. Staff are described as 'cutting their teeth' or 'on a steep learning curve'. So much of this seems unnecessary - as one of the respondents said, [*".if only we could circulate bids and share good practice. We are frightened we might lose out - but better bid writing would benefit everyone"*].

Project officers who are working at the edge of 'safe' organisations trying out risky ventures with difficult to reach clients can be in a particularly difficult position and can be understandably defensive about costings and targets reached. The Policy Action team reporting to cabinet office recognises this nationally, " But for existing institutions, social entrepreneurs are not always easy to live with. They challenge the status quo, they are not necessarily concerned with consensus building and they can be seen as a threat." (PAT 16, para 3,9 Feb 2001)

Competitive Bidding and Partnership

The findings did not show that the capable 'networkers' ran successful projects and the isolated ones failed. The difference appeared to lie in the long term attitudes. Project leaders with strong and active networks appeared to react to failed projects as a learning exercise and move forward, whereas isolated project leaders appeared to want to give up. ["... *how does one find out which partners are worth working with and which will end up as sleeping with the enemy?*"]

The Exit Strategy

Findings showed that Respondents varied in their attitude to short term initiatives. On the one hand they could be seen at best as, ['*allows us to try out new ideas*'], on the other hand there was concern about raising the level of provision and expectation that was not sustainable.

References

Home Office (1999). *Report of the Policy Action Team on Community Self-Help*. http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/acu/shelp.pdf

Home Office (2001). *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: Report of the Policy Action Team 16: Learning Lessons*. http://www.neighbourhood.dtlr.gov.uk/management/pat/pdf/pat16.pdf

THE RESEARCH CENTRE

CITY COLLEGE NORWICH

Work in Progress

AHERO: Promoting Mental Health in the Workplace: An Action Research

The project aims to facilitate through action research within public sector organisations a better understanding and consequently better informed support mechanisms for the issue of mental illness in the workplace. This APU led research project has been collaborating with The Research Centre to seek a complimentary exercise to that being undertaken with private sector companies in Norfolk. The College's Centre for Health, Nursing and Social Work supported by The Research Centre will be focussing on a co-operative approach with a large private sector company locally. We are currently at the stage of negotiating participation with a range of companies of local and national repute.

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An Independent Evaluation of the ESF 'Extending New Deal' (END) Project

The 'Extending New Deal' (END) Project is a European Social Fund project that is match funded by the Employment Service. It offers extended provision to those who are registered on the Government's New Deal scheme. The aim of the project is to add value to existing New Deal provision with a view to improving employment prospects. It encompasses additional training that cannot be funded by the Employment Service under New Deal (eg driving lessons) as well as one-to-one support, counselling, advice and grants for equipment and tools. The Research Centre has been commissioned to undertake an independent formative evaluation of the effectiveness of this initiative. One-to-one semi structured interviews have taken place with New Deal Advisors, ESJ Managers, project staff and a range of beneficiaries.

Research and Development Co-ordinator:

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Business Link Adviser Assessment

The project purpose is to assess the competence of Business Link Business Advisers and Information Staff in Norfolk, against the UK standards for professional competence (as produced by the Small Business Service in conjunction with Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI) and the Business Link national organisation). This entails meetings with Advisers and with Information staff, and accompanying Advisers on client visits, to observe their work and to discuss their knowledge of the topics on which they provide support to SMEs. The intended output is a 'competency report' on each person. The project is currently drawing to a close. Independent evaluation of Advisers' individual competencies have been directly embedded into the existing appraisal systems of the organisation.

The project is being run by Jacqui Frost of Heptagon, who is directing and co-ordinating a small team of assessors, and is contracted to Business Link in Norfolk for this project.

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Great Yarmouth Young Women's Project Evaluation

The Great Yarmouth Women's Project provide a 'one stop shop' of support services for young single mothers, a topical area in view of the publication of the Social Exclusion Report in June 1999 outlining the issues of teenage pregnancy. This research will undertake a case study of The Great Yarmouth's Women's Project to examine, analyse and document the processes and culture of this highly successful and acclaimed project. The final report will give an in-depth insight into the project with the aim of enabling others to learn from the project's experience.

The final report will be launched at a national conference hosted by GFS Platform, London. The Conference, organised and led by young women form GFS Platform Great Yarmouth and supported by professionals, will be held on 9th July 2002 at Norwich City Football Club. The aim is:

- To give young mothers a voice to influence and shape the delivery of services
- To share good practice in working with teenage mothers
- To illuminate the work of GFS Platform Great Yarmouth through the independent evaluation conducted by The Research Centre.

Further details and a booking form are available from The Research Centre.

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LSDA – Enrichment Strategies for Full-time Learners 16 – 19

The project is being funded by the LSDA to refine the definition of 'enrichment' in the context of Curriculum 2000's entitlement element. The research will endeavour to clarify what the college philosophically/culturally views as 'enrichment and consequently offers its' students. It will also identify which parts of 'enrichment' fall within the Key Skills, Enrichment and Tutorial (KET) element, which is eligible for FEFC funding. The primary aims are to:

- establish scope and current range of practice
- identify and develop principles of good practice in college provision
- CCN are currently committed to undertaking an audit of enrichment with a view to better defining this in its student prospectus.

Research and Development Co-ordinator:

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SELP - Students with part-time jobs: SURVEY 2002

The Research Centre at City College Norwich were approached by the 14-19 Advisory Group of the SELP (South Essex Learning Partnership) in February 2002 to advise upon the production of a consultation. It was understood that such a survey would require analysis and that The Research Centre would tender for this aspect of the work.

The survey is designed to profile the impact of part-time work on current learners in the partner institutions that comprise the SELP. Approximately 2000 questionnaires are to be distributed and returned through the existing tutorial systems of the partner institutions. The complete return will be passed to The Research Centre for analysis by May 2002.

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The East of England Learning Partnership Health and Lifelong Learning Project

The Research Centre was approached in March 2002 by the Manager of the Norfolk Lifelong Learning Partnership to pick up on a piece of research commissioned in the 2001/2002 financial year by the Regional consortium of Learning partnerships. A short term research project to survey the type of integration between health initiatives and 'lifelong learning', the work involves desk research paid on a consultancy basis. The broad aims and objectives as confirmed by the funding agency Go-East (the Government Office for the East of England) are as follows:

- To establish health linkages to learning through reference to and analysis of planning documentation from a range of sources and provide an overview of Healthy Living Centres;
- To identify key organisations and partners with which the Learning Partnerships should engage;
- To provide recommendations for future projects and areas which Learning Partnerships could take forward to link the health and lifelong learning agendas and add value/make an impact.

A research report was produced and a presentation delivered to Learning Partnership Managers, members of DfES and GO-East on 8th May 2002, at The Forum in Norwich. Copies of the report are available from The Research Centre.

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