

Institution: University of Bedfordshire
Unit of Assessment: 36 - Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
Title of case study: Making Impacts on the Development and Implementation of Social Policy for child protection, drugs policy and mental health
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The three impacts outlined here derive from research by Professors Ivor Gaber and Jon Silverman into the relationship between the media and the formation and development of policy in the fields of child protection, drugs policy and mental health. Gaber and Silverman were members of the <i>Munro Review of Child Protection</i> (2010/11), and their input led to recommendations about the management of media relations during child protection crises. Silverman's research into the media and drugs policy contributed to the final report of the influential <i>UK Drug Policy Commission</i> (October 2012). Gaber was a member of the <i>Independent Inquiry into the Care and Treatment of Michael Stone</i> (2006) and worked with the Mental Health Alliance, both of which played significant roles in the policy debates that led to the reform of the Mental Health Act.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Ivor Gaber, Professor of Media and Political Communication, commenced 01/09/2006 Jon Silverman, Professor of Media and Criminal Justice, commenced 03/07/2007</p> <p>Silverman's research interest in the media, criminal justice and child protection began with his co-authored book, <i>Innocence Betrayed</i> (2002), and expanded into thematic case studies begun after his appointment to the University of Bedfordshire in 2007. These studies combined extensive content/discourse analysis of newspaper reportage with 45 semi-structured interviews (with six former Home Secretaries, a former Lord Chief Justice, an ex-Attorney-General, leading police officers and others). At the heart of the studies was an examination of the relationship between media coverage and policy-making, with particular emphasis on public protection and drugs policy. Different aspects of the research were published between 2007-10 in <i>Policy Review</i> magazine (widely circulated in Whitehall) as well as the <i>British Journalism Review</i> and the <i>Howard Journal of Criminal Justice</i>. On the strength of his research, Silverman gave evidence to the Commons Home Affairs Committee investigating police and the media (HC75, January 2009).</p> <p>Two chapters of Silverman's book, <i>Crime, Policy and the Media</i> (2012), are a detailed analysis of the relationship between the media and UK drugs policy in the period 1989-2010. The research for this work was carried out during 2008-11 and involved a) content analysis of media reporting of the downgrading of cannabis to a Class C drug in 2004 and its reclassification to Class B in 2008; and b) a content analysis of media coverage of the mephedrone/'legal high' scare in 2009/10. This was supported by an examination of primary documents, some obtained under the FOI, and semi-structured interviews with Home Secretaries, David Blunkett and Alan Johnson, as well as interviews with key members of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, including its former chair, Professor David Nutt.</p> <p>Gaber's underpinning research spans a number of areas that he has been writing about since his appointment to UoB in 2006. His principal focus has been how the relationship between the media and politicians has impacted on the policy formation process at local and national level; in addition to this he has published a number of specific outputs relating to child protection and mental health issues. In 2006 he contributed to the report of the Independent Inquiry into the Care and Treatment of Michael Stone. He authored Chapter 14 'Media Interest and Involvement' which outlined how the media coverage of the killings of the Russell family had interacted with the judicial process. The following year (2007) he developed this material for a conference paper – Hearing voices: the role of the media in misinforming the policy debate – which he presented at the European Consortium of Political Research in Helsinki which demonstrated clear links between the media's coverage and the subsequent policy debate about the care and treatment of mental health patients. Latterly he developed this interest to look at media reporting around child protection issues which included an</p>

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article in the *British Journalism Review* and this in turn led to his (and Silverman's) appointment to the Government's inquiry, led by Professor Eileen Munro into Child Protection.

3. References to the research

- 3.1 Gaber I. (2011) "Child Abuse: the media must listen" in *British Journalism Review* Vol. 22 No 3 pp.57-63 – in the top ten most downloaded articles in 2011, according to the journal publishers.
- 3.2 Gaber I. (2007) policy debate. Paper presented to the *European Consortium of Political Research*, Helsinki, May 2007.
- 3.3 Gaber I. & Silverman J. (2011) "The public image of social work: media and public relations" in *The Munro Review of Child Protection Final Report: a child-centred system* by Professor Eileen Munro published by the Department of Education November 2011.
- 3.4 Silverman J. (2012) *Crime, Policy and the Media*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- 3.5 Morgan R. (2012) Review of the above in *British Journal of Criminology*, (2012) 52(6), pp.1244-45.
- 3.6 Silverman, J. (2010) 'Addicted to getting drugs wrong', *British Journalism Review*, Vol. 21, No 4. pp.31-36.

4. Details of the impact

On the strength of their research expertise in the media and public protection, in 2010, Gaber and Silverman were appointed to the Government's *Munro Review of Child Protection*. Community Care magazine wrote that, "A key task of Professor Eileen Munro's review of child protection is to examine the public perception of social workers and the media coverage of the profession." Gaber undertook a research project into how the police and council social services in Sheffield and Lincolnshire handled a sensitive child protection issue that at the time had attracted a great deal of media coverage. The confidential report, *Crisis Media and Communications Management in Social Work: a case study*, was submitted to the Inquiry in February 2011.

The final report – *The Munro Review of Child Protection: A child-centred system* – received widespread approbation on its publication by the Department of Education in November 2011. Only one of its 14 principal recommendations was rejected. A recent article in the *British Journal of Social Work* (Warner J.; 'Heads Must Roll'? Emotional Politics, the Press and the Death of Baby P) noted the importance that Munro gives to the issue of media coverage. In *The Munro Review of Child Protection* (Munro, 2011), the relationship between social work and the media receives a significant amount of attention (see pp.121-7). Munro explicitly highlights the need for politicians and other public figures to avoid 'knee-jerk reactions or conclusions' and for 'actions to be thoughtfully reviewed' This reflects an important aspect of Gaber and Silverman's work.

Following publication of the Review, Gaber and Silverman were asked by the College of Social Work to distil their research and experience, into a comprehensive media training programme for the College staff and spokespeople for the social work profession around the country. They ran eight workshops for the College throughout 2012. Some 35 social work practitioners were trained to undertake both radio and television interviews to explain the varying demands of social work to a general lay audience. The response to the training was overwhelmingly positive and most of those trained have appeared on local radio or regional media at some point to represent the profession. Further details of this can be obtained from Mark Ivory, Policy and Communications Manager at the College of Social Work (see below).

Drugs Policy

Silverman's book, *Crime, Policy and the Media*, was widely read in policymaking circles and led to an invitation to give evidence to the UK Drug Policy Commission (UKDPC), set up to examine the case for a fresh approach to drugs policy. He was interviewed by the UKDPC chief executive, Roger Howard (June 12, 2012) about the likely media response to any form of legalisation or gradual decriminalisation of certain drugs in the UK. Silverman also took part in a select round-table (11 October 2012) and his contribution helped fine-tune the UKDPC's final report 'A Fresh

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Approach to Drugs, published that month and well publicised in the media. The report was endorsed by the Commons Home Affairs Committee which also advocates an evidence-based approach to drugs strategy.

Silverman's research is referenced in Daly, M., and Sampson, S. (2012) *Narcomania: A Journey Through Britain's Drug World*, London: Heinemann, pp.288-90 (for which he was interviewed). Furthermore his research/media expertise was used by DrugScope when compiling *The Media Guide to Drugs* (2011).

Silverman's research also underpinned two drugs policy debates organised by him and held at Kings College, London on March 30 and April 6, 2011, under the title, "A Ceasefire in the War on Drugs?" Amongst the high profile speakers were the Colombian Ambassador to the UK, His Excellency Mauricio Rodriguez Munera, and the *Mail on Sunday* columnist, Peter Hitchens. The Ambassador has since been prominent in policy discussions in Latin America around drug decriminalisation. The former Home Secretary, David Blunkett, had to pull out from speaking at the last moment because of House of Commons business. The event was attended by the chief executive of the UK Drug Policy Commission, Roger Howard, and contributed towards the commission's final report of December 2012.

Mental Health Issues and the Media

Professor Gaber was appointed to the inquiry that examined the care and treatment of Michael Stone who had earlier been convicted of the killings of Lin and Megan Russell. His role was to advise on the role played by the media in the events leading up to Stone's arrest and conviction. The Inquiry reported in 2006. Robert Francis QC (Chair of the recent inquiry into Mid-Staffordshire Hospital) can be contacted for further information about Gaber's contribution to the Inquiry. In addition, Gaber's reputation in this field led him to being asked by the Mental Health Alliance to assist in their campaigning around the changes to the Mental Health Bill which was going through Parliament between 2006 and 2008. This he did by devising and running media training programmes for members of the Alliance and addressing a seminar of mental health workers convened by the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health in 2007.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact**Child Protection:**

- 5.1 Author of Munro Review of Child Protection, Dept of Social Policy, London School of Economics
- 5.2 Policy and Communications Manager, College of Social Work

Drugs:

- 5.3 Chair of the UK Drug Policy Commission
- 5.4 MP and Former Home Secretary, 8 June 2001-15 December 2004
- 5.5 Former Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire, 2002-2005
- 5.6 Head of Policy and Communications, Transform
- 5.7 Director of Communications and Information, DrugScope

Mental Health:

- 5.8 Chair of the Inquiry into the Care and Treatment of Michael Stone
- 5.9 Deputy Chief Executive Centre for Mental Health