

<p>Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: C25 Education</p>
<p>Title of case study: Changing policy and practice regarding ‘no-touch’ and similar risk-averse interactions between children, teachers, and other professionals</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This case study reports the impact of a sustained programme of research by Piper and colleagues (since 2001) investigating ‘no-touch’ intergenerational interaction in educational, childcare, and sporting contexts; and identifying unintended damaging consequences. Research outcomes challenged: guidelines on touch between adults and children in schools and elsewhere, procedures for vetting, and approaches to allegations of abuse. Impact was achieved through fostering media, academic, practitioner, and political interest, resulting in changed public discourse and governmental policy statements. Such change is gradual but by 2012 formerly dominant approaches to touch and allegations of abuse began to be reversed, and mass vetting was considerably reduced. The research has had a unique impact, which continues.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>This sustained initiative of empirical research and conceptual clarification explored and problematised touch between children and adult professionals and volunteers acting <i>in loco parentis</i>. Outcomes demonstrated the misguided and damaging effects of contemporary practices in these areas, treating them as products of moral panic in risk society. Policy and practices around (not) touching children, (contrary to good practice in child development) were documented and critiqued. Although their espoused justification was child protection, they actually focussed on protecting adults, while placing them (particularly men) in a vulnerable situation. The consequences included adult anxiety and reduced effectiveness, increased concern about false allegations, and flawed responses (eg mass vetting). In both policies on touch and allegations of abuse, the research identified indefensible policy and practice, suggesting alternatives based on more appropriate understandings of risk, professional responsibility, and trust. The core finding, that misapprehension of risk has produced counterproductive behaviours with children, challenged current mainstream policy and practice.</p> <p>Initial pilot research (2001-2002) by Piper and colleagues led to journal papers (Piper & Smith 2003; Piper, Powell & Smith 2006) and to ESRC funded research in schools and childcare settings (Piper, MacLure, Stronach, 2004-2005, RES-000-22-0815). The project report (rated ‘outstanding’ by ESRC) produced a book (Piper & Stronach 2008), further papers and wide dissemination. Subsequently, Piper conducted unfunded research (2008-2009) with Sikes (Sheffield) on false allegation, also considering the ethics of researching risky topics. A book (Sikes & Piper 2010) and papers followed, including an edited Special Edition (<i>International Journal of Research Method in Education</i> 2011). A second ESRC project (Piper, Garratt [Chester], and Taylor 2010-2011, RES-000-22-4156) extended the work into PE and sports coaching contexts and was rated ‘very good’ by ESRC. A further edited Special Edition (<i>Sport Education & Society</i> 2013) and book are completed. To date this program of research has generated 2 ESRC reports, 3 books, 5 book chapters, 2 special editions, 15 refereed papers, and 30+ conference presentations – and has attracted a full-time studentship to support and extend the work (Fletcher).</p> <p>The context for this research is challenging because the topics are sensitive, contested, and of perennial media interest. Questioning the assumptions and imperatives of the dominant discourse is unwelcome to organisations which combine institutional authority, gatekeeping power, and moral certainty. Nevertheless the research has challenged agencies to respond, and a modification of policy and practice has begun.</p> <p>Key Researchers</p> <p>Heather Piper - Appointed RF 1995; SRF 2007; Professor 2009 Hannah Smith - Appointed RA 2003-2005 Maggie MacLure - Appointed Professor 2003 Ian Stronach - Appointed Professor 1995-2008 (changed institutions) John Powell - Appointed SL 1990-2012 (retired) Bill Taylor - Appointed SL 1992 Dean Garratt - Appointed RF 1996; (now Professor Chester since 2010) Pat Sikes - Sheffield (Appointed SL 2000; Professor since 2007)</p>

3. References to the research

Key research outputs:

- Piper, H. and Smith, H. 'Touch in Educational and Child Care Settings: Dilemmas and Responses', *British Educational Research Journal*, (2003) 29 (6) 879-894. Available [here](#) (*Significance in UK context indicated by inclusion in R. Parker-Rees and J. Willan (eds) Early Years Education: Major themes in Education, [2006].*) (Included in previous RAE).
- Piper, H. and Stronach, I. *Don't Touch! The educational story of a panic*, (2008) London, Routledge. (Listed in REF2).
'This book is timely and is very aptly titled, even to its punctuation mark ... This is an extremely well-written book ... I would urge any educator – academic and practitioner – to take [its] advice ... I applaud the authors ... for pursuing this topic ... The parallel between the need for ... freedom to research ... and the freedom to touch makes this topic even more important to resolve.' Professor Ruth Rees, Queen's University, Canada, [Education Review](#), 10.07.09.
- Stronach, I. and Piper, H. 'Can progressive education make a comeback? The touching example of Summerhill School', *American Education Research Journal*, (2008) 45 (1) 6-37. (Listed in REF2).
- Sikes, P. and Piper, H. *Researching Sex and Lies in the Classroom: Allegations of Sexual Misconduct in Schools*, (2010) London, Routledge. (Listed in REF2).
(This book received an International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry Award).
'[and is] a valuable attempt to ... work through the process by which trusted, responsible adults – can suddenly find themselves barred from school and forbidden to talk to their colleagues, based on nothing more than an adolescent's claim that 'he touched me' ... Few researchers are brave or dogged enough to pursue such a sensitive subject area' Jennie Bristow. [Spiked Review of Books](#), 30.12.09.
- Piper, H. Taylor, W. and Garratt, D. 'Sports Coaching in Risk Society: No touch! No Trust!' *Sport, Education and Society*, (2011) 17 (3) 331-345. Available [here](#) (Listed in REF 2).
- Piper, H. Garratt, D. and Taylor, B. 'Child abuse, child protection and defensive 'touch' in PE teaching and sports coaching', *Sport, Education and Society*, (2012) 18 (5) 583-598. (Listed in REF2).
An anonymous reviewer stated: *'This paper was a compelling read ... Having read several papers on this issue [abuse], I concur, seldom is attention directed to how the 'problem' is framed, nor to the ways definitional matters matter! ... In sum, a splendid paper - thank you for the opportunity to review it.'*

Key research grants:

- Piper, MacLure, & Stronach - MMU, "Touchlines: The problematics of 'touching' between children and professionals" **ESRC**, RES-000-22-0815, 2004-5, £50K,
- Piper & Garratt – MMU, "Hands-off sports' coaching: the politics of touch" **ESRC**, RES-000-22-4156, 2010-11, £100K.

The quality of this work is indicated by a range of indicators including:

- ESRC ratings of 'outstanding' (RES-000-22-0815) and 'very good' (RES-000-22-4156) for the 2 projects integral to this work. ESRC rapporteur stated: *'Recent conversation with policy maker in the department of education indicate that they are aware of the significance of this research and I am certain it will play an important role in policy deliberations'* (2013),
- Selected for inclusion *Britain in 2013*, the annual publication of the ESRC, 'showcasing the research funded by the ESRC through the contributions of leading academics',
- Expert witness/advisor (Piper) for a number of teachers experiencing disciplinary or criminal proceedings following false or unwarranted allegations,

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- Invited expert (Piper) Summerhill School Ofsted Inspection 6-7 November 2007,
- The inclusion of papers in highly ranked journals (eg *AERJ*, *BERJ*, *SES*, *IJRME*, *QI*),
- Invited seminars/presentations/symposia (eg 2 ESRC Seminar Series: 'Parenting Cultures' and 'Revisiting Moral Panic' (Piper is co-applicant for the latter),
- Award by Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (Illinois, USA, May 2010) for Sikes and Piper (2010). (To confirm contact Congress Director, see confidential appendix to section 5),
- Invited presentation (Piper) at The Sunday Times Festival of Education, Wellington College, June 2012,
- Edited Special Editions, *International Journal of Research Method in Education*, 2011; *Sport Education and Society*, 2013.

4. Details of the impact

The research has helped the pendulum swing away from fear-based approaches in schools, childcare, and sport. Impact is extensive in terms of scale and scope; it can be identified at all levels: perceptions, policy and practice regarding the investigation of allegations of abuse; regulations and procedures re vetting; guidelines regarding appropriate touch between adults and children at LA, school, and sport level. This is an incremental process, but significant change can be identified, indicated by wide media coverage and the range of agencies and organisations involved – see below:

Policy Impact:

The impact of the research into touch and teachers was demonstrated by approaches from DfE officials prior to the [Importance of Teaching White Paper](#) (2010, endnote 43), in which the ESRC (RES-000-22-0815) report is referenced, alongside additional data commissioned from Piper. Substantial media coverage (available [here](#) and [here](#)) followed the intervention of Secretary of State Gove to an overly risk-averse NSPCC initiative advising music teachers not to touch children. While politicians will present any good idea as their own, successive paragraphs of this Gove letter, and also of Gove's speech [The failure of child protection and the need for a fresh start](#) (16.11.12), evidence wording and arguments drawn from the publications on touch (ESRC report [here](#)), unambiguously demonstrating significant impact. Similarly [national plans for vetting were scaled down](#), following a wider campaign to which the research contributed. The research (Sikes & Piper 2010) on false allegations provided evidence published by the [House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee 2008-2009](#), which also led to further research by the DfE [Allegations of abuse against teachers and non-teaching staff](#). Problems of false allegations are also acknowledged in the [White Paper](#) referred to above (see endnote 41). In sport too, where the research made public, and gave voice to the concerns of many experienced coaches and teachers, there are [indications of change](#).

Wider Dissemination and International Impact:

The research attracted fruitful engagement (eg [Free Play Network](#), [Manifesto Club](#), [Manchester Salon](#), Inspired2Greatness, and further [dissemination opportunities](#)), including overseas (eg [Free Range Kids](#)). The international interest included invited collaborations with significant researchers including professors: Richard Johnson (US), Keith Lyons (Aus), Clive Pope (NZ) Hiroyuki Fujitahi (Japan) around touch and false allegation. This also led to interdisciplinary work with the American Veterinary Association re. children and violence (Emily Patterson-Kane). In addition the research outcomes were deployed in significant practitioner journals (eg *Nursery World* and [Scholastic](#)); via training organisations (eg Pillars of Parenting) and opinion formers (eg [Battle of Ideas](#) X 2). Widespread print-media exposure and national and local radio invitations raised the profile of the research, including (in REF period): Radio 1 Stories (Tempted by Teacher) 12.8.13; ESRC Britain in 2013; The Daily Record & Sunday Mail 25.11.12; ESRC Society Now Summer 2012; The Daily Telegraph 22.7.12; THE Campus Round Up 12.7.12; Spiked online 3.7.12; Physical Education Matters Spring 2012; Radio 4 Woman's Hour 7.10.11; The Sentinel 10.9.11; BBC Radio Stoke 8.8.11; The Sunday Times 22.5.11; Sec Ed 5.11.09; Spiked online 7.10.09; Radio 4 Woman's Hour interview 7.10.09; The Independent 20.09.09; Psychology Today 17.7.09; *Nursery World* 2 page feature 25.10.08; Manchester Evening News feature 9.5.08; Channel M Television interview

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29.2.08; Sheffield Star Series feature 28.2.08; BBC Radio Berkshire interview 28.2.08; CRINMAIL 28.2.08; The Guardian (education online feature) 27.2.08; BBC Jon Gaunt Show interview 27.2.08; Daily Mail feature 26.2.08; Child Rights Information Network 25.02.08; Sunday Mail online feature 25.2.08; The Independent feature 2.8.08.

Practice Impact:

Piper has been contacted by solicitors representing teachers who have been accused of abuse to provide expert statements for court and LA hearings. A number of teachers in similar circumstances have also made direct approaches requesting consultancy and expert advice. Teachers' organisations and campaign groups (NAS/UWT, FACT, Institute of Ideas) have requested evidence that links practitioner experience in teaching and childcare with wider policy debates around perceived risk and the vetting of adults in contact with children, in order to support their advocacy of positive change. Others have drawn on the publications eg *'This timely book (Stronach & Piper 2008) raises serious issues about how adults' anxiety and self-protection can undermine the welfare of children. The authors ... place children's emotional well-being at the centre of the discussion ... The arguments support practitioners'* [Nursery World](#) (Jennie Lindon, 03.07.08). As the damaging trends in policy and practice on which the research has been focussed are reversed, beneficial impact effects individual teachers, care workers, coaches and others acting *in loco parentis*. Children and young people benefit from more nurturing and humane intergenerational exchange. Numerous organisations (eg Local Authorities, sporting bodies) benefit in an environment characterised more by prudent trust than all-embracing fear.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact**Policy Impact:**

- [DfE](#): See link, endnotes 41&43 of *The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper, 2010*, (or contact officers/researchers for Michael Gove, see confidential appendix [1]).
- [House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee Report](#): See link (pages 75-78) to corroborate inclusion in, *Allegations against School Staff, 2009*).

Wider Dissemination and International Impact:

- [Free Range Kids](#): See link to corroborate inclusion in US-based blog *Reject the fear that coach automatically = pervert: Thank a Coach*.
- [Free Play Network](#): see link to corroborate inclusion in *Child Protection Discussion Forum*, (or contact Director, see confidential appendix [2]).
- [Manifesto Club](#): see link to corroborate wide dissemination.
- [Manchester Salon](#): See link to confirm presentations at non-academic dissemination events.
- Institute of Ideas: To corroborate impact of the work on touch on public discourse, contact Director and Founder of Think Tank, see confidential appendix [3]).
- See also media exposure section 4 this document for evidence of wide range of dissemination/impact.

Practice Impact:

- NAS/UWT: To confirm support for and significance of the research process.
- FACT UK: To confirm use of research in bulletins and talks, contact Secretary, see confidential appendix [4].
(In addition further details could be provided relating to solicitors acting for those falsely accused, who contacted Piper for advice re court hearings - although specific details are necessarily confidential – for more information contact HEI.)