Appendix J

This piece shows me working with ideas; extending my thinking around and understanding of working with issues of power by integrating thinking about the development of the secure individual and their relationship to a secure society.

Secure people, secure society

I need to be awake for my own feelings of insecurity and any resonances there might be with the situations of those I'm working with who have been made to feel ignored, impotent and insecure by family or by the society in which they live.

It was for this reason that I returned to the published papers from a conference I attended at the Tavistock Clinic in March 1995 and to the points Lynne Murray made in her contribution to the book *The Politics of Attachment, Towards a Secure Society.*(1996:49-58) Murray considers the research findings on adult adjustment and the quality of parenting in the light of evidence on early infant social development and the clinical work of John Bowlby and Donald Winnicott. This is particularly important at a time when the relationship between the individual and society is being recast – it was in 1996 when Murray wrote and continues to be relevant in 2005.

She argues that a theory of moral behaviour should be of interest to
> philosophers... those who work in a clinical capacity with families and to those [interested in] the intergenerational transmission of difficulties in personal functioning. Here, the direct experience of the forces, both social and economic and those within the individual, that influence human conduct, may fruitfully inform the current political debate (1996:48-9).

Without this they neglect an issue which is central to both of the current stakeholder and communitarian theses, that of the preconditions for the personal and emotional resources necessary not only for good parenting (the individual level) but also for a wider concern and commitment to others (the societal level).

Lynne Murray goes on to describe the development of the 'capacity for concern' (Winnicott) and its relationship to our potential development as participating members of our communities. To do this she reminds us of the writings of Winnicott and Bowlby (Bowlby 1953; Winnicott 1963) on the development in infants of the capacity for concern, its role in their development of a sense of self worth and its link to a capacity for good citizenship based in that sense of the 'self' being worth giving. In raising this here I am interested in both where my own behaviour comes from and the mirroring of this development in our society, in many of the groups with whom I work. And in

developing a consciousness in my facilitation practice informed by both.

She describes infants by the age of two months being able to show a wide repertoire of communicative actions and facial expressions in face to face interactions that appear to be responsive to the quality of the adult carer's behaviour. If this behaviour is experimentally disrupted in even very mild ways, the infant becomes distressed very rapidly: this takes the form of initially protesting, then the infant appears to try to solicit the involvement of the unresponsive carer; if this does not have the desired effect the infant will eventually become dejected and withdrawn.

Murray concludes that these findings attest to

> a fundamental motivation to be engaged in a world of consistent human contacts, where mutual, interpersonal relations are an end in themselves, rather than a means to pursue individual interests (1996:57).

A message of hope and vindication for those of us who have argued for the fundamental nature of a co-operative, inclusive and participative society.

It is also evident from the clinical work of Bowlby and Winnicott that the capacity in the infant to feel a sense of responsibility and be concerned on behalf of others is fostered through a complex developmental progression. Most importantly for my argument here is the first stage of the process: the infant's experience of a reliable, caring environment, which over the first six to twelve months gradually becomes internalised by the infant as a sense of worth, goodness or satisfaction, and which becomes part of the infant's sense of self.

Murray writes

> What is fostered is, in effect, a sense of there being something good within the self that will eventually be felt worth giving to others. This component of the capacity for concern is not, therefore, the inculcation of a rational sense of duty, or a set of learned moral codes, but a felt experience of being of value. The research findings …similarly indicate that the adult expression of concern, like the infant's, is not simply a product of rational decisions based on a cold appraisal of self-interest, nor is it neatly regulated according to some set of moral codes: it is just as much an emotional affair where issues of security, attachments and interdependencies in relationships loomed large(1996:58).

What happens if that sense of self worth is not developed to its potential, if the child is made to feel ineffective/impotent or less than worthy through lack of appropriate parental responsiveness? There is the potential for a pervading fear of inadequacy and ineffectiveness, fear of a terrifying sort of invisibility, which for the infant could lead to it being abandoned or ignored and simply not surviving.

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In my biography my parents' experience of their own parenting, (damaging in both cases), was playing itself out in the environment which my mother created for me, and my experience of her parenting affects my sense of security, self worth and attachment. I maintain this is positive, if uncomfortable, material to be worked with if my practice keeps it identifiable, nameable. It seems to me that these fears can be surfaced, identified and worked with – particularly within my individual therapy but also, with the insights that come from the therapeutic process, in-the-moment in my professional practice and through reflection on it. In this way it becomes a useful point of identification and shared experience with others in the same way as a shared experience of class, gender, disability or race would be. Others whose individual upbringing or experience of a society organised in such a way that individuals feel themselves to be irrelevant to events leaves them feeling excluded, insecure, disaffected, without positive interdependencies in relationships and who may be subject to what Murray describes as 'a kind of moral apathy' (see also Power chapter and reference to Peter Marris.

Murray goes on to draw the connections between the individual experience of parenting and our experience in society. It seems plausible to argue that in circumstances where support may be adequate but society is organised in such a way that individuals feel themselves to be irrelevant to events, a kind of moral apathy may ensue.

> In fact, in the context of parent-infant relationships, good support alone may well be sufficient (for those not too damaged by previous adversity) since, once facilitated, the very process of caring will evidently be important in the infants response and will thus bring about its own immediate reward. … In the wider social context it appears to be the case that with the ever growing erosion of local democracy, increasing numbers of people, and particularly the young, are disaffected with the political process and fail to vote or engage themselves actively in mainstream society, their capacity for care being expressed rather in 'alternative' causes where they do feel themselves to be effective, e.g. in relation to animal rights or environmental protection, where they are literally prepared to lay down their lives(1996:59).

What this suggests is that political strategies for decentralisation of services and more democratically sensitive local control ….. are appropriate policies regarding the expression of concerned and responsible behaviour, providing that they are accompanied by the provision of conditions in which people may feel secure.

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