

EMBRACING NEOLIBERALISM? A RECONSIDERATION OF THE RESTRUCTURING OF A NEW ZEALAND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION¹



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A study of the restructuring of a New Zealand non-governmental welfare agency concerned with the needs of children and their families shows how a prominent local non-governmental organization sought to reverse the detrimental effects that New Zealand's adoption of neoliberal ideology, policy, and practice has had on the country's voluntary sector. The research indicates that the attempt at restructuring has the potential to align the organization more closely with emerging local developments in neoliberalism and offers an analysis of what happened. The analysis presented here supports the view that neoliberalism is fragmentary, uncertain, and variable; a contextual rather than a unitary phenomenon. That the market-oriented ideology constitutes "a thing that acts in the world" paradoxically emerges stronger than before. (New Zealand, neoliberalism, NGOs)

A recent article (Levine 2009) considered how a prominent local non-governmental organization, Barnardos New Zealand, tackled the effects of neoliberalism. Barnardos is the country's leading agency promoting the welfare of children and their families. It is a fully independent offshoot of a British charitable organization (named after its founder, Dr. Thomas Barnardo) that was founded in 1866 to assist poor orphans. When British children were sent to the colonies (Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), Barnardos established branches overseas.

Barnardos New Zealand runs a large number of programs, including counseling for children and family members, a parent help-line, social workers in schools, a contact service where parents who have been cited for violence or abuse can visit their children under supervision, centers for the treatment of adolescent sex offenders, childcare centers, and a home-based childcare program called Kidstart, the brand focused upon here. The Barnardos annual budget is about \$40 million. Funding comes from fees for service, public donations, and contracts from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development's Child, Youth, and Family agency (Barnardos New Zealand 2008).

In 2006 the Chief Executive Officer announced his intention to restructure the organization by instituting a plan to provide more "integrated services" (Barnardos New Zealand 2006), to join the various programs the organization offers so that its clients' needs are met in the most efficient, user-friendly manner

possible.² In the original analysis of Barnardos' integrated services, Levine (2009) treated neoliberalism as a hegemonic agenda aimed at dismantling the local welfare state and replacing it with a contract system based on free-market principles that had adverse effects on voluntary organizations. While New Zealand exemplifies the switch from a welfare to a contract state, with Barnardos working at the front line of these changes, wanting to address the corrosive effects of neoliberalism by integrating services, a nagging doubt remains as to whether Barnardos' efforts amount to resistance or accommodation to the neoliberal agenda.

This question amounts to a specific and contextual way of addressing something of widespread interest. Wolf (1990), for example, refers to "structural power" as making certain things possible and others impossible. Referring to organizations he says, "Asking why something is going on and for whom requires a conceptual guess about the forces and effects of the structural power that drives organization and to which organization on all levels must respond" (Wolf 1990:591). Regarding the kind of non-governmental organization that Barnardos represents, Kivel (2007)³ makes a distinction between groups that are working for change by providing services and those that provide services but do not work for change. Working for change is signalled by being directly accountable to the people who require assistance. An organization that merely provides services to clients becomes part of what Kivel (2007) calls the "non-profit industrial complex." Such NGOs have upward accountability, "towards the ruling class and its managers." They enhance their own position and help to maintain the status quo (Kivel 2007:148). The rest of this article fleshes out the "conceptual guess" that Wolf, above, refers to. Focusing on Kidstart, this article examines various interpretations of possibilities, causes, and effects of this NGO's stress on service integration.

Since the inception of its plan to integrate services at Barnardos, a publication devoted to looking at neoliberalism anthropologically appeared (Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008) prompting a re-consideration of what neoliberalism is. Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008:117–18) "wish to move beyond paradigms that speak of neoliberalism as a thing that acts in the world and focus instead on concrete projects that account for specific people, institutions, and places." This is a productive approach because, as they state, neoliberalism is "fragmentary"; it competes with other programs and ideas and is instantiated in specific milieus. This makes sense because when doing fieldwork, the patchiness (e.g., uncertainty, accommodation, resistance, etc.) is what is seen up close. The ethnographic interviews, on-site visits, and focus-group research obscure, rather than signal, which trend dominates.

However, when stepping back, when interviewing people in more powerful places and government who fund programs, and aligning these internal and

external data sources with literature oriented to macro-analysis of the situation, neoliberalism looks more like an actant and service integration appears as a variety of it, rather than a resistance to it. In brief, Barnardos' restructuring accommodates to neoliberalism. The re-branding of "Childcare Services" to "Kidstart" demonstrates that the mix of motives and understandings, doubts, opposition, and acceptance of the consequent developments exists within a milieu of neoliberal structural power that pushes this organization, like everyone else, to reorient itself to a dominant ideology. In contradistinction to Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008), the ontological status of neoliberalism seems clear enough. It is the effectiveness and ultimate goals of Barnardos' strategy of "tackling by embracing" that exhibits the uncertainties Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008) highlighted.

NEOLIBERAL NEW ZEALAND

Neoliberalism is generally viewed as an intrusion of market principles into spheres previously free of strict economizing, particularly the provision of welfare. The dismantling and minimizing of New Zealand's welfare state started in the 1980s, paradoxically by a Labour government led by David Lange, who said New Zealand was "run like a Polish shipyard." Indeed, a plethora of regulations governed all aspects of life. Government organizations owned and ran the basic infrastructure: roads, airports, airlines, telephones, television broadcasting, buses, ferries, and trains, as well as businesses as varied as milk processing and electrical appliance repair. Shops could not open on the weekend. Women received an allowance from the state for their children, healthcare was socialized, unemployment virtually nonexistent, and most working people made about the same amount of money. New Zealand sent meat, butter, milk powder, wool, timber, and other raw materials to Britain, and imported goods from there. Quotas existed for all imports. Government bureaucrats, for example, decided how much underwear the country needed.

This all came to an abrupt end when Britain joined the European Common Market and was obliged to purchase its raw materials and agricultural produce from other member states. The government said the country was broke and the administration started one of the most comprehensive neoliberal transformations of any national government (Larner and Craig 2002). Evans and Shields (2006) note that the government's moves to embrace and extend the reach of the free market have particularly undermined NGOs. "New Zealand has gone the furthest toward a contract state model and it is here where the transformation of third-sector voluntary organizations into agents of the state is no longer simply a theoretical issue." Indeed, Barnardos found itself unraveling when its CEO

retired after 27 years at the helm. The difficulties Barnardos faced provide a microcosm of those visited upon the entire voluntary sector.

Larner and Craig (2002) provide a useful summary of three phases of change. In the 1980s, the government moved out of business, selling off and privatizing the railroads, airports, communications, etc.; decreased welfare grants; and introduced means-testing for eligibility. In the early 1990s, market principles were more widely inserted into health, education, and welfare. Now there is a “partnering ethos in both economic and social policy” (Larner and Craig 2002:9). Government and non-government organizations are encouraged to work together to provide social services. Particularly relevant to restructuring efforts at Barnardos is the “one-stop shop” where health, education, and welfare services are brought together in a single setting.

The idea that co-ordinating disconnected welfare programs is beneficial to clients is not new. It was central to the Great Society initiative of President Lyndon Johnson and fundamental to policy debates in the 1990s when the fragmentation of welfare initiatives caused by privatizing and contracting became apparent. But there is no firm evidence that service integration achieves its intended results (Milward 1995). Gray’s (2003) review of the literature undertaken for the Ministry of Social Development in New Zealand says that the only demonstrable benefits accrue “to participating agencies in the form of improved processes, better relationships, and a clear sense of direction” (Gray 2003:38). Any impact on clients would therefore be indirect. A more focused and positive Barnardos could presumably work better to meet the needs of its clients.

KIDSTART

About welfare in general, Kivel (2007:136) notes that “programs are severely underfunded and over-regulated” and rarely address issues that could eliminate inequality. In the course of contracting for services, Barnardos found that it makes money from activities classified “education” and spends it on those defined as “welfare.” It runs its home-based childcare services and childcare centers (considered educational activities) as businesses. Home-based childcare was originally staffed by volunteers who looked after a few children of working class or single-parent families in their own homes. Barnardos re-branded this service as an early childhood educational program called Kidstart and sold home childcare to more affluent people. Barnardos describes Kidstart in the following way on its website:

KidStart is a home-based care and learning service for children aged from birth to five years, provided in the homes of carefully selected vetted and trained Caregivers. Brought to you by Barnardos and approved by the Ministry of Education, KidStart helps your child learn and develop in a welcoming and safe home environment, with no more than three other children.

Better still, KidStart offers affordable rates, convenient locations and flexible hours to suit your needs. Before caring for children, all our Caregivers have:

- been police-checked (police checks are also carried out on all others aged 17 years and over living in the Caregiver's home);
- a current First Aid Certificate ;
- provided medical and personal references;
- completed the KidStart Caregiver Training Certificate Course.

And their homes have been inspected to ensure they meet the strict health and safety standards set by the Education (Home-based Care) Order 1992 and 1998 Amendment.

Our KidStart Caregivers are required to:

- attend regular on-going training and professional development courses;
- work with a Visiting Teacher (a qualified and registered early childhood teacher) to ensure each child learns and develops through fun and active learning experiences, based on New Zealand's early childhood curriculum framework, Te Whariki. Each child's learning and development is documented in a Record of Learning and Care;
- attend regular KidStart playgroups where the children have the opportunity to interact with other young children, use different play resources and take part in larger group activities.

A major feature of KidStart is that children learn from the rich learning opportunities offered in everyday activities in the home and local community.

The establishment of Kidstart coincided with the Ministry of Education's initiative to turn day care centers into "early education" centers staffed by trained and accredited providers. The Barnardos volunteers became contract teachers' aides; Barnardos provided support services for them and monitored their performance. They also opened their childcare centers to fee-paying clients as part of an attempt to position the organization in the rapidly growing early education business. The social work and counseling activities, typically involving intense work with individuals, proved more difficult to run as profitable businesses.

Staff members mentioned that the different funding streams and certification practices of teachers and social workers destroyed much of the solidarity and comradeship of the old organization. That the teachers receive more money and that some of the social-work clients (especially the sex offenders) cannot be dealt with by, or pose a potential threat to, others in Barnardos also drives a wedge between staff. The biggest destroyer of solidarity, that which obliterates "collective structures which may impede the pure market logic" (Bourdieu 1998a), is the contract regime.

Kidstart Caregivers in Porirua

Porirua is a working-class suburb north of Wellington with a high concentration of Pacific Island and Maori residents. Barnardos has an office near the local shopping mall. In response to my request to interview Kidstart providers, the Porirua manager arranged a workshop that she invited me to attend in that area. This was the first time that such a workshop was held during working hours. They usually happen at seven o'clock at night because it is difficult to care for the children while the women are having a meeting. They're required to attend three such workshops a year in order to keep their ticket as Kidstart providers. This requirement and the others for certification mentioned on the website accompanied the move from home-based care as a voluntary service to the Kidstart branded childcare business.

The women who went through this organizational change made a number of comments that instantiate Bourdieu's critique of neoliberalism. They said that they like the idea of the workshops because they provide an opportunity to get together to see how everyone is doing. Generally, they see each other only occasionally—in playgroups, and sometimes on trips to places like the zoo. Of course, such occasions do not allow for sustained discussion among themselves. Having workshops after work on the other hand interferes with family life and family life means a great deal to them. Indeed, they perceive their role as an extension of motherhood. Having a meeting after work, when their husbands ("maybe after a horrible day at work") and their own children are at home, interferes with their responsibilities to their families. In the words of one woman "it turns into a nightmare rather than a pleasurable get-together, for me anyway."

The women received NZ\$4.50 per hour per child. One of the group said she didn't have an issue with the pay and the others made agreeing noises. This caregiver said she had a lot of issues with other things. "We had no choice. I was trained as a Barnardos Caregiver and all of a sudden it was 'You are now Kidstart; you are now self-employed,' but we are treated like we [are] employees because of all the rules. 'You do this, you'll do that; if you don't like it, tough'." Formerly, when working for Barnardos, these women were "volunteers" and the money they received was "treated strictly as a reimbursement" for their own expenses. Now they are taxed.

There's a very fine line between employed and self-employed. I've been given nothing about what it means to be self-employed. If you ring up and you have an issue, it's like you're self-employed. Kidstart do say that you cannot take on any of the children from any other source while you have got Kidstart children. But if you're self-employed, you should be able to take on what you like. Your relationship with your families becomes quite personal. You become part of their family. And therefore it is sometimes natural for them to ask you, rather than somebody else, to baby-sit for them or look after the children. Kidstart [say] they'll tell the tax department. . . .

If we decided to leave when the tax system changed, Barnardos was going to forward our names to the tax department [which might give an audit to see if what was formerly a reimbursement should be reported as taxable income].

These individuals kept working for Barnardos because the organization provided them with a guaranteed payment, support during working hours, and visiting teachers to train and inspect. They were not sure what “integrated services” meant, and worried that the essence of the change was to support the trend to turn them from mothers and volunteers at home into educators who ran “mini day care centers, mini kindergartens.” Although one woman said that the wages are “just laughable. McDonald’s wouldn’t pay that sort of wages. I think it is a joke. My husband says I cannot be doing it for money and I’m doing it for love to give that child,” another said that she does it to earn money.

One aspect of professionalization that generated considerable discomfort for these women, who were not highly educated, concerned the requirement to file reports that chart what the children did during the day. This task forced them into a teacher role on a daily basis and conflicted with their wanting to be seen as giving home-based care to children in a motherly way. “It takes so much of your time. . . . The parents really aren’t interested in that. They’re more interested in whether the child has enjoyed their day.”

They resent having to put all the details down and worry that the books can make them look like incompetent teachers. One woman said she was good at “hands-on work” with children. “But give me a pen and paper to write notes and I’m hopeless.” Another gave hanging out the wash with the children as an example. She teaches them the colors, the numbers, turn-taking, but she doesn’t want to have to write all that down.

The writing we do is basically what a kindergarten teacher used to do. . . . [I]f a child is on the bus, I could just say ‘she was on the bus.’ But they want to know ‘What did she do on the bus?’ and I really don’t think that’s important. . . . [E]very Kidstart caregiver I’ve spoken to has the same issue with the books. I struggle with the babies—how do you write a learning story about a five- or six-month-old baby? The book goes to the visiting teacher and the parent gets to see. The purpose of this is to monitor and say they are following the early childhood education guidelines.

Barnardos met the Ministry of Education’s requirements for certification and training and adapted their operations to the market forces that privatized child-care. Kidstart now competes with other services as a business and will rise or fall on that basis. In the course of making this transition, it turned volunteer mothers who looked after children from families in need into early childhood teachers’ aides and independent contractors who feel that the nobility of their efforts has diminished. This threat to the meaningfulness of work, for an organization dedicated to caring for children, presents Barnardos New Zealand with its most

fundamental challenge in integrating services as a response to governmental policy change.

Bourdieu (1998a) regards people involved in administering and delivering social services as experiencing the contradictions of neoliberalism most directly. Referring to those who deliver social and educational programs as “the left hand of the state,” he says they are constantly undermined by technocrats of finance ministries and banks, comprising the state’s “right hand.” Sent to the front to repair the damage of market-led policy, he asked how the constituents of this weak side could “not have the sense of being constantly undermined or betrayed” (Bourdieu 1998a:3).

A Return to the “Old” Barnardos?

Looking back on the organization of only a dozen years ago, well after the start of the contract system, individuals described it as well integrated compared with the present. During a 2006 focus group of seven employees from a range of programs at the head office, one social worker said that when she started at Barnardos, all 26 clients came from Barnardos Childcare Services.

Every family used Kidstart or other childcare and I came to all their play groups and introduced myself. If the co-ordinator in Kidstart saw a family that needed my services, she would refer them. That was 10 years ago and I suppose that’s what they’re getting back into today. We had it in the past. What stopped it was that Barnardos . . . was looking for outside funding . . . and they didn’t get funding to continue it. I see that as an integrated service. We would ring up Access [an internal social work provider] if we felt a family needed some services. But I don’t see us using it that way anymore now.

R., another participant in the group discussion, agreed with her, saying

When I started 13 years ago there was far more integration of services. We’ve very much moved away towards autonomous services even though [the CEO] wants integration . . . across early childhood care, family support, education, in order to provide holistic outcomes for all children. He’s making that statement but I don’t think it’s going to happen. We’re further away from that than we’ve ever been.

A third person, J., brought up the branding of Barnardos Childcare as Kidstart.

When I first started here three years ago there was a perception that only children in need could use Childcare Services and they were trying to move away from that. Any child could use Kidstart. So I wonder if one of the moves away from integrated services was to be competitive in the market, sell anyone the childcare services. They named it “Kidstart” to move away from the associations of Barnardos Daycare Services.

R. agreed that Barnardos launched Kidstart

to get away from the perception that it was for children in need and to revamp the service as a high quality children's education service because we were being absolutely slaughtered and still are slaughtered by the opposition.

J. replied: "Every child should have the same opportunities," prompting R. to respond:

I think it's very much an attitude problem within the organization, that has to be the will to make this work, that has to be the management and financial structures, you can't just leave it up to the people at the coalface [where the actual work with clients occurs] to integrate themselves, it has to be driven all the way through. The funding from the organization has to come in a way that allows it to happen. At present we have a situation where we only have a limited pot of money and all the services are trying to get as much as they can and this creates competition between the services.

J. brought up contracting, specifically the fact that funding tied to specific programs can't be shared. R. answered:

That's right . . . you picked up on this whole integration issue, that one of our services is concerned that another one of our services [is taking away its clients]. We shouldn't be competing, we should be collaborating. One of the difficulties is that the two services have different fee structures that creates a barrier for parents going from one to the other because they get two separate bills. In this day and age, services should come under the one bill.

The problem of internal division and competition seems fundamental. The CEO acknowledged that the transition from home-based care, as a social service for needy parents, into an early childhood education business under the oversight of the Ministry of Education, stimulated the development of different professional expectations and standards for early childhood teaching and added more funding streams for the more diverse programs. This drove a wedge between parts of the organization that are commercial and education-based, like Kidstart, and the more social-work initiatives. He noted that this "creates competition between the services," and that clients' needs transcend such divisions. If the barriers were removed, for example by billing for both services together rather than separately, Barnardos could provide a more integrated service to its clients.

Integration is conceptualized in two rather different ways in these comments. Chasing contracts and starting businesses like Kidstart split the organization. As Larner and Craig (2002) put it regarding New Zealand's NGOs:

The contracts were largely top-down, and involved a strong emphasis on vertical accountabilities measured in the new language of outputs and outcomes. Social service organizations, including notable church-based not-for-profit entities, found themselves recast as little arms of the state and to a certain extent brought into competition with each other. Repositioned as accredited service

delivery agencies for government, they were forced to represent their capacities within the parameters of the new public management discourse, a discourse that often stood in stark contrast to the core values and accepted modes of working. (Larner and Craig 2002:8)

The experience of the Kidstart caregivers in Porirua, that Barnardos moved them from mothers on the inside of the organization to contractors to one of its businesses regulated by the Ministry of Education, highlights this clash of values and decline in collegiality. Staff in the head office who talked about how the existence of different contracts makes it impossible for people doing social work to help clients using child care, reconceptualized as educational services, told a similar story. In line with the caregivers' comments, they said that these bureaucratic regulations also negatively affect the cohesion and solidarity of Barnardos. These staff members voiced the additional concern that clients need integration. The prime driver of the restructuring should be to make it easier for people to get what they require from Barnardos. They seem to be arguing that the organization should be doing more to work for change. In line with the initial citation of Kivel (2007) above, they want Barnardos to become more accountable to its clients. The CEO's perspective is that integration has the potential to help the organization to work through these issues of values, change, collegiality, and service, as well as with the government agencies that provide the funding necessary to accomplish these goals.

A VIEW FROM THE MINISTRIES

Two officials, from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development, who work closely with the CEO of Barnardos, talked about how the agency fits into the changed environment of policy implementation they are involved in constructing. The Social Development interviewee admitted that government agencies did not handle NGOs well.

It was a master-servant relationship where all power was with the funder. If the organization wanted money they had to deliver exactly what the agency was prepared to fund. Government has tended to purchase the delivery of services that are really specific, prescribed, and have more to do with the delivery of a certain number of widgets than they do with achieving high-level outcomes.

This official planned to change this by creating a Family and Social Services Unit within the Ministry to work closely with NGOs to provide effective services. He said he had a particularly close relationship with the head of Barnardos, a key player on the Family Services National Advisory Council of Government and Nongovernmental Representatives that the Ministry set up.

Having met recently with staff from a British government program to establish family centers and extended schools, the official was convinced that New Zealand should have some centers like this. Barnardos owned a property in Taita (a suburb north of Wellington) that looked like a particularly promising place to establish a center for facilitating a “one-stop shop.” The fact that Barnardos’ CEO managed to position the NGO well in relation to the Ministry’s plans becomes clear from the following interview quotes.

M. [Barnardos’ CEO] is trying to set up a hub, or Family Center, in Taita. . . . We were going to be looking at one-stop shops in different parts of the country, and he said to me “What would be the chances of this being a one-stop shop?” . . . The Taita initiative, my take, Barnardos has this place that has not been used for some time. What we’ve said is that if the community actually think that this is a good idea we’d be happy to support a one-stop shop concept in Taita. We’ve got enough money for 13 of these things in the next 12 months. It pales into insignificance compared with 13,000 in the UK. We quite like the concept of one-stop shops. They work best with their collaboration between different NGOs and hopefully government agencies as well. Their success derives from a greater capacity to provide a seamless service. . . . M’s keeping me up to date on the way it’s going. I have no doubt that they’re getting the community support. So it’s not an issue.

The official from the Ministry of Education noted that Barnardos was part of the sector group that developed the 10-year Strategic Early Childhood Plan that the Ministry launched in 2002. The Plan was to increase participation in early childhood education, improve quality, and improve collaboration.

There is a two-year pilot looking at integrated services and what services can be provided from early childhood centers and Barnardos has a couple of sites that are part of it. From our point of view the kind of advantage that Barnardos has integrating new services and making them available is that they have the opportunity to bring social supports as well as the benefits of universal education to their client groups which is something that is the strength of Barnardos and has been well appreciated for families. Their ability to take what’s out there and make the best use of it and integrate . . . their services . . . in early childhood. It appears to me to always have been an organization with social conscience that wants to do the right thing for families and children. . . . They concentrate on the parts of the business that bring in the money—to do that well and use any surplus for good purposes. They are a canny, good, strong organization.

INTEGRATING SERVICES, AND NEW ZEALAND NEOLIBERALISM’S THIRD WAVE

When the women in Porirua and staff at Barnardos’ head office complained about the effects of contracts and commercialization, their comments came from personal perspectives and internal organizational situations. Questioning them about the restructuring and integrated services led the Kidstart contractors in Porirua to express skepticism based on their recent experiences. The staff in the Wellington head office were both skeptical and hopeful. In both cases, the

meaningfulness of working with children, by mostly female staff who are committed to doing their best in co-operation with others, diminished. Within the organization, the CEO's promotion of integrated services was phrased in terms of a way back to solidarity and meaningfulness, a return to the core purpose of Barnardos that sounds like resistance to New Zealand's program of neoliberalism. When views from the ministries and the literature are included, service integration starts to appear less like resistance and more like collaboration.

Larner and Craig (2002) characterize partnership and integrated services as indicators of the third stage of New Zealand neoliberalism. It seems that the Barnardos CEO, well placed within government circles and committed to the family center project in Taita, wants to position the organization as an important player in the partnering environment.⁴ Partnership seems unlikely to put Barnardos back together again, and it does not disentangle the country from the grasp of "new right" policy. But the people in Barnardos and the two ministries do not concern themselves with the nature of neoliberalism, an abstract academic issue. They deal with everyday practicalities to realize their goals and aspirations. The pervasiveness of the effects neoliberalism has had on New Zealand's NGOs limits the range of possibilities that exist to deal with their consequences. The unity of neoliberalism there derives from a diffuse structural power, one that in Wolf's (1990) terms includes the power to "structure the political economy and . . . govern consciousness" (Wolf 1990:587).

CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this project, the Barnardos program to restructure itself by integrating services and returning to a unified agenda with clear goals seemed like the start of a campaign to roll back the devastating effects neoliberalism had on the country's nongovernmental organizations and on less than affluent people. It seemed to have the potential to become a program for social change as well as a strategy to help the organization better provide its services. Later, although it seemed that they were tackling neoliberalism, it was unclear whether this amounted to "resistance" or "collaboration," both being loaded terms with limited potential to make sense of the situation. If resistance to neoliberalism is good and collaboration bad, service integration works against the kind of social change Kivel (2007) calls for and deserves to be treated with contempt. On the other hand, if neoliberalism is "an unstable, incomplete, and limited governmental regime" (Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008:117), despite its diffuse structural power to condition consciousness and strategies of change, something may yet develop at Barnardos New Zealand to "fire back" as Bourdieu (2001) puts it.

Integrated services may not provide clients with more effective services, like R. expects to happen at Barnardos. The providers in Porirua also seem destined to remain contractors if they stay with Kidstart. Barnardos itself seems set to prosper as “a good brand” and “canny organization” in the context of its partnership with the ministries of Social Development and Education. However, the Barnardos CEO and the officials interviewed for this project spoke in terms of more far-reaching goals, of mutual co-operation to promote stronger and more effective agencies for families. So, it is possible that their accommodation to neoliberalism will position them to ameliorate its negative consequences to some degree. This is, admittedly, a statement of faith, or as Wolf (1990:591) puts it, “a conceptual guess” about what is going on that comes from getting to know the situation and the people involved in it. Service integration at Barnardos is a specific ongoing effort—dynamic, contested, fragmentary, and uncertain of success; a neoliberal endeavor, just as Kinsfisher and Markovsky (2008) envisage. But this research, in an attempt to discover the meaning of integrated services to those who work for and with Barnardos, suggests that people with power and influence want to work to promote change. However, they can do so only by situating the organization strongly within the structurally powerful partnership regime emerging in a neoliberal policy environment.

NOTES

1. The data for the project came from interviews lasting about an hour with 17 staff members at several Barnardos offices, and two-hour focus-group sessions elsewhere with five or six staff in each group. These loosely structured interviews and focus-group discussions explored perspectives on Barnardos’ direction and current situation and whether staff perceived the need for change to be genuine or imposed by the Barnardos head office in Wellington. I also interviewed some clients and two Ministry officials recommended by the Barnardos CEO, and talked to staff at a number of early childhood centers.

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2. For example, if a woman’s partner abuses her and their children, she may need childcare, counseling, and a contact service to make sure her partner’s access to the children is supervised. In an integrated services regime, her needs would be assessed and provided for with a minimum of duplication.

3. An anonymous reviewer suggested paying more attention to Wolf’s article and kindly sent a link to Kivel’s paper.

4. In a vaguely worded address at the end of the year, Finance Minister Bill English indicated that his government plans to increase the role of NGOs “with proven track records” in the provision of social welfare. One reporter notes that the “government’s ideological friends” stand to gain by what is foreshadowed by Mr. English: more privatization of welfare (Campbell 2009). This recent development supports the conclusion that Barnardos’ CEO is moving to get “on side” with neoliberal policy.

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