

Part I

SETTING THE SCENE

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INTRODUCTION

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The word ‘festschrift’ is German and means, literally, ‘festival script’. There is a time-honoured tradition in some disciplines of academics collaborating to produce an edited collection to celebrate the distinguished career of a close colleague. Sadly, there are few such efforts in the arena of social policy and, with important exceptions (Bernstein and Brannen 1996; Green and Yule 2001), fewer still in the area of applied research into child development and children’s services. The reasons for this gap are not immediately apparent, aside from different academic traditions, although one factor must be the relative infancy of the field and thus the dearth of people whose careers have spanned sufficient time to warrant having something published in their honour.

Roger Bullock is unusual, then, and it seemed appropriate to mark his official retirement with a collection of essays reflecting on changes to research, policy and practice in children’s services since he started out as a young researcher in 1965. The topic areas selected are suitably diverse, reflecting the breadth of Roger’s research interests, from residential and foster care to family support and the mental health of young offenders. At some point during his career, most of the kinds of children whom we would nowadays regard as ‘children in need’, or children at risk of social exclusion, have come under his research gaze. So, on any given day in the late 1960s Roger would no doubt have been found in a boarding school or institution for young delinquents searching through files or applying his acute observation skills to proceedings; today he is probably doing similar work but perhaps in the office of a social services team focused on supporting similar children at home.

The 40 years selected also mark a period of considerable flux in the field, both in terms of the direction of services as they have sought to respond to various factors, notably scandals and financial crises, and the role of research evidence in steering this zigzag course. In 1963 in England the *Children and Young Persons Act* was published, setting out an agenda for the greater use of family support to help to maintain children in their homes, and it is fitting that in 2003, the year of Roger’s retirement, the government produced *Every Child Matters*

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(DfES 2003) to herald the most far-reaching reforms to services in England and Wales since the 1960s. This is pure coincidence, of course, but it provides a useful frame of reference within which to mark and weigh developments.

The book is not intended as a eulogy to Roger, although in places it may appear so, such is the regard in which he is held by his colleagues. Rather it is to mark and celebrate Roger's research career by taking a step back and reflecting on the changing relationship over 40 years between research, policy and practice in the areas that make up the new children's services. It is the focus on this relationship that, hopefully, distinguishes the volume from other reviews of the child welfare field (e.g. Hill and Aldgate 1996; Stevenson 1999; Fawcett *et al.* 2004). Roger was a fervent proponent of evidence-based policy and practice long before the phrase was invented. In the course of showing how research has been harnessed (and sometimes abused or ignored) in the pursuit of progress in serving vulnerable children, the contributors demonstrate, collectively, both the direct and indirect influence of evidence – the policies that follow research recommendations to the letter and those that emerge from findings and perspectives that clarify and aid the understanding of complex issues.

In pursuing these aims, the book also provides to some extent an insight into the contribution of a specific research centre, namely the Dartington Social Research Unit. This is unavoidable to the extent that Roger is and always has been associated with Dartington: indeed, to many the two are synonymous. But Dartington, of course, has always been a collection of people and its role, along with that of similar centres, such as the Thomas Coram Research Unit in London, in shaping social policy in relation to children could be the subject of another book – one that Roger is gently being encouraged to research and write.

As editors of the volume we are acutely conscious that some people reading the book will not know Roger Bullock or be familiar with his work. Rather than go into this here, sections at the end of the book chart the main landmarks in his career (Appendix A) and his major publications (Appendix B). The remainder of this introductory chapter sets out how contributors and chapter themes were selected and the brief that authors were given, before summarising in turn the focus of each chapter.

As noted above, Roger has turned his attention over the years to children with various types of need and who are served by all of the main agencies that comprise children's services – social care, health, education, police, youth justice and voluntary organisations. Although his expertise is by no means uniform across these areas, the new world of children's services heralded by *Every Child Matters* means that it makes sense to cover in some way all of the aforementioned areas. Authors were selected for their own expertise in the area and also because of their personal connections with Roger, forged through working together closely in a variety of settings over the years. All were extremely keen to participate and have worked with us patiently in bringing the project to fruition. We are grateful to them all.

By virtue of being written by different people and covering different topic areas, the chapters are all unique in their emphases and style. However, as requested, all provide an overview of developments in research, policy and practice in their area over the past 40 years, and all

reflect on the contribution of Roger (and Dartington) to these changes. There is also consideration of how the research community, together with policy-makers and practitioners, can further children's well-being in those areas, with some of the key messages brought together in the final chapter. It is hoped that a range of people will find this book useful – undergraduates and experienced researchers, frontline practitioners and central government policy-makers, those working in the UK and those based in other countries. Whether the contributions in themselves offer any new theories, evidence or understanding is for others to judge – it would be a tall order in the space provided and given the parameters of the brief – but individually each one offers a useful summary of progress, and it is envisaged that, collectively, they will stimulate both the debate and actions required to improve services and so achieve better outcomes for children in need.

The book is structured, loosely, in the chronological order of Roger's research interests. Inevitably this is somewhat artificial, given that he has often been involved in several projects at once and returns continually to territory covered earlier in an attempt to open up new paths. But it is logical and also, to some extent, reflects broader shifts in children's services research over the 40 years covered: from the focus on children in institutions or those cared for away from their home or natural parents, through a growing acknowledgement of the wider needs of such children, to research into children with complex needs who live in the community and are supported at home. The chapters on discrete topics are book-ended by more broad-sweeping contributions considering, respectively, changes in social research since the 1960s (Chapter 2), the implications for children's services of the growing international agenda in social policy research and policy (Chapter 12), connections between social research and the creative arts (Chapter 13) and how the Research Unit at Dartington is seeking to adapt to a changing context (Chapter 14).

PART I: SETTING THE SCENE

Following this introductory chapter, Roy Parker provides a commentary on changes in social research in the UK from the 1960s to today (Chapter 2). The first section starts at about the time that when Roger obtained his first appointment, asking why social research was on the threshold of a new era. It considers political factors, such as the promotion of more effective economic and social planning and changes to the funding and administration of higher education, as well as technological innovations. Parker assesses the significance of these developments against the backdrop of the state of social research before the mid-1960s. Here he focuses on the funding of studies, the availability of statistics and other secondary material and the existence of campaigning organisations committed to assembling and utilising research evidence. He notes that high quality work on child care was 'extremely thin on the ground' in 1965.

The second section of Roy Parker's chapter discusses the salient changes that influenced the climate of social research from the 1960s onwards. Those selected are: changes in the position of research in the universities; the reorientation of the Social Science Research Council; the enhanced role of central government in promoting studies; and the academic move away from a positivist approach to research. The third section considers the present state of social research in the child care sector and compares it with what has gone before.

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Particular attention is paid to the quantity and scope of the research and to its nature – for example, the kinds of questions that are being asked and the degree of interdisciplinary collaboration. Strengths and weaknesses are identified. Parker also explores the extent to which research and dissemination activities have had an impact on policy and practice in children’s services. The chapter ends by considering changes that are likely to affect the climate in which social and, in particular, child care research is conducted. It focuses on the administration and funding of research, changes in government *vis-à-vis* departmental responsibility for children’s services and the role of conviction politics.

PART II: CHILDREN’S SERVICES FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

As noted earlier, Roger’s research career began with studies of residential education, specifically boarding and approved schools: *The Hothouse Society* (Lambert and Millham 1968) and *After Grace – Teeth* (Millham *et al.* 1975). With this in mind, Ewan Anderson reviews the fundamental and virtually continuous change in education in Britain over the past 40 years (Chapter 3). He describes the broadening and deepening of education until 1979, highlighting themes such as the promotion of greater access and the introduction of more progressive teaching practices. He then charts the reorientation since the early 1980s towards preparing children for the world of work. Anderson offers a critical perspective on reforms in the period, focusing on the curriculum, inclusion and the introduction to education of market- and business-driven ideas.

Anderson’s chapter moves on to assess the contribution of Roger and the Dartington Unit to the area. It draws on those publications of Roger’s that focus on residential settings and education, noting their influence on research methodology, conceptual thinking, and policy and practice. Anderson highlights in particular the holistic perspective adopted in the publications, with their acknowledgement of the value of expressive as well as instrumental goals, and the way in which they sought to relate outputs and outcomes to the intention of the intervention. The chapter closes by describing how the work has since been taken forward and notes the central place of education in the new children’s services.

Roger is perhaps best known for his work on the residential care of children, notably books such as *The Chance of a Lifetime?* (Lambert *et al.* 1975) and *Structure, Culture and Outcome* (Brown *et al.* 1998). Roger Clough’s contribution (Chapter 4) begins with some personal reflections on hallmarks of work by the Dartington Unit, and Roger Bullock in particular, including the often imaginative style of writing and presenting material, the drawing on sociology to interpret phenomena and the willingness to listen to children’s accounts of their experiences. It then charts several seminal studies of residential homes since the 1960s and shows how Dartington’s research fits into this context, noting in particular its attempt to describe how places are different from one another and also to explain what leads to different outcomes.

The next section identifies key themes emerging from residential child care research in the UK. It sets out some of what is known about the effectiveness of residential homes, the factors that are conducive to good outcomes for children and how patterns of caring for

children away from home in the UK have changed in the last 40 years. Clough then summarises what he sees as the strengths and limitations of this research, considering themes such as the style of regime in children's homes, the level of institutional abuse, the evaluation of long-term outcomes and the effect on children of the size of homes. The chapter closes with some reflections on how the links between research, policy and practice as regards residential child care might be strengthened.

Of course, children live in various kinds of institutions, including secure accommodation, and Roger has been involved in several studies of antisocial behaviour by young people and attempts by society to deal with it, in particular *Locking Up Children* (Millham *et al.* 1978) and *Secure Treatment Outcomes* (Bullock *et al.* 1998). In Chapter 5, Henri Giller examines the extent to which developments in the youth (previously juvenile) justice field over a 40-year period have been influenced by three themes that are the hallmark of Roger's work, namely: the impact of research on policy and practice developments; the appreciation of the need for a 'whole system' approach to social interventions; and a practice context in which services are matched to needs.

Giller's chapter begins by summarising changes in youth justice in England and Wales since the 1960s, looking in particular at the extent to which reforms exhibit a punitive or welfare-orientated outlook and the relative influence on them of research, political debate and economic constraints. It then focuses on initiatives introduced by the Labour government since 1997, in particular the Youth Justice Board and Youth Offending Teams. Giller sets out evidence regarding their impact, demonstrating advances in terms of greater consistency in pre-court decisions, the reduced use of custody and the secure estate and, generally, practice becoming more evidence based. The chapter concludes that there have been significant gains but also notes ongoing challenges, including the prevention of youth crime and the problems associated with placing young people in secure settings (especially given the inauspicious political context for progressive reforms in this area).

It is easy in an area such as youth justice to become preoccupied with administrative categories, such as 'locked-up', or the primary reason for a young person entering the system, namely crime. Roger has consistently encouraged a more holistic perspective and a focus on the child's needs in all areas of his or her life. Sue Bailey's contribution (Chapter 6) is therefore about the mental health of young offenders, in particular those in secure care. It starts by noting recent developments in child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) in the UK, including the push towards multi-agency working and evidence-based provision. Next, it charts the changing pattern of custodial options for and attitudes towards young offenders since the early nineteenth century, identifying both a growing recognition in policy circles of those young people's mental health needs and also concerted attempts by health and youth justice agencies to work together to address them. The chapter then reviews briefly some of the research into links between the mental health, social well-being and delinquency of young people detained in locked institutions and discusses the impact of those regimes.

To help with understanding and improving the fit between needs and services, Bailey turns to theoretical and methodological approaches associated with Roger and his colleagues at Dartington. These include the concepts of 'career', 'life-route' and 'process' as well as

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attempts to develop taxonomies of need with predictive power that can help with fashioning more focused interventions. Bailey then identifies advances since the early 1990s in improving the mental health of young offenders and discusses how research is contributing to this process. She concludes that there is a sufficient body of evidence to inform policy-making and practice aimed at improving the mental health of previous and existing young offenders but also identifies challenges for the future, including the need for services to engage children and families more effectively and the requirement to strengthen training for professionals working in this area.

As policy and practice for children in need shifted to supporting children living in the community, so Roger and his contemporaries in social research adjusted their focus. Some of these children live away from their birth families, but with other families. In Chapter 7, June Thoburn concentrates on children adopted from care – not an area in which Roger has specialised but one in which his work nevertheless has relevance. The chapter begins by considering the types of children this involves and the different routes they take into adoption. Thoburn discusses the social work processes involved in placement, listing the main decisions that need to be taken (relating to the child, to the birth family and to the prospective and actual adopters). She explores the different ways in which the success of adoption can be measured and, using these criteria, indicates how successful the adoption is.

The chapter then summarises, under several headings, what is known about the factors associated with better or worse outcomes for different groups of children. It discusses not only the child, birth family and adoptive family variables, but also service-related variables and the importance of the ‘matching’ decision. Particular attention is given to two themes, namely ‘the respective places of long-term/permanent foster care and adoption as routes to permanence’ and ‘the impact on stability and long-term well-being of continuing contact with birth family members’. Thoburn notes that in both areas there are debates between researchers on how to interpret findings. The chapter ends with some reflections on the implications of the England and Wales *Adoption and Children Act 2002*.

Foster care has become more important relative to residential care over the years and is a subject area that Roger has studied more intensively, for example, in *Lost in Care* (Millham *et al.* 1986). Ian Sinclair explores the complexities associated with decisions about long-term foster children returning home (Chapter 8). The first part of his chapter looks at Dartington’s account of the relationship between the child looked after in the care system and his or her birth family. It discusses themes common to the Unit’s work, including the high percentage of separated children who eventually return home, the importance of symbols of belonging and contact with the birth family, the need to consider the child’s best interests and subsequent environment, and the importance of the child’s views. Reference is made to some of the rhetorical and imaginative devices employed in the Unit’s writing and their role in enlivening the topic and persuading the reader.

In the second part of the chapter, Sinclair considers the extent to which other research on longer-staying children in the care system bears out or modifies these conclusions. Noting differences in emphasis rather than direct contradictions, he focuses, first, on the tensions regarding the desirability of returning home and, second, on evidence on contact and the long-term effects of care. With regard to the former, Sinclair suggests that there is a need for

imaginative adaptations that go beyond a ‘family good, foster care bad’ position. He draws from his own work on long-stay foster children, noting their wishes and the sometimes negative effects of a return home. The same evidence is used to put contact in a more equivocal light and the question is considered as to whether its potentially harmful effects could be mitigated by treatment or by more purposeful social work. Sinclair’s conclusion that ‘outcomes depend heavily on setting’ is linked to research on resilience, residential care and therapeutic foster care as well as to Dartington’s work. The section closes with a brief reflection on the importance of the meaning that children attach to themselves and to events and people in their lives. The third section of the chapter sets out some implications of the above for policy, practice and research. It focuses on the dilemma that although children want to go home and will inevitably do so, going home is very often a bad experience.

As little as 10 years ago, the reflex response to evidence of child abuse or neglect was often to remove children from their families. Although this attitude persists in some quarters, on balance the nature of child protection activity has since changed, to some degree as a result of work by Roger. David Berridge starts Chapter 9 by remarking on the increased attention to child protection in England and Wales over the past 40 years and its impact on social care policy generally. He then charts the development of services to protect children from abuse and neglect since before the Second World War, looking in particular at how the Cleveland Inquiry helped to shape the *Children Act* 1989 and the focus on risk management in the 1990s. Next, he considers what has been learned over this period. He notes trends and cross-national patterns in referrals to services of children thought to have been abused or neglected, and discusses how the system processes cases.

Berridge also sets out central themes from the research review of child protection with which Roger was closely involved, namely *Child Protection: messages from research* (DoH 1995) – also known as the ‘Blue Book’. These include the problem of defining abuse, the significance of context when considering the effects of maltreatment and the value of engaging and supporting families. Criticisms of the review are also noted; for example, the lack of research on ethnicity or institutional abuse. Berridge expresses his amazement that the latter has not received more attention, and wonders how he and others failed to notice the problem until it blew up in various scandals. The penultimate section identifies other topics that might have been covered – for instance, the impact of wider family and community factors on child abuse, and the failure of social research to exert more influence on policy and practice. Finally, Berridge appraises the value and appeal of the work of Dartington and Roger in particular.

The notion that family support can be a means of protecting children may not seem novel today, but little more than a decade ago it transformed the thinking of many working in the field. In Chapter 10, Michael Little and Ruth Sinclair show how considerable advances have been made since the publication of the Blue Book in terms of refocusing services away from a longstanding preoccupation with investigative procedures and towards meeting children’s needs. They suggest that a new incarnation of family support is emerging, characterised by a focus on child development outcomes, the involvement of various agencies and the integration of specialist interventions within universal provision.

The chapter then charts some of the key research from Europe, North America and Australasia that is relevant to the challenges facing policy-makers and practitioners concerned

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with supporting children in need and their families. First, patterns of how agencies typically process cases are presented, with pointers as to how these system dynamics might be altered in order to respond more logically to service-users. Second, the needs of children are considered from the perspectives of developmental psychology, sociology and the children and their families, enabling insights into the way in which different forms of family support might better meet those needs. Third, evidence is set out concerning rigorously evaluated family support programmes designed to break the chains of negative effects operating in children's lives. Little and Sinclair end by considering the future prospects of family support, arguing that developments in the field are gradually improving children's services.

Of course, the well-being of children and families is by no means affected solely by designated children's services agencies. Broader socio-economic and political trends are important, as are other systems within which children and families move, including that of family justice. In Chapter 11, Mervyn Murch and Douglas Hooper explore developments in family justice research over the last 40 years. They draw on their extensive research into adoption and fostering, divorce, domestic violence and the representation of children in court. Much of this work influenced legislation, including the *Children Act 1989* and the *Adoption and Children Act 2002*. The chapter focuses on studies in areas that remain particularly relevant today. One is the welfare of children in divorce proceedings; another is the participation of children in family law proceedings. Recent decades have seen children considered increasingly as participant actors rather than passive victims, but how has this shift to rights-based thinking played out in terms of children's experience? Finally, the chapter examines the extent to which the family justice system meets the needs of children and families. It highlights deficiencies in the current set-up, and advocates ways of making services less stigmatising and more conciliatory as well as strategies for making practice in the area more evidence based.

In the course of sketching out these studies, Murch and Hooper reflect on broader social and cultural changes and their effect on policy and research. This provides insights into three questions. First, what was it about the climate of the 1960s and 1970s that was conducive to the strong role in policy-making of child care and family justice research? Second, is it realistic to expect the continuation of these factors and the assumptions that underpinned social and legal reform? And third, will the kind of research endeavours with which they and Roger Bullock have been associated have a place in the new era of post-modernity? The authors end with practical suggestions for ensuring that centres such as the Dartington Unit continue to thrive.

PART III: LOOKING FORWARDS

All of the chapters in Part II take a subject area and consider it from different angles. Peter van der Laan and Monika Smit's brief was different. In Chapter 12 they take a perspective of growing significance for the children's services field – cross-national comparative research and policy – and apply it to one subject area, namely youth justice. It is an approach with which Roger has long been interested (e.g. Bullock 1992). The chapter starts by describing current developments at a European level concerning ways of dealing with juvenile delinquency. It traces broad trends in juvenile delinquency in western and eastern/central

Europe, recognising the limitations of the data but nevertheless seeking to explain the patterns presented. Next, the authors set out the most common developments in juvenile justice in Europe over recent years. They note the growth of diversionary and community-based approaches, but argue that custodial sentences continue to form the backbone of responses to youth crime in many, if not all, European countries.

Van der Laan and Smit then seek tentatively to summarise the headline similarities and differences between countries and relate them to socio-economic, cultural and political factors as well as to the welfare, justice and restorative models of anti-crime measures. They identify groups among which, at least in some European countries, crime appears to be increasing, including minority ethnic groups, girls, younger children and those involved in gangs. What actually is happening here, and how can the changes be explained? The authors also consider custodial sentences and the growing popularity of pre-trial detention, particularly in western European countries, pointing out that, remarkably, given their widespread use, knowledge about the nature and effectiveness of such measures is patchy. The final part of the chapter considers why England and Wales and The Netherlands appear to be following a different track from other European states.

Other ways of looking at the world are also having their effect on social research. Frustration on the part of researchers at being limited to particular 'silos' has led to greater cross-disciplinary working, including some unlikely collaborations between those who previously regarded each other's work with mutual incomprehension and whose only contact was in the college canteen. Roger has always been something of a polymath. In Chapter 13 he is given licence to 'let his hair down' a little and reflect on the influence on his social research activities of a life-long interest in the performing and creative arts. In particular, he asks whether the portrayal of situations in art can improve social research.

Roger's chapter is divided into six sections, each discussing an area where there appears to be a mutually beneficial relationship between artistic and research creativity. First is the development of ideas, in particular where they come from and why they flourish in some settings but not in others. Second is the distinction between the temporal and the eternal, and why some art and ideas survive while others fall away. Third is the relationship between form and content, with a strong focus on how the arts might help researchers to communicate more clearly and memorably. Fourth is seeking wholeness; both the way that looking at phenomena from different perspectives can help with obtaining an objective picture, and the manner in which this is presented. Fifth is the role of the artist and researcher in society, notably the apparent dilemma of popularity meaning vulgarity and the often uneasy relationship between social science and politics. Finally, Roger considers how science and art seek to present the truth. He suggests that social researchers might need to develop different methods and to some extent shift their focus if they are to explain more clearly child development in the context of children's services, and that this will benefit policy and practice.

How are independent research centres to respond to the changing research and policy landscape in children's services identified by each of the contributors? In Chapter 14, Nick Axford and Louise Morpeth explore continuities and change at the Dartington Social Research Unit. Far from offering a blueprint for what *should* happen, the chapter provides

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a brief case study of one centre's development at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It starts by identifying a refocusing of research topics, with a greater stress on children's developmental trajectories and outcomes and the development of theory – not so much of the sociological kind but rather in the form of a 'common language' for children's services. It also highlights attempts to sharpen the Unit's traditional methods, notably the exploitation of secondary data and mixing of methods, and illustrates how the longitudinal approach is being adapted away from retrospective studies and towards prospective and experimental designs.

The chapter then considers strategies employed in response to the changing research context, including efforts to pursue a programme of linked studies and investment in training younger researchers. The authors show how the Dartington Unit has focused increasingly on local service development, both at clinical and planning levels, and they give examples of the Unit's attempts to improve the dissemination and take-up of research – primarily through 'practice tools'. The organisational change that has taken place to support these developments is described, as are new international ventures in the form of comparative studies. The chapter ends by noting that the dilemmas faced by a centre like Dartington are, in many ways, perennial, and that much is to be learned from those who have traversed similar landscapes in the past.

The final chapter (Chapter 15) seeks to pull together some of the main themes from the contributions, reflecting on how lessons from the last 40 years translate into challenges for research, policy and practice in children's services in the next decade or so. We hope that the book does Roger justice and that in some small way it will help those responsible in various ways for 'making' effective interventions for vulnerable children to build on his impressive legacy to the field.

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