IMPLICATIONS OF POST-STRUCTURALISM FOR POLICY WORK IN HEALTH

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Introduction

The vision of the Enlightenment, collectively planned, technically resourced, social progress, is under siege. It is under challenge from market fundamentalists (who argue that blind market forces carry fewer risks of unintended adverse consequences than government decision-making[2]) and from religious fundamentalists (who find greater comfort in religious faith than from the promises of the Enlightenment). Empirically it is not doing so well either: continuing inequalities, brutality, corruption, war and environmental degradation do not inspire faith in the project of rationally determined, technically resourced, social progress. The collapse of socialism and the renunciation of social democracy do not inspire faith in the processes of democratic planning and management.

Post-moderns argue that the failures of, and loss of faith in, the promises of modernity reflect flaws which are integral to its strengths: realism, rationalism, dualism, universalism, humanism[3]. Post-modernism, of course, is a mixed camp; it extends, at least along one axis, from the careless hedonism of the pessimistic wing to the uncertain searchings of a more hopeful wing[4]. I identify with this more hopeful wing.

Policy practice has been central to the project of modernity and rationalist, reductionist policy-analysis is included in the post-modern indictment. . If we are to retrieve the hopes that have previously been carried by the technologies and visions of modernity then the policy process must be a key focus of study, reflection and development[5]. The vision, of better ways of living for all humans and for the earth generally, may depend (if it is to be realised at all) upon a reworking of the disciplines of policy work.

The work I am reporting in this paper, a re-examination of the policy process and the discourses and practices which go with it, may thus be located as part of a response to the challenges of post-modernism.

Prominent among the resources that I draw upon in this project are the paradigms and methods of post-structural social theory. This is not so surprising because post-structuralism[6], in its feminist inflexions in particular[7], has contributed significantly to the contemporary critique of modernity upon which much of post-modernism draws[8]. Post-structuralism involves several major paradigm shifts including:

- the linguistic turn (an understanding of knowledge as constituted in language, rather than represented through language, and of speech (and writing) as both representation and material social action);

- a recognition of the self-referentiality of knowledge (the presence of the knower in the field of the known) and a discounting of the various dualisms of

> the Enlightenment tradition (in particular, the distinction between subjective and objective knowledges and between facts and values);

- the embeddedness of human subjectivity in knowledge.

I come to this project against a career background of more than two decades as a student of health policy (and variously activist, analyst, administrator, consultant, teacher and researcher). Over the last seven years I have been exploring in my teaching and my practice the usefulness of post-modernism as a perspective from which to reframe the challenges facing public health and post-structuralism as a resource in this project[9]. During this time I have been involved in a range of separate policy engagements: in teaching health policy; as a participant in the wider public health community; and as an occasional activist, consultant and researcher. As part of preparing this paper I have documented and systematically reviewed a number of recent case studies from my own practice. I have looked in each case for aspects of these episodes where the disciplines of modernity (realism, rationalism, humanism) may have contributed to the barriers I was facing. I have also sought to identify and reflect upon passages of practice where I have drawn upon post-structuralist ideas to help overcome such barriers.

Some of the functions for which I have found post-structuralist tools particularly useful include:

- mapping the issues being considered in the policy discussion onto a more structurally organised model of the field of action;

- tracing the ways in which streams of policy discourse flow, mix and storm and linking these to prevailing political, economic and cultural pressures;

- thinking about the ways in which different strategies of policy development affect the processes through which agreement may be achieved;

- thinking about our own subjectivity in relation to our participation in policy work and the ethical decision making which is present within our practice;

- thinking reflexively about our own place in the field of which our own policy commentary speaks;

- speaking about the ways in which health practitioners 'in-the-field' engage with down-coming policy discourses in their daily practice;

- tracing the ways in which policy implementation is achieved through the discursive reframing of meaning as well as through changes in institutional structures and practices; and

- looking at the operations of power in policy discussion, in particular, the ways in which a focus on the truth or otherwise of a policy narrative can deflect attention from the question of who is participating (and who is not participating) in this act of meaning creation.

The purpose of this paper is to present an account of some of these aspects of policy practice with a focus on the added value which I have derived from post-structuralism in my own work. But first I shall sketch briefly some of the key features of post-structuralism as I have used it in this project.

Theoretical issues

The word 'policy' is used differently depending upon how we conceive the wider field of social practice within which we use it. In some constructions policy is understood as input to decisions by authorities (government officials or leaders in other institutions). Policy is constituted by the facts, objectives, logic and strategies which frame a sequence of more specific 'decisions' by identified authorities who have the power to make such decisions and to ensure that they are carried out (that other people's practices change or are maintained in accordance with the 'policy')[10].

This is useful for some purposes. However, I also find it useful to use the term 'policy' as referring to stories which coordinate the work of different agents, practising in different locations across an institutional system. Making this shift (from 'policy as input to decisions by authorities' to 'policy as stories which coordinate the practice of different agents') is not just a redefinition. It involves a reconceptualisation of the field of practice in which the term 'policy' finds its usefulness.

In this section I will discuss some key issues upon which this reconceptualisation turns, under the following three headings:

- the epistemological status of 'policy';

- the relationship of 'policy' to power and social change; and

- the relationship between participating in policy discourse and the shaping of our own subjectivity.

In presenting my ideas about these issues I must sometimes contrast them with commonly prevailing understandings. I am not arguing that commonly prevailing understandings are wrong or not useful for many purposes; rather I am seeking to contextualise the insights and strategies which are suggested by the post-structural turn.

The epistemological status of policy

Much commentary about policy and much of the practice of policy development and policy analysis are predicated upon a representational epistemology. The policy narrative is taken to reflect an underlying reality; it is seen as a criterion of good policy that it corresponds closely to the social and political realities. Policies are understood to reflect judgements of value as well as of fact. Values explain why people differ in defining the problem or in setting objectives; it is commonly regarded as good manners to distinguish clearly between facts and values in policy work.

Post-structuralists find representational (or correspondence) theories of knowledge unsatisfactory; they are uncomfortable with many of the assumptions which are part of correspondence theory. The following issues touch upon some of this discomfort:

- language; post-structuralism does not agree that words transparently represent reality;

- recursiveness; post-structuralism is critical of realism for failing to recognise and address the paradox of recursiveness which is embedded in the correspondence theory of knowledge;

- dualism; post-structural theory does not accept the conceptual separation of fact from value, feelings from knowledge and the subjective from the objective 'domains' which is part of correspondence theory of knowledge.

Correspondence theory is so named for the assumption that words bear a correspondence relationship to *things* in the real world. The word 'table' corresponds to 'real' tables. Post-structural theory builds instead from de Saussure's proposition that new significations emerge because they are needed to capture difference rather than identity; to help us to speak more clearly about distinctions which have newly come to matter[11]. Wittgenstein likewise observes that the introduction of such new meanings takes place in the context of social action; the newly emergent significations capture distinctions which matter to real people in their social practice[12]. The constructivist turn suggests that we think of policy (and other) narratives as frameworks for making sense of our experience (giving meaning to our experience) rather than representing real things. In other words our concerns (experiences and aspirations) are present in the very boundaries which we draw; creating meaning rather than discovering facts.

Derrida takes Saussurian difference further, inviting us to explore the potential meanings which are excluded by fixed binaries of received categorisations such as the market versus the organisation. The introduction of the term 'network' into a policy debate about the market versus the organisation, by capturing aspects of both, illustrates how fixed binaries can be deconstructed to allow new meanings to emerge (newly important differences to be recognised)[13].

Foucault's concept of discourse is used extensively in post-structuralism[14] and it is central to my work in policy analysis. A discourse is a collection of statements which speak of a common or overlapping set of objects and which speak of those objects from a particular subject position. Central to Foucauldian discourse theory is the recognition of the subject who speaks, or the range of subjects who could be speaking, in a particular statement or discourse. From a realist perspective, dealing with 'statements of fact', who is speaking is taken to be irrelevant; a fact is a fact is a fact. The emphasis on subject position in Foucauldian discourse theory reminds us that the fact is a fact only within a particular community of agreement[15].

A further problem with correspondence theories of knowledge is their inability to accommodate the presence of the knower (and his/her knowledge) in the field of what is known. Any system of knowledge which claims to bear a correspondence relation to a putative reality must be presumed to exist outside that reality. Godel pointed out this paradox in relation to mathematics some decades ago[16].

This paradox of self-referentiality has particular importance in relation to policy; the fact that a particular policy exists has a very salient presence in the field of which it speaks. This is obvious to policy practitioners but not so easily handled in a representational understanding of the policy narrative. The advent of post-structural theory offers alternative (and in some respects more satisfactory) ways of handling policy recursion, the self-referentiality of policy.

The third aspect of correspondence theory which post-structuralism is a reaction against is its necessary dualism, the separation of fact from value, of knowledge from feelings, of subjective from objective. Dualism is one way of coping with the recursiveness of human knowledge by creating a categorical divide between representations of reality and a (completely separate) domain of feelings (emotions, biases, prejudices, etc). Dualism is closely implicated in the correspondence theory of knowledge and the construction of research as bringing knowledge closer to truth[17].

So how does post-structuralism help to cope with recursiveness and to avoid dualism in speaking about ourselves or about the larger systems of which we are part? I draw upon three insights from post-structural theory in trying to think my way through the recursive paradox[18]. These are that:

- all theories are partial;

- we integrate partial stories at the point of action (praxis) involving an intuitive (and potentially ethical) eclecticism; and thirdly

- a mutually constitutive and deconstructive relation exists between subjectivity and discourse.

All theories, all knowledges, are partial[19]. Some theories (knowledges) stand side by side, the parallel partial stories of different academic disciplines (political science, economics, sociology) or of different schools within these disciplines. In a large degree the knowledge bases of these different social sciences are different ways of understanding the same fields of human experience rather than being a mutually exclusive but jointly comprehensive set of facts. Some of the partial stories which inform our practice are created by discursive shifts, as we move from speaking as subjects within the discourse of problem, to the politics of the discourse, to looking at ourselves in the field of analysis. With each discursive shift we create a new partial story which feeds into our action.

The holy grail of the positivist tradition is the grand unified theory which will subsume and resolve the contradictions between these different partial theories. The post-structuralist is not convinced that the notion of a grand unified theory makes sense and is concerned that it may become more dangerous as it becomes more grand and more unifying[20]. The post-structuralist would prefer to view the partial stories created by different disciplines or different perspectives as fundamentally incommensurable (like particles and waves)[21]. For the integration of useful but incommensurable partial stories we draw upon our intuition; we practice a kind of intuitive intersubjective eclecticism. We explore different ways of looking at the situation we are in, we try to make sense of these different stories but finally we act in accordance with our feelings, deciding and enacting as whole bodies what is right for us ('praxis').

Post-structural theory argues for a mutually constitutive and deconstructive relationship between subjectivity and the wider discourses and structures of which we are part. On the one hand our subjectivities are shaped by the discourses and practices in which we take part; on the other hand those discourses are being re-shaped by the way we take part, by the actions of our embodied selves[22]. So where is this cycle, the mutual constitution of discourse and subjectivity, to be broken or are we locked into a closed loop? It is our embodied feelings, desires and discomforts, which constitute the deconstructive pressures to reshape these discourses. From the disjunctions between what is allowed in available speech and what we feel about our situation comes the need to signify new difference and to create new meaning. In striving to deconstruct the boundaries of received language, we are driven by our desiring, caring or fearing[23].

Policy, power and social change

Different constructions of power have important implications in terms of how we understand policy. Policy may be understood as input to decisions which are then enacted through sovereign

power. Alternatively policy may be understood as stories which coordinate complementary action in different parts of an institutional system.

The term 'sovereign power' refers to constructions of power where it is seen as mediated by identifiable sanctions (ultimately 'threats' and 'bribes') and where it operates in a top down way through hierarchies of authority[24]. Constructions of society which see change and movement as determined primarily by sovereign power must necessarily work with constructions of policy as feeding into the operations of such power. Numerous thinkers have recognised the limits of such a conception of power[25]. In the Marxist tradition the notion of ideology has been used to explain the ways in which power can be mediated through cultural institutions and practices which shape people's understandings of their world[26]. This usage of the term has become much more general and widespread. The feminist movement for example has used the notion of ideology in theorising patriarchy[27].

The concept of ideology (particularly as used by Marxist reductionists) has been criticised for its connotations of 'false consciousness'[28]. The person who uses the term ideology assumes themself to have direct access to the truth; the people to whom the term is applied have their access to the truth distorted by ideology. Gramschi sought to correct this oversimplification[29]. He argued that all social groupings (including classes) have particular ways of seeing the world. What matters, in determining social development, is which groups exercise hegemony. He argued that part of the communist strategy was to establish the hegemony of a working class and socialist world view[30].

Post-structuralism has contributed further tools for thinking about the presence of power in local and personal transactions and the ways in which the micro mechanisms of power are carried in the norms of language. Foucault has demonstrated in detail the ways in which stories about surveillance circulate in our everyday culture and assist in our discipline and governance[31]. Uncertainty as to whether we are in fact being watched (by big brother, God or some less well defined 'other') is common to all such stories. This kind of disciplinary power clearly provide a mechanism for the translation of sovereign power into a more disseminated micropower.

Contemporary changes in the organisational structures of manufacturing, from Fordist mass production towards 'post-Fordist' flexible specialisation (with operatives exercising greater discretion in determining their work routines) has been accompanied by a range of changes in the technologies of power, including much more complex information systems for more sophisticated surveillance[32] and radical changes in the norms of human resource management[33]. These changes conform closely to those theorised by Foucault.

However, Foucault's concept of micropower is much richer than simply the discipines of surveillance and the panopticon. It extends to an understanding of the mediation of power in the interstices of daily life, in the ways in which we talk and listen. The shaping of language takes place in a tension between participating in received discourse and speaking differently on account of the deconstructive pressures of desire and discomfort. As Wittgenstein emphasises, the emergence of new meanings is a social function; it takes place in the context of cooperative action. The tendency to create individualised languages is opposed by the need for communication to yield the benefits of cooperation. However power is also operative in setting the terms of this cooperation. Some people have greater discretion than others to respond to the deconstructive hints of desire or discomfort or to listen deeply to others who are trying to speak differently. The choices about how to speak and how we listen in very local and personal settings reflect, reproduce and reshape the larger patterns of power in society.

For our present purposes the points to take forward are as follows. Much of the decision-making which mediates institutional and social change is shaped (at least in its immediate context) by the disciplines of micropower rather than by top down sovereign power. Models of policy which are tied to concepts of implementation through sovereign power are limited in this degree.

The notion of discourse provides the basis for an alternative model of policy implementation which acknowledges the operations of more diffused forms of power; power at work in communicative action. Institutional and social change can be understood as constituted by agents in different parts of an institutional or social system practising differently because they are telling new stories about the contexts and purposes of their work. If these different agents are drawing upon a shared story, in thinking about the problems they are facing and the logic of their strategies, then there will be a complementarity between their new patterns of practice as that shared story is progressively realised (or modified in the telling/doing).

Policy, subjectivity and ethics

The relativism (epistemological, moral and aesthetic) of post-structuralism presents a particular challenge to realists. Many who would otherwise share the post-structural critique of metaphysics, nonetheless seek comfort from the assumption of a singular reality ('out there somewhere') and from the grand narratives of truth, justice and beauty. The relativist must opt for the less comfortable path of affirming the ethical capacity of humans to create and realise these standards rather than seeing them as bestowed or authorised in some (supra or extra human) way[34].

Our embodied subjectivity is at the core of our policy practice: coining the words to capture the distinctions which matter; integrating in praxis the partial stories of different knowledges; integrating in praxis our judgements of contingent circumstance with the precepts derived from theory. Our agency, our ability to break out of the fixed structures of received meaning, depends upon how we articulate and respond to the deconstructive pressures of the desires and discomforts arising in our embodied selves[35].

The judgements we make, the actions we take, in working through these issues, will shape who we are becoming as well as the policy narrative upon which we are currently working. In taking such judgements and actions, we are factoring into the decision-making processes narratives about ourselves, about who we are becoming[36]. These essentially ethical choices are part of every moment of policy practice, for the policy leaders, analysts and the policy doers (the agents-in-the-field).

Policy practitioners in positions of institutional influence face choices between policy leadership and policy opportunism. Policy leadership involves offering new policy directions, explaining new directions and inspiring a wider constituency. But how far ahead of the pack will you go; taking unpopular positions, disregarding what everyone else thinks? What sort of leadership is it when you find yourself in the wilderness by yourself and leaving your constituency leaderless? Populist representation is an alternative model of leadership which involves articulating the common view and making it happen. This presents comparable challenges; how far behind the pack will you travel? When does populist representation become simple opportunism; simply following the lowest common denominator in order to be assured of popular support and thereby getting access to the comforts of institutional power?[37]

Similar ethical choices are faced by the policy doers, the agents-in-the-field, the practitioners who will implement (or not) the policy. How shall I know whether to accept the down-coming policy discourses or whether to resist and sabotage or to engage and try to reshape the meanings and applications of down-coming policy discourses?

Where shall the policy practitioners (leaders, analysts or doers) find frames of reference or ethical accountability to assist them in handling these questions? How may we find reassurances that we am not simply being reshaped by the pressures of various policy constituencies or the down-coming policy discourses?

I am sure that there are no absolutely secure strategies for managing these challenges; such security would obviate the uncertainty and questioning which must be part of such practice. However, I offer (tentatively) three strategies which seem to me to be useful in handling these questions:

- good policy practice,

- reflexivity,

- mobilising the 'deconstructive pressures' of caring

First, we can ensure that we do our policy work well. As policy leaders this might mean listening widely in putting together the policy stories we are running. As doers (the agents-in-the-field) this might mean reorienting the received policy discourses around our own concerns and aspirations so that we may refer to meaningful accounts of the big picture when we are deciding when to accept, resist or engage.

Second, we can develop the practices of reflexivity. We can learn to step outside of the policy discourses in which we work and objectify ourselves speaking (and the institutional context and power relations of that speech). And then we can do it again; watching ourselves being reflexive!

Third, we can stand side by side with the people for whom this policy is directed; whose lives this policy will affect. We can build direct collaborations with the people whose lives are at stake in this field of policy so that we may see and feel when the discourses of policy (problems, causes, options and strategies) need to be deconstructed.

Implications for policy work

In the rest of this paper I explore the practical implications of post-structuralism in policy work under the following headings:

- discursive policy analysis;

- policy implementation: complementary action in different sites coordinated by a shared story;

- policy development as the creation of new meaning;

- subjectivity, ethics and reflexivity.

Discursive policy analysis

Discursive policy analysis involves delineating particular discourses as the units of analysis. Each discourse carries with it a particular construction of 'the problem', a particular construction of causation and a preferred set of pathways to change. Out of each discourse can be read a story about the problem; a story which is linked to a particular set of speakers and the institutional settings from which they speak and practise.

Naming and objectifying policy discourses is a useful way of mapping the policy field. It helps us to link the cognitive logic of the policy argument to the politics and power of institutions and social structures; to map the stories(arguments) against more structural models of the institutional and social fields in which the discussion is taking place. It also helps to track the engagements of different policy discourses, watching them come together, blend, clash, cross-pollinate and diverge, and to link these changing stories to wider political, economic, cultural structures, processes and movements[38,39].

The notion of using 'stories' as a unit of analysis has a long presence in policy work[40]. A wide range of terms has been used to theorise this general approach to policy analysis including: stories, frames, narratives and argument.

In their use of the notion of 'frames' for policy analysis , Rein and Schon[41] are drawing particular attention to the system of meaning within which a particular policy story is developed. It points to the importance of the world view associated with a particular frame of analysis. Rein and Schon use the notion of frames to assist us to be more reflexive about the ways in which we used different frames of analysis for different purposes and at different times. The argue for 'frame-reflexive discourse'[42].

In their use of the notion of narrative, Kaplan[43] and Roe[44] both emphasise the importance of a beginning, a middle and an end. They require their 'unit of analysis' to be clearly formed as a story, canvassing problems, causes and solutions explicitly. Kaplan demonstrates the advantages of narrative over chronicle in that it conveys the dynamics of the transactions involved. He also argues that speaking explicitly of narrative is a strategy for making us more aware of the self-referentiality of policy narratives; their own presence in the field of which they speak.

The argumentative school[45] uses the notion of argument to address many of the purposes for which I am using the term discourse. These include seeking a more fluid way of moving between rationalistic analysis and political analysis and a recognition of language as constitutive rather than transparently representative of reality. The argumentative school draws heavily on Habermas[46] and his notion of communicative freedom and on the work of Toulmin and his formalisation of the structure of argument[47].

The main differences between the argumentative school and my use of post-structuralism turn upon the relativism of post-structuralism (rejected by the argumentative school) and the more detailed theorising within post-structuralism of the links between subjectivity and discourse.

Emery Roe is a narrative analyst who has explored the use of deconstruction[48] using policy narratives as the units of analysis[49]. Roe's method involves first, identifying the dominant policy narrative in relation to the issues in question and second, identifying the stories and discourses which inform the critiques and resistances to that dominant narrative. The next step is to identify the differences in meaning and interpretation which separate the dominant narrative from its

critiques and resistances and to formalise new stories about those differences (that is to say, stories which objectify and provide a fresh account of those differences). Finally we create an omnibus story which incorporates these various contending and interweaving stories into a meta-narrative which can then be subject to the strategies of conventional policy analysis and policy development (pilot studies, consultation, economic evaluation, or whatever). This will be a story which (objectifies and) speaks about the contending stories and their constituencies and which tells of the interplay between and among the different stories and players (and the practices, structures and power relations which frame their contributions to the discussion).

Roe argues that this approach is particularly suited to policy issues which are very complex, quite uncertain and highly polarised. Policy problems which are not complex, uncertain and highly polarised can already be cast in terms of an agreed statement of the issues and are hence ready for conventional strategies of policy development. Roe's strategy is to use deconstruction to recast a confused, contradictory and highly charged field of debate into a reasonably coherent statement of the problem which most stakeholders will feel comfortable with and which can then lead to small agreed steps towards elucidation and consensus.

From a post-structural point of view Roe's method raises two questions, first, 'does the method involve the construction of new grand narratives?' and second, 'does the method accommodate the presence of the analyst in the system of narratives and power relations with which he/she deals?'.

Roe explicitly denies that he is creating new grand unifying truths which will override the local stories of the contending participants. What he is trying to do is to create a framework for dialogue; to begin the collaborative process of working through the complexity, uncertainty and polarity. However, creating his meta-narrative does require that choices be made and some partial stories will be left out in creating broadly coherent story. This query relates closely to my second question, about failure to formally consider the presence of the analyst in the field which is subsumed into the wider meta-narrative. Some of the ideas developed in the later sections of this paper provide resources which can be mobilised to help to deal with both of these issues.

In a final chapter dealing with the ethics of policy analysis Roe argues for tolerance as a condition for narrative policy analysis. It requires a willingness to listen to a wide range of different accounts of the network of issues and problems, including some which initially do not make sense. Roe's plea for tolerance and his characterisation of it as an issue of ethics echoes comments made by Foucault in an interview in 1984 in which he explained his own refusal to participate in polemic.

> *The polemicist, on the other hand, proceeds encased in privileges that he possesses in advance and will never agree to question. On principle, he possesses rights authorising him to wage war and making that struggle a just undertaking; the person he confronts is not a partner in the search for the truth, but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong, who is harmful and whose very existence constitutes a threat. For him then, the game does not consist of recognising this person as a subject having the right to speak, but of abolishing him, as interlocutor, from any possible dialogue; and his final objective will be, not to come as close as possible to a difficult truth but to bring about the triumph of the just cause he has been manifestly upholding from the beginning. The polemicist relies on a legitimacy that his adversary is by definition denied.*[50]

Whilst Foucault was not addressing the formal practices of policy analysis here, his comments are germane to a field where uncertainty is commonly determined by power and where the adversarial 'testing' of policy narratives is commonplace[51]. Forester also argues for the practical importance of careful listening in policy work and in learning among policy practitioners. He theorises listening in policy work in terms of the ethics of friendship[52].

Developing one's willingness, and an ability, to listen to others has been theorised within feminist post-structuralism in terms of a 'politics of difference' (in contrast to a more familiar 'politics of identity')[53]. In this usage the 'politics of identity' refers to women's struggles which are conceptualised and organised around a discourse of their shared identity, that of woman[54]. There is a commonality here with other social movements (nationalism, trade unionism, anti-colonialism) which have likewise structured the logic of their struggles around a shared singular identity. The politics of identity assumes an axis of analysis which separates 'us' from 'them', the 'other'. This axis may be based on gender, race, relation to the forces of production or sexual preference.

The danger associated with the 'politics of identity' is that we take as real the categories which each conceptual scheme creates; people are reduces to their category. The critique of the politics of identity reminds us that people are more complex than the categories which we assign to them on the basis of certain (partial) frameworks of analysis.

The politics of difference is based on the challenge of listening to 'the other' as openly as possible, without forcing what he or she says into our pre-existing assumptions; listening for difference across apparent similarity; listening for commonality across apparent difference. We may decide that what they say fits easily into our preconceptions; we may elect to adopt a particular interpretation what they are saying to fit in with our preconceptions; we may have to modify our analytical framework to make sense of what they are saying; we may decide that that framework is just too limited and that we need to rethink our whole analysis. The politics of difference does not require that we give upon structural analysis; simply that we remember that the structural frameworks we use are conceptual tools partial and incomplete. They are simplifications, even caricatures, of the realities with which we are dealing.

The critique of the politics of identity is very relevant to the widespread use of interest group theory in political analysis. This is a practice which all too often reduces what people say to a function of the category to which we have assigned them. The critique of the politics of identity reminds us not to represent people simply as objects, with no agency, in the policy narratives we tell.

A model of discursive policy analysis

Discursive policy analysis helps to mediate between frames of analysis which recognise only the rational moment of policy development and those which give precedence in their analysis to the interplay of interests and power. It can help us to go beyond the cynicism which subordinates interpretation to structural analysis and the naivete which takes the story as told at its 'face value'. However, narrative or argument can be used in much the same way. What then is the 'added value' of the discursive turn? What are the consequences of the relativism and the more detailed consideration of subjectivity associated with post-structuralism.

I am presently theorising my own practice in policy analysis as moving between three different kinds of discourse: the discursive field across which the policy issues are being discussed; a meta-discourse which treats the policy discussion as a political process; a set of events taking place in a political field; and a meta-meta-discourse which speaks of my own practice as policy analyst.

In the first phase of analysis I focus on the arguments contending across the policy field; these I seek to evaluate 'rationally', that is, within the terms in which they circulate.

Consider, for example, the policy debates about the regulation of drug use, in particular, those between prohibitionism and some form of decriminalisation. Two of the main contending arguments in these debates are the argument that decriminalisation will send the 'wrong message' to young people as and the argument that 'prohibition is not working'; that the bulk of the harm associated with drug use is a consequence of its criminal status rather than its intrinsically damaging properties. In the first phase of my analysis I seek to rationally evaluate these contending arguments.

I then seek to map the arguments onto a more political representation of the field of debate. In order to do so I analyse the field of debate in terms of a number of different discourses of the problem which are circulating. I objectify each of these discourses, give each one a name and locate it within a more structural analysis of the field of action. I place it beside other stories about this problem field. I consider it (the emergence or continuing circulation of this story) as an event to be described, explained and its influence predicted within that field of action.

Among the different discourses which can be identified in the field of drug policy are the following:

- drugs are intrinsically damaging to health and morality;

- drug use saps the work ethic and the nation building ethic;

- drug use symbolises defiance and rejection of the values (and hypocrisy) of the Establishment;

- drug use is a legitimate source of pleasure and extension of consciousness, so long as it does not hurt others;

- drug use is a pathways to existential analgesia, sometimes chronic suicide;

- the main harm associated with drug use is a consequence of its illegal status.

Identifying (objectifying and naming) these discourses provides a unit of analysis which makes sense in both the analysis of argument and the analysis of politics. The definition of a particular story or theory as a 'discourse' follows certain rules. For discourses which are being generated contemporaneously there will be an identifiable institution or movement which constitutes the 'home base' for this way of seeing things. There wil be some identifiable set of places and settings where people speak in this way, an identifiable set of people who do speak in this way. Many discourses reflect the continuing influence of an older political, social or cultural traditions which are less clearly identified with particular institutions or movements but which have blended into deeper cultural themes.

The discourse of drugs as intrinsically damaging and as sapping the work ethic draws upon a tradition of puritanism and on a discourse about the immorality of unearned pleasure (because it weakens the status of pleasure as the promised reward for hard work and goodness). The discourse about drugs sapping the nation-building task reflects something of the same tradition blended in to other sources of economic nationalism. However, both of these discourses are amplified by the dynamics of moral populism; by populist politicians and tabloid journalists reflecting, cultivating and exploiting such discourses for purposes of winning votes and selling newspapers.

Drug use as symbolising defiance and rejection of the values (and hypocrisy) of the Establishment is a discourse which circulates principally among some groups of drug users but which is also amplified by some sections of the popular music industry. Again these commercial interests can be seen as reflecting, cultivating and exploiting this discourse of drug use as defiance.

Drug use as a legitimate source of pleasure or extension of consciousness (so long as it does not hurt others) is a discourse which circulates primarily among drug users but which also takes support from libertarians of the left and of the right. The increasing prominence of New Right libertarianism (illustrated by the recent expansion of legalised gambling around Australia) has some implications for projecting the trajectory of this discourse. New Right libertarianism informs influential currents of neo-liberalism, helping to normalise increasing social polarisation (and perhaps a consequential increase in the demand for mind-altering drugs) and the decline of the nation-state (and perhaps decreasing concern for the consequences to nation-building of drug use).

Drug use as existential analgesia (serving to dull the psychic pain associated with mental illness, traumatic childhood, school failure, unemployment, etc) is a discourse which circulates among some drug users, many professionals involved in treatment services and within more traditional constituencies of liberalism in the wider polity. Those accounts of drug use, which emphasise the effects of alienation from a materialist and individualist society, tend to be carried and amplified by critics of materialism and individualism. In this connection they are informed by secondary discourses of communitarianism.

Thus far I have rationally evaluated the arguments and developed a political analysis of the debate, based in part on a discursive mapping of the argument against the politics. In the next phase of my analysis I compare the findings of my analysis of the 'arguments' with the findings of my analysis of the 'politics' of each of these policy positions. Where I have identified weaknesses in the argument I seek to explain these in terms of the politics. I look for inconsistencies between my evaluation of the argument, good or bad, and my analysis of (sometimes speculation about) the politics of the argument. These inconsistencies may take the form of a flawed argument coming unexpectedly from a political context from which I might have expected 'better' or a particularly powerful argument coming unexpectedly from a political context from which I might have expected 'worse'.

I iterate between these two frames of analysis, argument and politics, seeking to identify and investigate inconsistencies between the two; clues which may point to weaknesses in my evaluation of the argument and/or to weaknesses in my analysis of the politics of the argument. These clues provide the starting point for further rounds of investigation and reconsideration of both argument and politics.

The third phase of the analysis involves my objectifying myself, even while I undertake this analysis. I seek to reflexively examine my own presence and my own practice in the field of the

analysis. Within this third discourse (the meta-meta-discourse) I develop a story about the ways in my frames of reference (against which I have evaluated the argument and the politics) reflect (are facets of) my own subjectivity, my own world view. This story tells also of the politics of my own policy analysis within my own institutional settings and the wider power relations and cultural traditions in which I work.

I use the inconsistencies which I have identified between my understanding of the arguments and my understanding of the politics of the arguments as clues from which to reflexively examine my own positioning. I am deconstructing the dichotomy between argument and politics with a view to developing an account of my own practice; objectifying my own analytic practice as a series of transactions which reflect a particular subjectivity in a particular context.

I am seeking to develop a story which *makes sense* of the 'first level' of inconsistencies (between argument and politics) in terms of the reflexive objectification of my own trajectory, context and practice. Critical to this reflexivity is my ability to recognise my own personal aspirations and discomforts; the mixture of yearnings and squirmings which are elicited as I objectify and review my own practice. These desires and discomforts, are difficult to name because they are embodied and pre-discursive but if I can find ways of speaking about them they provide clues for a further round of analysis: a review of my earlier analysis of the arguments and of the politics of those arguments; a review of my comparison of the findings of my analysis of argument and of politics. In this further round of analysis I am experimenting with different frames of reference and different subjectivities in re-evaluating the argument and the politics. In this further round of comparison and reconciliation I will again try to make sense of the inconsistencies I have discovered (created) between the arguments and the politics in terms of a reflexive understanding of my own practice.

This third phase of this three phase approach to policy analysis brings an explicitly ethical dimension to the process; ethical practice understood as the deliberate steering of whom we are becoming. The final test is whether I feel more comfortable with the new story that I am telling of my own evaluation of argument and politics.

The description of the method thus far is contained entirely within the practice of the individual policy analyst. Clearly all of these processes of criticism, analysis and reflection are social activities, undertaken within various communities of policy stakeholders, policy analysts and personal colleagues. The social nature of these activities should be understood as qualifying all the stages of the 'method' as outlined.

I am diffident about offering this sequence as a 'method' of policy analysis. I think that it corresponds with some of the main movements in my own practice but whether it can be properly presented as 'algorithmically' as I have done in the preceding passages may be subject for further discussion.

Policy implementation: complementary action in different sites coordinated by a shared story

One of the reasons for having a policy is to coordinate action across an institutional system. How does policy effect such coordination? Different understandings of policy implementation are associated with different constructions of power.

In some settings policy is mediated mainly through the operations of sovereign power; perhaps the army or the assembly line may be the prototypic settings. In such cases we may think of policy as input to the decision-making of the authorities.

However, most institutional systems in modern society are simply too complex to be run solely according to the instructions of sovereign power[55]. (Even in the army and on the assembly line, people retain some agency, there is some scope for resisting the demands of sovereign power.) Coordination also depends on the agents-in-the-field who exercise significant discretion in their practice (Lipsky's 'street level bureaucrats'[56]). Hupe uses the notion of co-production to speak of policy outcomes created in the interplay between the formal policy makers and the agents in the field whose practice shapes the policy as implemented[57].

In simple 'stagist' accounts of policy work, implementation is generally identified as a separate 'stage' of policy practice[58]. The discursive construction of policy suggests instead a conversation taking place across a dispersed system; an evolving process of telling stories and practising differently. The telling of the stories iterates and overlaps with the changes in practice which are spoken of in the stories[59]. Policy implementation, in this view, involves people in different institutional sites working in a coordinated way towards agreed general aims because they are orienting their work around shared stories even though their work practices and settings may be quite different. Policy as narrative provides a way of thinking about the enactment and implementation of policy mediated through these more diffused mechanisms of power.

One of the most stark failures in health policy in Australia concerns Aboriginal health. It is a complex field involving numerous agents: government bodies, service organisations, businesses and most importantly Aboriginal people, families and community organisations. It is apparent that coordinated action towards better health is unlikely until we have policies that resonate widely among these different agents. We can foresee, when this happens, coordinated policy implementation mediated by diffuse mechanisms of micropower; people in diverse settings acting in a coordinated way because their practice is informed by a common story of problems, causes and useful strategies.

> *"We assume that the core resources upon which Aboriginal health improvement will be based are the caring and determination of Aboriginal people themselves; of young people and elders, of mothers and grandmothers, of fathers and grandfathers in Aboriginal families and communities. Unless the drive and agency of these people is recognised and placed at the centre of policy making, program design and service delivery, the technical power of the experts will remain relatively ineffectual."[60]*

In my engagements in Aboriginal health policy I am conscious of the ways in which some non-Aboriginal health policy movers and shakers speak about Aboriginal health in ways that render Aboriginal people simply as objects, as the vessels of health or ill-health, with no acknowldedgement of their agency and the centrality of their projects in creating the conditions for better health.

The agents of policy

The limits to sovereign power are well known to any leader who supposedly exercises it. Policy leaders and policy managers depend upon the willing participation of the practitioners (the doers, the agents-in-the-field) in new discourses, practices and structures.

If we follow through with the notion that policy implementation is effected through complementary action in different sites coordinated by a shared story, we may theorise the participation of the doers in terms of the credibility and usefulness of the new stories to them. It is not just procedural cooperation which is required for policy implementation, although it is clearly essential. Full cooperation depends upon the doers participating fully in the new ways of speaking which accompany the new forms of practice and new structures.

In recent years the implementation of 'market reforms' in health care has involved a major reorientation of how practitioners understand the health care relationship. Essentially it involves moving from a construction of health care as an interpersonal transaction to health care as an anonymous commodity. The discourse of marketisation is making significant inroads across the health sector. Some aspects of this policy have been enacted and are being complied with. However, in many settings the commodification of health care required by marketisation does not resonate with people's experiences and understandings and it is being resisted. Degeling has commented how nursing staff in particular are finding the commodification of patient care difficult to accept[61].

Practitioners tend to be alienated by stories about the big picture which represent them merely as objects to be manipulated rather than as autonomous agents participating responsibly in a shared endeavour. Sanguinetti (working in the field of adult literacy) speaks of the 'politics of discursive engagement' to emphasise that the engagement by the practitioners in policy discourse is more complex than simple compliance or resistance[62]. Health practitioners likewise are engaging with down-coming policy discourses in their daily practice; in the ways in which they speak as well as how they practice.

From the perspective of the practitioner in-the-field, the strategies of 'discursive engagement' include:

- naming (and thereby objectifying) the discourses which shape and are reproduced by the ways we practise;

- being aware of how our own practices and ways of speaking are positioned in these discourses (even while stepping out of them to name and objectify them);

- affirming that by practising and speaking differently we can alter the flow of discourses (for example by insisting on retaining terms like 'patient' and 'client' rather than 'customer'); not so much as individuals but as participants in 'social movements' whose coordinated action is oriented around shared stories which we find to be more useful;

- listening for the world view and the personal projects which give meaning and integrity to discourses which we would otherwise find less useful or alienating;

- cultivating a sensitivity for the possibility of fresh meanings which might dissolve or reframe old polarities; listening for new meanings which better reflect our experience and guide our practice (as in critical evaluation, participatory action research);

- looking for opportunities for small collaborative actions, the consequences of which might confirm and widen the domains of shared meaning.

More complex engagement by practitioners in the policy conversation involves their developing alternative stories which speak to the big picture issues while being structured around their concerns and aspirations. This underlines the importance of professional organisations engaging formally in policy development and policy advocacy, partly as an avenue for advancing specific policy objectives but also as a professional development opportunity, providing a context in which practitioners may take the received wisdom about the big picture and reorient it around their own agency and projects.

Policy development as the creation of new meaning

Understanding policy implementation as action at different sites coordinated around shared stories throws new light on the processes of policy development.

First, it invites us to think in new ways about how consensus emerges. How are those new stories are shaped? Why do people sign on? Wittgenstein[63] suggests that intersubjective meaning is created through small tentative collaborations which in retrospect are judged to have been useful in practice. This perspective suggests that we might give careful attention to opportunities for small collaborative engagements in policy development planning.

Policy development involves the interplay of different understandings of what is the problem; what is it due to and what should we do about it. How shall we conceive the processes involved in achieving consensus out of this plurality?

Agreement on policy, the creation of shared meaning, involves trust and the development of confidence in unfamiliar or new stories. This requires processes for testing the degree to which our different stories are based on sharable meaning through small tentative collaborations which confirm the possibility of a wider shared meaning or reveal the dissonances. Central to policy development, according to this perspective, are the small tentative collaborations which test the assumption of shared meaning[64]. If discourse and subjectivity are mutually constitutive, the processes of developing new stories also involve new ways of understanding our own projects; the co-production of who we are becoming.

Many policy analysts have found it useful to think about the processes of coming to agreement in terms of the different world views of different players, the 'life space' of Lewin, the 'community of assumptions' of Etzioni, the 'assumptive world' of Young and the use of 'epistemic communities' by Haas[65]. World view is not such an easy concept to deal with in the busy and sensitive settings where different stakeholders come together to discuss 'what is the problem?' and 'what should we do next?'. Drewery has introduced the concept of project as a way of speaking more clearly about the kind of concerns and hopes which orient our meaning-making. The concept of project enables us to speak about the kinds of concerns and aspirations around which we shape our lives, around which we make sense of our lives[66].

Putting the spotlight on the processes through which shared meaning emerges invites us to focus more sharply the ways in which Foucault's micropower operates in this process, in particular, through rhetoric. The insights from such an analysis can contribute usefully to the practices of policy analysis; delineating the operations of power in the formation of policy. A clearer analysis of the role of micropower in policy formation can also inform our own reflexivity; can help us in watching ourselves participate in policy making.

One of the most powerful strategies of rhetoric is the claim of truth. Rhetoric and the operations of power in speech are not necessarily bad. There are many situations of uncertainty where a collective response is needed but no-one knows for sure which direction to move in. The power of rhetoric can help us to bridge such gaps; inspired by rhetoric we will agree to try on the new story. Clearly there still needs to be a reassessment afterwards to see how well the previous story worked!

Planning a series of engagements with a view to developing new policy is one of the most important functions of policy managers and activists. Understanding policy as story telling can contribute to policy development planning in modelling the expected flow of discourse development against the more formal arrangements for policy making (the commissions, parliamentary committees, consultations, consultancies, etc). The transactions which are planned in any particular policy development scenario may be modelled in terms of the opportunities they provide for small collaborations and testing the possibility of a widening of shared meaning.

The 1991-93 National Health Strategy process in Australia was based on a research-led policy development strategy (as compared with more adversarial or pre-emptive strategies of policy development). Research was used in this case as a context for small collaborations through which the tentative assumption of shared meaning could be tested[67].

Subjectivity, ethics and reflexivity

My subjectivity, who I am, is intrinsic to my participation in policy work. Conversely, my participation in policy work is intrinsic in shaping who I am becoming.

Our subjectivity is present in our knowledges but to talk of our own subjectivity and feelings is generally regarded as not proper in academic discourse. This proscription corresponds to the sharp dualism which separates knowledge from feelings within the realist paradigm. This dualism is required by realism to cope with the recursiveness (self-referentiality) of human knowledge.

Post-structuralism provides strategies for managing the recursiveness of human knowledge without resorting to dualism. Central to such strategies is the rejection of the grand unifying tendency in theorising and an acceptance that human knowledge is made up of partial and incommensurable stories. With this acceptance comes a recognition of the role of intuition (or 'feelings') in integrating the multiple partial stories which circulate about policy problems and strategies. These include the competing stories produced by different theories and disciplines about a particular issue and also the succession of partial stories produced through our own discursive displacement as we move out of the policy discourse to a political discourse and then shift again to reflect upon our own policy participation.

Recognition of knowledge as partial and discursively constructed also points to the importance of our recognising contingency and particularity in the settings of our practice, realities which have not yet been captured in words, phrases or theories. We may know about such contingency but not in forms which can be put into words. Such knowledge may take the form of patterns half recognised but poorly articulated; traces and clues noticed but not recognised; and meanings constituted in non-linguistic semiotic systems. It may be that all that we can put into words is 'I feel that ...'.

Our subjectivity is present in the distinctions which we try to capture in our words, phrases, theories and knowledges. These are distinctions which help us to give meaning to our experiences and to frame our actions. Our subjectivity is present at the point of action when we rely upon our

intuition in the integration of our various partial, incomplete and incommensurable knowledges. Horkheimer states that 'truth inheres in and is a moment of correct practice'[68]. Our judgement of truth then turns centrally upon our intuition at the point of action. What we take retrospectively to have been 'correct', in Horkheimer's terms, depends upon the outcomes of the action. In the light of these outcomes we reshape our stories (our discursive knowledges) and add a few more patterns to our non-discursive experience. We will also reshape the stories which position us as who we are. Our actions contribute to the policy process; at the same time they are contributing to the reshaping of who we are becoming. In this respect our actions have an intrinsically ethical aspect to them.

It is an ineluctable feature of policy work that we, the policy workers, are key players in the field upon which we comment. We need to be able to think reflexively about our own place in the field of commentary.

I have already referred to a certain pattern of academic discourse in relation to Aboriginal health which reduces Aboriginal people to objects without agency or project. This objectification is generally quite unreflexive about the complicity of academia (its structures, its conventions and its personnel) in the historical processes at the colonial interface which have shaped the contemporary circumstances of Aboriginal Australia.

Likewise for practitioners, the policy implementers, there are pressing ethical dimensions to the questions of compliance, resistance or engagement. If we elect to comply are we simply recognising the logic of the down-coming policy stories or are we buying peace through conformity? If we elect to resist the down-coming stories is it a principled engagement, based on a different understanding of the policy issues, or is it blind protest at the onrush of change?

The three phase approach to policy analysis involves speaking first within the discourses of the problem, then about the politics of the policy discussion and then within a discourse which objectifies me as policy worker in my institutional and power setting. The use of the first person in our policy commentary can serve usefully as a continuing reminder that there is an I in this text. Another discipline of reflexivity is the ability to be sensitive to what 'our feelings are telling us'; the skill of noting the deconstructive pressures of our desires and discomforts and then working to find the words to say it.

Conclusions

This paper is a contribution to conversations about the processes of policy work, specifically policy work in health. The particular contribution I am seeking to make involves the application of the tools of post-structuralism in a reframing of the disciplines of policy work.

I have provided a brief sketch of some of the key theoretical ideas from post-structuralism in terms of their application to policy work and I have discussed some areas of policy practice in detail and drawn some more practical implications about the shape of post-structuralist policy practice. Some of the key ideas include:

- the use of policy discourses in mapping the policy field;

- the notion that policy implementation is effected through complementary action in different sites coordinated by a shared story;

- ways of theorising agency in policy discourse;

- the creation of new meaning as one dynamic of policy development/implementation;

- the links between policy work and the subjectivity of the policy actors; and finally

- the disciplines of reflexivity in policy work.

Post-structuralism is an exciting field of theoretical work which has not been widely applied in policy studies. The project is worth exploring for this reason alone. However, and more importantly, post-structuralism is heavily implicated in the post-modernist critique of the failures of the Enlightenment project; the disciplines of policy work are clearly included in the indictments of this critique. The failures of modernity are manifest most clearly in the obscene contrasts between the wealth and technological capacity of some countries (corporations, classes) and the depths of human poverty and suffering in many other places. They are manifest also in the continuing degradation of the environment. The declining power of modernity to inspire people is reflected in the rise of economic and religious fundamentalisms and a widespread retreat from political engagement.

The disciplines of policy work are fundamental to the promises of modernity. I am intrigued by the possibility of reframing the disciplines of policy work in ways which are informed by post-structuralism and which address at least some of the weaknesses identified by the post-modernist critique.

I believe that the insights of post-structuralism have an important contribution to make to the disciplines of policy work. The traditions of policy studies already align with some of the directions suggested by post-structuralism: the use of stories, the recognition of the partialness of different stories and an acceptance of eclecticism. The main contribution of post-structuralism to policy might be in providing new ways of speaking about the discourses and practices of policy work. Refreshed with post-structural reflexivity, policy work might be able to contribute more usefully to the search for new paths to better ways of living.

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2. Pusey, M., *Economic rationalism in Canberra: a nation building state changes its mind*, p 20, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991

3. Rosenau PM, *Post-modernism and the social sciences: insights, inroads and intrusions*, p 5, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1991. For an earlier critique see Adorno T and M Horkheimer, *The dialectic of enlightenment*, 1944, J Cumming translation, Verso, London, 1979.

4. Rosenau (op cit) refers to these as the affirmative and the sceptical wings of post-modernism.

5. Healey comments on the challenges of post-modernism to the notions of planning and policy work (Healey P, 'Planning through debate: the communicative turn in planning theory, pp 233-253, see p 234-5, in Fischer F and Forester J (eds), *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*, UCL Press, London, 1993

6. Lemke JL *Textual politics: discourse and social dynamics*, Taylor and Francis, London, 1995 provides a good introduction.

7. Weedon C, *Feminist practice & post-structuralist theory*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987; Yeatman A, Post-modern revisionings of the political, Routledge, New York, 1994.

8. Fox NJ, *Post-modernism, sociology and health*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1993 provides an introduction to the application of post-modernism to health care.

9. All the ideas in this paper have been developed in collaboration with Jill Sanguinetti and Wendy Drewery. I am also indebted to the students, with whom I worked at the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health from 1990-1994, for their collaboration in the development and testing of these ideas.

10. See for example, Easton D, A, *A framework for political analysis*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1965

11. de Saussure F, *Course in general linguistics*, p 114, (Roy Harris translation (1983) of 1972 text), Duckworth, London

12. Wittgenstein L, *Philosophical investigations*, p 226, (GEM Anscombe translation), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 2nd edition, 1958

13. Grosz offers the following account of deconstruction. "Deconstruction is neither a destruction of prevailing intellectual norms and theoretical ideas, nor their replacement or reconstruction by new, more acceptable forms. Deconstruction in its technical sense refers to a series of tactics and devices rather than a method: strategies to reveal the unarticulated presuppositions on which metaphysical and logocentric texts are based. Derrida uses the term to designate a three-fold intervention into the metaphysical structures of binary oppositions: 1 the strategic reversal of binary terms, so that the term occupying the negative position in a binary pair is placed in the positive position, and the positive term in the negative position; 2 the movement of displacement, in which the negative term is displaced from its dependent position and located as the very condition of the positive term; and 3 the creation or discovery of a term which is undecidable with a binary logic , insofar as it includes both binary terms and yet exceeds their scope. It is a term which is simultaneously both and neither of the binary terms. By means of these procedures Derrida not only contests the underlying presumptions of metaphysics but also explains their historical tenacity and dominance within our received intellectual history. It is a series of strategies to make explicit what must remain unsaid for this domination to continue; and an attempt to replace this structure of domination with a more fluid and less coercive conceptual organisation of terms". Grosz E, *Sexual subversions*, p xv, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1989.

14. See especially Foucault M, *The archaeology of knowledge*, Routledge, London and New York, 1972

15. For a systematic introduction to Foucauldian discourse theory see Lemke (*op cit*) and Fairclough N, *Language and power*, Longman, London and New York, 1989.

16. A particularly good introduction to the recursive paradox is Hofstadter DR, *Godel, Escher, Bach: an eternal golden braid*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1980. See also Lemke J, *Textual politics: discourse and social dynamics*, p 154-184, Taylor and Francis, London, 1995.

17. Feyerabend P, *Against method*, Verso, London, 1988

18. I am particularly indebted to Jill Sanguinetti and Wendy Drewery for their collaboration in working through these issues.

19. This is not such a foreign insight to policy analysis. See Parsons, *op cit*, for a discussion of partial stories, p 248. Parsons (p 489) also refers to Morgan's use of metaphors (which signal partial stories), Morgan G, *Images of organisation*, p 63, Sage, Newbury Park, Cal, 1986.

20. Lyotard, J-F, *The post-modern condition: a report on knowledge*, (original 1979) English translation by G Bennington and B Massumi, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984

21. Kuhn, TS, *The structure of scientific revolutions*, (first published 1962), 2nd edition, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970

22. To this point the argument corresponds loosely to the structuration model of Giddens. However, it is not clear to me that Gidden's version does not lead to a closed circle whereby structure is constituted by subjectivity which is constituted by structure. See Giddens A, 'The social sciences and philosophy: trends in recent social theory', pp 52-72 *Social theory and modern sociology*, p 154, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987

23. Irigaray L, *Je, tu, nous: towards a culture of difference*, Routledge, New York and London, 1993; Kristeva J, 'The system and the speaking subject', pp 24-33, in *The Kristeva reader*, Moi T (ed), Blackwell, Oxford, 1986

24. Foucault, M, *The history of sexuality, Vol 1, An introduction*, Penguin Books, London, 1981, pp 135 et seq

25. See for example: Wrong, D, *Power: its forms, bases and uses*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1979; Lukes S (ed), *Power*, New York University Press, New York, 1986; Boulding K, *Three faces of power*, Sage, Newbury Park, 1990

26. See for example, The German ideology by Marx and Engels (1846): "Life is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by life. ... Where speculation ends-in real life-there real, positive science begins: the representation of the practical activity, of the practical process of development of men. Empty talk about consciousness ceases, and real knowledge has to take its place." from Marx K and F Engels, 'The German ideology', pp246-261, in Feuer LS (ed) *Marx and Engels: basic writings on politics and philosophy*, Doubleday Anchor, New York, 1959

27. Hennessy, R, *Materialist feminism and the politics of discourse*, Routledge, New York and London, 1993.

28. For example: "The notion of ideology appears to me to be difficult to make use of for three reasons. The first is that , like it or not. it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth." Foucault M, 'Truth and power', pp 51-75, in *The Foucault reader*, Penguin Books, London, 1984

29. See, for example, Gramschi A, 'Critical notes on an attempt at a popular presentation of Marxism by Bukharin', pp 90-117, in *The modern prince and other writings*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1957

30. Germino, D, *Antonio Gramschi: architect of a new politics*, p 256, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge and London, 1990

31. Foucault M, 'Panopticism' pp 195-228, in *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*, Penguin Books, London, 1977

32. Giddens A, *Social theory and modern sociology*, p 154, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987

33. Parsons (p 559, *op cit*) suggests that the practices of human resource management illustrate the panopticon being put in place.

34. For two recent nihilist accounts of post-modernism see Vattimo G, *The end of modernity: nihilism and hermeneutics in post-modern culture*, (Translation by Jon R Snyder), Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988 and Levin DM, *The opening of vision: nihilism and the post-modern situation*, Routledge, New York and London, 1988.

35. Jaggar AM and SR Bordo (eds), *Gender/body/knowledge: feminist reconstructions of being and knowing*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick and London, 1989

36. See Hennessy (*op cit*), pp 55-58

37. I am grateful to Michael Moore for working through these ideas with me.

38. Hajer (1993) provides a nice case study of the flowing, overlapping and clashing of discourses in the formation of policy over acid rain (Hajer MA, 'Discourse coalitions and the institutionalization of practice: the case of acid rain in Great Britain'. pp 43-76 in Fisher F and Forester J (eds) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*, UCL Press, London, 1993)

39. See Haimes (1993) for a discussion of the importance of mapping the policy discussion onto a more structural analysis of the field. She also illustrates the interplay of discourse in shaping the policy outcome. Haimes E, 'Theory and methodology in the analysis of the policy process: a case study of the Warnock Committee on Human Fertilisation and Embryology', pp 152-175 in Hill (ed) *New agendas in the study of the policy process*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York, 1993

40. Vickers, G, *The art of judgement: a study of policymaking*, p 173, Chapman and Hall, London 1965, cited by Parsons 1995 (op cit)

41. Rein M and DA Schon, 'Reframing policy discourse', pp 145-166, in Fisher F and Forester J (eds) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*, UCL Press, London, 1993

42. Rein M and DA Schon, 1993, p 163, *op cit*

43. Kaplan T, 'Reading policy narratives: beginnings, middles and ends', pp 167-185 in Fisher F and Forester J (eds) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*, UCL Press, London, 1993

44. Roe, M, *Narrative policy analysis*, Duke University Pres, Durham, NC 1994

45. Fisher F and Forester J (eds) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*, UCL Press, London, 1993

46. Dryzek, JS, 'Policy analysis and planning: from science to argument', pp 213-232, especially p228 in Fisher F and Forester J (eds) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*, UCL Press, London, 1993

47. See Dunn, WN, 'Policy reforms as arguments', pp 254-290 (see especially pp 265-268) and MacRae D, 'Guidelines for policy discourse: consensual versus adversarial', pp 291-318 (see especially pp 318+) in Fisher F and Forester J (eds) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*, UCL Press, London, 1993

48. See explanation of deconstruction by Grosz, footnote 12 above

49. Roe, *op cit*

50. Foucault M, 'Polemics, politics and problematisations', pp 381-390, in Rabinow, *op cit*, p 381

51. See MacRae D, 'Guidelines for policy discourse: consensual versus adversarial', pp 291-318 (see especially p 308+) in Fisher F and Forester J (eds) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*, UCL Press, London, 1993

52. Forester, J, 'Learning from practice stories: the priority of practical judgement', pp 186-209, in Fisher F and Forester J (eds) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*, UCL Press, London, 1993

53. See Anna Yeatman (1993). 'Voice and representation in the politics of difference'. *Feminism and the politics of difference*. A. Yeatman and S. Gunew. St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin**:** 228-245.

54. Yeatman's counter-position of the 'politics of difference' against a 'politics of identify' should be distinguished from an earlier use of the same dichotomy to contrast a feminist politics which aspires to equality with men against a politics which seeks to define the feminist project in terms which are woman-centred rather than referenced to male status.

55. I am not suggesting that more direct deployment of sovereign power in policy implementation is unknown in modern and complex society. The use of bullying and intimidation has been a prominent feature of health politics in Victoria over the last three years.

56. The dependence of policy implementation upon the practitioners in the field was been theorised by Lipsky in terms of 'street level bureaucracy', a term which was initially coined to explain the frustrations confronting the policy planners in the face of non-compliance at the level of delivery. See Lipsky M, Street level bureaucracy, p 208-210, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1976, cited in Parsons (p 468, op cit). Parsons (p 469 *op cit*) discusses other commentary on the presence of discretion in policy implementation and different constructions of the 'street level bureaucrat'.

57. Hupe P, 'The politics of implementation: individual, organisational and political co-production in social services delivery', pp 130- 151, see especially p 141, in Hill M (ed), *New agendas in the study of the policy process*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York etc, 1993

58. Parsons (p 77 op cit) discusses simple and more heuristic versions of stagism in policy process analysis.

59. In this context, speech, as in the telling of the story, may be seen as having both a hermeneutic function (interpreting, making sense of, reshaping meaning) and a rhetorical function (an action in the world directed at having particular effects).

60. From Drewery W and Legge DG, 'Public health is the concern of the grandmothers', in preparation. We are indebted to Ben Bartlett and Valmai McDonald for sharing their practical experience of working in Aboriginal health. Both are working towards forms of practice which build collaboration with Aboriginal people rather than 'intervening'.

61. Degeling P, Policy as the accomplishment of an implementation structure: hospital restructuring in Australia, see especially p 50, pp 25-56, in Hill, 1993, *op cit*

62. Jill Sanguinetti is a adult literacy researcher (as well as being my partner) who is working with a number of adult literacy teachers in Victoria, studying the ways in which they cope with and respond to the changing currents in educational policy as it affects their field. Sanguinetti has documented the ways in which adult literacy teachers engage creatively with the changing discourses of policy, both in the ways in which they speak and the material practices of their work. It would be too simple to characterise these patterns as resistance or as compliance; teachers are actively reflecting on the implications of new policies; incorporating, changing, resisting, changing, engaging. She has also documented some of the ways that the sentiment and practices of teachers can have influence the policy process. Their participation in each new regime is a condition for its legitimacy as well as for its effectiveness. Sanguinetti's concept

of 'discursive engagement' has application in other sectors where practitioners exercise significant discretion in their work flow and where policy makers must have regard to the agency of practitioners in the implementation of policy.

63. Wittgenstein L, *Philosophical investigations*, p 226, (GEM Anscombe translation), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 2nd edition, 1958

64. The notion of creating shared meaning through small collaborations may help to explain the enduring usefulness of Lindblom's incrementalism. See Parsons W (1993), pp 284-294, *op cit*

65. Parsons reviews these different ways of speaking about: 'life space' (Lewin, p 375), 'community of assumptions' (Etzioni, p 381), 'assumptive world' (Young, p 374) and 'epistemic communities' (Haas, p 381) in Parsons W, *Public policy: an introduction to the theory and practice of policy analysis*, Edward Elgar, Aldershot.

66. In her doctoral thesis, at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, Wendy Drewery has documented the life experiences and life choices of a range of women in their middle and later years. Drewery uses the notion of 'project' as a way of speaking about agency and speaking also about the life world which we construct around our experiences and hopes.

One of the women whose lives Drewery studied was Sonya. Sonya lives a complex life woven variously around her household work, the problems of her large extended family, her part-time work as a cleaner, her struggles with the social security and her various voluntary engagements, including helping blind bowlers. Drewery describes Sonya's life experiences and life choices in terms of an evolving set of projects upon which she is working: her husband's unemployment benefit, her mother's mental illness, her sister's depression, her daughter's housing problems and her own involvement with bowling for the blind. Drewery uses the concept of project to convey an idea of the purpose, the judgements, the choices, the skills and resources which are mobilised around each of these involvements.

To speak of project captures the quality of agency that is missing from much policy and policy commentary. However, to speak of our various life projects also enables us to speak about the life worlds (world views) which give meaning to those projects and which are shaped and reshaped by the experiences of life's projects as we work through them. The notion of project thus has epistemological value in that it provides a practical and everyday way of speaking about the life worlds which frame the meanings which thread their ways through the ways we speak and the discourses in which we speak.

67. Research does not necessarily work in this way. The case studies of Hajer and Throgmorton both illustrate situations where the research deferred or obstructed collaboration. Hajer MA, 'Discourse coalitions and the institutionalisation of practice: the case of acid rain in Great Britain, pp 43-76, in Fischer and Forester, *op cit*; Throgmorton JA, 'Survey research as rhetorical trope: electric power planning arguments in Chicago', pp 117-144, in Fischer and Forester, *op cit*

68. Horkheimer M, 'Zum problem der wahrheit', Zeitschrift fur Sozialforschung, 4(3),256, reprinted in Arato A and E Gebhardt (eds), The essential Frankfurt school reader, cited by Held D, *Introduction to critical theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*, p 192, Hutchinson, London, 1980