Towards an alternative basis for policy and practice in Community Care

with particular reference to people with learning disabilities

Mark Burton

Correspondence to:
Mark Burton
Manchester Learning Disability Partnership
mark.burton@mcr1.poptel.org.uk

Abstract

An alternative is articulated to the dominant basis for theory and practice in 'community care'. It draws on the critical theory of Habermas, an analysis of global trends, and Wolfensberger's account of societal devaluation. These perspectives identify three linked threats to people with major disabilities: colonisation of the lifeworld, socioeconomic destabilisation, and systematic discrimination. Using Doyal and Gough's theory of human need, an agenda is outlined for an appropriate service response to this context. Finally an analysis of ideology and social action suggests how dissident actors 'in and against the system' can work to establish an alternative 'common sense' and shared action to realise it.

We have now arrived in a new world of quasi markets, community care, and even tougher cash limits than we experienced in the 1980s. Yet again the initiative has been with the right, although arguably things could have been worse (as we may yet see). There has been little in the way of a coherent alternative approach to policy formulation, with those responsible for managing services capitulating to the dominant ideologies, implementing the policy. What I want to try here is to stand back from this whole mess and construct a theoretical orientation for policy and practice in the general 'community care' domain, that provides some anchors for evaluating current and proposed alternative approaches, and generates a theory of action for those of us who are dissident practitioners and managers, in and against the system.

I use the term '*dissident*' to convey a sense of the contradictory position of being a member of the 'Professional Managerial Class' (Hales, 1980), yet aware of the considerable problems of modern western society and its organisations, many of which can be interpreted in terms of forms of domination. Nevertheless human service organisations are officially supposed to be 'caring' so dissidents at least have the possibility of justifying their position, while perhaps having stronger allegiances elsewhere.

It is difficult to achieve complete theoretical coherence in an attempt like this, and I have made pragmatic use of several theoretical approaches whose core assumptions might conflict with one another.

The analysis is based on the case of people with learning disabilities (synonym: learning difficulties; previous synonym: 'mental handicap'; North American usage 'mental retardation'; antipodean usage: 'intellectual disability'), the domain that I know best, and one that has been the subject of two recent pieces of Central Government guidance.

Four problems will be reviewed: they require some kind of solution, if only provisional, in order for there to be a defensible and coherent basis for practice in human services today. They can be stated briefly:

1. **<u>The theory problem</u>:** How can we understand the nature of modern human service organisations and practice within them? This understanding is to be literate in both the detail of service provision and practices *and* in the broader forces and relations that define the very service organisations themselves. ***What then is our general theoretical orientation?***

2. **<u>The context problem</u>:** Using such a theoretical framework, how can we understand the complex changes affecting the society in which our service users and we live, and in which our organisations are situated? How can we understand the more immediate changes in the policies affecting our organisations and practices within them? ***Where then is our practice situated?***

3. **<u>The content problem</u>:** Using the account generated by the first two questions how can we best (re)define the goals and tasks of our services, and hence of their functionaries? **What are the real**

issues (those for people) rather than the issues defined by the dominant systems?

4. **<u>The action problem</u>:** What then should be done? How do the perspectives developed in response to the above problems help in the development of strategies for principled and responsive leadership of human service systems - or, **what can the dissident manager feasibly and morally do?**

The Problems of Theory and Context

In addressing these two problems, I will draw chiefly on the work of Jürgen Habermas. Habermas' work is within the tradition of the 'Critical Theory' of the Frankfurt School. It is complex and comprehensive, and the following description is based on his own account in the interviews collected in Dews (1992), and in **The Theory of Communicative Action** (1987, 1991) and on the commentaries by White (1988), Howard (1977), and Holub (1991), while Pusey (1987) gives a good introduction.

Habermas rests his social theory upon a theory of human rationality, a 'minimal model of the human subject'. The key question here is *what kinds of justifications can there be for human acts?* Habermas addresses this through an analysis of the implicit rules followed in utterances aimed at reaching an understanding. He suggests that rationality can be inferred on the basis of three kinds of appeal, which correspond to the three main philosophical models of rationality.

A. to a world of events or facts, (teleological, strategic, rational choice, cognitive, or means-ends rationality -'truth')

B. to the world of others and hence of social norms, (contextual, normative, or inter-subjective rationality - 'moral rightness');

and

C. to the world of personal subjectivity - and that of others - (dramaturgical or aesthetic rationality - 'authenticity').

Habermas argues that the competent human actor and speaker has access to all three of these sources of rationality, simultaneously, and with the capacity to select the most appropriate for interpreting a given situation. This 'commonly imputed system of coordinates' is available to human actors to aid them in understanding one another. It is this recourse to a shared basis for the assessment of rationality that makes social interaction possible, because participants in communicative action (action that requires social coordination) make a

> *reciprocal supposition of accountability [that] involves two expectations: that the other's actions are intentional and that he (sic) could, if called upon, justify the claims he raises in interaction.*
> White (1988) p50

Habermas postulates an ***ideal speech situation*** wherein coordinative speech acts are subject to such an open and equal process of justification. In any society this is probably unattainable, but the notion - rather like Absolute Zero in physics - serves as a reference point in evaluating how unequal and or dishonest coordinative social interactions have become.

Habermas connects the communicative theory of rationality to the phenomenological notion of the shared ***life-world***, which

> *..stands behind the back of each participant in communication and which provides resources for the resolution of problems of understanding. Members of a social collective normally share a life-world [which] only exists in the distinctive, pre-reflexive form of background assumptions,*

..receptivities or ..relations. The life-world is that remarkable thing which dissolves and disappears before our eyes as soon as we try to take it up piece by piece.
Habermas, in Dews (1992): p. 109

When brought into the domain of communication, the life-world becomes explicit, subject to criticism, and loses its very life-world characteristics of certainty, opacity, and background character. It is just this kind of thing that has been happening under the conditions of 'modernity' from the Enlightenment onwards, but with accelerating speed in the late twentieth century.

A further key concept needs adding here, that of *system*. This is a structural-functionalist concept (appropriated by Habermas from Parsons), examples of which include the capitalist economy or a bureaucratic organisation. These systems employ *steering media* - money and power, which substitute for the implicit or communicatively attained agreement among actors, in order to co-ordinate social activity.

Habermas then uses an analysis of alterations in the relationship between *system* <u>and</u> *life-world* as a basis for theorising the characteristics of modern societies in general, and current Western societies in particular.

At this point my discussion shifts towards the analysis of the *context* problem identified above, firstly by continuing to develop the Habermasian account of modern society and the social forms, including organisations, within it.

Habermas reviews the historical process of **modernisation of the life-world**. In this the three spheres of value (that underpin rational discourse) became separate from the life-world and from one another, having been conflated and integrated in traditional culture. The modernisation of the life-world allowed specialised <u>systems</u> to separate out from the life-world. This process is held to have reached its fullness under capitalism. Under 'late-capitalism' the steering media of market and bureaucratic organisation have grown enormously without control, increasingly governing (commodifying and bureaucratising) activities within the lifeworld that would otherwise be intrinsically bound to communicative action: this is the thesis of *colonisation of the life-world.* In this analysis Habermas diverges from Marx and his predecessors in Critical Theory: it is not systems as such that are the problem but their colonisation of the life-world. This point is crucial in the attempt to develop a radical/anti-organisation theory, and indeed to develop a truly radical critique of our present modern industrial society. As Habermas puts it:

> *... Weber's prognosis has proven correct: the abolition of private capitalism would not at all mean the destruction of the iron cage of modern industrial labour. Marx's error stems in the end from dialectically clamping together system and life-world in a way that does not allow for a sufficiently sharp separation between the **level of system differentiation** attained in the modern period and the **class-specific forms** in which it has been **institutionalised.** Marx did not withstand the temptations of Hegelian totality-thinking; ..... otherwise he could not have failed to see that **<u>every</u>** <u>modern society, whatever its class structure, has to exhibit a high degree of</u>*

6

> _structural differentiation._

Nevertheless Habermas is pointing both to contradictions in modern societies and to social pathologies resulting from them -

analogous to 'alienation' (Dews, 1992, p.14). Coordination of action through implicit or explicit agreement is essential for the

everyday transmission of culture, social integration and the socialisation of individuals, but when such social relations become

instead coordinated (colonised) by the steering media of a modern capitalist society, they become distorted.

> _... the irresistible irony of the world-historical process of enlightenment becomes evident: the rationalisation of the life-world makes possible a heightening of system complexity, which becomes so hypertrophied that it unleashes system imperatives that burst the capacity of the life-world they instrumentalise._

Habermas suggests ways in which this is manifest in terms of three structural elements and three domains of societal

reproduction:-

figure 1

REPRODUCTION PROCESS	STRUCTURAL COMPONENT			
	CULTURE	SOCIETY	PERSON	DIMENSION OF EVALUATION
Cultural reproduction	Loss of (consensus-based) meaning	Withdrawal of legitimation	Crisis in orientation and education	Rationality of knowledge
Social integration	Unsettling of collective identity and mutual obligations	Anomie (disordered interpersonal relationships)	Alienation (disruption in pattern of social belonging)	Solidarity of members
Socialisation	Rupture of tradition	Withdrawal of motivation to conform to social norms	Psycho-pathologies (personal identity crises)	Personal responsibility

Adapted from Habermas, 1987, Figures 21 and 22.

So Habermas' 'grand theory' offers a guide to our modern condition, also presenting an agenda for the social sciences, rooted in the analysis of human communication for social action. Unlike Marx's classical attempt at a general theory of society, Habermas builds his on four key social roles employee, consumer, client, and citizen, which relate to the economic system (employee and consumer) and administrative system (client and citizen). Marx only considered the first of these roles, while Weber added the third via his analysis of bureaucracy. The foundational use of communicative rationality rather than the analysis of labour/value/commodity relations marks the 'linguistic turn' of Critical Theory and arguably gives it greater heuristic power than previous attempts at general theory.

So far the theory has been presented in fairly abstract terms. However, as Habermas points out (in Dews, 1992, p 108) he was keen to develop what he calls 'this monster' in order to develop an understanding of the current crisis in the historic compromise of the welfare state and of the potential of the new social movements (feminism, anti-racism, the greens, etc.)

> *without surrendering the project of modernity or descending into post- or anti-modernism, 'tough' new conservatism or 'wild' young conservatism.*

Habermas, in Dews, 1992, p 108

How is this done?

The historic compromise of the 'post war settlement' in the West can be seen as attempting to ameliorate the effects of Capitalism on human relations via the Welfare State. Habermas has a more complex account:-

Advanced capitalism defused class conflict in the sphere of production by sharing its profits. Habermas additionally argues, like Marcuse (1964), that at the same time the public sphere has been neutralised as a site for authentic public participation. In terms of the four key roles identified above, Habermas argues that the roles of employee and citizen have been neutralised, while compensations flow via the roles of consumer and citizen:

figure 2

Order of the life-world	Role	Interchange relations	Media-steered subsystem
Private sphere	1 Employee	Labour Power (P) ® ¬ Income from employment (M)	Economic system
Private sphere	2 Consumer	¬ Goods and services (M) Demand (M) ®	Economic system
Public sphere	3 Client	Taxes (M) ® ¬ Organisational accomplishments (P)	Administrative system
Public sphere	4 Citizen	¬ Political decisions (P) Mass loyalty (P)®	Administrative system

Medium: M = Money; P = Power.

Adapted from Habermas (1987) Fig 39 and White (1988) Fig 2

But all this is at a cost, the cost of core areas of communicative socialisation within which the reproduction of the lifeworld takes place: the lifeworld, as we have seen becomes colonised, so that

> *… the media of money and power increasingly infiltrate spheres of social life in which traditions and knowledge are transferred, in which normative bonds are intersubjectively established, and in which responsible persons are formed.*
>
> White (1988), p 112

This is the key to a critique of organisations as such. Notwithstanding their inevitability in a complex society, the organisational form is a refined form of administrative apparatus, with all the problems of colonisation of the lifeworld identified above. Habermas provides us with clues as to how organisations may perversely alter human relations both within and without their boundaries, paradoxically consuming the foundations of social life (i.e. the life-world) as they do so. A critical/anti organisation theory then, can be developed by considering organisations within the general theory of modern society, as a particular manifestation of the power and money complexes, the administrative and economic systems.

Happily for my focus on welfare organisations, Habermas has chosen what he calls *the juridification of communicatively*

structured areas of action to test his account of the colonisation of the lifeworld.

His thesis is that a successful welfare state program inevitably creates contradictory effects; while articulating itself in terms of the expansion of social rights, there has been an opposite tendency to create a new sort of dependency between the client and the administrative system. Habermas focuses on the rapid expansion of legal regulations in the German welfare sector, but it is arguable that this trend is universal across welfare states in the West (Cocks, 1992), witness the full legislative agenda of British local authorities.

Habermas identifies the following phenomena

· bureaucratic implementation of social provisions

· individual citizens define public existence in means-ends terms in relation to bureaucracies, leading to reduction in
co-operative social and political action

· redefinition and fragmentation (reification) of the lifeworld as a result of its classification and theorisation for the
purposes of administrative action, leading to

· a burgeoning of new areas of (alleged) expertise in relation to the newly defined areas of life.

There is a final consequence of Habermas' account that needs noting, and this concerns ideology, but connects to the previous points. Marx saw ideology as global accounts of social order rooted in metaphysics and religion - essentially as mystification. Habermas argues that under the modern condition, of progressive disenchantment (Copernicus-Darwin-Freud-Crick/Watson etc.), such ideologies have lost their credibility. However, if such classical ideology has largely collapsed, people in general are yet unable to apprehend the contradictions in the societies in which they live: culture is increasingly impoverished, replaced with a multiplicity of 'expert cultures' including management theory, and an increase in the availability of information, but no means to grasp the whole (perhaps hence the distaste for grand theory today) - that is unless you read Habermas! For the optimistic side of his theory is that modern rationalisation - the development of critical un-ideological thought ***could*** provide the basis for a 'critical foothold', through the opening of new possibilities for collective learning.

Some global trends

In addition to having a provisional general theory of the society in which those who rely on services, and the various service organisations are located, it is important to also describe some more specific elements in the present context, some of which can

be readily understood in terms of general theory, but others less so. What then is the context in which we try to assist people with learning (and other serious) disabilities and their allies? What is the context for **them?** I will suggest some of its key dimensions.

1. The cumulation of environmental damage, starting with deforestation and soil erosion around the first urban settlements and culminating in a global degradation and even destruction of ecosystems which directly threatens human survival (e.g. Seymour and Girardet, 1986). This ultimately means that our present patterns of land and energy use and hence our settlement patterns are not sustainable.

2. The nature of industrial societies is also changing. The following can be identified as characteristics:

   a. The crisis of modernism: an increasing awareness of the limitations of the world view (technocratic rationality) that relies on science and technology to increase human control over nature, including human relations and behaviour, and that holds up an image of incremental progress in Western societies. There are various interpretations of this, from Habermas' analysis of the contradictions between lifeworld and an increasingly autonomous system, to the accounts of the *postmodernists* including Foucault, Lyotard, and Derrida. Mohawk (1992), for example, writing from a Native American perspective, sees the change in terms of the erosion of the utopian myth which once galvanised social movements, and is common to the Judaeo-Christian tradition in general (including Marxism), a viewpoint that need not (as the postmodernists sometimes seem to) jettison rationality and morality.

   b. The decline of manufacturing industry as the dominant sector in the economy of Western countries, coupled with the globalisation of production and of commercial corporations (e.g. Dicken, 1986). This at first might sound remote from the concerns of a service for people with learning disabilities, but it is felt directly in changes to the labour market in Central Manchester where I work, which have led to unemployment becoming the most common state among parents of people with learning disabilities, and despite available technology for assisting many learning disabled people to work productively (e.g. Mcloughlin, Garner, and Callahan, 1987), they remain particularly disadvantaged in the employee role.

   c. A continuing economic and political crisis, in both societal steering media, and in their legitimation (Habermas, 1976; Ray, 1993). This can be understood in terms of the coming home to roost of societal contradictions: in the West and in the former Eastern Bloc (cf. Habermas, in Dews, 1992, pp. 48-52).

   d. Increasing private-isation of social life: the decline of collective social forms and the increased dominance of the smaller social arrangements, of which the idealised nuclear family is but one version (the politics of self interest à la 1992 General Election is an index of this).

e. The dominance of a market model of human relations: from workers to consumers, from education to training, from planning to purchasing. With this the increasing material decadence of (affluent Western) human lives (videos, computer games, 'compact discs are soon to be obsolete', satellite TV, tumble dryers, french beans from Kenya, lager from Canada, bubble packs).

f. Increasing inequality: casualisation of large sections of the labour force, the flight from full employment policies, huge differentials in wages, homelessness and BMWs, erosion of liberal consensus (e.g. on asylum seekers).

g. Increasing nationalism and racism, contingent on the crisis of the nation state and the consequences of colonialism and neo-colonialism - the re-institutionalisation of inequality on an international scale (GATT, the debt crisis, (Sachs, 1992).

h. A revolution in communications, which among other things would appear to affect the very pace of modern life - jet planes rather than ships, television rather than newspapers, fax rather than mail. There are various effects of this but the change in pace is again likely to marginalise those who do things slowly, or who have difficulty processing information, as well as those whose lives are entwined with theirs.

i. Advances in medical technology, which have changed patterns of affiliation and mating, as well as the epidemiology of impairment.

3. Critics of the professions and welfare organisations (e.g. Illich et al. 1977) have noted the failure of formal human services to achieve their own stated aims. Indeed, some services may even contribute to the problem. Expenditure in the welfare sector is seen as a problem, (hence the demand for accountability) and cuts are being made, either directly or indirectly, resulting in a general move from services in relation to demand/rights, to provision based on rationing, targeting, discretion and definition of eligibility, i.e. some users have to wait or do without (e.g. the new Community Care arrangements (HMSO 1989), or the Social Fund). Typically, in the last two decades, **better management** has been seen by dominant interests as the main solution to this contradiction. In Habermas' terms this response can be understood as a further extension of the power and (with marketisation) money systems into the increasingly rationalised lifeworld, which is likely to produce further contradictions requiring some kind of exit route (cf. Ray, 1993).

4. Organisations are changing, not just in the welfare field. There are several components to this, including the joint effects of a cost crisis in both commercial and public organisations and the availability of new information and communication systems (cf. the effects on accounting practice and thence the devolution

of budgetary control within centrally policed parameters); the availability of new managerial models that humanise organisational life, on the surface (through emphasis of the contextual/normative dimension of rationality); the retreat of state involvement/ownership/regulation/investment and the return of the market; restructuring and more restructuring to maximise flexibility; decentralisation; cost externalisation, and the neutralisation of power loci (particularly in the professions) (e.g. Hoggett, 1990, 1991).

5. A shift in the site of welfare service delivery to locality, family and (allegedly) community - a long wave change stemming from the 1930s at least, but gathering pace through the post war settlement (Burton, 1983) and into the current period. One consequence of this has been the emergence of a large number of women with multiple responsibilities for both caring and in other spheres of life (e.g. Kagan and Lewis, 1993).

All of the above represent long term changes in society, or the more proximal consequences of such long term change. I have indicated at several points less obvious implications for the life circumstances of people with learning disabilities living in advanced capitalist societies in the 1990s. Many of those trends not covered by the Habermas modernisation/colonisation/rationalisation thesis can be identified in terms of processes of globalisation and global destabilisation directly linked to the survival and transformation of industrial capitalism on a global basis.

It is also necessary to add in a further perspective on the situation of people with major disabilities, in terms of the patterns of their typical social experience, for if we can understand the nature of 'the problem' in everyday life we can begin to understand the fundamental tasks of services.

Wolfensberger (e.g. 1992), has argued that there is a universal dynamic of societal devaluation, whereby

> *entire classes of people are judged negatively by an entire collectivity, society, or majority thereof. …. it creates and maintains societally devalued classes who systematically receive poor treatment at the hands of their fellows in society and at the hands of societal structures - including formal, organized human services.*
>
> Wolfensberger, 1992, p 3.

He argues that this is universal across all societies, although the actual devalued class varies from society to society. In contemporary western societies this includes people with learning disabilities. It is arguable that while the more severely impaired members of this group are devalued in all societies, there is evidence (e.g. Rose, 1985) that less severe learning disabilities were only recognised and objectified as a category for social administration from the late nineteenth century onwards. This accords with Scull's (1979) argument that a combination of the breakdown of the pre-market ties of obligation between rich and poor, the strain on family and parish-based poor relief, and the administrative imperative to distinguish

between those who 'would not' and those who 'could not' work, led to the societal construction of psychiatric and other categories, specialist institutions, and the professional and para-professional disciplines of the human services of the twentieth century. The story continues into this century with the rise of the eugenics movement and psychometric testing, and the moral panic about the breeding of 'the feebleminded' and the decline of the national intelligence (Rose, 1985; Wolfensberger, 1975). Hence the specific dynamic of devaluation is constructed in history, while present social arrangements (e.g. the persistence of segregative and congregative formal services) continue to sustain it.

Wolfensberger (1980, 1992) argues that a variety of consequences follow from social devaluation, mainly concerning exclusion, marginalisation and segregation, objectification or dehumanisation, leading at worst to the institutionalisation of what he terms 'death-making', the shortening of life (e.g. through neglect, iatrogenic effects of treatment, denial of active life supports), or outright killing (as in the Nazi holocaust but also he argues through the unofficial practice of euthanasia, abortion etc.). It is not necessary to accept the whole thesis: so for example, I have suggested (1983) that Wolfensberger's moralism needs grounding in a macro sociological analysis, and I do not accept the stance on abortion while acknowledging that the almost automatic abortion of impaired foetuses does reveal the relative value accorded to those with disabling conditions. But such differences need not prevent us from acknowledging the problem of devaluation, and the subtle, often unconscious processes by which people with learning (and other) disabilities are denied participation in the social world, and therefore risk the continued denial of a fully human status - at least if we take seriously the social constructionist account of human personality, that '*selves must be accounted for in terms of the social process'* (Mead, 1964, p49).
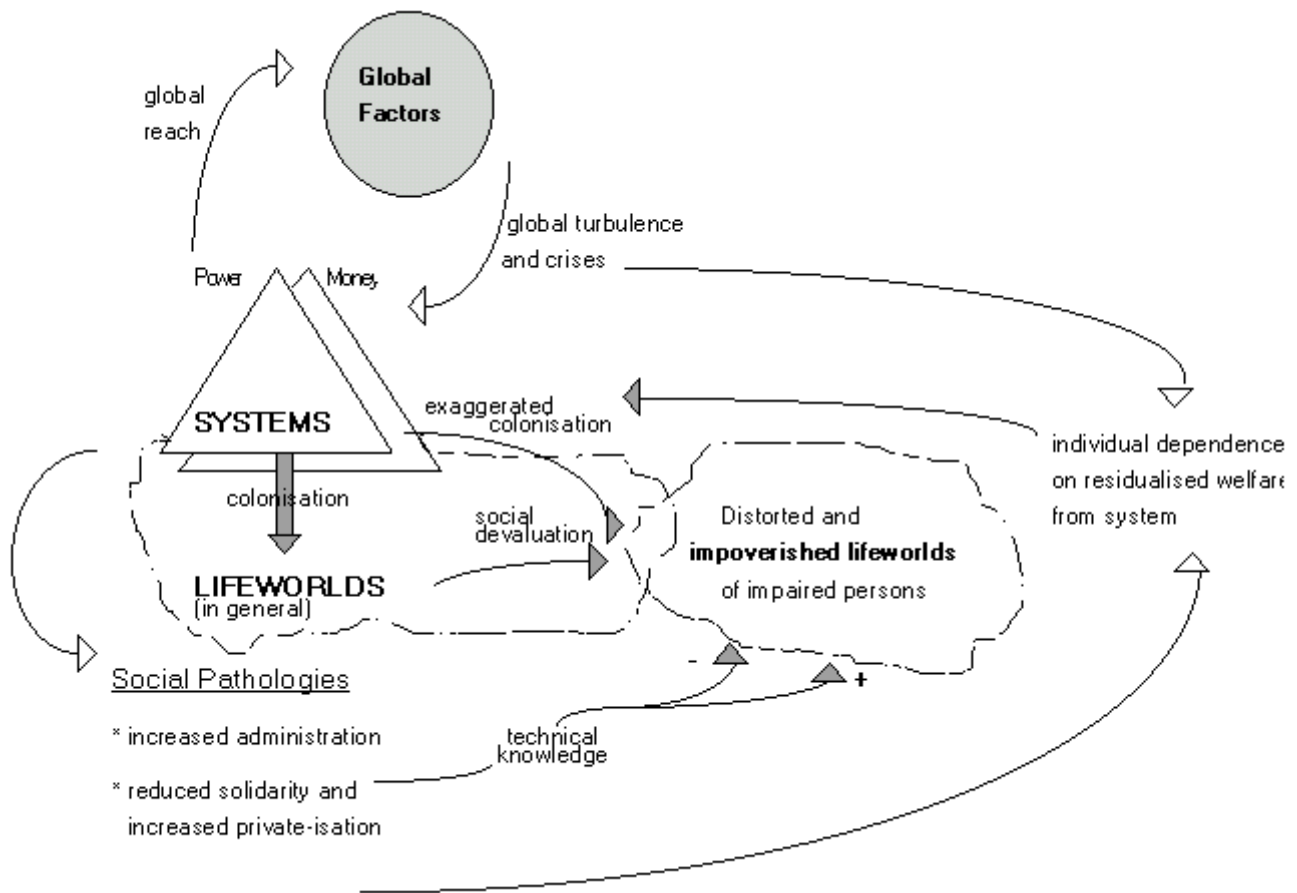
The Problem of Content

We can now begin to outline the provisional answer to the question raised in relation to content: **What are the real issues** (those for people) rather than the issues defined by the dominant systems? By 'people' I here mean firstly people with learning disabilities, then their families, and then those actually or potentially involved in supporting them, together with the 'general social interest': there are of course contradictions here, and as those most at risk of devaluation are those with learning disabilities, it is they who are accorded the greatest priority in balancing interests.

So first I will try to summarise key issues from the analysis so far, as they bear on people with learning disabilities in Britain in the mid 1990s.

In late twentieth century Britain, the social pathologies that may be attributed to the colonisation of the life-world are all too plain to see. Particularly salient for people who depend on the support and assistance of others are the erosion of social

solidarity - the private-isation of social relations, coupled with an increased administration (not necessarily classically bureaucratic in form) and separation of spheres of expertise. This has had the spin-off of increased knowledge about effective technologies in relation to some aspects of disability (e.g. communication aids), but has also under the current economic crisis, led to increasing residualisation of the formalised welfare systems. All this takes place in a broader context of destabilisation reflecting the global contradictions of an allegedly successful capitalist system. Meanwhile the persistent socially constructed processes of devaluation lead to exclusion and dehumanisation against what is already an impoverished and distorted life-world (at all degrees of learning disability), already compromised by the fundamental intellectual disadvantage that impairs equality in communicative action. This lifeworld is particularly prone to colonisation and hence to further distortion. This set of relationships can be summarised diagramatically:

figure 3: A summary of the broader context

global reach

Global Factors

global turbulence and crises

Power   Money

SYSTEMS

exaggerated colonisation

colonisation

social devaluation

Distorted and **impoverished lifeworlds** of impaired persons

individual dependence on residualised welfare from system

LIFEWORLDS (in general)

Social Pathologies

* increased administration

* reduced solidarity and increased private-isation

technical knowledge

+

What is of particular concern is that these processes (colonisation of the life-world and its effects; global destabilisation, and societal devaluation) could act additively, representing real threats for people with learning disabilities (as well as for other marginalised and dependent social groups). If a truly strategic view is to be taken, then issues such as this have to be recognised. As Morgan (1988) notes,

> *One characteristic of the modern socio-economic environment is found in the frequent occurrence of forces that come together, gather momentum, and have an ability to reshape the future of entire industries and services and, hence the nature of the constituent organizations.*
>
> p. 20

Morgan calls such conjunctions 'fracture lines' but is, perhaps inevitably, rather unclear about how they can be identified.

For a dissident functionary, considering the above set of trends and processes, however, there is a paradox: it is not possible to

merely take a non-interventionist stance - the contradiction between the need for help and its unintended effects on the lifeworld must be recognised and worked with. To elucidate the issues here, a mediating theory will be invoked, a critical account of human need.

Doyal and Gough (1991), present a universal but culture-sensitive theory of human need. They argue that the widespread use of the term *need* in much social welfare practice disguises the almost universal failure to examine the concept. A disenchantment with the concept, perhaps in reaction to the pseudo-objectivity with which professionals identify clients' needs, was characterised by a conception of need as subjective and culturally relative. Yet as Doyal and Gough argue, a conception of morality relies on a universalist notion of need, which is often implicit. They define basic individual needs ...

> *as those goals which must be achieved if any individual is to achieve any other goal - however idiosyncratic or culturally specific*
>
> Doyal and Gough, 1984, p.10

... and argue that there are two of these basic human needs, **physical health** and **autonomy** which itself has two levels, <u>autonomy of agency</u>, the ability to initiate actions, and <u>critical autonomy</u>, the opportunity for participation in the political process at whatever level. Note that this critical autonomy would relate equally to participation in (Habermas') communicative action.

Meeting these basic needs depends upon the availability of *specific satisfiers*, such as adequate nutrition and water, significant primary relationships, economic security, education, etc. While all human beings share the same basic needs and many of the specific satisfiers, some groups are subject to additional threats to their health and autonomy and therefore require 'additional and specific satisfiers and procedures to address and correct them' (Doyal and Gough (1991, p. 74).

The availability of the need satisfiers in turn depends on certain (fairly obvious) societal preconditions.

The *real issues* then, for people with learning disabilities are that their needs are met, which means:

The Problem of Action

1) What?

What then should be done? We can use the above list to define not just the key tasks of appropriate human services for people with learning disabilities (and similar disabling and/or marginalising conditions), but also to say something about the way in

which they should go about their job. This then gives us the beginning of an answer to the question: **what can the dissident feasibly and morally do?**

One way to organise the issues is by means of a matrix of need satisfiers *versus* societal threats to need satisfaction:

Threats to health and autonomy	Ordinary need satisfiers	Additional need satisfiers
societal destabilisation (including cash crisis in formal services)	protect and enhance rights and power resist discriminatory ideology	increase capacity of services to respond; recruit robust non-service supports; develop multiple sources of resources
social devaluation (including failure to meet needs)	advocate for rights to these satisfiers; make satisfiers available in ways that both empower and don't mark out as different; build inclusive communities	identify additional need satisfiers accurately; provide sensitively with regard to implicit messages to society
colonisation of the lifeworld (including dependence on media steered systems and fragmentation of community)	develop and promote ideology of responsible citizenship; provide satisfiers where possible using non-system options, or non-system mediation; build inclusive communities with decreasing dependence on power/money based coordination of action	provide as independently as possible from system, e.g. give cash to people (or their agents) not to bureaucracies; develop technologies that increase scope for critical autonomy, i.e. access to the three sources of rationality.

The above framework provides an alternative outline of the appropriate tasks of human services, and their managers. It is presented in general terms and requires developing in relation to specific classes of need (health and the two autonomies), need satisfier (ordinary and additional), and specific short, medium and longer range 'threats' from the three societal forces. The detailed material in the boxes is not of primary importance here, however, but rather the outline of a way of conceptualising the key issues for our response to people who depend significantly on others. What is most striking is how this conceptualisation differs from the agendas that dominate social welfare provision with their reliance on service technologies as quick fixes, and their dubious boundaries and distinctions (e.g. purchaser/provider; health care/social care). The argument implies that these responses have their origin in the three societal tendencies of destabilisation, devaluation and life-world colonisation, (but are unable to identify these factors clearly enough to confront them). Furthermore, the analysis subsumes but goes beyond the normalisation / role valorisation analysis, potentially providing greater scope for disruption, prediction and proactive adaptation. What the framework developed here offers is a way of critically navigating through the range of possibilities that societal change (to post Fordism, post Fabianism, or whatever) opens up: so, for example, how do we capitalise on the new split between commissioning and providing without compromising equity, nor commodifying human solidarity, nor imposing more

layers of bureaucracy (cf. Le Grand, 1993, Cornwell, 1992/3)? The answer lies in the extent to which the proffered solution is likely to amplify or attenuate the societal tendencies identified above.

2) How? - Ideology and Social Action

I now want to consider ideology more systematically than I have up to now, relating it to the mobilisation of social action, both in maintaining existing arrangements and in transforming them. Again I have strayed outside the familiar territory of social policy and welfare management, this time into the area explored by Gramsci. Gramsci (e.g. 1971; Simon, 1983, is an accessible secondary source) was concerned with the maintenance of power in the modern capitalist state. While in the nineteenth century the order was maintained mainly by force (the threat of starvation or violence) in modern capitalist societies it is maintained on a day to day basis (although the threat of force is always there) by the organisation of consent. Much of what passes for 'common sense' (assumptions and expectations about the order of things) is socially constructed. Our consent to various social arrangements is because we expect the world to be like that. We expect people with more interesting and varied jobs to be paid more so we do not question it; instead we accept it. For Gramsci, ideology acts as a kind of 'social cement', unifying a bloc of varied social groups and interests. In this, a hegemonic social group exercises leadership and power, not through crude ideological domination, but rather through the combination of key elements from the ideologies of those social groups that form an alliance or social bloc with it. Thus the Thatcher government was able to appeal to the anti-egalitarian sentiments of the skilled working class, as well as to the more traditional ideologies of middle England. While Gramsci's analysis was constructed for explaining this kind of phenomenon, we can also use it to examine the maintenance of power relations in other social and organisational contexts. So the consensus on the appropriateness of Community Care has united the different ideologies of civil rights activists, professionals, families of service users, and those concerned with the cost of hospital provision. Similarly, the ideology of normalisation (Wolfensberger, 1972; 1992; Burton, 1983) combines ideologies concerned with social inclusion and equal rights, autonomy and self determination, and human development and educational/clinical technology.

My suggestion is that organisational order is maintained in similar ways to that outlined by Gramsci for the political order (indeed organisations can be regarded as a microcosms of the wider society). Hegemonic groupings and individuals articulate ideology that a variety of interests can also identify with. Given this possession of the very basis for common sense or unreflective assumptions and expectations, challenge to their order is not so much suppressed but is difficult to conceive (cf. Lukes', 1974, three dimensional theory of power). Of course there are many conflicts in organisations but they tend to take place over familiar territory - and there is little challenge to the shared assumptions that short-circuit full and democratic

communicative action. In some ways this echoes Habermas who identifies the distortion of communication when the three

sources of rationality are not transparent to all the actors: and even if <u>all</u> the actors are basing their (rational, contextual, and

dramaturgical) justifications on an ideological framework that reflects the interests of the dominant social group, then the

speech situation will be far from ideal. (Eley ,1992, and Holub, 1992 have noted some of the shared concerns and respective

gaps in the work of Gramsci and Habermas, both adding insights from feminism to repair their gender blindness and to

potentially further develop the key concepts.) Ulrich (1983, 1987) provides a useful methodology for exposing and criticising

the ideological boundary judgements made by the dominant interests in social systems design that draws explicitly and

profoundly on the philosophy of Habermas and Kant.

How can we make use of these ideas in practice? Typically a dissident is likely to be in the position of arguing for a change in

policy or provision, a new design, or for implementing a change in a particular way. Often it will be from a minority position,

with limited power and influence (although some dissidents might be in relatively senior positions). There will often be a clash

of ideas, characterised by mutual incomprehensibility and failure to communicate between parties. This problem of articulating

an ideology outside the hegemonic one is not just a question of different people having different ideas, but of different ideas

reflecting different histories, different vantage points, different interests, all interacting with other individuals, groups,

ideologies, and the unfolding of experience over time. The dissident will need to read the opposing ideologies and their social

connections, identify groupings whose ideologies are at least reconcilable with her/his own, and act with others to mobilise

such broad based support, making progressive compromises (those which have the potential to become less compromised over

time). Gramsci's metaphors of Modern Prince and War of Position, although developed in relation to the class struggle, apply

equally to the politics of working for progressive social change from within the welfare system in the present era

It is this socially rooted conception of ideology and hegemony (as *lived* rather than abstract, Williams, 1980, p. 38.) that

potentially makes it a more powerful and more critical theoretical framework than the interpretivist writing on organisational

culture and ideology (e.g. Handy, 1976; Johnson, 1990; Lorsch, 1986; Pettigrew et. al, 1992) which can give the impression that

these constructs are taken as givens rather than as socially produced and reproduced. Gramsci also takes us beyond a

simplistic notion of ideology as domination by ruling ideas. I will explore some of the implications for this way of looking at

ideology in and around welfare organisations.

1. Ideological hegemony, and its ideological coalitions, has boundaries other than those of the organisation. Therefore the

    focus of change efforts at the ideological level must be on both the internal coalitions (Mintzberg, 1983) of the bureaucracy

but also on other external interest groups who can be empowered in the process of cohering in a hegemonic coalition. This is well illustrated in the movement for better provision in learning disability services in New South Wales in the 1980s which involved an external alliance of parents, academics, civil rights activists who for a period formed a hegemonic bloc with professionals, managers and politicians within the state government bureaucracies, and thereby enabled a shift in both *thinking* about people with learning disabilities and through practical action, in the *services* available to them (Burton, 1989). That extra-organisational coalition is generally weak in Britain, and it often becomes dominated by professionals, being so often built around single issues.

2. Ideological coalitions are likely to have varying degrees of hegemony. The effective range of their hegemony over diverse interest groups will vary as will the intensity with which such groups identify with the hegemonic ideology.

3. In order to continue uniting diverse interests under changing conditions, the dominant group will need what I have termed *necessary hegemony* (Burton, 1989), i.e. a sufficient degree of hegemony (in range and intensity) to handle threats to the hegemonic view. (In this sense the idea is similar to Kuhn's (1962) notion of paradigm in the sciences; however the Gramscian notion also offers an analysis of the social dimensions of these Weltanschauungen.) Where there is a deficit in the necessary hegemony of the dominant group in the coalition then there can be signs of hegemonic strain with the breakdown of ideology and the splitting off of components of the coalition.

4. We therefore have a basis for the succession of hegemonic groups and their wider coalitions. The more successful hegemonists will be able to alter both the ideology and the assemblage of allied groupings to adapt to changing conditions, protecting a core ideology (which is probably generative of the more peripheral elements of the ideology; cf. Lakatos, 1970) and the core membership of the alliance. It is this *active* engagement that Gramsci refers to with the metaphors of the 'Modern Prince' and the 'War of Position'. The Church of England, the Monarchy, and the Labour Party illustrate some of these processes with it being questionable whether they will demonstrate necessary hegemony or hegemonic strain in the present period.

I recognise that in social welfare contexts it can be difficult to read the ideological picture, particularly under present conditions, where for example, in some local authorities big city chauvinism and paternalism is being replaced by a social market philosophy. Similarly, ideologies of service content are in a state of flux with one dimensional 'care', 'self determination', and 'treatment' ideologies undialectically fighting it out in the health and social care arena.

The above discussion gives some idea of the likely dynamics of ideology and the social groupings which exercise power through its articulation. Potentially, if not here, it gives us a framework for describing the system in motion with some precision. Followed through it also suggests some points for counter-hegemonic action by individual dissidents, when trying to establish an alternative 'common sense' and a support movement associated with it.

A key idea behind this strategic notion is worth identifying here. Sociological theory has traditionally focused on either human agency or social structure. The former leads to a voluntaristic applied approach that underestimates the array of social forces stacked against those who would make changes. The latter makes the opposite mistake, seeing the social 'givens' as final. Work by Bhaskar (1989) and by Giddens (e.g. 1979) offers a resolution.

> *...people do not create society. For it always pre-exists them and is a necessary condition for their activity. Rather, society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so.*
>
> Bhaskar 1989, p.36

Giddens, through the notion of the 'duality of structure' makes a similar point.

> *The recursive* [self reproducing] *character of language - and by generalisation, of social systems also - cannot be understood unless we also understand that the means whereby such systems are reproduced, and thus exist as systems, contain within them the seeds of change.*
>
> Giddens, 1979, p. 18.

Whittington (1992) builds upon this idea in the context of organisations and management. Since managers inhabit plural social worlds they are also subject to, and exponents of, various quasi-independent systems of social rules and social ideologies. Not only can they exploit the systems of the organisation to change them as they reproduce them, but the ambiguity of these multiple systems gives scope for legitimating action via several different rule/ideology systems.

> *... leadership is not simply a matter of individual managers' personal psychological qualities ... but also dependent on the resources - capital, professional status, ethnic or gender privilege - made available by their specific social identities.*
>
> Whittington, 1992, p. 708.

This can be contrasted with the cult of strategic leadership, criticised by Knights and Morgan (1992). Much the same argument can be made in respect of other potential activists such as women with multiple commitments (cf. Kagan and Lewis, 1993). So, a counter-hegemonic approach would involve articulating an ideology that could unite the agendas and interests of diverse groupings. Such a movement would not just involve the managers and politicians in the bureaucracy but would explicitly seek to engage with others, for example parent organisations, academics, community and church organisations, and dissident/principled staff, professionals and managers (a radical recuperation of the notion of 'healthy alliances' floated by the Department of Health (1992)? It would exploit the changes in welfare organisations, their loss of direction and the limits of their

new managerialist ideologies. There is no space for a detailed description, but key texts might include, at a practical level Albery and Yule(1992), Alinsky (1971), and Dluhy (1990); and more theoretically, Zald and McCarthy (1979). However, to get started on such a hegemonic/counter-hegemonic strategy will require dissidents freeing some time and resources from the daily operation of the service, which presents its own ethical dilemmas, akin to the old reform/revolution question on a different scale.

If on reflection our premises for action point beyond the organisational boundaries, then our actions themselves must also extend there too, while recognising that as functionaries of the system we will rightly lose some control in the process.

References

Albery, N. and Yule, V. **The Book of Visions: An Encyclopaedia of Social Innovations** London: Virgin Books, 1992.

Alinsky, S. **Rules for Radicals** New York: Random House, 1971.

Bhaskar, R. **The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences** (Second Edition) Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1989.

Burton, M. Understanding mental health services: theory and practice. **Critical Social Policy** 1983, 7, 54-74.

Burton, M. **Australian Intellectual Disability Services: Experiments in Social Change. (Working Papers in Building Community Strategies, No 1.)** The Kings Fund College; London: 1989.

Cocks, E. Seminar on Safeguards for Disabled Service Users. unpublished Manchester, 1992.

Cornwell, N. Assessment and accountability in community care. **Critical Social Policy** 1992/3, 12, (36), 40-52.

Department of Health **The Health of the Nation** London: HMSO, 1992.

Dews, P. (Ed.) **Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas** London: Verso, 1992.

Dicken, P. **Global Shift: Industrial Change in a Turbulent World** London: Harper and Row, 1986.

Dluhy, M. **Building Coalitions in the Human Services** Newbury Park, CA.: Sage, 1990.

Doyal, L and Gough, I. A theory of human needs. **Critical Social Policy** 1984, 4, 6-38.

Doyal, L. and Gough, I. **A Theory of Human Need** Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991.

Eley, G. Nations, publics, and political cultures: placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century. In C. Calhoun, (Ed.) **Habermas and the Public Sphere** Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1989.

Giddens, A. **Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis** London: Macmillan, 1979.

Gramsci, A. **Selections from the Prison Notebooks** Edited by Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971.

Habermas, J. **Legitimation Crisis** London: Heinemann, 1976 (German edition, 1973)

Habermas, J. **The Theory of Communicative Action Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalisation of Society, Volume 2: The Critique of Functionalist Reason** (First published in German, 1981) Cambridge: Polity, 1991 and 1987.

Hales, M. **Living Thinkwork: Where Do Labour Processes Come From?** CSE Books, 1980.

Handy, C.B. So you want to change your organisation? Then first identify its culture. **Management Education and Development** 1976, _7_, 67-84

HMSO **Caring for People: Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond** London H.M.S.O., 1989. (Cmnd. 849)

Hoggett, P. **Modernisation, Political Strategy and the Welfare State: An Organisational Perspective** Studies in Decentralisation and Quasi-Markets No 2 Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies, 1990.

Hoggett, P. A new management in the public sector? **Policy and Politics** 1991, _19_, 243-256.

Holub, Richard C. **Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere**. London: Routledge, 1991.

Holub, Renate **Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism** London: Routledge, 1992.

Howard, D. **The Marxian Legacy** London: Macmillan, 1977.

Illich, I., Zola, I.K., McKnight, J., Caplan, J. and Shanken, H. **Disabling Professions** London: Marion Boyars, 1977.

Johnson, G. Managing strategic change: the role of symbolic action. **British Journal of Management** 1990, <u>1</u>, 183-200.

Kagan, C. and Lewis, S. Women, work, and caring: accounts of women with multiple commitments. Paper read at International Sociological Association, (Committee on Family Research), Conference on Rapid Social Change and the Family; Palanga, Lithuania: 1993.

Knights, D. and Morgan, Glenn Leadership and corporate strategy: toward a critical analysis. **Leadership Quarterly** 1992, <u>3</u>, 171-190.

Kuhn, T.S. **The Structure of Scientific Revolutions** Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Lakatos, I. Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes. In I. Lakatos and A Musgrave, (Eds.), **Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Le Grand, J. **Quasi Markets and Community Care** Studies in Decentralisation and Quasi Markets, No. 17. School for Advanced Urban Studies, University of Bristol: 1993.

Lorsch, J. Managing culture: the invisible barrier to strategic change **California Management Review** 1986, <u>28</u>, 95-109..

Lukes, S. **Power: A Radical View** London: Macmillan, 1974.

Marcuse, H. **One Dimensional Man.** London: Routledge, 1964.

Mcloughlin, C.S., Garner, J.B., and Callahan, M. **Getting Employed, Staying Employed: job development and training for persons with severe handicaps** London: Paul H.

Brookes,1987.

Mead, G.H. **On Social Psychology** Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964.

Mintzberg, H. **Power in and Around Organizations** Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983.

Mohawk, J. Deconstructing Utopia. **The Permaculture Activist** 1992, 8, (2), 4-14.

Morgan, Gareth **Riding the Waves of Change: Developing Managerial Competencies for a Turbulent World.** San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989.

Pettigrew, A., Ferlie, E. and McKee, L. **Shaping Strategic Change: Making Change in Large Organisations - The Case of the National Health Service** London: Sage, 1992

Pettigrew, A., Ferlie, E. and McKee, L. **Shaping Strategic Change: Making Change in Large Organisations - The Case of the National Health Service** London: Sage, 1992

Pusey, M. **Jürgen Habermas** London: Tavistock, 1987.

Ray, L.J. **Rethinking Critical Theory: emancipation in the age of global social movements** London: Sage, 1993.

Rose, N. **The Psychological Complex: Society, Politics and Society in England, 1869-1939** London: Routledge, 1985.

Sachs, W. Development: a guide to the ruins. Seven essays reprinted in **New Internationalist** Special Issue No 232, June 1992.

Scull, A. **Museums of Madness: The Social Organisation of Insanity in Nineteenth Century England** Harmondsworth: Allen Lane, 1979.

Seymour, J. and Girardet, H. **Far from Paradise: the Story of Man's Impact on the Environment** London: BBC, 1986.

Simon, R. **Gramsci's Political Thought** London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982.

Ulrich, W. **Critical Heuristics of Social Planning: A New Approach to Practical Philosophy**
Bern: Haupt, 1983.

Ulrich, W. Critical heuristics of social systems design. **European Journal of Operational Research**, 1987, <u>37</u>, (reprinted in R.L. Flood and M.C. Jackson, eds. **Critical Systems Thinking: Directed Readings** Chichester: Wiley, 1991).

White, S.K. **The Recent Work of Jürgen Habermas: Reason, Justice and Modernity**.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Whittington, R. Putting Giddens into action: social systems and managerial agency. **Journal of Management Studies** 1992, <u>29</u>, 693-712.

Williams, R. **Problems in Materialism and Culture** London: Verso, 1980.

Wolfensberger, W. **The Principle of Normalization in Human Services** Toronto: National Institute on Mental Retardation, 1972.

Wolfensberger, W. The Origin and Nature of Our Institutional Models. In **Changing Patterns in Residential Services for the Mentally Retarded** Washington: President's Committee on Mental Retardation, 1975.

Wolfensberger, W. A call to wake up to the beginnings of a new wave of 'euthanasia' of severely impaired people. **Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded** 1980, <u>15</u>, 171-173.

Wolfensberger, W. **A Brief Introduction to Social Role Valorization as a High-Order Concept for Structuring Human Services** (rev. ed.). Syracuse, N.Y.: Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership and Change Agentry (Syracuse University), 1992.

Zald, M.N. and McCarthy, J.D. **The Dynamics of Social Movements: Resource Mobilization, Social Control, and Tactics.** Winthrop, 1979; reprinted Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1988.