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Finding space for agency in permanent exclusion from school

Abstract

This paper aims to examine the experiences of pupils and professionals who are affected by permanent exclusion (what used to be called *being expelled*) from school. An ethnographic study conducted during employment as a 'Pupil Support Officer' within secondary schools and the Children's Services department of an urban local authority in England explores the idea that professionals may be forced to make inequitable decisions about including or excluding pupils in the face of powerful competition between the politically unchallengeable concepts of tolerance, inclusivity, attainment, and choice. The paper argues that the tensions of multi-agency working are focussed within what will be described as the contested space of the young person's 'extended body'. However, whilst the contested nature of this space renders it vulnerable to negative description, and the biased judgments of authoritarian power, it also offers itself as a space for emancipatory self description by the young person and for the expression of agency on the part of those professionals working for social justice.

> We come from a country, a land war torn
> There's a vicious devil with a spiky horn
> This is where my parents was grown, where they was born
> Nothing to eat but bread and corn
>
> I'm delivering a message of survival and misery
> But now I'm glad that it's all history
>
> I'm now in a place with harmful drugs
> Walking down the street with 1000 thugs
> There's no remorse, no love or hugs
> With annoying people who bite like bugs
>
> Poem by a permanently excluded pupil at the pupil referral unit

This article will recount the story of Mahad, a Turkish-British boy of fifteen, who was permanently excluded from school for sexual assault. He had experienced a difficult, unsettled early childhood as his mother had been jailed for trafficking heroin, but teachers at his secondary school did not appear to take his history or his current views into account when they recorded his 'disruptive' behaviour in the school records. There was a sense of inevitability in Mahad's records- explanations and questions about his escalating behavioural issues did not feature in what became a litany of complaint.

I am aiming here to excavate a space for agency- for some form of control over one's own destiny- from within the experiences of pupils and professionals affected by permanent exclusion from school [1]. The article is based on an ethnographic study conducted during time spent working as a 'Pupil Support Officer' within the twelve secondary schools and Children's Services department of an urban local authority in England: 'Enway' [2]. Permanent exclusion from school happens within an educational system built in part on a policy framework of 'inclusion'. Within the system of 'Inclusion', what I call the pupil's 'extended body' can be seen as a space that can be described and 'captured' (Foucault, (1977) p.189) in formal documentation- but which may also provide a space for agency. The article will conclude with suggestions designed to support the expression of professional and pupil agency in rebalancing the inequities inherent in instances of permanent exclusion from school. It will also challenge the distance between 'front-line' practitioner and academic research, drawing out a suggestion for an ethic of pragmatic collaboration.

The Field (1): physical space
During the period of ethnographic research into permanent exclusion- about two and a half years- my job was to attend Enway local authority's 'Hard to Place' Pupil Placement Panel, which sat every fortnight, to discuss around twenty-five young people. Many of these young people were seeking a new school placement because they had either been permanently excluded from school, or were at risk of exclusion Sometimes they needed a school place because they were what was termed as 'school refusers' due to bullying or school phobia, or because they had come into the local authority from 'secure accommodation' (a secure children's home or a Young Offender's Institution), or as refugees or asylum seekers. What all the Panel cases had in common was that in providing them and their families the choice to be included in mainstream school, the local authority and schools would need to offer a variety of support strategies and specialist interventions to make placements a success.

The Panel sat on alternating Friday mornings in a high-ceilinged Victorian schoolroom on the third floor of the Enway Pupil Referral Unit. Thick mint-green paint chipped from the heavy, rough old radiators, gathering in piles with the dust on the floor underneath, mustily scenting the warmth rising from them to combat the blast of air flowing through the tall, rattly windows. A tea urn and green institutional cups and saucers were always laid out on a school desk in the corner, with plates of biscuits spread across a long group of grey Formica tables, crucial for the sustenance of the group through what all knew would be another long, harrowing list of descriptions of the desperate situations that young people, families and schools found themselves in. On this Panel- chaired by the Head of Inclusion - would be sitting three Enway head teachers; the Enway heads of School Admissions, the Attendance Advisory Service, and the Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Educational Psychology services; occasional representatives from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS); Safeguarding and Social Care [3]; the Youth Offending Team, which dealt with young people involved in the criminal justice system; and myself. Although 'recorded' in the documentation- problems with which will be described below- largely absent from the Panel were the voices of pupils, parents, and to some extent, the classroom teachers with whom young people spent most of their school-based time.

My job as Pupil Support Officer was to take the cases of young people who had been given places in mainstream school, negotiate with and advise deputy head teachers and heads of year to empathise with the young person's situation, and arrange multi-agency meetings in order to plan for and establish the necessary support strategies. So my work- and the ethnography- was carried out in the big Panel meetings; during home visits to families to find out what they

wanted out of these situations; in multi-agency meetings in heads of years' cluttered offices; in the tidy waiting rooms and meeting rooms of other agencies such as CAMHS; and with colleagues clutching armfuls of folders during fleeting chance meetings in the quiet corridors and rainy car parks of public buildings and institutions across Enway. Intersecting with my own experience of Enway's schools, institutions and homes are those of the young people and parents with whom I work. For example, during a home visit with the mother of Derek, one of the young people I worked with, she explained, with weary resignation, some of her family's experiences in Enway:

> …the school lost all of Derek's sister's work… she went to the Fresh Start centre- was chucked out during the interview because of bad behaviour…
> School staff did well to try with Derek.
> One boy we know was beaten so badly at school by him that his father came down from the gypsy site and started stamping on Derek's head. Derek's cheeky…the police got involved.
> Living around here…there are men on the stairs, big men selling crack cocaine, calling little boys to help. People being racist broke my nose, kicked my door in.
> This estate is so run down, they just don't care any more, we're supposed to be moved out in five years. There are a lot of boys on here…they're all in centres.
>
> Field Notes: May 2008

It is difficult to know whether Derek's teachers knew about his experiences out of school. What was his behaviour like the day his mother's nose was broken? Did he walk past big men selling crack cocaine on his way home from school? Do teachers in mainstream schools consider the context outside school when they are considering a permanent exclusion? One way to investigate this is to look in the documentation filled out by teachers.

The Field (2): Documentary Space
Looking through documentation was an easy task, since my work, and the ethnography, was also conducted in documentary space. An immense and complicated institutional machine is set into motion when a permanent exclusion becomes likely, and it generates a vast array of working documentation, all concerning various descriptions of the young person subject to the exclusion. One of these young people was Mahad, who had been born in Enway two years after his parents had moved from Turkey, and who had been permanently excluded from school at the age of fourteen for sexual assault.

Mahad's Behaviour Log, below, is one of the documents used by the Hard to Place Pupil Placement Panel to decide what kind of school this permanently excluded young person should be going to. Generated as an electronic database at school, its entries are made by any member of staff who wishes to record an event, including classroom teachers and heads of year. It also functions as a record that the school can bring to a permanent exclusion Governors' Hearing to show that its decision to permanently exclude has been made on the basis of evidence of 'persistent disruptive behaviour':

 (Table I: Behaviour Log 1)

You can see from the entries in this Behaviour Log that Mahad was exhibiting some very distressed and distressing behaviour- for example, urinating against a classroom door. Following his permanent exclusion from school, I picked this case up (together with the paperwork) at the Hard to Place Panel. One of my first actions was to arrange a meeting at a local intensive CAMHS project for children at risk of involvement in the criminal justice

system. During this first CAMHS meeting, I discovered that when Mahad had been seven years old, his mother had been to Turkey and had been pressurised into carrying heroin back into the UK under her clothes. She had been sentenced to four years in prison and Mahad had been suddenly left first with her boyfriend, and then with his elderly father, who for the first six months did not know where she was. The structure of the Behaviour Log provided no space for an explanation of this history and the negative effects it may have had on Mahad. It stretched from Year 7, when Mahad was eleven years old, to Year 10, when he was almost fifteen, amounting to around sixty events each year. The sample above is typical of Mahad's Log: it focuses only on negative incidents, and there is provision made for the recording of his own version of each event. It seems that Mahad had not had an opportunity to explain his situation until after he had been permanently excluded.

Would Mahad have avoided being permanently excluded for 'sexually inappropriate behaviour' and 'sexual assault' if an empathic understanding of his situation had been sought earlier on? According to the Behaviour Log, nothing, beyond tracking and late referrals to outside agencies [3] had been done to address the context in which Mahad was growing up or the problematic relationships he had with staff, or the worrying increase in his forceful, aggressively sexualised behaviour towards many of the girls in his classes at school. In its apparent primary role, then, as a record of the evidence justifying the permanent exclusion of a pupil, the Behaviour Log can be seen as the punitive tool of an 'audit culture' (Strathern (2000)) so taken with the procedures of recording and auditing that they become a kind of 'tyranny of transparency' (Strathern (2000b)), concealing the real task of helping Mahad with his back-story behind a picture-wall of 'true' and recorded behavioural observations.

Behaviour Logs are particularly difficult documents to work with as they 'capture and fix' (Foucault (1977) p.189) the young person in a paper form which becomes darker and grainier and more difficult to read as it is repeatedly photocopied copied as 'evidence'. The observation/record-keeping nature of Behaviour Logs can be read as a '…modern pedagogic practice…' (Walkerdine in Henriques (1998:150); see also Rose (1989:145-154)) related to the historical adoption in schooling of child study and observational record making. This is in alignment with '…developmental psychological principles…so taken for granted that it is difficult to see precisely what could be questionable about them' (ibid). Behaviour Logs, then, have been established both in response to a normalised set of pedagogical child study strategies originating in psychology, and in order to discipline- to 'capture and fix' (Foucault (1977) p.189) the extended body. For example, in Mahad's Behaviour Log, his behaviour is variously described as 'uncooperative', 'unacceptable', 'challenging', and 'disruptive'. In his absence at the Pupil Placement Panel, the document becomes a representation of him, and of his extended body:-

(Table II: Behaviour Log 2)

The visual 'look' of official documentation- often stamped with an institutional logo and in a corporately established font [4] has a way of establishing its contents as irrefutably 'valid' and 'true'. But because a Behaviour Log is a multi-user document, it is vulnerable to the fact that those teachers who use it are operating simultaneously in a variety of roles. In Mahad's case, for example, roles ranged from that of 'pastoral nurturer', that of 'policing investigator', and that of 'subject teacher'. The 'pastoral nurturer', is evident in the head of year's actions (paragraph 1) in speaking to Mahad and warning him about fighting. Although the burden of proof in school investigations is usually held 'on the balance of probabilities', and in contrast to the empathic 'pastoral nurturer', the 'police investigator' tries to use legalistic 'beyond all

reasonable doubt' language- for example, Mahad's behaviour 'was reported' (paragraph 1) and 'was witnessed' (paragraph 3). And the 'subject teacher' worries about 'the achievement of the class' (paragraph 4). She is demonstrating a range of conflicting agendas here: she is at once the 'pastoral nurturer' and the person held responsible for the whole class's level of academic 'attainment'.

The Behaviour Log document thus brings a variety of sometimes conflicting roles together into one corporate or institutional personality. Its recorded conclusions will be discussed in the fortnightly Hard to Place Panel meeting as if they are the considered conclusions of 'the school'. For example, Panel members will believe that 'the school' has recorded in the Behaviour Log that Mahad 'seriously affects the achievement' of his classes, and that he is 'uncooperative'. All of this amounts to the vulnerability of the Behaviour Log and similar electronic or paper documents to 'unquestionable judgements'. As Lightfoot (2009) explains, describing the new Contact Point electronic database for Children's Services, 'It is not just factual information that is being logged. People who work with children are being compelled to make judgments about them and their families that they are not qualified to make… '(t)ittle-tattle' will be entered on the system and treated as gospel…' (p.1). Mahad's life has been fossilised within a reductive judgement- he is 'uncooperative'- ungovernable- and so must be excluded.

Foucault (1977) explains that '(t)he examination that places individuals in a field of surveillance also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them' (p.189). When a young person is subjected to the critical event of a permanent exclusion, what I have termed the 'extended body' makes its passage through databases, filing cabinets, and document shredders. The passage of the young person's 'extended body' through this 'mass of documents' is recorded on its own tracking sheet:

(Table III: Contact report Tracking Sheet)

In Mahad's case, his behaviour (captured here as an element of his 'extended body') was recorded at school in biro on a series of green Incident Slips and then logged by an administrator in the school office onto an electronic database: the Behaviour Log. This Behaviour Log was printed out and photocopied for the permanent exclusion Governor's Hearing. Following the Hearing, after Permanent Exclusion had been ratified, a letter was written to his mother explaining the exclusion, a copy of which was held in his school file. For the Pupil Placement Panel, the Behaviour Log, together with the letter, was collated and stapled with a cover sheet for the Panel, detailing his name, address, parents' names, ethnicity, a précis of the behaviour history and of related interventions (such as fixed term exclusions or referrals) to date. This was copied to the twenty-five Panel members, some of whom left their tea-stained copies on that long set of school tables in the high-ceiling Victorian schoolroom at the end of the Panel meeting for the Panel administrator to collect in a plastic bag and haul back to the Inclusion office for shredding. A few copies were retained, for example by me, in order to carry out the reintegration meeting at the new school placement decided by the Panel. A copy of the full set of papers was also sent to the new school. This was inserted by a school administrator into a file, which would also contain a new set of paperwork completed by Mahad's parent during the new school's reintegration meeting. This school paperwork included another form requiring addresses and contact details, and a further form requiring ethnicity data, doctors' contact details, preferred subjects, and details of involvement with other services. A few days after the Panel meeting, Mahad and his mother met me at a big

multi-agency CAMHS meeting, where a longer history of Mahad's life was taken by a trainee psychologist, with teachers and family members present, all speaking up and adding to the narrative. These case-notes were retained at the CAMHS Centre, together with the bundle from the Pupil Placement Panel. Back in the Enway Inclusion service offices, a copy of the whole file was kept in a locked filing cabinet whilst further copies, left over from the Panel, lay unsecured in bin-bags waiting to be shredded by the young volunteer who came in on Fridays. She would sit, totally absorbed in reading every detail within each stack of papers, before feeding them noisly into the shredding machine. Paper dust hung in the air around her as paper facsimiles of Mahad's and other children's extended bodies were shredded. In the meantime, Mahad's progress from one school to another and details of his referral to the Panel and to CAMHS were held on an electronic Admissions Department database. Selected notes (usually those which had arrived by email or attachment in electronic format) were saved in the notes section of this database, and were often used to write reports or to give information to other professionals such as social workers, who might call to ask what was happening with the case. The whole paper-trail was recorded on its own special handwritten tracking sheet, replicated above.

The Field (3): the Policy Community

In conducting my research, then, on the effects of permanent exclusion on professionals, young people, and parents, I understood these meeting spaces, discursive spaces, and documentary spaces to be amenable for an ethnographic methodology as I was looking at a what I thought of as a 'policy community'. Thinking through the lens of policy '…offers the potential for a radical reconceptualization of 'the field'; not as a discrete local community of bounded geographical area, but as a social and political space articulated through relations of power and systems of government' (Shore and Wright (1996), p. 14). In considering permanent exclusion from school, it appears that professionals are often forced to make decisions about pupils in the face of powerful competition between the difficult-to-challenge and motivating concepts of tolerance, inclusivity, attainment, and choice. Mahad, for example, was trapped between a concern to give him the choice to be included at a mainstream school, and his teachers' concerns for the educational 'attainment' of the wider cohort of pupils in his classes- and the way this would be measured in the league tables. All the paperwork generated, the Hard to Place Panel meeting, the labelling judgements- were an attempt to deliver these competing aims whilst operating within a policy system of inclusion. It is as if a exclusion is to be justified within a system rhetorically framed around 'inclusion', its subject has to be labelled, documented, and confirmed as impossible to include.

The Child as Mobilising Metaphor/ the child as potentially degenerate adult

Does the diffuse journey of Mahad's documented life amount to a restriction of his civil liberties? Why has this way of working become accepted? When public work is concerned with children and young people, it makes the mobilising metaphors inherent in the relevant policy discourse especially difficult to challenge. To illustrate this, Edelman (2004) discusses a series of public appeals made by former US president Bill Clinton 'on behalf of America's children' (p. 2). One of the television advertisements shows Clinton saying,' "We're fighting for the children. Whose side are you on?"' (ibid). Edelman explains that 'the Child' as a metaphor is 'an ideological mobius strip… obviously unquestionable' and represents the kind of irrefutable discourse that '…distinguishes public service announcements from the partisan discourse of political argumentation' (p. 2). The reason that 'the Child' is such a powerful metaphor is that it represents a future adult: it embodies potential. Because policy discourse-

the public service announcement of politics- '…works to affirm a social structure, which it then intends to transmit to the future…', the Child '…remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the phantasmic beneficiary of every political intervention' (ibid (p. 8)). At the same time, there is an undercurrent of accepted wisdom that intervention early in a child's life means that '…degeneracy could be nipped in the bud, by regulating the development of children in order to ensure their fitness as adults' (Walkerdine (1998:165)). This combination of 'the Child' as the recipient of a brighter future, and 'the child' which must be regulated in order to prevent it becoming a degenerate adult, may illustrate why permanent exclusion from school could be viewed as a restriction of current civil liberties for the benefit of future freedom and safety. 'Early intervention', currently embraced in education policy and delivered through universal services, is cheaper than the targeted services needed by young people such as Mahad who come to school shouldering a brace of complex needs. The power of 'the Child' as a mobilising metaphor thus insidiously distracts our attention from those things a government may want to conceal- for example, the restriction of civil liberties through mass documentary data-capturing, or the reduction of public spending through cheaper early intervention methods.

In Children's Services work, there are more and more data-capturing mechanisms in place, and professionals employed to make these mechanisms fit together. At Enway I met Miguel, a contracted IT professional whose two-year contract required him to audit the several databases used to track Enway children and young people and then to rationalise these into a massive Contact Point children's database. He showed me a scribbled diagram in his notebook: a complicated spaghetti junction of pencilled lines and circles detailed the information traffic through Enway's eclectic mix of electronic databases. These databases represent an attempt to respond to government recommendations following devastatingly sad cases of child death, such as those of Victoria Climbie in 2000 and Baby P in 2007, both of which were followed by extensive media coverage documenting a perceived failure of public services to collaborate sufficiently to stop the extreme neglect and abuse. The perceived answer to this 'failure to collaborate' has been in part to develop more and more detailed and time consuming data capturing opportunities. Data captured as an 'early intervention strategy' could be used later to 'predict' a person's likely misbehaviour- a panoptic (Foucault (1977)) strategy similar to that described in George Orwell's (1949) dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or the Philip K Dick (1991) science fiction story (later a film) *Minority Report* (2002). As Edelman (2004) explains, '…our enjoyment of liberty is eclipsed by the lengthening shadow of a Child whose freedom to develop undisturbed…terroristically holds us all in check' (p.21). The capturing of data in Mahad's Behaviour Log thus represents a cheap 'early intervention' alternative to targeted support, giving the impression that 'something is being done' to help him. At the same time, the Behaviour Log, with its shining and serious institutional and policy mandate, its array of contributors, and its absence of the voice of Mahad and his parents, becomes an officially mandated 'description' of his 'extended body': a representation of him which will stay in an eclectic range of variously secure paper and electronic files for an indeterminate number of years- all in the name of 'Inclusion'.

Multi-agency working: a source of tension in the Panopticon

A ream of documentary evidence is one of the outputs of multi-agency working. It can be seen from Mahad's tracking sheet (above) that the keeping of records functions in part to maintain a cohesive picture of the work of a support team that includes, in this case, teachers, a Youth Inclusion Support Officer, a Schools Liaison Officer and two CAMHS workers.

Mahad's CAMHS workers wanted to see him succeed in mainstream school, but his school teachers were adamant that this was no longer possible and that he needed to be in a Pupil Referral Unit. This difference in opinion may have partly originated in their differing work practices: CAMHS workers are required to see young people as individuals, and tend to work with them in a calm environment on a one-to-one basis- whereas teachers feel under pressure to maintain the wellbeing of individual pupils within the considerably more frenetic atmosphere of a school and with equal regard for the needs of a whole class or year-group. Social workers, teachers, educational psychologists, youth offending team officers and school police officers are also expected to work together despite what are often varying working philosophies. These were illustrated at a support planning meeting for Sara, another young person I worked with during my time in Enway, during which I heard the collected professionals describe her variously as 'very dangerous' (the police officer); 'learning disabled' (the educational psychologist); 'a nasty piece of work' (the head of year); 'a young person with a lot of potential, caring for her alcoholic father' (the social worker); and 'in need of an ASBO' (the housing officer).

There are, then, many tensions inherent in multi-agency working, and these- like competing descriptions of young person subject to a permanent exclusion- can be understood as focussed within the contested space of the pupil's 'extended body', explained below.

Making sense of a complex intertextual picture

It can be seen, then, that an instance of permanent exclusion from school represents the crystallising intersection of a series of complex pictures. One of these concerns the machinations of policy, which raises a series of questions: who makes policy; how does it work; and what are its mobilising metaphors? The young person's own story- his history; his journey, in space and time, to the present- intersects with the gendered, classed, and 'race'- based systemic prejudices that a permanent exclusion can magnify within his extended body. The multiple agencies with their different agendas- police, teachers, youth workers- intersect with the competing policies inside these agencies. And in schools, these competing policies include the discourse of achievement; the goal of inclusion; the siren's call of parental choice, and the constant grinding pressure of financial budgeting.

Given this complex picture, how can we arrive at a sensible resolution? Given that I must position myself as equity and social justice-orientated, what discourse do we in the academy have, that can offer resistance to an authoritarian power not necessarily oriented towards social justice (within our current neo-liberal, meritocratic, capitalist context, one that makes use of such powerful motivating metaphors as 'the Child')? Might this include making contested space for the telling of stories- in Mahad's case, the chance to re-represent himself in a format as officially validated as the Behaviour Log?

The 'extended body': a docile body? Or contested space?
In seeking to understand the complex forces involved in the assessment, placement, reintegration and ongoing support of the young people with whom I was working, I turned to Foucault (1977), who discusses authoritarian control in institutions such as hospitals and schools, including 'educationalists' in a list along with psychologists, judges, and members of the prison service (p.21). Significantly, Foucault understands a body's financial value- and that its '…constitution as labour power (in a free market economy)… is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection' (p.26). Hence when pupil support officers, heads of year, learning mentors, social workers, attendance advisory officers, and education psychologists are faced

with support planning for pupils with behaviour management issues, aspects of the pupil's 'attitude'; 'behaviour'; 'intention'; and 'mental state' [2] become *subject* to this control. These aspects fall within the 'extended body':

(Figure 1: The Extended body diagram)

In this diagram, the lighter central part represents the physical body. However, the boundary between that and the outer ring is blurred, emphasizing the absence of a dichotomy between the inner and extended elements. The boundary of the outer ring is also blurred, and this demonstrates the vulnerability of the extended body to further extension, providing more space within which a person can be 'supported', controlled, or discussed. These discussions transform the pupil-subject's extended (docile) body into a constituency of 'contested space': a space in which a young person's agency can also be expressed. This contested space of the extended body is where people can project their own classed, 'raced', ability and gendered readings of someone- labels such as 'uncooperative', or 'girly', for example- but is also 'a space of critical enunciation' (Allen (2009)) in which young people have the space to tell their own story in all its complicated facets, demonstrating, in the remembering of their own stories, '…agency in resisting subjection into representations of themselves as innately incapable …' (Phoenix (2009)).

The extended body is vulnerable to the descriptions of others (descriptions such as 'challenging and disruptive', recorded in Mahad's Behaviour Log), but at the same time, amenable to descriptions of themselves. It can also be seen as vulnerable to the co-opting claims of policy-makers pushing through their agendas in the name of 'the Child'- and amenable to the facilitative and emancipatory efforts of many of those working with young people. This requires an understanding of the need to open up this possibility for 'renarrativising'. How can we make good use of these possibilities? How can teachers and others working in schools ensure that the young people they are working with are given the opportunity to tell their own stories in an empathic forum? Could Mahad have voiced the loss of his mother, and would this have helped him and his teachers to manage his own school-based behaviour?

Paying attention
One idea concerns the potential inherent in the focus and depth of academic qualitative research practices. Professor Les Back, an urban sociologist, talks about the tragedy of the mistaken identity and consequent death of the innocent Jean Charles de Menezes in the aftermath of the 7/7 London bombings in calling for social researchers' moral responsibility to 'pay attention to detail': to not believe our eyes, at first. Back explains that '(t)he task … is to pay truth the courtesy of serious effort without reducing the enigmatic and shifting nature of social existence to caricature and stereotype' (2009, p.153).

Are there then ways in which we as academic researchers collaboratively engage with schools and other 'policy communities', to challenge a perfunctory attachment to 'evidence-based practice' and the legitimating discourse of undeconstructed packages of statistics- such as the number of times a pupil such as Mahad has received a detention [5]? Can we begin to think about Mahad's behaviour within the context of his personal history- and his family's diasporic history? These are the details we need to sift, with what Les Back calls 'a fine-grained attentiveness'.

Altermodernity: wandering in time, space and mediums

A second framework which could assist in the useful comprehension of this complicated intertextual picture concerns a discourse embodied in a 2009 exhibition at the Tate Britain in London: *Altermodern*. Nicolas Bourriaud, the curator from the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, explains that

Altermodern is an in-progress redefinition of modernity in the era of globalisation, stressing the experience of wandering in time, space and mediums. ..crucially, in the age of globalisation- … altermodernity arises out of negotiations between agents from different cultures and geographical locations. Stripped of a centre, it can only be polyglot. . ..artists wander in geography as well as in history, exploring a transcultural landscape saturated with signs to create new pathways between multiple formats of expression and communication

One of those exhibiting was Navin Rawanchaikul, an Indian-Thai-Japanese artist, whose narrative work about his identity-journey in space and time '…offers a re-reading of personal history while raising questions of nation and identity in today's world'.

Altermodernity as a concept goes some way towards dealing with the complexities of the field described above, involving descriptions of conflicting policy agendas, the extended body, multiple narratives, and a wealth of documentary ethnographic data. In this exhibition, the act of researching the past, remembering, and describing how present identity has been arrived at and is still in development, interacts and blends truth with fiction in what the autoethnographer Carolyn Ellis (2004) has called 'narrative truth' (ref). After a crisis of deconstruction born of a three-year immersion in a postmodernist understanding of the issues surrounding permanent exclusion from school, it is interesting to ask: in the face of the 'motivating metaphors' of public policy and an increasing focus on a narrowing range of 'evidence-based' institutional practices, could Altermodernity be one of the lenses through which we carry out our moral responsibility as researchers to 'pay attention' to detail?

Room for agency within the contested space of the field of authoritarian power
During my work as a Pupil Support Officer, concurrently conducting this ethnographic research, I have often asked myself whether I became a 'street-level bureaucrat' (Shore and Wright (1997:5)), sucked into administrative habits exclusive of young people's voices. But despite the inequities inherent in the administration of permanent exclusion from school, the dedication to fair outcomes for children and young people has been massively evident amongst staff and management in the Enway Children's Services Inclusion Section. How does this fit within Foucault's (1977) conception of the internalisation of authoritarian power? There are many examples of attempts to work creatively within the policy framework. The Head of Inclusion, for example, gave me free rein to develop a new, more inclusive Reintegration Plan form, where space for the story of the pupil was provided, leading the meeting to include the active solicitation of his or her story.

Just as people have space to express agency in the contested space of their own extended bodies, I think that there is space for some workers and professionals and parents to help pupils and parents subject to instances of actual or threatened permanent exclusion to negotiate the mechanisms of decision-making and service delivery within the contested space of the field of governmental authoritarian power. Understanding this might present an opportunity for the strategic use of power inherent in the mobilising metaphor of 'the Child' (Edelman (2004)). This is not without its dangers: Walkerdine (1998) explains, '…child-centred pedagogy satisfied those concerned with juvenile crime, with psycho-analysis, with freedom, with 'keeping the masses in their place' and more, all at the same time and in contradictory ways' (198, note 29). But as Professor Les Back has identified (2008), it is our responsibility to 'pay

attention' to the details of an extremely complicated field if we are to promote social justice. In order to take advantage of the possibilities inherent in the 'contested space nature' of the field of authoritarian power, it will be important to develop opportunities to promote in-depth critical thinking in the Children's Services Workforce. This will require frontline workers and professionals to *pay attention* to the ways in which the techniques of 'policy' might be obfuscating the important issues, and share their insights with parents and pupils whilst providing opportunities for parents and pupils to develop the skills necessary to pay attention on their own behalf.

Endnotes
[1] what used to be called 'being expelled'
[2] 'Enway' is a pseudonym. All names have been changed to protect confidentiality.
[3] formerly 'Social Services'
[4] in Enway, this was 11 point Tahoma
[5] …and league tables
[3] …are these referrals being made to *outside* agencies as an attempt to deal with the abject (Kristeva (1982)?
[4] Not an exhaustive list.

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Table I: Behaviour Log 1

Date	Summary of Incidents/Behaviour
12.02.05	Letter home (Geography). Concerns over Mahad's lack of work and disruptive behaviour in recent lessons. Also his lack of cooperation with the teacher.
19.02.05	Incident Slip (ICT). Mahad smashed down the keyboard on the desk causing the space bar to fall off. This was the final straw in a lesson where he had done no work, was continually out of his seat and constantly disturbing others. Removed by Senior Management.
10.4.05	Incident Slip (History). Late to lesson. Mahad had knocked down chairs in the dining room. One hit a meal supervisor. Mahad refused to apologise. Mahad refused to put his shoes on all lesson. Had no equipment. Did no work. Put head on desk to sleep. Sent out. Refused to follow instructions. Would not answer any questions for 20 minutes. Banging on the wall.
16.4.05	Seclusion (2 days). Urinating against a door when sent out of lesson.
18.6.05	Incident slip (lunchtime). Mahad was up a tree in the playground. He refused to get down despite being asked 3 times. He said 'shut up you ****ing ****'. He got down eventually and started shouting 'shut up', 'you don't know my name anyway'. Mahad spoken to and warned.

Table II: Behaviour Log 2

Date	Summary of incidents/behaviour
22.9.05	Incident slip. Mahad was reported to have been threatening a year 7 boy. Mahad had apparently broken a window after school and the owner had come out and grabbed another boy. He wanted to know who Mahad was. Mahad got to hear about this and had threatened to get the boy for giving his name over. Head of year spoke to Mahad and warned him re fighting. (1)
25.9.05	Seclusion (lunch + one lesson) Mahad slapped another student for no reason. Uncooperative/unacceptable behaviour. Mahad in seclusion until Dad came up at the end of the day. Mahad then excluded for 7 days. (2)
5.10.05	Mahad was slapping other students around the head as they entered the building. Mahad denied doing this but it was witnessed by an adult. It was also reported by other students. (3)
8.10.05	Geography: challenging and disruptive behaviour. Told the teacher he didn't have his planner and wouldn't give it to her even if he did have it. The teacher noted that his behaviour "seriously affects the achievement of the class". Mahad was given 15 minutes detention. He climbed out of the window. (4)

Table III: Contact Report Tracking Sheet

Pupil Placement Panel referral contact report sheet		Sheet no. *1*
Pupil Name *Mahad xxx*	**Provision** *Forrest Boys*	
d.o.b. *xxx*	**Year Group** *10*	
Contact no. home *xxx xxx xxxx*	**Mobile no.** *07xxx xxx xxx*	
Date	**Notes**	**Initials**
7.6.07	*Panel→ dual registered with Church Forest or Forrest Boys & PRU*	*AC*
8.6.08	*Exclusion paperwork arrived from Ennon Castle School. Poss. Mixed school*	*AC*

	inappropriate.	
11.6.07	Letter to school in file	AC
26.6.07	As Church Forest felt unable to support reintegration, has been placed at Forrest Boys- letter in file	AC
14.8.07	Letter from admissions and Head of Inclusion to get reintegration moving- in file	AC
4.9.07	Call from xx at Forrest Boys- Rtg Fri 7/9 at 9.30am	AC
"	Spoke w/ mum- will be attending	AC
"	Called PRU to speak to home school liaison officer who will speak w/head teacher and may attend, or call XX at Forrest if nobody can come	AC
"	Spoke w/ Youth inclusion support Project- will refer→emailed. Take consent form to meeting to sign and fax	AC
5.9.07	Spoke w/ head teacher at PRU- xx atForrest can call her Fri PM to discuss protocol if necessary	AC
"	Left message/emailed w/ Young Minds project manager and CAMHS doctor	AC
6.9.07	Referral to CAMHS completed	AC
7.9.07	Review set for Oct 17 9am	AC
"	Fax to Youth Inclusion Support project (signature page)	AC

Figure 1: Extended Body Diagram