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Is there a unifying professional culture in Youth Offending Teams? A research note

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Introduction

Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) were established, under the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, to supervise all young people entering the youth justice system. YOTS became operational nationally in 2000 with the YJB being tasked to monitor their performance. This was largely in response to the Audit Commission's (1996) earlier conclusions that previous youth justice interventions were expensive and ineffective.

A key rationale for establishing YOTs was to ensure that YOT officers were drawn from the main agencies that were, de facto, involved in managing young offenders prior to 2000, in order to avoid duplication, inconsistencies and variation in priorities (Home Office, 1997). There was, therefore, a statutory requirement by the CDA1998 for the following services to be represented in the Yots: social services; police; the probation service, education/schools and the health service. Guidance on the roles of officers from the different agencies was issued by the Home Office (1999), but most research evidence showed that YOT officers were increasingly expected to carry out the same tasks, despite the variation in professional background, education and training.

One concern under these circumstances was whether the different professional backgrounds of YOT officers would prevent the development a 'fusion' model of interagency working (Burnett and Appleton, 2004) where all YOT officers would work within a common 'ideology of unity' (Crawford, 1994). Unsurprisingly, some writers, for instance, Thompson (1998), argued that YOTs created tensions between the social services and the other agencies involved. However, others, such as Allen

(1998), argued that the Crime and Disorder Act offered the chance to cut away from a 'cops, courts and corrections' model of youth justice in a way which would suit Social Services and was optimistic about cooperation with police officers working in the YOTs.

The balance of the evidence from early research on the YOTS augured badly for a unified approach to supervising young people. However, Burnett and Appleton (2004: 36) noted that the negative observations of some critics of the new youth justice system were often made at some remove from practice innovations or had focussed only on narrow aspects of implementation. Indeed, Burnett and Appleton concluded that there was an inter-agency fusion effect within the Oxfordshire YOT such that, irrespective of parent agency of the YOT officers, there was a unifying social work ethic. This suggests, as Eadie and Canton (2002, p.15) have already noted, that the occupational culture of those who work with young people, is 'grounded in the requirements of the job', and will always intervene between policy and practice.

This paper is therefore largely written in response to the publication of Burnett and Appleton's (2004: 36) recent qualitative research, which produced very positive 'experiential' findings 'about the realities of the new arrangements for youth justice'. Since Burnett and Appleton's research runs counter to most previous findings and was based entirely on the qualitative findings within a single YOT (Oxfordshire), we felt it was important to triangulate their findings on the impact of parent agencies on YOT culture, by researching a different YOT and also using a quantitative research tool. We focus here on 3 key issues which offer a measure of the variation in attitudes and values that are likely to impact on the supervision of offenders: views on the purpose of *criminal* justice; views on the purpose of *youth* justice; and attitudes to young offenders. Key to all this is determining risk management and links with effective intervention planning

Below, we first summarise the existing evidence on the extent to which those from different professional backgrounds integrated into a coherent YOT supervision team. We then present the findings of our research and the extent to which this supports Burnett and Appleton's (2004) most recent notion of a unified YOT culture, based on a surviving social work ethic. The paper ends with a critique of the evidence for, and

assumptions made about, pre-existing cultures and ethics within the parent agencies of the YOT officers, and some suggestions for future research on this topic.

Previous research on YOTs

Studies commissioned and published around the implementation period of the YOTs tended to paint a generally confusing and problematic picture. For instance, Bailey and Williams (2000) in their study of the early 'shadow YOTs' found that there were many conflicts between different agencies. Holdaway, Davidson, Dignan, Hammersley, Hine and Mash, (2001) also found that there were 'cultural hang-overs' from previous youth justice practice, conflict over implementation of caseworking, and obstructiveness over management attempts to introduce evidence-based practice. On the other hand, evidence from research on Multi-agency Public Protection Panels has shown that this was not inevitable. While police and probation officers had conflicting cultures, which created tensions, they were able to work well alongside each other (Maguire, Kemshall, Noaks and Wincup, 2001).

The largely negative findings of the early studies on the YOTs were underpinned by other commentators' deeper philosophical and ideological concerns about the New Labour approach and legislative pressures which were relayed through the new Youth Justice Board. Fionda (1999), for instance, argued that the new Youth Justice System still manifested the same, decades long, ideological indecision about whether welfare or justice approaches were appropriate. Others were not so equivocal. Goldson (2000) and Pitts (2001) argued that the new YJB was based on a tough populism, and one that Goldson (2000) argued increasingly overrode children's rights.
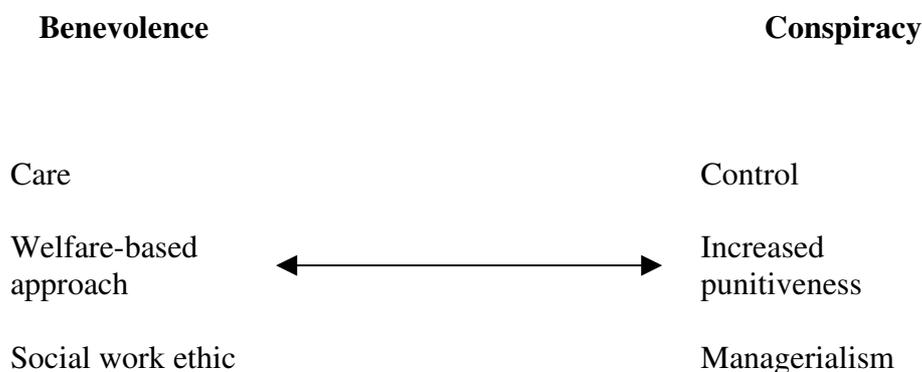
Another key criticism is often labelled the 'welfare as justice approach'. Within this perspective, there is an increasingly narrow and individualistic focus on risks, parenting and cognitive deficits, which ignores the differential impact of structural inequalities such as poverty, housing, neighbourhoods and income (Muncie, 2002; Pitts, 2001). In this scenario, young people with needs are too easily referred into the youth justice system, because of the failure of mainstream services to offer adequate provision.

Perhaps the most pertinent criticism of the new youth justice arrangements for the focus of this paper however, is the notion that multi-agency working is being used as a method of systemic de-professionalisation of youth justice supervisors. In this perspective, welfare-based approaches are replaced with managerial performance measures and case management (Pitts 2001, Pitts, 2003, Garrett, 2002). In essence, there is an additional layer to this argument when compared to similar arguments about equivalent probation service supervision (see for instance, Robinson, 2003; Merrington, 2004). The assumption within youth justice is that there is a de-professionalisation from an original social work ethic, partly through dilution of YOT supervisors with non-social work backgrounds. It should be noted, however, that those who were formerly youth justice workers or social workers still dominated the YOTs numerically (which is equally true of our study, see below) and it was to some extent, inevitable that the social work 'archipelago of care' would tend to dominate the working discourse and practices of the YOTs (Burnett and Appleton, 2004). Coupled with this, there is evidence of weakening bonds with parent agencies and identification with a 'generic social worker' role (Holdaway et al, 2001), or what Burnett and Appleton (2004: 42) call the 'YOT fruitcake mixture'.

Burnett & Appleton's findings

Burnett and Appleton's (2004) research is essentially based on an analysis of where Oxfordshire YOT workers as a whole fit on a continuum of benevolence and conspiracy. This continuum dovetails with several other oppositional pairings in the literature and can be approximately be represented by Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Benevolence   **Conspiracy**

Care   Control

Welfare-based   ⟵————————————⟶   Increased
approach   punitiveness

Social work ethic   Managerialism

If the harsher critics of the New Labour Youth Justice project are correct, then YOT workers as a whole and/or specific professional groupings within the YOT would be located toward the conspiracy/control end of the continuum. If Burnett and Appleton are right, then we would expect a location toward the benevolence/care end.

In sum, Burnett and Appleton (2004: 34) examined: core practice; specialist projects and strategic management and concluded that 'the social work ethic has survived this [New Labour] overhaul of the youth justice system'. Their analysis was based on a 2 year ethnographic study of Oxfordshire YOT, using: participant observation; regular attendance at meetings; and interviewing practitioners, managers, specialists, Youth Court magistrates, victims, young offenders and parents.

In contrast to earlier research, their evidence was that inter-agency working (fusion) was popular. There was evidence of a good level of shared professional expertise, based on previous professional experience, so that YOT workers from different backgrounds were able to pool different local knowledge, especially in relation to service access and practical knowledge of policies and procedures of different agencies.

The study is certainly convincing in terms of the level of in-depth data gathered. However, a number of questions are raised by the research. First, while Burnett and

Appleton (2004: 36) are happy to use 'Oxfordshire YOT as a case-study with general applicability for other YOTS' they also note that there are likely to be 'occasional differences' between YOTs. We would argue that while their findings are promising and convincing for Oxfordshire, it is a rather larger step to claim this level of generalisability for all YOTs, especially given previous research evidence to the contrary. Second, while the qualitative research design used provides a good deal of in-depth analysis, Bailey and Williams (2000) suggest that where agencies are engaged in partnerships, they are likely to deny or suppress notions of conflict, and it is possible that to some extent, this may be manifested in the response to the research being carried out. There is, therefore, a case for using additional, more quantitative methods, to assess the extent to which the views expressed in the qualitative analysis are truly representative. These first 2 questions essentially establish the need for further triangulation. The third question raised, is the extent to which the very notions of occupational culture, ethics, values etc. are firstly defined, and secondly, coterminous. We therefore set out to address these 3 questions in our study.

The current study

We set out to triangulate Burnett and Appleton's findings, firstly by carrying out our research on another YOT, in a medium sized English county, and secondly by developing and administering a quantitative instrument. If our results are similar to Burnett and Appleton's, then their generalised notion of a surviving welfare-based ethic among all YOT officers will be more secure. If our results contrast with theirs, then it is clear that further research is required.

We issued our instrument, through the internal YOT administrative system, to all 106 YOT officers and managers, including ISSP staff, between February and May 2004. Administrative support was negotiated in advance with the YOT manager, but all questionnaires were returned directly to the researchers and with a guarantee of anonymity. Eventually, we established, through cross-checking non-responses, that the valid sample population was reduced to 98 once maternity leave, long term sick, and even a cleaner, were removed. The analysis reported here is based on a response rate of 50%, but indications are that we will eventually be able to increase this to

63%, though with considerable effort in chasing up respondents. In line with previous findings above, over half of our sample recorded their parent agency as Social Services.

The instrument we developed was based on a number of questions, but for the purpose of this paper, we focus here on 3 scales, which when put together, we argue, provide a good measure of where YOT officers' attitudes and views are located along the welfare-justice continuum. The focus throughout the rest of the paper is on an analysis of YOT workers in relation to their parent agency.

Attitudes toward the Criminal Justice 'System'

The first set of responses are based on an adapted question from Appendix 5 of the Halliday report (2001:117). Halliday asked a group of criminal justice professionals from all of the main criminal justice agencies involved, to rank what they saw as the purpose of sentencing by the 7 most common models of punishment used in criminology: rehabilitation; retribution; incapacitation; reparation; general deterrence, specific deterrence; and denunciation and degradation. Halliday was attempting to produce a broad national picture, but there are weaknesses such as a low response rate and a focus on managers rather than maingrade workers in some agencies. Despite these caveats, Halliday's results were convincing in showing that different criminal justice professions had very different views on the purpose of sentencing, depending, which was largely dependent on their specific role within the criminal justice process.

We are not attempting here to make any direct comparisons with Halliday's results, but it is worth noting that in relation to YOT workers, and youth justice in general, Halliday made no attempt to include social workers, teachers or health workers, which we have done here for the first time. This is partly understandable in Halliday's case, as the focus of enquiry was rather different, but it is odd that social workers, who have a long history of managing young offenders, were not included.

For our study, we extended Halliday's scale to include an eighth component: 'protecting young people from harm'. This was as a direct result of the input from the YOT managers with whom we collaborated to produce and pilot the research

instruments. Finally, we used the question in a slightly different way to Halliday to ask YOT officers to rank what they thought was the 'purpose of the criminal justice system' against the eight components of the scale.

The results from this first question (see Table 1) were not generally consistent with Halliday's findings, although only 2 professions are included in both studies. On the one hand, the police, as a group, saw criminal justice as primarily about incapacitation in both Halliday's results and our own and this is consistent with the police's role and function within the criminal justice process. On the other hand, Probation Officers in our study saw retribution as the prime purpose of the criminal justice system, and rehabilitation was ranked fourth: a complete reversal of Halliday's (2001:117) results. The other professional groups are not directly comparable with Halliday's results, but 2 issues emerge strongly. First, those with a social work background have produced a very similar pattern to the rankings by probation officers in the Halliday report. Second, the variation in responses overall between the different agencies, with health, education and ISSP workers all with different views on the primary purpose of criminal justice.

Table 1. Attitudes on purpose of the Criminal Justice System by YOT parent agency

Profession	Change behaviour / attitudes of offender	Punish	Restrict opportunities to re-offend	Make amends to victim	Deter others from committing crime	Express society's disapproval	Scare offender from committing same crime	Protect young people from harm
All	1	2	3	6	5	4	8	7
Police	2	3	1	4	5	5	8	7
Probation	4	1	2	3	6	5	7	8
Social Services	1	2	2	6	4	4	7	8
Education	1	6	5	6	3	2	8	4
Health	2	1	8	4	6	5	3	6
I.S.S.P.	4	3	1	7	1	5	6	8

There is a number of ways to try to explain this:

It may be that the relatively small number of probation officers (8) and police officers (5) in our study affected their representativeness of our YOT and/or other YOTS

- It may be that the variation in the question from a focus on 'sentencing' in the Halliday report to 'criminal justice overall' in our study has shifted respondents' interpretations from what sentencing is supposed to be about to what the criminal justice system actually does.

It may be that commentators such as Pitts are correct and that the increasingly punitive agenda in youth justice has made YOT workers with a probation background more retributive, perhaps reflecting the impact of the new, non-social work probation qualification and the emphasis on reducing crime. This seems increasingly unlikely based on the results presented here, and by Burnett and Appleton (2004). However, we think it is more informative to look at the grouping of the means (which is not possible in the Halliday report) from which the rankings were taken (see Table 1a) and then to look at the results of our second question, which is directly comparable, on attitudes as to the purpose of Youth Justice (see Table 2)

While rankings are good at establishing easily recognisable patterns, they are not good at distinguishing the relative difference in strength between each rank position. As Table 1a shows, although there are variations between parent agency groupings, the overall strength of these differences is relatively small, such that the mean overall scores for rehabilitation, retribution and incapacitation are very close. There are similar groupings on the other components, and the overall range of means is not very large (3.23-5.67 on an eight-point scale)

Table 1a : YOT officers' overall attitudes on purpose of criminal justice: grouping of means

Profession	Change behaviour / attitudes of offender	Punish	Restrict opportunities to re-offend	Make amends to victim	Deter others from committing crime	Express society's disapproval	Scare offender from committing same crime	Protect young people from harm
All agencies	3.23	3.52	3.58	4.54	4.46	4.42	5.79	5.67

Attitudes toward the Youth Justice 'System'

The relative closeness to Halliday's results by parent agency, yet the relatively weak differentiation between the different components of the question are both important to bear in mind when contrasted below with the responses to the almost identical second question, which asks about the 'purpose of *youth justice*', see Table 2.

Table 2. Attitudes on purpose of the Youth Justice System by YOT parent agency

Profession	Change behaviour / attitudes of offender	Punish	Restrict opportunities to re-offend	Make amends to victim	Deter others from committing crime	Express society's disapproval	Scare offender from committing same crime	Protect young people from harm
All	1	6	2	4	5	8	7	3
Police	1	7	3	2	5	6	8	4
Probation	1	5	4	2	6	8	7	3
Social Services	1	6	2	3	5	6	6	4
Education	1	6	2	3	5	8	6	3
Health	1	7	3	3	5	6	7	2
I.S.S.P.	1	6	2	5	3	8	7	4

Here the responses by parent agency bear almost no relation to the responses in Table 1, and are more clearly homogeneous, ie, relatively unaffected by parent agency consideration. It is not only striking that all of the YOT workers, irrespective of parent agency, consider the area of youth justice in which they work to be primarily about rehabilitation, but also that, as Table 2a shows, this was a much stronger finding based on the mean scores.

Table 2a : YOT officers overall attitudes on purpose of YJS: grouping of means

Profession	Change behaviour / attitudes of offender	Restrict opportunities to re-offend	Protect young people from harm	Make amends to victim	Deter others from committing crime	Punish	Scare offender from committing same crime	Express society's disapproval
All	1.2	3.1	3.4	3.5	4.9	6.1	6.3	6.4

We would argue that the findings on the first 2 questions support Burnett and Appleton's (2004) findings, in that those from different professional backgrounds have very similar views on what their role is in supervising young offenders, and that this role is primarily about care rather than control/coerced treatment. This means that in the youth justice arena, these attitudes are perhaps more likely to be translated into practice. Additionally, there is some evidence to indicate that, while views on criminal justice more generally are more likely to be associated with professional background, this impact is relatively weak.

Attitudes to young offenders

The third and final component of the analysis presented here was based on a 36 question Likert scale (1-7) instrument originally developed and validated by Melvin, Gramling and Gardener, (1985) for measuring attitudes toward prisoners. We adapted this instrument to apply to attitudes toward 'the young people who you supervise'. Again, as Table 3 shows, the results are fairly conclusive in supporting Burnett and Appleton's (2004) findings, in that all YOT workers, irrespective of parent agency,

are clearly toward the welfare end of the welfare-justice continuum. Given the imbalance of the numbers within each professional grouping, we have not carried out significance tests. There is unlikely to be any significant variation between any of the professions other than health workers, and there are only 3 of them, which limits the usefulness of further analysis.

Table 3: Attitudes to young offenders by YOT parent agency

PARENT AGENCY (n)	MEAN ATTITUDINAL SCORE
All (49)	**2.56**
Education (3)	**1.98**
Health (4)	**2.34**
Police (5)	**2.48**
Probation (8)	**2.56**
Social Services (25)	**2.61**

Evidence of cultures within parent agencies?

Having established a level of further triangulation which supports Burnett and Appleton's findings, we argue below, why it is important not to stop here. We therefore conclude with a critique of the way professional cultures are discussed generally within criminal justice, which has an impact on the findings of such studies. For instance, within Burnett and Appleton's study, there is a reliance on a notion of the 'social work ethic', although this in not really defined. When looking at the other parent agencies, notions of occupational culture, ethics, values are contrasted, but are not fully developed. We contend here, with the exception of the police, there is very little written about the actual occupational culture of the other agencies. To talk about the social work ethic, or probation values tells us a great deal about the 'front stage of these professions', but almost nothing about the backstage arena of practice, which has been so heavily studied in policing. In addition to this, there is the notion of the ecological fallacy to be accounted for. Discussing occupational culture or ethics so

generally does not allow for the fact that a member of the YOT team may not be typical of that professional group. Cultures can also change over time and within a culture there are subcultures, so the terms 'probation values','police culture' or 'social work ethic' are somewhat general.

What do we know about parent agency culture?

We have focussed here on Reiner's 2000: 85) definition of professional cultures as a 'complex ensemble of values, attitudes symbols, rules and practices, emerging as people react to the exigencies and situations they confront, interpreted through the cognitive frames and orientations they carry with them from prior experiences'. This seems to us the most appropriate definition for the focus of our study, which is really attempting to look at the impact on YOT practice of the prior (and mostly concurrent) membership of a different professional group.

Police culture

There is now a vast literature on 'cop culture', which is where we have taken the terms 'frontstage' and 'backstage' from. Reiner (2000) has summarised this literature very well and it is our intention here simply to highlight key concerns that this literature raises for other professions involved in the YOT.

For the police, we know that 'law in the books' is unlikely to be applied as 'law on the street' without a good deal of mediation through police officers' discretion, and that in the case of the police, there is a great deal of evidence on this in the UK, from Banton (1964) onwards. Some of this discretion is regarded as inevitable and desirable (Reiner, 2000). Without professional discretion, every minor misdemeanour would end in a mechanistic prosecution and the justice process would be overloaded. However, we also know that social conservatism, suspicion, and social isolation (Reiner, 2000), plus a view of criminal justice as primarily about incapacitating offenders (Halliday, 2001) are key parts of police culture, as is stereotypical racism and sexism (Holder, Nee and Ellis, 2000). These factors and others are likely to affect

the fairness with which discrimination is applied by the police as a whole, and the racial disproportionality of the application of stop and search powers is the most commonly cited example of how professional discretion can turn into individual discrimination.

However, the literature also has a great deal more depth than these headlines, with typologies of different types of police officer, from 'ordinary copper with a good use of discretion' through to ambitious professionals who are career minded and Home Office puppets (Reiner, 2000). It is unlikely that this last description is unique to the police within criminal justice, and this is our point here. Police culture, like any other, is neither monolithic, universal nor unchanging (Reiner, 2000, p.87). There are differences of outlook within police forces, according to such individual variables as personality, generation or career trajectory, and structured variations according to rank, assignment and specialisation. For the purposes of our study, the best indication of the overall effect that parent culture may have on police officers is from the work of Maguire et al (2001, p.37) on cooperation between police and probation officers on public protection panels. They found that although working relationships between police and probation were generally very good, cultural and organisational differences could have an impact upon the plans made and the actions taken. Maguire et al (2001, p.37) found that police officers typically focused upon the containment or incapacitation of offenders (see Halliday Report, 2001, p.117) and the effective management of public order issues, rather than on rehabilitative issues. Above, we have shown that, while police officers' views on criminal justice as a whole may reflect to some extent previous findings on police culture, it is also likely that the exigencies of working in YOTs and the dominance of social work-trained colleagues has mediated this view.

Probation: culture or values?

When we turn to look for similar 'working culture' evidence in the probation service beyond youth justice, the level of illumination is much weaker than with the police.

As with the social work ethic (see below), there is some work on probation values, but surprising little on how these translate into practice, or occupational culture. Additionally, it is clear that the organisational transformation of probation over the last decade has compounded difficulties in any understanding of what that culture might be, especially since the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, which established the National Probation Service as a 'law enforcement service' (Nellis, 1999; NPS, 2003).

Gelsthorpe and Mellis, (2003 p.227) have argued that in the last decade, the core probation principles have been turned upside down and transformed from 'advise, assist and befriend', (the legal aim of supervision under the Probation of offenders Act 1907) to 'enforcement, rehabilitation and public protection' values (NPS, 2003). Part of this process was the abandonment of Social Work qualifications and training for probation officers and the establishment of a new non-Social Work qualification route (NPS 2003).

In the late 1990s, Mcknight (1998, p.33) was already claiming that, outside youth justice, probation culture was simply one of constant change and fatigue. One in which there was a tendency for probation officers to 'fail to recognise the rights and interests of the offenders', whereas 20 years ago there was more concern about their 'over-identification' (Roberts, 1997, p.20). Gelsthorpe and Mellis (2003: 227) have argued that current probation culture now seems ambiguous with no clear overarching moral principle. Faulkner (2002 p.4) has also complained that probation 'identities and values are merged into a common grey culture of performance management and quantitative measurement.' (2002, p.47). As such, it appears that probation officers seem to have less control and 'choice about how they respond to the demands of probation's framework' (Roberts, 1997, p.17).

Certainly, the application of increasingly formulaic National Standards and governing legislation by probation officers can be seen as the 'front stage equivalent' for police work, as can the plethora of practice guidelines and occupational standards. These represent what probation officers should do. There is, however, very little on the backstage translation (or not) into practice. Some studies (eg, Ellis, Hedderman and Mortimer, 1996) have shown that considerable discretion had been used in applying

National Standards, leading to variation in the treatment of offenders. In line with Roberts' comments above, this was a concern addressed in reformulating the standards and indeed the aims of the service itself, all done with little acknowledgement of the benefits of discretion.

In sum, we know little about the working culture of probation officers coming into the YOT. Those trained as social workers may have different views than those trained more recently as law enforcement officers, but we know little about how either will react in YOT practice. Certainly from our evidence above, probation officers have a retributivist view of criminal justice overall, yet also have a clear commitment to a care-based or rehabilitative youth justice system.

Social work culture; a paucity of evidence?

The YOTs are dominated by those who are social work trained, many of whom had been working in youth justice prior to the establishment of the YJB. Unsurprisingly, a search of the literature on social work and social work practice shows that there is considerable investment in debating the social work knowledge base, but relatively little in on understanding how practitioners make use of this (Osmond and O' Connor, 2004). There is much more on welfare-based practice, developing good practice, reflecting on good practice, but again, little on how actual practice varies from these 'front stage' intentions in the way that the vast police literature outlines. In short, we know much about the front stage Social Work 'ethic' referred to by Burnett and Appleton (2004), but little about the backstage social work practice or working culture. Much of what we do know, sadly, is based on a series of formal investigations, such as the case of Victoria Climbie, after individual and multi-agency departures from procedure, or even weaknesses in procedure, have contributed to client deaths.

In these circumstances, it is hard to find sufficient evidence of working culture to be able to compare with the working culture of police officers. Some recent studies suggest that, although the front stage ethic of care and welfare is well- established, this is not likely to have a straightforward relationship with what happens in practice. For instance, Musil, Kubalcikova, Hubikova and Necasova (2004) found that (non-

UK) social workers operated street-level policies (rather like the police's 'working rules' or 'law on the street') that allowed them as, as 'street-level bureaucrats', to avoid the dilemmas presented to them, not only by their clients, but also by their uncertain working conditions. Fraser (2004) also found that social workers would depart from structured treatment protocols due to the exigencies of their role. Other examples of the impact of cultural exigencies on the social work ethic relate to experiences of fear (Smith, Nursten and McMahon, 2004), oral versus text-based development of working culture (Horder, 2004), and job satisfaction (Coffey, 2004).

There is not space here to develop a full review of social work culture, still less on its impact on attitudes toward offenders. The point in this research note is to emphasise that, just as we cannot assume police or probation working culture from legislation, codes of practice, good practice guides etc., likewise, we cannot assume a straightforward caring agenda for those with social work backgrounds.

Health and teaching: different setting, same cultural issues?
Health and education are the other 2 key parent professions represented in the YOT. There is a little more evidence in these traditionally non-criminal justice organisations of working cultures and even some evidence of attitudes toward offenders.

Searches of the of the MEDLINE, CINAHL and ASSIA databases produced evidence of analogous occupational culture similar to the policing literature, in the forensic/psychiatric nursing field in secure settings. It is worth noting too, that the nursing profession has had a similar level of upheaval as the probation service (see Mason, 2002, p.513).

Similar tensions are identified here to the care-control continuum in youth justice and probation. In this field, there is an analogous tension between care/therapeutic applications on the one hand and security on the other (Burrow, 1993; Mason, Williams and Vivian-Byrne, 2002: 566). There is also evidence that within the working culture, some level of discrimination is likely in attitudes towards offenders who have committed certain types of offences, such sex offenders, child-killers, etc. (Richman et al, 1999; Kent-Wilkinson, 1996)

Morrison (1990) also found evidence of the macho culture often outlined in police culture studies (Holder et al), and also developed typologies of staff: 'supermen' were looked up to as able to handle anything; and 'schizoid' types who were able to manipulate a front stage image of positive care but were in fact inconsiderate in the non-visible backstage work. The front stage and backstage are somewhat reversed here in terms of police culture, but the issue is what proportion of social workers, for instance, are professed carers, but in practice are not?

Similarly, for education/teaching, a search of CSA & ASSIA databases produced very little recent evidence on attitudes to offenders or even discipline in schools. Older material is available, and even in 1967, Stenhouse argued that generalisation about an 'educator world view' was impossible. Gouldner (1957) had already developed a typology of teaching staff as: locals; cosmopolitans; and activists. A little more recently, Sachs (1988) found that there were overlapping discourses in teaching, and that teaching culture is simply a signifier for the production and composition of these discourses which can vary over time and place.

Perhaps an obvious and more recent crossover with justice and offending issues is in the way classroom discipline is enforced. Given the dearth of information on this front stage area, evidence of the way in which disruptive pupils are dealt with is informative. TNS Social Research (2003) looked at the need to support students with a behavioural problems, which is a high central priority. LEAs provided or arranged 'alternative provision' for a total of 498 pupils during 2002/03, with variation between LEAs with different levels of deprivation (ibid, p.3). The TNS report shows that schools are generally happy to give support to disruptive pupils if the finance is available, but are, in the main, reluctant to re-admit such pupils (ibid, pg.4, 40).

Evidence of professional cultures in health care is less sophisticated than for police culture, but again it emphasises caution over applying monolithic notions of culture. These issues sketched out for health workers indicate that: groups of individuals adapt differently, even within the same pervasive culture; we have little knowledge of the actual 'backstage' treatment applied in secure treatment establishments (Mason, 2002, p.512); and that culture can change over time (see HMSO, 1992 and 1999 regarding bullying nursing culture in Ashworth Hospital). The evidence on professional cultures

is somewhat weaker, but again suggests that there is variation and much to be learned about front stage practices.

Finally, it is worth noting in this section that there is some recent evidence on the roles of health and education professionals working in YOTs (see Pitcher, Bateman, Johnston and Cadman, 2004, pp.10-12). Both were more likely to be seconded rather than directly employed and both were likely to be the only representatives of their profession within YOT teams. Health professionals tend to be part-time and were most likely to describe their role as specialists with some generic duties. While they considered themselves well-integrated within the YOTs, they felt that there was sometimes tension caused by the different expectations of the YOT on the one hand, and their parent agencies on the other, toward confidentiality and time-limited work. Education workers were also likely to be the only representatives of their profession within YOT teams. However, they were more likely than health workers to regard themselves as generic members of the team and to hold caseload responsibilities.

Conclusions

This research note has added to the corpus of knowledge by subjecting the findings of Burnett and Appleton (2004) to further rigour. This was done by researching a different YOT and also by using a quantitative instrument. The findings support the notion that a social work ethic is alive and well in the current YOTS and that this is the case, irrespective of the parent agency of the YOT officers.

However, these results inevitably throw up further questions about what the social work ethic means. We have used proxies here, such as care, welfare, etc. developed by others. However, it is clear that commitment to professional care and/or organisational norms can be mediated by working cultures, and we know little about these for most of the agencies involved in the YOT.

Certainly our research, and Burnett and Appleton's, strongly suggest that YOT workers are inclined toward care and welfare rather than punishment and control, but is this evidence of a continuing social work ethic, or of a developing Youth Justice culture? The answer is likely to be somewhere between these extremes, but further

research is required. The impact of YOT specific professional qualifications is also likely to have an impact here.

It will be possible to analyse our data further to look at age, gender, length of service in parent agency, recency of YOT employment, level of training received, However the purpose here was to focus of professional background and the possible impact of parent agency culture on fairness in managing offenders.

It is also important to survey the parent agencies with the same instrument, if resources and agreement are secured. It may be that there is an element of self-selection in who is employed by the YOT. For instance, the predominantly 'caring' profile of the police officers working in the YOT may not be typical of the police force they applied from, either individually or sub-culturally. It may be a case of 'elective affinity' rather than the impact of a change of job. It may also be that non-criminal justice social workers have a different profile to their YOT colleagues.

In sum, although the results are clear, this paper cannot be regarded as the final word on this topic. Further research is required which combines research methods across a number of different YOTS and which will facilitate more sophisticated analysis.

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