

222

**SOCIAL WORK AS NARRATIVE: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE SOCIAL AND
LITERARY NATURE OF SOCIAL WORK ACCOUNTING.**

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ABSTRACT	ii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
1. What do Social Workers do?	3
2. The Problem: What is the Nature of Social Work Accounting?	4
3. Approaches to the Representation of Social Work Accounting	6
CHAPTER 2. A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO NARRATIVE	24
1. Foucault and 'Grand Narratives'	25
2. Micro Analysis and Conversational Stories	31
3. Literary Texts and Narrative Performance	39
4. Narrative Methods: Plot, Character and Point of View	43
5. Functions and Effects of Storytelling	48
CHAPTER 3. SOCIAL WORK ACCOUNTS AS STORIES WITH READERS	60
1. Social Work Accounts as Stories	61
2. Social Work Accounts as a Product of their Reading	73
CHAPTER 4. HANDLING BLAME AND CONSTRUCTING MORAL CHARACTER .	99
1. Theoretical Approaches to Moral Construction	100
2. Reporting Child Abuse in a Social Work Journal	105
3. Constructing Moral Character in a Research Interview: The 'Failure to Thrive' Case	115
CHAPTER 5. EXPLAINING THE 'FACTS' AND CLAIMING ENTITLEMENT	132
1. Theoretical Approaches to Fact Construction, Entitlement and Robustness	134

2. Depicting Clients and their Attributes	145
3. Telling a Strong Story: Donna	151
CHAPTER 6. RETELLINGS: FOLLOWING THE SOCIAL WORK STORY	164
1. Theoretical Approaches: Intertextuality and Blackboxing	165
2. Following the 'Assessment Story' of Donna	173
CHAPTER 7. REPORTED SPEECH: HEARING THE WORDS OF THE CLIENT . .	195
1. The Persuasive Text and the Passive Reader	195
2. Theoretical Discussion: the Other	199
3. Hearing the Voice of the Client	205
CHAPTER 8. DEPICTING CHARACTER: READING ADEQUATE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CLIENT	224
1. Theoretical Approaches to Depicting Character	226
2. Character in Social Work Texts	232
CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION	256
1. Themes	261
2. Limitations	264
3. Claims	265
4. Implications	268
FOOTNOTES	272
APPENDICES	308
REFERENCES	337

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates what can be gained by approaching social work reports and conversations as narratives. A conventional approach to social work accounting practices is to treat such documents as (more or less) accurate descriptions of social workers' clients, their problems and proposed remedies. Such a realist approach was found to be flawed, since it assumes straightforward access from accounts to external reality, not considering the constructedness of such documents. Drawing on theoretical themes from the sociology of scientific knowledge, literary theory, conversation analysis, ethnomethodology and sociolinguistics, this thesis explores the construction and reception of social work accounts as rhetorical, narrative and interactional processes.

The documents analysed represent some of the occasions on which social workers describe and recommend social work intervention with children and their families - research interviews, court reports, internal memos, case file entries and journal reports. On these occasions, social work is performed and displayed in descriptions of people and their attributes, justifications for social work intervention and excuses for lack of success.

The main theme of the thesis is that social work accounts can profitably be analysed as stories. To explain their work and their clients' world to a variety of audiences, social workers are heard to tell competent, professionally persuasive stories. A variety of storytelling features are explored, looking in particular at plot, character, the construction of the reader and the authority of the writer. Stories are heard to vary with reading occasions and critical audiences, and it is the study of reading relations which is a main focus of the analysis - to whom are these accounts addressed and how are they available to be read? Rhetorical features are investigated in order to understand how social work accounts are made available to be read as morally and factually persuasive. A critical reading is also offered, which questions the adequacy of the accounts, and makes available the possibility of reading unheard stories. Reflexive interludes comment on the claims of the thesis writer in terms of the efforts of the social work writer.

The implications of this study are that treating social work accounts as textual accomplishments undermines social workers' claims for reporting objectively about their clients and their problems. Social work can be seen as constituted in and through the performance and reception of stories: doing competent social work is achieved through telling competent social work stories.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Armoured with correctness and righteousness, social workers go out into the world, hunting for what they see as evil. Working constantly amongst the losers of society, it would be surprising if they did not develop a sense of knowing better than the rest of us. As individuals they are well-intentioned and often highly committed to the welfare of their clients. But entrenched behind their ideology and equipped with fearsome legal authority, they have achieved powers which they are plainly unfit to hold.

Daily Express July 14, 1993.

BACKGROUND: SOCIAL WORK, CONTROVERSY AND UNCERTAINTY

Social work is a relatively recent professional and bureaucratic activity which is concerned with the administration of important and sometimes controversial areas of social policy. With the development of the welfare state after the last war, the first Children's Officers were appointed to implement the 1944 Children Act. Since then, social workers have taken on wide-ranging responsibilities for the administration of child protection, juvenile justice and family support services. How they conduct assessments, investigations and subsequent interventions has important consequences on the lives of individuals, families and communities. Throughout the last twenty years, the activity of social workers has received intense press scrutiny and governmental review. The initial concern was about child abuse. From the death of Maria Colwell in 1974 ⁽¹⁾, the focus was on the failure of social workers to recognise and intervene in dangerous family situations. The 1980s and early 1990s saw further criticism and uncertainty as a series of controversial cases and their subsequent inquiries hit the headlines. Social workers' 'soft' approach to juvenile offenders, and, most recently, policies of 'same race' adoption has been under the media microscope, as in the Daily Express quote above ⁽²⁾. Such outrage, its associated moral indignation and stereotypical formulations attack the centre of social work - its practices, knowledge and attitudes, and not, for example, its organisation, resources or responsibilities. There are not just a few incompetent individuals, but how all social workers think and act is challenged.

Social workers are surrounded by concern and controversy. Children are taken from their parents; they are also left at home where they are hurt and worse. Families are offered a range of supportive services; they are also left to their own devices. Young people are encouraged away from crime; they may also be recommended for custody. Couples are supported in having a new family or they are 'counselled out'. For those involved, the outcome is potentially life threatening or life enhancing. Perhaps their position can be seen as similar to doctors, promoting peoples' emotional and social life rather than their physical health. However their mandate and claims to knowledge appear much less certain or ratified than doctors. Barbara Wootton (1959:290) sums up the problem:

Other professions specify the nature of their cases: in medicine, general practitioners deal with cases of illness, specialists with cases of particular diseases: judges and magistrates deal with fraud, burglary ... but the (social) worker deals with - cases of what?

Pithouse (1987) calls it an 'invisible trade' in order to indicate how social workers spend much of their time in various closed and unobserved encounters - interview rooms, clients' homes, small meetings with colleagues. Unlike other professionals,⁽³⁾ they do not perform in easily identifiable arenas - the courtroom, the surgery or the classroom⁽⁴⁾.

Both the issues social workers face and the responsibilities with which they are charged, cover areas where spokespersons of different persuasions have strong opinions and feel confident in expressing them. Perhaps only the nuclear industry or more recently the teaching of reading, are similar situations where public and media voices are raised over what constitutes appropriate practice and policy. Unlike nuclear power or teaching reading however, there are rarely voices heard to support the social workers' stance. Outrage is always available from both sides of a divide: the right and left, the victim and the villain, the poor who depend on social work support and the rest who pay for it, those concerned about lowering moral standards and those worried about social work interference. Social work, it seems, is always likely to get it wrong.

Two pictures of social work 'inadequacies' have been identified in studies of the media (Franklin and Parton 1991) and in the official reports on particular tragedies (Parton 1991). First, social workers are 'inept and passive', as in the cases where

children were killed by their carer, despite their family being supervised by social workers. (Beckford 1985, Henry 1987, Carlile 1987 Reports). Second, they are 'intrusive and authoritarian', as in cases where children are removed from home without adequate reason (Cleveland 1988, Rochdale 1990 and Orkney 1992 Reports). As Dingwall et al (1983:2) comment social workers are pilloried for "bureaucratic delay or for overzealous intrusion", each view predicated on models of the relationship between children, families and the state.

This thesis investigates how social workers carry out their work by examining reports and conversation about child care cases. It does not attempt to counter media over-simplification nor does it promote features of 'good practice' ⁽⁵⁾. Rather, it asks more fundamental questions about how social work is constituted, how is it performed and made recognisable. This chapter outlines the problem to be confronted and contrasts alternative methods to approaching social work. It also offers some of the background and hi(story) to this thesis. But first how do social workers spend their time?

1 WHAT DO SOCIAL WORKERS DO?

Most social workers are employed by local authority Social Service Departments (SSDs) and organised into local area teams. They are managed by a team leader, with a hierarchy of managers ultimately responsible to elected councillors. This thesis investigates the work of social workers concerned with children and families. Other social workers in SSDs work with elderly and disabled people and those with a mental illness or learning difficulty ⁽⁶⁾. Child care social workers spend their time visiting children and families at home, in foster homes, in their office or in other establishments - residential homes, family centres, school etc. They hold meetings with families, their managers and other agencies. They make phone calls, write letters and reports. They attend courts and panels. Each social worker is likely to have a 'caseload', a number of families and children for whom they are the designated worker ⁽⁷⁾. The way in which a family's problems are identified and becomes a 'case' with a social worker allocated is complex (Rees 1978). Having become a case, the allocated social worker is likely to perform a number of tasks in relation to identified problems.

Social workers in Social Services Departments are charged through legislation with supervising children in danger or whose health and development is impaired. Trained in various counselling methods, they offer support and guidance to help parents look after their children. As a last resort, children are removed from their families, either with parents' consent or through a court order. Children may stay 'in care or accommodation' ⁽⁸⁾ for short periods, ranging from a few days whilst parents sort themselves out, to a permanent move to an alternative family. Work with children 'in care' makes up a large proportion of child care social workers' long term cases and will be the main type of case considered in this research.

2 THE PROBLEM: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF SOCIAL WORK ACCOUNTING?

Given the relative 'invisibility' of social work practice, most research analyses social workers' documents and talk. There has been only limited attempts to measure social work success with little 'hard data' for the researcher.⁽⁹⁾ Most research on social work relies on interviewing social workers and analysing their documents. Like other occupations, social workers write reports, complete forms, make entries in files, talk in a variety of settings with colleagues, managers, other professionals, courts and researchers. Such documents and talk are collectively referred to as 'accounting' or 'accounts' in this thesis. Social work accounting is approached here as more than a jumble of arbitrary utterances and pauses, words and spaces, but as communicative processes through which social workers describe, explain and justify social work problems and solutions. In this way, such accounts constitute and configure social work, they offer the opportunity to display the move from the 'is' to the 'ought', from analysis and assessment to recommendation and action. In other words, the researcher approaches such documents in order to investigate how social work activity is rendered 'account-able' (Garfinkel 1967:1).⁽¹⁰⁾

This thesis investigates the social and literary practices of social workers made available in such accounting. The central question to be addressed is, what is the social and literary nature of the accounting practices by which social workers describe their clients' behaviour, problems and character, and explain their own activity. Such accounts are located in the reports that social workers produce for courts or case

conferences and in informal and formal talk about their work (see Appendix 1.1 for 'data'). There are various ways of approaching social work accounting. The Daily Express quotes John Major as seeing social workers' beliefs and action as predicated on "trendy social theories of political correctness" (14 July 1993 page 17). Social work researchers investigate the mistakes or barriers to carrying out accepted procedures of good practice. This thesis will not investigate social work as a media construction of moral panics (Cohen 1980, Franklin and Parton 1991) nor will it attempt to justify social work practice. Rather it will ask the more basic question, what constitutes such accounting practices? How can such documents and talk be approached and conceptualised in the first place?

A classic scientific investigation of a problem might proceed as follows. First, identify an entity to be studied (for example, the nature of the surface of Mars). Second, review previous attempts to study the entity (studies using various telescopes). Third, criticise previous attempts for various technical and epistemological reasons (previous telescopes were not accurate enough or the images wrongly interpreted). Fourth, offer an alternative research method (a better telescope). Fifth, display new 'clearer' findings based on these more sophisticated research methods (better pictures of Mars). Sixth, assess the significance of these new findings and hence their contribution to knowledge (now we know more about the surface of Mars).

Can such a model be applied to an investigation of social work? Do sociological research methods enable us to gain a clearer image of what social workers do and think? Will we know better than the Daily Express about the 'twisted ideologies of social workers' or than the social work researchers about the barriers to social work success? (that is, more knowledge about the 'true' nature of the surface of Mars). On the other hand, does investigating social workers' accounting only allow us to draw conclusions about the accounting practices of social workers? Are social work accounts like the telescopes? Are we able to make the move from accounts of entities to entities themselves? (the true nature of the surface of Mars or the nature of the interaction between the scientist, his/her telescope and the images). Such questions require an investigation of what claims can be made on the basis of studying social work documents and talk. What do social work accounting practices represent?

3 APPROACHES TO THE REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL WORK ACCOUNTING

Social work produces in its everyday activity conversations and documents, social work accounting. For social workers, their clients, other professionals and observers, manipulating these accounts represents doing social work. A social worker talking to a colleague, a mother asking for help with her children, a judge reading a social work report, a social work manager agreeing to provide a place in a children's home, a journalist reporting a scandal, a researcher evaluating social work competence - all accounts of these encounters constitute social work, none necessarily representing the essence of social work more than any other (cf. Latour 1987:158 on science).

Given the importance of these conversations and documents, how the researcher approaches, handles and analyses them poses critical ontological decisions. A wide variety of theoretical approaches to the status of social work accounts are available. Can investigating social work accounts answer questions about social structures, inner psyche, interpersonal relations, professional power? Whilst it is not proposed to take the reader on a journey of all the tried and rejected theories of social work representation considered by this project, this introduction briefly discusses one considered but rejected approach, 'social work as decision making', as a contrast to the 'social work as narrative' approach investigated in the rest of the thesis. The critical choice between these alternatives involves either going 'inside' the production and reception of social workers' accounts or using them as a 'building block' for wider claims.

3.1 Social work accounts as 'building blocks' in decision making

Most readers of social work documents are likely to approach them as more or less accurate representations of entities and events. Social workers make claims about the client, her/his history, behaviour and what should be done. Critics might look for mistakes in order to undermine claims, supporters might point to the implications of observations and assessments. Neither the critical nor supportive reader questions whether social work accounts are concerned with facts; disputes are over their accuracy.

3.1.1 Social Work Researchers: social work accounting as facts

When this research was started in the mid 1980s, several studies of social work with children and their families were published (11). They were summarised in a publication by the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) 'Social Work Decisions in Child Care' (DHSS:1985), known as the Pink Book. These studies present a particular approach to the status of social work with children and families, which this project first adopted, but now challenges. A key feature of these studies is that social work accounts are considered to constitute straightforward representations of social work activity. Reports, files and research interviews are seen as displays of facts about families and children, outside of the report or occasion of talk. To use Tibbetts' (1988:117) terms, social work documents and descriptions are treated as 'representational devices', which more or less accurately stand for a 'representational object', social worker assessment and intervention. The social work researchers consider that their interviews, or their analyses of files and reports give them access to what happened between social workers and their clients. The realist nature of this approach is not a worry for these researchers since representation is (more or less) unproblematic. A metaphor used to sum up the studies shows the transparent nature of research (rather like a telescope looking at Mars):

Reading these reports is like looking out of different windows and seeing the same picture (DHSS 1985:7)

Packman et al (1984:26) displays the 'more or less accurate' aspect of representational devices:

Case records are notoriously uneven and sometimes unreliable, and they are not of course primarily composed with research in mind... To ask participants to explain themselves long after the event is also to risk unreliability and patchiness of recall and the possibility of rationalisations made glib by hindsight.

Research interviews and documentary analysis provide access to social work activity, to enable the researcher to evaluate what is really going on. For Vernon and Fruin (1986:10) their research schedules provided them with "factual information". Terms like "research instruments" (Vernon and Fruin 1986:10), concerns about "reliability and bias" (Fisher et al 1986:23) link these studies to methods of research which

Silverman (1985:158) calls 'positivism'. Silverman identifies how 'positivism' views research interviews:

... interview data give access to 'facts' about the world. Although these facts include both biographical information and statements about beliefs, all are to be treated as accounts whose sense derives from their correspondence to a factual reality. Where that reality is imperfectly represented by an account, checks and remedies are to be encouraged in order to get a truer or more complete picture of how things stand.

These social work researchers are realist in their approach to social work accounting; such descriptions are treated as representational devices which enable access to the activity of social work. They are dealing (more or less) with the facts of social work.

3.1.2 Social Work as Rational Decision Making

These studies also deploy a rational decision making (RDM) model for analysing social work accounting. This approach is used by a number of social work researchers to both recommend and evaluate social work activity ⁽¹²⁾. The assumption is that if social work is a particular set of practices, then more successful ones can be identified and promoted, commonly referred to as 'good practice'. In this view, social work is not a complex set of everyday encounters, but a set of 'plans' and 'decisions' about what should be offered as appropriate interventions with families. Sometimes this 'rationality' is offered as a 'science'. For example, Adcock (1980:20) considers that:

A more careful and scientific appraisal of all the factors in each situation will surely result in greater security and happiness for many more children and their parents.

In some formulations, the 'science of social work' takes on authoritative prediction ⁽¹³⁾.

Social work activity as making decisions and implementing plans can be heard to abstract what social workers do from everyday encounters and evaluates it in terms of goal oriented behaviour. For social work as RDM, social workers do not merely talk to families and children, provide resources and sometimes take children from their family. Rather, social workers (should) carry out their everyday activity within a framework of rational decisions and plans. Parker (1971:13) offers such a view of social work planning:

Having a reasonably clear practical view of the future we wish for them

(children in care) and taking a sequence of steps which is instrumentally relevant to that end.

Sinclair (1984:30-1) quotes Simon's (1965) definition of RDM:

It is becoming alert to a problem, exploring it and analysing the different components of the problem and finally deciding on a course of action.

The implications of such a view of social work is that the many conceptions, encounters and documents surrounding a family constructed as a social work case can (and should) be identified, signified and condensed into clear directives to action, plans and decisions.⁽¹⁴⁾ These plans and decisions appear to operate somewhere outside the daily encounters of the job, informing such activity but not necessarily identifiable - when and where is a decision made? when and where is a plan carried out? Packman et al (1986:49) express some concern about whether a social worker's action was a decision or a non-decision, although identifying a plan was less of a problem:

Deciding when a decision had been made was not, of course, as simple as the crispness of the word implies. Where admission was the plan it was relatively straightforward. Where it was not, there was much greater uncertainty. Had a positive decision been taken to keep the child out (of care), or was it really a non-decision - a not deciding to admit rather than deciding not to admit?

Decisions could be identified eventually though there might be 'a protracted period between first consideration (for admission to care) and the recorded decision'. 'Decisions' therefore exist once other options are closed off and the decision is recorded. Vernon and Fruin (1986:72) considered in 75 per cent of their sample 'plans were less directly expressed'.⁽¹⁵⁾ Decisions and plans can be reasonably easily identified and hence evaluated by researchers using a measuring rod, external to the research encounter.

In summary, these social work researchers assume that they can gain access to the 'facts' of social work by (merely) interviewing participants and reading documents. Moreover they conceive of social work as located in 'decisions' and 'plans', entities above everyday encounters but guiding and informing such activity. Such 'decisions' and 'plans' can be identified and evaluated as rational or not rational. They could later be assessed as successful or not, though this is not the main

preoccupation, since contingencies are seen to interrupt the move from intention to outcome. Having an intention, (a plan), which was followed with an action, (a decision), is however expected.

3.2 The slide to scepticism: problems with RDM and 'facts'

This research was initially interested in the work of the social work researchers but was soon critical. There are three objections. First, RDM writers do not appear to have such operational ambitions for 'rationality'. Rationality is an ideal type, as Cicourel (1976:47) says it is "approachable but not achievable".⁽¹⁶⁾

Second, the concept of a 'decision', a 'plan' or rational action as a separate and identifiable entity outside everyday activity has been questioned. Cicourel (1976:53) notes the shifting nature of facts and decisions as cases pass through the legal system:

At each stage the various participants select from available 'facts' or created interpretations about motives, intent and the like, those propositions which are to be accorded a factual status in their particular explanation.

Garfinkel (1967:114) notes how jurors operate in the opposite direction to RDM:

Only in retrospect did they decide what they did that made their decisions correct ones. When the outcome was in hand they went back to find the 'why', the things that led to the outcome, and then in order to give the decisions some order, which namely, is the 'officialness' of the decision... the decision maker's task is justifying a course of action.

Decisions as emerging from everyday activity and oriented to justification and accounting is precisely that criticised by Vernon and Fruin (1986:94). As Packman et al (1986) indicated above, a decision becomes such when it is officially recorded as such, rather than being the outcome of RDM deliberation.

Third, when I began to talk to social workers and read files, it became difficult to identify decisions or delineate plans⁽¹⁷⁾. More fundamentally, the nature of the conversations and documents which I was hearing and reading was questioned. The interviews were an important part of the initial data collected and it was the uncertainty of their status which challenged factual assumptions. Major changes to a social worker's formulation of a case were evident in subsequent interviews where a new social worker had taken over, highlighting the fragile nature of the formulation.

It became impossible to identify the definitive version of the case ⁽¹⁸⁾. This is more than inaccuracy in the interview. I came to see the interview, not as a factual account of children, families and social work activity, but as a specific encounter in which a social worker and research interviewer jointly create speaking about and hearing social work ⁽¹⁹⁾. Where was the social work case which was independent of the interview encounter? Questioning the nature of the interview material, meant changing fundamentally the approach to interview 'data' and 'social work'. Neither could be taken at face value, both are unstable and variable. This resulted in a major reformulation of the investigation such that social work accounts could no longer be approached as building blocks to wider claims (they could not tell us about the true nature of the surface of Mars).

In summary, social work accounts are too variable to enable claims to be made about the facts of social work. Decisions are not 'made', they are reconstructed. Accounting practices do not report actual events, they construct and constitute them. Also, in such reporting, actors monitor and readjust to their own performance. Further, when confronted with the social work account, the analyst embarks on a set of reconstructions, reconstitutions and reflections. Every occasion of reading a social work account involves yet another set of accounting practices, without any stable centre. What kind of theory can help to approach such complexities?

3.3 Social Work as Narrative: How is reading social work accounting possible

The failure of the factual/rational approach to social work accounting has required a reformulation of my assumptions about entities and their attributes. What on earth is the reader and hearer of social work accounting faced with? 'Interview talk', 'decisions', 'plans', 'social work' were entities with which I had been familiar, but could no longer locate, put boundaries around and interrogate. At every stage they disappear into local talk and interactional uniqueness. To attempt to impose external codes and categories upon free floating performances only results in gross oversimplification, violating conversational subtleties. The complexities of these encounters are too variable to conflate into traditional factual/rational boxes. Fortunately, newer approaches which treat entities as 'textual' productions, celebrate, rather than conflate, the local and interactional. This enables a switch from

asking in what way social work is to be approached as rational and factual, to asking how it is possible to approach social work in the first place. This project was forced to embrace a sceptical stance, permanently uncertain as to what, where and how is social work. Social work accounts were no longer easily identifiable entities but became 'texts' with multiple reading relations.

What can be gained by a sceptical approach, which treats social work accounts as 'texts'? Garfinkel's study of medical records (1967:186-207) was faced with a similar dilemma. His researchers found such records inaccurate in many aspects of recording 'facts' about patients. He concluded that if read as an 'actuarial record' they were poor. However if they are read as 'a potential therapeutic contract' they begin to 'make sense'. Accounts do not aim to report facts, rather they make displays of justifiable medical work available for later inquiries. The focus of analysis shifts from the production to the reception of accounts. Perhaps in the textuality and reading relations of social work accounting, social work might be approached. This project has had to make two important changes. First, the interviews are approached differently, and second, the status of all social work accounting is investigated for its 'textual' status. What sort of reading relations are configured?⁽²⁰⁾ (We are no longer accepting the clear image of social work through the research telescope, but asking questions about the status of the images, their interpretation and the production of social relations between them).

3.3.1 Alternative Approaches to Interviews

Given the importance of the interview material in this project, it is necessary to question the status of research interviews. There are a number of studies which have similarly failed to find within interviews a definitive version of events which an analyst can claim represent a reality, external to the interview.⁽²¹⁾ As Potter and Mulkey (1985:249) note:

... respondents' accounts of social actions are so variable and so dependent on detailed changes in interpretative context occurring in the interview that the task of extracting a single, coherent analyst's version from the data cannot be satisfactorily accomplished.

In various ways these writers consider that interviews provide important methods for investigating a topic, however interview material is approached differently. Interviews

are now 'cultural displays' (Silverman 1985:173) or 'accounting repertoires' (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984:55). They tell us about how adequate descriptions of, for example, social work are constructed and attended to by interviewer and respondent, and investigation of local and interactional interpretative practices is encouraged. Whilst some analysts concentrate on the 'internal' formal sequences of the interview talk, for example turn taking or consistency rules (Watson and Weinberg 1982:61), others attempt to generalise to other situations.⁽²²⁾

The constructions and formulations of social work presented in these interviews may not describe the 'actual' events or characters of the case. However, they display accounting practices which may be heard more generally in social work encounters. Indeed it is suggested that it is these sorts of formulations which constitute social work; if it does not sound like a social work description, then it is not social work. Approaching interviews as 'textual' may yet give us some access to social work.

3.3.2 Approaching the social work as 'text'

The everyday use of the term 'text' refers to a book or written document, as distinguished from talk. This thesis will investigate what can be gained by approaching all social work documents and conversations as 'texts', since we are interested in how they are performed, read and interpreted.

To approach social work as a 'text' is to adopt a more sceptical stance to the possibility of reading social work accounting. It means linking into theories which investigate the constitutive processes and social relations of social work conversations and reports. A text, unlike a fact, is not a self contained, bounded object, easily separable from production and reception. Rather, it is caught in a web of interpretations and social relations in order for it to be read and reacted to. Reading social work accounts as 'text' does not offer solutions about the adequacy of social work claims, but investigates methods and interactions of social work in production and performance. As with Barthes' (1977:155) move from the work to the text in the literary field, so the social work account is no longer seen as a closed entity with definitive meaning, but an entity with multiple versions and interpretations. Silverman (1985:148) notes how Anglo Saxon sociologists have avoided investigating social

phenomena as 'texts':

... words seem too ephemeral and insubstantial to be the stuff of scientific analysis. Better, then, leave textual analysis to literary critics and to concentrate on clearly social phenomena - actions and the structures in which they are implicated.

Thus traditional sociologists have used social entities - suicide, child abuse, delinquency - as a definitive phenomena which are then used as a building block to identify structures and actions. To approach social entities as texts means to ask questions about how they can be treated as 'social' and as 'entities' in the first place.

Hanks (1989:95) defines a 'text' as:

any configuration of signs that is coherently interpretable by some community of users.

Such a definition suggests that a text is not a senseless or arbitrary comment or jotting but is produced and received as a part of a communicative process and within an everyday community of hearers and readers. Interpretation of texts by a community of users locates analysis in the everyday encounters of reading and writing texts and importantly not just any reading will do. Unlike literary texts where reading can occur far from the intended or expected audience, social work as 'text' means asking questions about specific occasions of reading and the community of readers; many readings are available but most illegitimate ⁽²³⁾.

Texts, discourse, stories and narrative are terms which are interlinked and used interchangeably in contemporary human sciences. Discourse has many uses and will be avoided where possible. The concept of 'a discourse' with structural connotations is discussed in chapter 2. Discourse as the on-going talk or communication between writer/speaker, reader/hearer and the relations surrounding that encounter is similar to the notion of text already defined above. Bauman and Briggs (1990:73) link texts and discourse:

(Entextualization) is the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit - a text - that can be lifted out of its interactional setting. A text, then, from this vantage point, is a discourse rendered decontextualizable. Entextualization may well incorporate aspects of context, such that the resultant text carries elements of its history of use within it.

Given this definition, discourse is always unavailable within the moment of its creation

and must be abstracted into a text by the analyst and reader. Social work accounting is thus approached as 'text' already wrestled from occasions of production but available to be read, analysed and consumed. Narrative and stories are also used interchangeably and are discussed in section 3.3.4 in this chapter and in chapter 2. Narrative and narrativity are examined as possible ways of reading and consuming an account.

3.3.3 Relativism: can someone help me read this account?

If an account has multiple readings, how are some readings to be approached as more appropriate than others? Can solipsism be avoided or is there an endless circle of meaning variance - 'the wearying platitude that 'you can't separate the meaning of a word from the entire context in which it occurs' (Mates quoted in Giddens 1976:44). Relativism considers that any social phenomena is to be investigated in terms of methods of construction and reading relations internal to that phenomena. Thus social work as 'text' can only be approached in terms of its performance, reading and audience.

But how is social work accounting to be read as 'text'? What set of relations are being deployed which enable the reader to make interpretations and locate meaning? Whilst relativist accounts may agree on the local and interactional nature of inquiry, there are differences as to how far a document or conversation already contains the elements of its own reading. This might be available in the grammar, the form, the structure, the devices, the weak or strong formulations, the instructions to the reader, or the community of readers. The main split is between form and performance.

A number of approaches concentrate on the form and structure of the account. For Whorf (1940:212) this means an absolutist approach which sees thought as determined by grammar:

... the background linguistic system (in other words grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity.

Other approaches are less absolute but still concentrate on the internal form of the account. Devices, structures and sequencing features are already 'inside' the text,

independent of their use. In contrast, an alternative is to consider the performance and use of an account, how the reader interacts with the document as 'text' and what formulation is possible on the occasion of the reading. This involves asking questions about the relationship between the writer and reader, how the reader is constructed, instructed and what opportunities are there for subversion. The tension between structure and performance is a key feature throughout this investigation.

3.3.4 Accounts and Stories

As mentioned earlier (footnote 10) there are two interrelated approaches to accounting. One sees 'account' in a restricted sense, the other as fundamental to social life. As Giddens (1976:20) notes:

The organisation of 'accountability' as has been made fully clear in existentialist phenomenology after Heidegger, is the fundamental condition of social life: the production of 'sense' in communicative acts is, like the production of society which it underpins, a skilled accomplishment.

Garfinkel (1967:1) insists that producing and managing everyday affairs is identical with accountable reporting. Heritage (1988:128) sees conversation analysis as concentrating on:

the level of overt explanation in which social actors give accounts of what they are doing in terms of reasons, motives and causes.

Later, however, he discusses 'repair', 'face' and 'handling non-compliance', all pointing towards a concern with rule-following and compliance. A more restricted model of accounts investigates the handling of 'fractured interaction', for example, 'excuses' and 'justifications' (Scott and Lyman 1968, Semin and Manstead 1983). Accounting can thus be located at various levels, but often is approached in the more restricted sense of 'defensive talk'.

Storytelling and narrative offer a wider, more creative approach to accounting and accountability. Rather than considering only explicit rule following and discursive self preservation, stories can be heard to answer the thorny questions of the ever present critic but with a wide array of rhetorical and narrative skills - engaging the hearer, creating suspense, resolving complications and presenting formulations which link together people and events. The more aesthetic the construction, the more

complex the accountability. There are many approaches to stories and narrative, with some writers seeing storytelling as a fundamental feature of human communication. Crago (1981 quoted in McLean 1988:2) considers storytelling one of the earliest creative skills, noting two-year-olds "constructing and relating narratives which already contain the three basics of critical situation, complication and resolution". Bruner (1991:4) consider that:

we organise our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative - stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing or not doing, and so on.

For Barthes (1982:251):

Narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative, is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative... it is simply there like life itself.

Latour (1987:53) finds stories, even epics in scientific texts about biochemical structures:

Scientific texts look boring and drab from the most superficial point of view. If the reader recomposes the challenge they take up, they are as thrilling as story telling. 'What is going to happen to the hero? Is it going to resist this new ordeal? No, it is too much ... Imagine the cheering crowds and the boos. No character on stage is watched with such passion and asked to train and rehearse as is, for instance, this GRF stuff.

Landau (1984:262) considers any sequence of events can be structured as a narrative with a beginning, middle and end:

Seldom do (scientists) recognise that many scientific theories are essentially narratives. The growth of a plant, the progress of a disease, the formation of a beach, the evolution of an organism - any set of events that can be arranged in a sequence and related can also be narrated... Students of literature are so conscious of narrative that some have argued it is storytelling which makes us human.

Jameson (1981:13) talks of:

... the all informing process of narrative, which I take to be the central function or instance of the human mind.

Anderson (1977:253) depicts the court reports of probation officers as stories with

heroes and morals:

Social inquiry reports are some sort of moral tale; which is hero centred, in which the hero is characterised: in which, like all good tales character should be consistent with narrative and the moral with both characterisation and narrative.

Such grand claims! Other sources could be located which stress the importance of storytelling, although what constitutes a story or narrative and how it is performed and identified varies. Theories of narrative are discussed in chapter 2.

What can be gained by approaching social work texts as narrative? The theoretical questions thus far outlined suggest that social work accounting approached as texts with readers sets up the possibility of exploring narrative and narrativity. Apart from the theoretical interest of narrative, the nature of these 'data' seems appropriate for such an analysis, they seem like stories. All interviews and reports appear to make available story-like qualities in that depictions of clients, explanations of events, justifications of action are predicated on the basis of detailed and chronological descriptions of people and events. Things were the way they were because of characters' histories and background. This is not to pre-judge the success of this enterprise but to further justify such an inquiry ⁽²⁴⁾.

CONCLUSION

As with other observers of social work, this investigation has identified social workers' accounting practices - their documents and conversations - as one of the few representations of this 'invisible trade' (Pithouse 1987). Two major questions follow from this proposition. First, what is the nature of social work accounting, and second, how far does its investigation enable us to make claims about social work? As we have seen, traditional approaches do not recognise these problems. Social work researchers see interviews and documents as offering access to 'facts' and 'decisions' and hence the underlying activity of social work.

First, we have seen how the nature of social work accounts is too variable and concerned with local and interactional interests to enable us to make claims about what is going on outside the production and reception of the account. It has been suggested that social work accounting is approached as texts, caught up in a complex network of relations of interpretation and reading. What advantages are to be gained

from deploying relativist, sceptical theories to social work? What questions can be asked about how social work is constructed, consumed, received and subverted? Social work as narrative is suggested as a way of approaching some of these questions. How far is social work available in storytelling performances to audiences?

Second, does such an approach enable us access to social work or does it set us into a circle of perpetual meaning variance? Are there stable features and readings, how do social workers' accounts attempt to control the reader? It is not the aim of this project to indulge in endless scepticism. Social work as narrative is investigated in order to locate how social workers construct and represent their everyday activity and how we might read it. A relativist approach, however, warns us against grand claims and metanarratives.

Is not this chapter also available as a story? There is a beginning - a critical situation, the problem of how to approach social work, a middle - a complication of a failed approach, and an end in sight - a possible resolution in the theory of narrative. The methodological journey is available as chronological, 'first I read... then I met... now let's go towards...' Has the hero researcher shaken off false prophets and now prepared for the trials ahead? That it is a possible story with a potential resolution, invites the reader to embark on the journey. Narrative, stories and accountability pose important questions for the study of social work.

Outline of Thesis

The overall aim of this thesis is to investigate the advantages to be gained by treating social work accounting as texts and available as narrative. Throughout the thesis a wide variety of social work accounts are analysed - interviews, court reports, journal reports, radio programmes, case notes and internal reports. The collection and accumulation of this 'data' is outlined in appendix 1.1.

Chapter 2 will review approaches to narrative in both human sciences and in literary theory in order to consider the questions they pose in approaching social work accounting. The wide range of theories of narrative are not compatible nor easily integrated. The major theoretical divisions between structure and performance, form and content, construction and constraint are discussed, drawing aspects from each, not attempting to resolve the contradictions, but profiting from their tension.

This then provides a basis for Chapters 3 to 8, which offer analyses of the social work documents around themes associated with the reader and reading relations. Each theme investigates an aspect of narrative performance, looking at what can be gained by approaching social work accounting in this way. The main question to be asked in each chapter is how is a critical and competent reader of social work accounting constructed, instructed and convinced (or not convinced). Latour (1987:52) notes the role of the reader in relation to scientific texts:

The image of the ideal reader built into the text is easy to retrieve. Depending on the author's use of language, you immediately imagine to whom he or she is talking (at least you realise that in most cases he or she is not talking to you!)

By locating the reader and exploring reading relations, can we gain a better understanding of social work accounting by investigating how the reader is attended to, persuaded or has the opportunity for criticism and subversion?

In chapter 3 the main question is how far social work texts can be heard as stories, who is the reader and how is s/he constructed? Applying some of the theoretical themes from chapter 2, we now investigate the advantages to approaching social work accounting as stories. What reader is being addressed and what instructions guide his/her reading? Is there a preferred or 'ratified' reader? The importance of this chapter is to examine the narrativity of social work accounts; what makes them read-able and accountable?

Chapter 4, 5 and 6 are linked in that the emphasis is on the 'passive' reader and strategies of persuasion, whilst chapters 7 and 8 investigate the 'active' reader and opportunities for subversion. Chapter 4 asks how far the reader is persuaded by the way in which social work accounting deploys moral characterisations and constructions? How far is the reader instructed to come to preferred conclusions through appeals to right or wrong, good or bad, innocent or culpable?

Whereas chapter 4 sees the reader as a moral subject, making judgements on the basis of ethics, the theme of Chapter 5 is fact construction and entitlements to tell stories; the reader as an empiricist. The question to be explored is how a rational reader is attended to? How far is s/he to be convinced on the basis of facts and authority? Chapter 6 continues the theme of chapters 4 and 5, the construction and reception of persuasive stories, but considers changes of depiction and

characterisation by following one story through several reading occasions. The question here is how far appeals to the reader and the strength of the story alter over time and with the occasion of the reading.

Chapters 7 and 8 offer a more active reading of social work accounting, where the opportunities for subversion and criticism are explored. In chapter 7, the voice of the client is finally given a platform; not through direct access, but through the concept of 'the other', the alternative and potentially undermining version available in the reading relations of the story. Chapter 8 questions the categorisation of social work accounting and the way in which flexible and changing depictions of characters and events enable the undermining of formulations. It considers not merely the nature of the appeal to the ratified reader (as in chapter 3), but how retellings of the story on occasions increasingly distant from the events, produced different versions of characters and different appeals to the reader.

In summary chapters 3 to 8 are organised around the theme of how far social work texts can be investigated as the site for the enrolment and construction of the reader, but also how the reader is able to criticise and undermine. Can such questions offer opportunities for reviewing the status of social work accounting? Rather than seeing them as docile entities producing empirical representations, what advantages can be gained by seeing social work accounts as texts and read as stories, replete with strategic, rhetorical, literal and interactional features?

Chapter 9 considers the implications of this project for both social work and sociology. How far is the study of narrative an important direction for further investigating other fields of accounting practices? What, in particular, can it offer the growing study of discourse and the professional? For social workers, does this sceptical/textual approach enable a more searching review of everyday activity? Does social work as narrative liberate or emasculate professional scrutiny of social work practice?

Thesis Writer: I'm glad you could all come to this team meeting at the beginning of our display. I am sure we are all eager to show the reader the work we have done.

Interviewer: Well I don't know where all my work has gone. From that

debate in 3.3.1. you seem to be saying that all my interviews were nothing more than cosy chats. Social Worker and I were merely taking turns and contradicting ourselves. If you listen to the tapes, you would know what we are talking about, we might not always express ourselves clearly, but you would get the general thrust of the social work that was done. When I worked for Social Work Researcher, she was much more appreciative of my interviews and produced some very interesting findings from them.

Social Worker: Yes, I also object to that. I did my best to explain to Interviewer what was happening with my cases - you seem to be saying that it is all show, 'a performance', that there is no substance to my descriptions. Some of these things are very hard to put into words, but if you think they are 'so variable' as Potter and Mulkay (1985) say, then either you are just not listening as would any other reasonable person, or you are being very picky. I also read the Pink Book (DHSS:1985) and found it very helpful.

Thesis Writer: I am sorry you feel that way and I did think that the interviews were full of very interesting stuff, that's why I take them seriously and don't want to do them an injustice. I really had no choice but to change direction...

Social Work Researcher: I think the implications of the direction you are going in are very serious, very worrying. You have made some pretty strong assertions, I know that you have tried to turn some of them into questions, but that doesn't hide the attempt to undermine, to ridicule. We have worked hard at trying to get our research taken seriously - you have thrown out the possibility of making general claims, you won't be able to use cluster analysis or logit and probit. How on earth will you influence policy and practice? No such thing as 'decisions' or 'facts', whatever next? I tell you the Department of Health won't be interested in this, how on earth, can we tell them what is going on out there?

Thesis Writer: That is exactly my point. This chapter is suggesting a very different way of viewing social work. I can see it is going to be harder than I thought convincing you...

Interviewer: Well you seem to think that I was being convinced by Social Worker, why not take a leaf out of her book?

Thesis Writer: Maybe that's not a bad idea. Look I did not realise you would be all so upset by this approach, perhaps I have taken too much on. But you have to admit that it was pretty silly all those attempts to break up the interviews into 'planning episodes' or 'underlying categories'. How many card indexes or tables should you attempt before you realise that each research situation has to be approached for its unique properties, not forcing it into boxes in order to play around with computers. Once

accepting that, generalities might emerge in terms of the local reading conventions. Look, let's see what theories of narrative have to offer in the next chapter.

Social Worker: This talk about it all being 'narrative' you mean it's just a story, a fabrication. I know you are not saying I tell lies, but that what I say is just a load of jargon and professional claptrap, as a judge said to me once.

Thesis Writer: No no I am not trying to rubbish your reports, on the contrary, I marvel at the 'artful practices' you display in making links between people and their circumstances.

Social Worker: Thanks, I think I can take that as a compliment. But I have a more serious complaint. I don't think you are taking this subject seriously enough; all these jokes and alternative literary forms. Don't you realise that children are suffering out there. Surely you are not saying that Jasmine Beckford or Tyra Henry is a 'text' and it is all to do with how she is read. You are just messing around with textual games, when children are dying. You've done the job, some time ago it might have been, but surely you remember all the dilemmas we face?

Interviewer: Yes I was struck by 'the sadness of it all', as the social worker in interview 4.1 eloquently put it.

Social Work Researcher: See, what did I tell you.

Thesis Writer: Yes, this is a serious complaint and I am not trying to be flippant. I was working in a Social Services Department, when it was rocked by a child abuse tragedy. I am not saying that the child was not killed but I do remember the different reactions from colleagues, the press and the inquiry team. Before the Inquiry everyone was pretty confident there would be no problems, that only good practice would be discovered. Once the Inquiry got under way, the questions ranged from missed letters to Government funding of local authorities, and you are accusing me of not looking at the child's body. But look let's see what narrative theory can offer, I think it might be pretty interesting. I think we need another meeting, don't you? Perhaps we can meet again in chapter 3. Though that last question will come up again, it does worry me.

All: Will you be looking at some proper data (Social work researcher), interviews (Interviewer) cases (Social Worker) by then?

Client (opening the door): sorry is this the case conference?

All: No. This is a private meeting. Can you come back later?

CHAPTER 2 A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO NARRATIVE

INTRODUCTION

At the end of chapter one, the thesis writer is faced by a mass of social work documents and conversations, collectively termed 'social work accounting'. The failure of the factual/rational approach in handling this material has reorientated the investigation towards approaching social work accounting as 'text' caught up in relations of construction and reception. Social work as narrative is suggested as a framework for encompassing concepts of audience, reading and textuality. What can theories of narrative offer to this investigation? How do theoretical approaches to the structural, rhetorical and interactional features of stories help in understanding the reception of social work accounts?

Narrative, like discourse, has been the subject of considerable theoretical debate in recent years and is used differently by different writers. One of the problems which confronts this chapter is how different versions of narrative can be appropriated for this investigation. As was noted in the last chapter, large claims are made for the ubiquity of narrative. Are such claims justified? What is required of a theory of narrative to help explore the nature of social work accounting? According to White (1980:5), narrative is concerned with "the problem of how to translate knowing into telling". To that can be added the requirement for telling to be heard as convincing.⁽¹⁾ How can theories of narrative help locate the performance of social work as describable, tellable and accountable?

This chapter reviews concepts of narrative drawn from history, literary theory, the sociology of scientific knowledge, post-modernism, conversation analysis and sociolinguistics. It is divided into five sections. The first section considers 'grand narratives' associated with Foucault; narrative as the story of the epoch. At the other extreme, the second section discusses the micro approach of sociolinguistics and conversation analysis, where narrative is located in everyday conversation. The third section discusses the literary text and the debate over autonomous or interactional stories. Whilst the first three sections of the chapter are concerned with questions of

what constitutes narrative, the fourth and fifth section looks at narrative methods and functions; not what a story is but how it is used. The fourth section looks at narrative methods, in particular investigating stories through plot, character and point of view. The final section explores how stories are used to perform competence and legitimacy, including how this applies to the analyst-storyteller as well as the social worker-storyteller.

Major theoretical differences in conceiving of narrative are discussed in this chapter; it is not proposed to attempt to integrate them. Instead, the aim is to draw on aspects of several approaches to develop this investigation of social work accounting as text. An important tension is between narrative as constraining and as constructed through 'artful practices'. The 'preferred' version of the nature and function of narrative which this chapter offers, forms the basis for the analysis of social work accounting as text in subsequent chapters.

1 FOUCAULT AND 'GRAND NARRATIVES'

The work of Michel Foucault is a focus for many important debates in the human sciences. Although he does not offer a theory of narrative, his concepts of 'discourse' and 'discursive formations' pose important questions for considering social work accounting in relation to wider social structural features. This is in contrast to micro sociological or linguistic approaches to accounting. What can Foucault's concept of discourse as 'grand narrative' offer to an investigation of social work as texts? How does his later interest in systems of power as located in particular sites of domination apply to social work accounting?

1.1 'Grand Recit'

Foucault's concept of discourse can be considered as similar to Lyotard's concern with 'grand recit' or metanarrative. Both are large formations of knowledge and practice which attempt to offer totalising theories of history and society. For Foucault the archaeologist, a discourse, is a locus of autonomous rules which constitute knowledge. Archaeology is the search to uncover the conditions under which it is possible to be able to make a 'statement' ('enounce') on a topic. Discourse here is not only texts, but the discursive formations, institutional arrangements and practices

which formulate questions and provide answers.

Foucault is interested in the conditions under which the human sciences developed, particularly psychiatry:

Such an inquiry does not belong to the history of ideas or of science: it is rather an inquiry whose aim is to rediscover on what basis knowledge and theory became possible; within what space of order knowledge was constituted; on the basis of what historical a priori. (Foucault 1970:xxi)

For example, Foucault saw madness as the product of a discourse of psychopathology, which developed during the nineteenth century.

Mental illness was constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it. (Foucault 1972:32)

The development and stabilising of the possibility of a knowledge of mental illness was a result of continuous transformations between and within discursive formations. Mental illness is not a stable object but its unity is achieved through the relations between:

...institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterisation. (Foucault 1972:45)

A possible Foucauldian theory of narrative as a totalising discourse is evident in a number of studies of how it is possible to conceive of non-Western cultures. Bruner (1986) signals an indebtedness to Foucault in discussing how anthropologists approach an ethnography of Native American culture. He compares 'the dominant story' or 'metanarrative' of how it was possible to talk about the Indian in the 1930s with that of the 1970s, seeing the change from "assimilation" to "resistance and exploitation". He considers that such "narrative schemes provide a science of the imagination" (p.140). The anthropologist is constrained to conceive of the native through the master story, or what Lyotard (1984) calls the 'grand récit'. As Bruner (1986:145) says:

My only claim is that different narratives are foregrounded in the discourse of different historical eras.

Similarly, Said (1978:3) discusses Orientalism as a discourse, the metanarrative of how it is possible that European culture has been able to manage and produce the Orient.

In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought and action. This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and is therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity 'the Orient' is in question.

Such material and cultural relations constitute the rules of formation of objects. Talking about an object is highly constrained by forms of discourse as an underlying code or rules, which are a product of inter- and intra-discursive transformations.⁽²⁾ The large concept of discourse or narrative is thus an attempt to locate all relations in and through the grand narrative, a system of ways of talking which are to be taken seriously. It is not just what is said but who says it and in what circumstances. As Dreyfus and Rabinow illustrate (1982:48):

For example, 'It is going to rain' is normally an everyday speech act with only local significance, but it can be a serious speech act if uttered by a spokesman for the National Weather Service as a consequence of a meteorological theory.

The consequences for this investigation are that Foucault is not interested in everyday accounting, only in "serious speech acts" (Dreyfus and Rabinow's phrase for 'enounce'). These utterances are divorced from any construction in everyday speech, but are constituted in an autonomous consistent realm of institutional formation and legitimation. Foucault is concerned with the possibility of discourse, not its practice. Kuipers (1989:105) notes:

...his unwillingness to link systematically what he calls a formulation (a situated, individually authored utterance) with a statement (a repeatable, "circulatable" decontextualised semiotic modality that transcends actual situations of use).

Said (1983:186) notes a similar version of an "overriding society":

Foucault's thesis is that individual statements or the chances that individual authors can make statements is not really likely. Over and above every opportunity for saying something, there stands a regularizing collectivity that Foucault has called a discourse, itself governed by the archive.

As Fairclough (1988:31) notes, for Foucault "discourse cannot be reduced to language."

Foucault's approach to discourse and narrative does not help this analysis of

everyday social work accounting. Such descriptions are approached only as reductive of the grand narrative. To limit discourse analysis to a level "anterior to the text" (Foucault 1972:75) ignores the possibility of a fruitful investigation of everyday encounters of reading social work. Fairclough (1988:32) criticises the contention that everyday talk and documents are governed by structures and autonomous rules:

The questionable assumption is that one can extrapolate from structure to practice, that one can arrive at conclusions about practice without directly analysing real instances of it... In brief, what is missing is any sense that practice has properties of its own which (a) cannot be reduced to the implementation of structures, (b) imply that how structures figure in practice cannot be assumed, but has to be determined and (c) ultimately help shape structures.

To approach narrative and narrativity as merely examples of totalising stories is to miss the complexities of local and interactional features of accounting. An analysis of the discourse of social welfare as constituting what can be said about children and families, and by whom, can offer important insights into the historical development of how families are conceived (Stenson 1989, Rose 1990). However such formulations do not exhaust the everyday manipulation and subversion of structural features. Indeed the possibility of locating practice as an example of structure has been a criticism of the privileged position of the archaeologist.⁽³⁾ It is thus suggested that local and interactional construction and reception of social work accounting involves more than an analysis of historical discourses.

In Foucault's later 'genealogical' studies, discourse is secondary to systems of power. This shift to 'bio-power' still appears to make Foucault's work less relevant for an interactional investigation of social work accounting, as it imposes on textual analysis a formulation of power external to the site of textual production and reception. Of particular interest to a study of social work is his discussion of the 'sites of power'. He considers the 'confession' and the 'examination' as technologies of discipline, which are geared to producing 'docile bodies'. Both of these sites are pertinent to social work, the social work interview and the medical examination. The construction of a case is an important aspect of how social work texts are manipulated, which Foucault sees as "the constitution of the individual as a describable, analysable object" (1977:190). He continues:

The examination surrounded by all its documentary techniques makes each individual a case: a case which at one and the same time constitutes an object for a branch of knowledge and a hold for a branch of power. The case is no longer, as in casuistry or jurisprudence, a set of circumstances defining an act and capable of modifying the application of a rule; it is the individual as he may be described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his very individuality: and it is also the individual who has to be trained or corrected, normalized, excluded etc. (1977:191)

The social relations around the construction, reception and subversion of the client as a case can gain from an awareness of Foucault's formulation of institutional sites of power, but the study of such encounters should still privilege the construction and manipulation of institutional features. To see such sites as only displays of domination is to ignore the importance of subversion. As Fairclough (1988:34) notes, Foucault's analysis comes over as "terribly one sided" because of an absence of a focus on struggle and practice.⁽⁴⁾

Comparing Bakhtin and Foucault highlights the different emphases on interactional/performative as opposed to structural/institutional features.⁽⁵⁾ Rice and Waugh (1989:194) sum up the difference:

Voloshinov/Bakhtin sees, in the social conditions of language use, a variety of temporal, provisional and contested fixings of meaning, while Foucault sees, in the configuration of discourse, power and knowledge, the production of surveillance of the social itself.

In summary, social work accounting practices can thus be seen as linked to complex processes of reading and subversion. An investigation of social work accounting is not easily linked directly to a grand narrative of welfare, but inevitably tied up with local and interactional practices of constituting and processing the client. The problem is how to move between the local and the institutional as a basis for textual analysis without simplistic narratives of power determinism. Further criticism of totalising theories of 'grand narratives' are offered by some approaches to post-modernism.

1.2 Grand and Local Narratives

The earlier work of Foucault sees grand narratives as constraining, even determining, action. Other writers are critical of the possibility of metanarratives or grand theories.

The individual and collective must be considered. Said (1978:23) considers that all texts are "worldly and circumstantial":

The problem of the relationship between individual subject and collective force (which reflects also the problem of the dialectic between voluntary intention and determined movement) is still an explicit difficulty and it is acknowledged by Foucault. (Said 1983:187)

More fundamentally, Lyotard (1984) argues that metanarrative or 'grand recit' is no longer possible and indeed he defines post-modernism as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (1984:xxiv). In promoting local narratives (petit recit), Lyotard discusses 'language games', which make use of 'moves', construct 'senders' and 'addressees' and handle the 'referent'. As Jameson notes in the foreword to Lyotard (1984):

...this revival of an essentially narrative view of 'truth' and the vitality of small narrative units at work everywhere locally in the present social system are accompanied by something like a global or totalising crisis in the narrative function in general, since the older master narratives of legitimation no longer function in the service of research - nor, by implication anywhere else. (Lyotard 1984:xix)

Grand narratives are breaking up, but this does not lead to the "dissolution of the social bond" (Lyotard 1984:15). Everywhere little narratives are performed. Drawing on Wittgenstein and the study of pragmatics (Austin, Searle, Grice) language games form the basis for Lyotard's post-modern method: "the minimum relation required for society to exist" (1984:15).

Locating local narratives in the performance of language games and the construction of the addressee has important implications for this study. Whereas narrative for the literary theorist is concerned with the role of the reader, Lyotard notes the importance of the moves necessary in science to construct the addressee (the student) and in doing so the criteria of legitimation:

...the scientist needs an addressee who can in turn become a sender: he needs a partner. Otherwise, the verification of his statements would be impossible, since the nonrenewal of the requisite skills would eventually bring an end to the necessary, contradictory debate. (1984:24)

In science, as in literature, performing a local narrative involves the construction of a reader and hence a community of hearers, wherein legitimation is constituted. However, for Lyotard, such narratives are not legitimated on the basis of consensus

of the 'community of experts', but on the basis of 'paralogy', to undermine from within the framework of previous orthodoxy. Such local undermining is not the grand changes of paradigm (Kuhn 1970), but the everyday flexible use of moves in language games. Lyotard makes an important distinction between language games based on denotative and prescriptive utterances, knowledge or action. Whereas science is centred on denotative utterances, rules for action are prescriptive:

The important thing is not, or not only, to legitimate denotative utterances pertaining to the truth, such as "the earth revolves round the sun", but rather to legitimate prescriptive utterances pertaining to justice, such as "Carthage must be destroyed"... Knowledge is no longer the subject but in the service of the subject: its legitimacy is the fact that it allows morality to become reality. (Lyotard 1984:36)

In locating knowledge 'in the service of the subject', as part of the language game, Lyotard appears to reverse the Foucauldian metanarrative.

In summary, a Foucauldian theory of narrative has been seen to be inappropriate for this study. To approach the complex and occasioned readings of social work accounting in terms of a totalising and determining metanarrative is to reduce textuality and narrative to simplistic versions of welfare discourses and power relations. A post-modern critique of metanarratives supports a distrust of such historical determinism. Lyotard locates legitimation and hence the possibility for knowledge and action in the language games of 'local narratives'. However such interest in language games and performativity also requires an analysis which rejects objectivity and delights in the play of alternative versions. The local narrative implies the proliferation of stories.⁽⁶⁾ Thus for this investigation of social work accounting, the work of Lyotard locates this project in the everyday activities of games, storytelling and strategies, but also in the play of infinite and equal local narratives. A delight in relativism is however not the basis of the more traditional approaches to local narratives, which are now discussed.

2 MICRO ANALYSIS AND CONVERSATIONAL STORIES

Whilst Lyotard's direction to consider speech acts and local narratives is clear, this is based on scepticism of grand narratives rather than sympathy with micro analysis. There is a considerable field of micro analysis, with little consistency amongst post-

modernists as to what 'investigating local narratives' involves.⁽⁷⁾ The post-modernist concern for an anti-empiricist, anti-theoretical focus on everyday life does not square with many micro theories, which seek to generalise from detailed empirical analysis of daily life. The empirical approaches of conversation analysis and ethnomethodology are however pertinent for asking questions about the production and reception of social work accounts, especially considering them as local strategic and rhetorical performances. However, a sceptical stance is required when approaching formalist or realist constructions of the subject (Rosenau 1992:51).

There are many approaches to the micro analysis of accounting (Potter and Wetherell 1987:7), but few which are directly concerned with long stretches of description or reports.⁽⁸⁾ It is proposed to outline briefly the differences between speech act theory and conversation analysis, and then to discuss two approaches to narrative associated with these theories - Labov and Sacks. Both these approaches see stories in everyday conversation as more than a single sentence, but still restrict their analysis to no more than a few lines - for example, Sacks' famous 'the baby cried, the mommy picked it up' (Sacks 1972). The approaches are in contrast to grand narratives, the literary novel and storytelling performances (as described by anthropologists eg Bauman 1986). The formalist tendency in linguistics (devices, grammar, syntax) is also criticised by Bakhtin, who recommends studying "the whole work, the whole utterance" (Medvedev 1985:129).

2.1. Speech Act theory and Conversation Analysis.

Speech act theory developed in opposition to logical positivist theories, concerned with the logical truth of language.⁽⁹⁾ Austin (1962) was interested in performative utterances which do things, not being assessable as true or false; for example, 'I name this ship'. In distinguishing the active nature of language, speech act theorists have been concerned with distinguishing necessary and sufficient conditions for various typologies of speech act. There has been criticism of such an enterprise since exceptions to such conditions are widespread in everyday use. Conversation is "just too variable and situation dependent" (Levinson 1983:281). Schegloff (in Sacks 1992:xxvi) notes the difference between Searle and Sacks in analysing an 'invitation'. Whereas Searle would attempt to distinguish conditions, Sacks is interested in

"practices and methods." For Sacks, a possible instance of an 'invitation' has two parts: a partial definition which then provides for the actual use on this occasion. The important difference is not the conditions for the act nor the rules of performance, but the interactional work necessary to bring off the act - to raise the possibility of an invitation and then attend to this particular incidence. That it is a 'possible' invitation can only be recognised by charting the outcome of the response. Such differences between the necessary conditions of speech act theory and the interaction of conversation analysis distinguish Labov and Sacks approaches to narrative. Labov acknowledges his indebtedness to Sacks but points out an important difference:

We agree that sequencing is a matter of considerable importance for the understanding of what takes place in conversation, and (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974) have advanced much further into the social structure of such speech events than anyone else; but it will be helpful if we can develop a more exact characterisation of the units that are sequenced.
(Labov and Fanshel 1978:25)

2.2 Labov and story structure

Labov is interested in understanding what is going on in a particular stretch of conversation; to "lay bare as much of the scaffolding of conversational interaction as we can" (Labov and Fanshel 1978:26). A narrative is one type of speech act through which the structure of a conversation can be recognised; others are requests, challenges, assertions. The use of a story can:

...function as equivalent to such single speech as response, putting off a request, challenge and so forth. (1978:105)

This is a functional approach to narrative. A speaker has to abide by 'obligatory' rules to use such speech acts and the listener must respond appropriately for the act to be successful. The crucial analytical questions for Labov are: is this a narrative or another speech act for displaying experiences, and what are the essential features of narrative structure? Labov and Waletzky (1967:20) define a narrative as:

one method of recapitulating past experiences by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually happened.

A narrative is structured to relate what happened and why it is worth telling. It has a temporal form but also an evaluative clause to answer the 'so what' question. A

minimal narrative has two clauses, but can be expanded by the addition of more temporal clauses, relating what happened next. A story is therefore recognisable through the distribution of narrative clauses.⁽¹⁰⁾ For a fully formed narrative, Labov and Waletzky offer six elements: an abstract which prefaces the point or topic; an orientation which sets the scene and provides the background; a complicating action which lays out the problem to be solved; an evaluation which comments on the problem; a resolution solving the problem and a coda to signal the end of the story.⁽¹¹⁾

The problem of locating the minimal narrative and its structure has, as Stewart (1991) suggests, been a concern of narrative theorists since Aristotle. Other narrative theorists identify different definitive characteristics.⁽¹²⁾ Story structure is thus an important aspect of any discussion of narrative theory, although there are major theoretical differences over what constitutes story structure. A story is a mental construct, a linguistic feature, a literary genre. Labov's model is of interest in that the features described do seem to correspond with an intuitive recognition of a narrative. Reading stories does seem to require that complications are set up and resolved.⁽¹³⁾ However, what does story structure constitute? Is it a set of necessary conditions which reside 'in' the text independent of the reader? Alternatively, is recognition of story structure a reader's task as much as an analyst's task? A theoretical definition of story structure does not ensure analytic privilege of story recognition, rather it suggests the search for story structure is a 'reader-as-analyst' task, a lay theory.

Labov's elements can be approached less as necessary conditions or obligatory rules for the identification of a story, and more as possible interactional accomplishments and tasks in writer/reader communication. Labov hints at the role of the reader more than others interested in story structure, but his reader and writer are formal constructs with fixed roles. In contrast, Barthes (1977) for example, sees the relationship between writer, text and reader as complex and fluid. A number of writers have criticised Labov, questioning whether his elements are clearly identifiable or necessary for successfully hearing of a story (Polanyi 1985). Shuman (1986:50) considers that the evaluative question with which the storyteller is faced may not be 'so what?' as 'who says?'; a challenge of the entitlement to recount, not interest.⁽¹⁴⁾ This is clearly an important aspect of accounting.

In summary, Labov's model of story structure is not helpful if seen as an abstracted theoretical formation of necessary conditions, an extended speech act. If story structure is approached as a possible interactional accomplishment for achieving accountability, then Labov's features are a useful starting point. Social work accounting can be investigated as achieved through the interactional production and recognition of stories by both reader and analyst. It is here that the work of Sacks can be developed.

2.3 Sacks and Conversational Stories

Sacks investigates stories in conversation, but, unlike Labov, is not concerned with the definition or necessary conditions for a story. Stories are approached as interactional constructs on the occasions and through the methods that they are attended to by speakers and hearers. Stories exist when participants react to them as stories. It is not what they are, but 'how does it matter'. Not what a story is, as what a story does. As with the earlier discussion of 'invitation' (section 2.1), Sacks is interested in a 'possible' or 'candidate story', its emergence as a story being dependent on its production and reception in conversation.

Does it matter that a story is produced to be recognised and that it is recognised by its production? With that, we are in a position to examine - not stories but candidate stories, to see whether it appears that it matters. And we look for some way to find that it might matter. What sort of facts about candidate stories can be found, in terms of which a demonstration of the relevance of that the thing is a story can be done? (1992:223)

Sacks considers that the production of stories takes work which involves making the ordinary unusual. Scenes do not simply present themselves. Speakers and hearers look at events for their 'storyable' and hence 'reportable' features, and find a story from the many possible representations of experiences.

Sacks notes different ways of handling this interactional problem. They can be presented through the events and experiences of the storyteller, a 'witness' using a 'course of action characterisation' (1992:242). Alternatively a reporter is more likely to use a course-of-action characterisation from within the story events. For either approach, the storyteller has to tell the story through an unfolding puzzle, which leads

the hearer through the maze of potential tellings. Sacks (1972:340) notes how any possible description can be developed into a possible story.

It happens to be correct, for Western literature, that if some piece of talk is a possible description it is also, and thereby, a possible story or story part.

It is this work at making the descriptions of events and experiences into stories, which involves the use of storytelling devices and story structures. The structures are however not intrinsic to the story, but are features of the performance of storytelling and the joint work of hearer and speaker. Goodwin (1984:245) demonstrates how participants use story structure as a constitutive feature of the events in which they are engaged:

(this analysis), by showing how the story provides for a field of action for a range of different types of participants and how these participants analyse and make use of the emerging structure of the story, is thus relevant to some general questions about story organisation that have been raised by workers in a number of fields.

Whilst story structure for Sacks and Goodwin is a product of interactional work, some of the features of story they suggest are similar to Labov's model. Sacks is concerned about beginnings and endings, which are similar to Labov's abstract and coda. The difference is that Sacks sees 'openings' as strategic moves to disrupt the normal turn taking sequence of conversation. The problem faced by a storyteller is to continue for more than a single utterance, and to prevent a potential next speaker from starting to speak. Story prefaces offer instructions to the hearer to allow the storyteller to hold the floor for more than a single utterance. Sacks (1992:226) notes some ways in which permission is sought and granted. For example:

There are sequences with an initial utterance such as 'I have something terrible to tell you' followed by some other party saying 'say some more' via such specific obvious technical things that can be done as 'what?' which returns the floor to the last speaker with an instruction to say some more.

Regarding story completions, Sacks (1972:342) notes for example, the reporting of characters doing a terminal action, like going to sleep, are hearable as an ending. Whilst Sacks does not suggest that stories have a 'point', he considers a story is completed when the subject of the story preface has been provided:

Just taking the type of preface I have given you, 'I have something terrible to tell you', then in stories that have characterising adjectives like 'terrible', the business of such a term is not just to arouse interest but to instruct hearers to use terms to monitor the story - when they've heard something that it could name, the story is over. (1992:228)

As with Labov's model, for the hearer to remain interested, the story must be heard to provide a complicating and then resolving feature, which was promised at the beginning. For Sacks however, such features are not intrinsic to the story, but interactionally linked to the occasion of the telling. Also in contrast to Labov, Sacks sees utterances not as chronologically related to the events of the story, but as demonstrating the storyteller finding a tellable story from within the mass of possible representations.

Ultimately, there are few differences between the story structures which Labov and Sacks offer - both suggest a beginning, an ending and a story complication or interest being satisfied. The important difference concerns the interactional nature of the story. For Labov, story structure is a framework 'outside' the interaction, which an analyst can identify. For Sacks, a story is available through communicational cues between any teller and hearer to enable story recognition and reaction. This distinction is important since any occasion of hearing a story by hearer or analyst means following the unfolding interactional features presented and reacted to by hearers. What methods are made available by the storyteller to engage and carry along the listener? The structure of a story offers important instructions to the hearer. Story structure viewed in this way is both a cultural (and sub-cultural) requirement meeting the expectations of the speaker and hearer; only certain story structures will be heard as appropriate and accurate.

What are the implications of Sacks' interactional, 'possible' stories for approaching social work accounting as stories? Sacks only discusses conversational stories and locates them in the turn taking sequence of everyday conversation. A story is an extended turn. Social work accounts are not all produced within conversation and interviews do not necessarily abide by a turn taking sequence (Silverman 1973).⁽¹⁵⁾ The problem for written social work documents is that the reader is not identifiable in the next turn. How then can the reader be identified and a story recognised? In interviews with an explicit hearer, research protocol dictates that the

interviewer does not react to and evaluate the story explicitly. Even in conversational texts, the next turn might not confirm recognition of storytelling, or there may be disagreement as to the nature of the interaction. To recognise stories only in the explicit reaction of speakers and hearers is to limit the potential of hearing narrative and of multiple reader relations. Achieving accountability through story recognition is equally an analyst's task, although a sceptical approach to hearing/reading 'possible' stories is essential.

The narrative features of all social work accounting might be usefully considered for the way in which Sacks attends to the role of the reader/hearer. A number of theorists have turned to the performance of storytelling as a model for approaching written texts as narrative. For example, McLean (1988:1) studies literary texts and considers:

The basic problems of narrative can, in the first instance, be better understood in relation to oral narration... the teller-hearer nexus inherent in all narrative.

Narrative as performance thus investigates the interaction between writer and reader on the occasion of the reading. Concepts from conversation analysis can be applied to a range of accounting occasions.⁽¹⁶⁾ If social work accounting through telling stories is located in performance, the aim is to locate such occasions, recognise narrative features and identify readers. Such performances are however widely distributed in many potential readings occasions. (see chapter 3). Similarly, story structure can usefully be approached as potential interactional features available in such performances.

To sum up so far, the possibility of approaching social work accounting as text and hearable as narrative means investigating local rather than grand narrative. A sceptical stance of multiple versions of texts as stories with many potential readers has been acknowledged. Story structure is approached as an interactional feature. Not what is a story, but how does reading social work accounting as texts make use of 'storyable features'; how do participants interact in producing and receiving accounts which are attended to as correct, frivolous, coherent, entertaining; in short storyable and listenable. The performance of social work accounts as stories, including written documents, is a central concern.⁽¹⁷⁾ We can now consider how literary texts are

approached as interactional and through the occasions of their performance.

3 LITERARY TEXTS AND NARRATIVE PERFORMANCE

The conclusion of our investigation of conversational stories has led us away from a concern with the definition of a story towards an interest in the activity of reading and recognising storyable features. In literary theory, there is a similar project aiming to identify properties specific to literary narratives, what the Formalists call 'literariness' (Rice and Waugh 1989:17). However emphasising a clear distinction between literary and non-literary narrative has been criticised by others (Herrnstein Smith 1978, Bakhtin 1981). Literary theory has recognised that by approaching the literary work as a 'text', interpretations change with every reading, as Barthes (1977: 157) says: "the Text is experienced only in an activity of production". Studies of performance are interested in the complex interaction of context and text, "the process of negotiation in which participants reflexively examine the discourse as it emerges" (Bauman and Briggs 1990:69). Such a formulation offers an occasion for the reader to evaluate the text and the storyteller's accomplishment, not merely receive it. This debate is discussed in the distinction between autonomous and interactional stories as illustrated in the dialogue between Chatman (1978, 1980) and Herrnstein Smith (1978, 1980).

3.1 Autonomous versus Interactional stories

Nystrand and Wiemelt (1991:25) make the following distinction:

Formalist accounts of text meaning define explicitness as the complete representation of the writer's intention whereas dialogical or social-interactive accounts treat texts as explicit when they negotiate unproblematic shared understandings between writers and readers.

Chatman (1978) develops the structuralist approach which considers that there is a basic story or deep plot structure underlying any narrative. He acknowledges Propp's (1968) formalist distinction between fable (fabula) and plot (sjuzet), and the structuralist division into story (histoire) and discourse (discours). This separates the content or chain of the events in a narrative from their expression in each manifestation; what happens as opposed to how it is told. The basic story is autonomous, independent of its surface manifestations. The narrative in a film or book

reproduces the basic story, but the discourse changes with different techniques and devices to represent it. Chatman concludes that:

The transportability of the story is the strongest reason for arguing that narratives are indeed structures independent of any medium. (1978:20)

A similar structural approach has been applied to non-literary writing.⁽¹⁸⁾ Unlike the concept of story structure in Labov, this contention is not that a story 'has' a structure, rather narrative 'is' a structure, a cultural entity independent of its use or construction. Any storytelling occasion is a surface manifestation of an underlying cultural entity. This returns to the story or grand narrative discussed earlier, 'literariness' or 'news' determined by deeper cultural structures, symbols or oppositions.

In contrast to a formalist/structuralist approach, Herrnstein Smith offers an 'interactionist approach' to narratives, and, in doing so, questions the idea of a separate literary narrative. She rejects the distinction between story and discourse, considering that a basic story would be 'unknowable' (1980:216). She concludes:

No narrative version can be independent of a particular teller and occasion of telling and, therefore, that we may assume that every narrative version has been constructed in accord with some set of purposes or interests. (1980:219)

Any reading or interpretation of a narrative is a product of contexts and interests; no version can be privileged above any other.

Whenever we start to cut back, peel off, strip away, lay bare and so forth, we always do so in accord with certain assumptions and purposes which, in turn, create hierarchies of relevance and centrality (1980:221)

All narratives and versions of narratives are a product of occasions of telling and reading, with no version more basic. Multiple versions can be constructed for every given narrative, each one reflecting the purposes at hand of the storyteller and audience. The analyst, as much as the storyteller or reader, is involved in producing metanarratives. The work of Bakhtin develops such reader-text-context interaction into a complex theory of communication and dialogue.

3.2 Bakhtin: Narrative and Dialogue

The work of Mikhail Bakhtin (and his colleagues Voloshinov and Medvedev) can help

develop these questions.⁽¹⁹⁾ He does not offer a theory of narrative, his interest being more in the theory of the novel. However his work provides a comprehensive (if disputed and perhaps inconsistent) theory of communication and dialogue, which locates narrative within a wide view of language use, communication and performance. A number of his main themes are outlined here and taken up in later chapters.

Overall Bakhtin is interested in what Morson and Emerson (1990:15) call 'prosaics' as opposed to poetics, a theory of literature that unlike formalism, privileges prose over poetry. More generally, such an approach emphasises the study of the everyday and the ordinary, with non-literary language seen as equally artistic and creative. He is concerned with dialogue in the widest sense in that social existence cannot be separated from communication, "To be means to communicate" (Bakhtin 1984:287).

His theory has a number of advantages. First, it offers an approach which is situated between societal constraint and individual creativity, considering both the occasion of performance and the history of language use. For Bakhtin, there is a continual interplay between the use of language, 'the utterance', and its previous and potential use.

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (1981:276)

The importance of this concept of the utterance, the 'double voiced word', is that all language use is seen as the product of a communicative event, a teller, an audience and the many potential voices that can be invoked in relation to such an act. Bakhtin sees all speech as reported speech in that previous uses are always available to be invoked. Another feature of Bakhtin's concept of language use is the constraint of 'speech genre'; cultural conventions of what constitutes adequate communication. Speech genres are given a wide canvas and can refer both to locally produced forms as well as "scientific statements and all literary genres from the proverb to the multivolume novel" (Bakhtin 1986:61).

Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own relatively stable types of these utterances. These may be called speech genres. The wealth and diversity of speech genres are boundless because the various possibilities of human activity are inexhaustible, and because each sphere of activity contains an entire repertoire of speech genres that differentiate and grow as the particular sphere develops, and become more complex. (Bakhtin 1986:60)

Such a view of creativity and constraint in the performance of accounting appears ideally suited to this investigation. It focuses on the local construction of events and entities, but unlike conversation analysis, it anticipates future ambitions and past experiences.

Second, Bakhtin is concerned with the unfinalised nature of entities. As Morson and Emerson (1990:30) comment: "Wholeness is always a matter of work. It is not a gift but a project." There is a continual interplay between forces which attempt to control fixed meaning and order and those which seek to disrupt; what Bakhtin calls 'centripetal' (or official) and 'centrifugal' (or unofficial) forces. A concern with instability sharply separates Bakhtin from formal or structural approaches which see events and entities as the product of an underlying system. For Bakhtin, there is no such system apart from momentary stability in the struggle of competing languages or 'heteroglossia'.

Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralisation and decentralisation, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance; the utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualised embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of heteroglossia as well; it is in fact an active participation in such speech diversity. (Bakhtin 1981:270)

The construction and reception of texts thus involves constantly attempting to stabilise meaning, and in the act of such construction, entities and their meaning are re-invented and altered.

The work of Bakhtin is complex and wide-ranging but develops Herrnstein Smith's approach to the interactional and local nature of narrative. In summary, as with the discussion of conversational stories, the search for narrativity in literary texts has focused on the performance of the story and the creation of the reader. Such a

discussion has confronted some fundamental aspects of how narrative and narrativity can be approached. First, narrative is located in the narrative act and in the 'commonplace', not in story structure or autonomous stories. Second, narrative performance extends over multiple reading occasions. On such occasions, local interactional features are negotiated, but historical and potential readings are available for appropriation. Third, some stability of reading and interpretation is offered in speech genres, but such stability is flexible and local, reacting to occasions and negotiations. Fourth, interpretation is unfinalised. Fixed meanings are open to challenge, but at the same time there are attempts to close down options and resist subversion.

Bakhtin's quintessential forum for the interplay of language use and genre is the market place or the carnival, with many languages and backgrounds clashing and interacting. Does this apply to the reading of social work accounting as text in the official occasions of courts and case conferences? How is subversion possible in social work accounts? This is developed in chapters 7 and 8. Suffice it to say here, this contested and negotiated approach offers a sceptical, unstable approach to reading narrative, but one which takes seriously the potential criticism of the audience and the persuasion of the text. Turning from disagreements over what constitutes a story, the narrative methods available to the storyteller and reader developed in literary theory remain a concern with the organisation and reception of narratives, in particular plot, character and point of view.

4 NARRATIVE METHODS: PLOT, CHARACTER AND POINT OF VIEW

These aspects of stories have been widely discussed in literary theory. Here they will be investigated to see how far they can be applied to social work accounting as text and available as narrative. There is a danger in imbuing concepts with explanatory significance, of locating storyability in features 'above' the discourse. How far does plot, character and point of view adequately locate the construction and reception of accounting as text? Do these features enable social work accounting to be read as stories? Literary theorists consider such features provide ways in which the reader is enticed into the sequencing of the story and instructed how to respond to and categorise plot and characters.

4.1 Plot

Chatman (1978:84) sees the development of literary theory since Aristotle as concerned with 'narrative macrostructures', "the general design of plots".⁽²⁰⁾ It has been suggested above that the structuralist approach to an external, determining story structure should be replaced by an investigation of the interactional structuring of narratives. Plot is a way of organising and displaying events and experiences as connected and related, providing the reader with a framework to follow the account. Events or experiences can be recounted in many ways. Hardison (1968:123) notes the author:

... can arrange the incidents in a story in a great many ways. He can treat some in detail and barely mention others... He can observe chronological sequence, he can distort it, he can use messengers or flashbacks and so forth. Each arrangement produces a different plot and a great many plots can be made from the same story.

For Sacks (1992:230), as mentioned above, the storyteller has to find a route into the story; the preface introduces a topic which the ending resolves. It should also be noted that the point of view from which the story is told, where the storyteller is standing, also alters the version available. The storyteller is likely to display only those features of events and experiences which support the 'point' and guide the audience. Events are ordered in a (often temporal) sequence ⁽²¹⁾ with extraneous elements and events eliminated or relativised. Carr (1986:123) quotes Barthes' image of the 'noise' of real life, which the story smooths over.

Whilst Sacks, Herrnstein Smith and Lyotard emphasise that 'narrative acts' and fragments can be heard as stories, other writers make distinctions between full formed narratives as opposed to potential stories. White (1987:173) discusses Ricoeur and the way 'emplotment' changes a fragment or chronicle into a narrative. A journalist's telling of a story of what happened cannot become a historical narrative without 'secondary referentiality'. A sequence of events to become a narrative must be "'configured' ('grasped together') in a such way as to represent 'symbolic discourse'", what Ricoeur calls the "ultimate referent". White (1980:9) contrasted the historical narrative with the chronicle:

The chronicle, by contrast, often seems to wish to tell a story, aspires to narrativity, but typically fails to achieve it. More specifically, the chronicle usually is marked by a failure to achieve narrative closure. It starts to tell

a story but breaks off in the chronicler's own present; it leaves things unresolved or rather leaves them unresolved in a story-like way.

Such a view of plot changes the discussion from an organising function to a legitimating, authoritative function. The authority of narrative is discussed in chapter 5, but it should be noted here that authority is an everyday, interactional as well as an academic achievement.⁽²²⁾

For the purposes of this investigation, plot can be approached as organising and authorising interaction between writer and audience in the reading of everyday accounts. It is not seen as an a priori legitimating function. Unlike formalist approaches to story structure, it is not the form of the story that is of interest but the way that events and entities are combined on the occasion of the reading. What instructions and pathways are provided to guide the reader through the story? (Smith 1978). How are events and entities linked together? It is therefore the way the story is put together which is of interest, and also how dispreferred avenues are closed off.

4.2 Character

Character in social work accounting is developed in chapters 4,5 and 8. If the investigation of social work accounting as narrative is to be productive, then character depiction is a central concern. Here the problem of character in literary theory is briefly outlined. Since Aristotle, analysis has mainly considered the action of characters, not their traits or personality. Chatman (1978:109) notes how Golden and Hardison for example compare 'plot' to the "overall plan of a painting' and character to the 'colours'.⁽²³⁾ Chatman (1978:117) criticises the 'closed' approach to characterisation and suggests an 'open' theory of character. He argues that the fictional/non fictional divide does not limit the reader's opportunity to make inferences about character.

For social work, which has been dominated by psychological theories of personality, how character is linked to plot is an important question. Todorov (1977:68-70) makes an interesting distinction between psychological and a-psychological narratives. Psychological narratives are character-centred, with actions as expressions or symptoms of the character's personality. A-psychological narratives are plot centred, the character merely a product of events. Todorov distinguishes

'immediate' and 'mediated' causality, as representing a-psychological and psychological narratives respectively. The first would be of the type 'X is brave - X challenges the monster.' In the second, the appearance of the first proposition would have no immediate consequence, but in the course of the narrative X would appear as someone who acted bravely.

Recent approaches to 'the subject' suggest caution in merely linking depiction of character to 'traits' of personality as does Chatman (1978:121). Foucault (1972) argues that Man is an invention of modern thought, "a position within language", hence analysis should concentrate on how character is constructed and reacted to, without attempting to use psychological constructs to legitimate or categorise depiction. Some post-modern approaches to literature resist the construction of character; for example, Eco (1983:14):

In the pages to follow I shall not indulge in descriptions of persons... as nothing is more fleeting than external form, which withers and alters like the flowers of the field as the appearance of autumn.

In 'The Name of the Rose' characters are constructed through the interplay of genres, as well as plot.

Other writers are interested in the way that characters break loose from the author's control, concerned about their own fictionality and resisting the author's authority. Bakhtin, discussing Dostoevsky's characters, considers plot not an ordered sequence into which characters fit, but the unanticipated outcome of dialogue:

Its goal (plot) is to place a person in various situations that expose and provoke him, to bring people together and make them collide in conflict - in such a way, however, that they do not remain within this area of plot-related contact but exceed its bounds. (1984:276-7)

Not based on a finalised plot or predestined plan, such narratives work entirely through reader interaction.⁽²⁴⁾ As Morson and Emerson (1990:249) put it, "readers are dialogic partners of the characters and author... it is impossible to be just an 'eyewitness'."

For Bakhtin and some post-modern writers, it seems no longer possible to see emplotment as a source of creative intentionality, but a part of the free play of unfinalised characters and events, open to continuing (re)interpretation. There are thus conflicting approaches available for reading character in social work accounting. To investigate character which is open to subversion from within the account as well as from outside is an interesting problem for social workers involved in depicting 'real' and possibly 'combative' characters'. This is investigated further in chapter 6 and the concept of the other in chapters 7 and 8.

4.3 Point of View or Narrative Versions

Chatman (1978:151) considers there are three aspects to point of view - literal: through someone's eyes, figurative: through someone's world view, and transferred: from someone's interest-vantage. He is further concerned about the difference between point of view and narrative voice, the latter more concerned with means of communication:

Point of view does not mean expression; it only means the perspective in terms of which the expression is made. (1978:153)

Point of view is developed as interactionally negotiated by Herrnstein Smith's concept of narrative version. She considers the narrative act as a version, local and from a particular point of view:

... narrative 'versions'- that is, as retellings of other narratives and as accounts told from a particular or partial perspective. (1980:215)

Herrnstein Smith (1980:218-220) considers the many versions of the story of Cinderella and concludes that the search for an original version from which the others have derived, has been unsuccessful. What the story is 'really' about has varied as much as the changes in plot and character in the 345 variants. Similarities between versions are dependent on the similarities in:

...the verbal acts of particular narrators performed in response to - and thus shaped and constrained by - sets of multiple interacting conditions. (1980:226)

The sociology of science offers a number of pointers to performing and reading texts

as versions (for example, Gilbert and Mulkey 1984, Woolgar 1976). In attempting to write a history of the discovery of pulsars, Woolgar (1976: 397) found that in reading summary accounts, there were a number of differences and gaps. More fundamentally, they were already histories and furthermore Woolgar himself is involved in 'logical re-construction'. To read an account is to construct a local, perspectival reading; a 'text- event'.

It thus appears appropriate to consider point of view in its widest sense of the situatedness of the writer and reader. Every version of every account has potentially multiple readings and responses. How then does the reader react to the writer's attempts to recruit and persuade? Do some readings gain more recognition than others? What features of more robust versions are able to survive retellings? (Versions and robustness are considered in chapters 5 and 6).

To summarise, this section has outlined three key concepts for analysing social work accounting. How is social work accounting constructed as text and the reader recruited to counteract subversion? Each of the features - plot, character, point of view - suggests fruitful ways of examining storyable features of social work accounts. In subsequent chapters, these features are deployed through a close analysis of social work documents, in conjunction with features of story structure and form outlined in the previous section.

5 FUNCTIONS AND EFFECTS OF STORYTELLING

So far this review of theories of narrative has been concerned with constructing, structuring and recognising a story - what does a story look like? how is a text available to be read as storyable? A wider and more difficult question is what is the purpose of a particular story. What does the storyteller achieve with his/her narrative? What does the hearer/reader take from hearing it? This is not an investigation of motives or intentions as prior to the encounter (Sharrock and Watson 1984). Rather what effects can be seen to be made available through storytelling performances? Confronting this question differentiates social work accounting from reading literary texts, which are associated with entertaining, desire, 'the pleasure of the text' (Barthes 1976). Social work accounts are written and read through legal and administrative occasions. A reason for the document might be stated at some point,

a request for a particular resource, a recommendation of court disposal. However, many local and global functions and effects might be attended to by teller, listener and analyst. Jakobson (1960) differentiates six functions of language around the overall speech situation, highlighting the range of functions other than the referential function.

One way of approaching social work accounting is to investigate the extent to which it performs community, how is it heard as social work? How are relations established between a particular account and concepts and conventions available in and recognisable as social work? This is not to suggest a discrete professional language, but to investigate how words, utterances and concepts display the "taste of a profession" (Bakhtin 1981:293). Work in sociolinguistics explores how the organisation of narratives make available competence and entitlement of the storyteller. From a different perspective, accounts can be heard to make links directly to organisational functions; how does a particular account display that it is performing and legitimating social work? Further, given that the storyteller is attending to his/her own performance, how does entitlement to tell the academic story require that the analyst make explicit his/her own methods of storytelling ; how far can reflexivity help an investigation of competence and performance of the academic and professional narrative?

5.1 Displaying Professional Competence.

The term 'competence' in linguistics has been associated with Chomsky's (1965) distinction between a speaker's knowledge of language (competence) and the use of language (performance). Such a distinction has been criticised as separating features which are in fact inextricably linked and constantly interact with each other.⁽²⁵⁾ 'Social competence' according to Harre and Secord (1972) refers to the stock of social knowledge which enables actors to respond to social situations in appropriate ways. Professional competence might be considered in a similar way, but not as a fixed set of social recipes, rather as rhetorical formulations which perform and display the social work community. A competent professional story can be investigated by both hearer and analyst to see how far it both displays and creates shared understandings, prescriptions for action and sentiments about what constitutes competent social work

talk.

Sociolinguistics has developed notions of coherence and cohesion to investigate the way accounts hang together as texts. Cohesion refers to the way clauses in text are interpretatively linked to each other; one clause read as understandable in relation to a previous one. Interpreting such cohesion is based on underlying semantic relations (Schiffrin 1987:9). Coherence is a similar concept referring to the connectedness of larger segments of text. The importance of a shared understanding for communicating a text is emphasised and according to Schiffrin's (1987:22) interpretation of Gumperz, the work of making such connections is reflexive:

...not only are (hearers) constrained by the larger interpretational frames in which they are situated, but they actually create interpretive contexts through which a speaker's underlying communicative intention can be inferred.

Hearers examine utterances in order to interpret the 'totality' of a message, not merely the communicative cues, and in doing so enable context and interpretation to be made available. The link between textual coherence and a competent storytelling is complex. Some writers develop concepts of 'schema', which attempt to interpolate from textual coherence a speaker's overall intention in telling a story.⁽²⁶⁾ Such approaches however appear concerned with the storyteller's intentions and how they are textually achieved. Competence is rather a matter of reflexive display and reader response, attended to by both hearer and teller, not merely inferred by an analyst.

How far can investigating the production and reception of interpretive contexts for reading accounts offer insights into the performance and reception of (professional) community based understandings? Demonstrating professional competence through storytelling may link functions of storytelling directly to the communicative task of the storyteller and hearer and their shared inspection of professional talk. Competence in telling and hearing professionally acceptable stories can be seen as an important function of these accounts, both to display the speaker and hearer as in line with professional norms and at the same time construct and reconstruct conventions of professional adequacy.

5.2 Entitlement to tell stories.

Another function of storytelling might be located in displays of entitlement to tell

stories; to provide within the story methods of creating legitimacy to speak, to be listened to and taken seriously. The performance of social work community is made available in the claims of entitlement to talk, write and listen to social work accounting. In historiography, there is a debate about how historical narratives are concerned to display legitimation through moral construction or fact building. White (1980:24) sees narrative as essentially concerned with moralising:

The demand for closure in the historical story is a demand, I suggest, for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a moral drama.

Mink (1978), on the other hand, sees narrative as a "cognitive instrument", standing outside and above events, taking them in at a glance, external to storyteller. Moral and fact construction have been discussed at length in conversation analysis and the sociology of scientific knowledge, and can be seen to offer an important way of approaching many of the narrative features so far discussed. They are investigated further in chapters 4 and 5.

5.3. Organisational Narrative

There has been little development of the concept of narrative in studies of organisational discourse (Manning 1986, Pithouse and Atkinson 1988). It is not suggested that social work accounting should be approached as a distinct occupational discourse, different from other readings of narrative. As Manning (1986:297) comments, police stories are "a framed bit of culture". Even so, in order to be heard as performing community, how are connections made between an account and social workers' occupational genres? How is the reader/hearer instructed that the account is occupationally legitimate and shared? How do such instructions for the reader vary with the context under construction? - court reports might perform community differently from case notes (see chapter 3).

Deploying and invoking shared understandings in reading occupational accounts has been investigated by a number of writers. Manning (1986) studies how the police reduce complex incidents to "mini narratives" to enable simple processing and reconstruction. Performing community in such 'organisational texts' makes use of crude narrative structures - plot, character and action. Manning (1986:298) notes

how occupational context is invoked:

Context is, if nothing else, assumed knowledge; it is what is absent from speech but signalled by it.

Garfinkel (1967:199) notes how medical records are concerned with demonstrating that treatment has been "in accord with expectations of sanctionable performances by clinicians and patients." The requirement to display 'medico-legal responsibility' outweighs a concern for accuracy. Later readers are able to reconstruct action as "documented representations" of an underlying doctor-patient contract.

Strong and Dingwall (1983) discuss displays of accounting through appeals to a range of organisational licenses, mandates, charters and missions. Having to reconstruct everyday activity in terms of charters:

...restricts the range of legitimisable discourse through which organisationally relevant action may be identified, analysed and discussed by members. (1983:109)

Strong and Dingwall consider how far charters constrain occupational action through formal ceremonies. Of more interest for this study is how charters are invoked in everyday accounting. For example, how is departmental policy or legal mandate invoked in social work accounting?

Whilst the above studies locate occupational accounting in links between local and organisational discourse, Pithouse and Atkinson (1988) suggest that social work accounting is interactionally constructed through skilled narrative display, a "kaleidoscope of occupational and personal views of proper domestic arrangements" (1988:195). This is an analysis of collegial accounting in social work supervision. Here social workers look to one another for local legitimation in establishing a 'narrative contract' between teller and hearer. How does social work accounting in other encounters appeal beyond invocations to the competence of the trusted storyteller?

5.4. Reflexivity: the analyst's storytelling.

To claim a mandate, competence and entitlement to read social work accounting through narrative also applies to this thesis as a storyable account. Gruenberg (1978:322) comments:

Any statement which holds that humans necessarily act or believe in particular ways under particular circumstances refers as much to the

social scientist as anyone else.

Reflexivity has become an important feature in the human sciences, with wide-ranging sceptical questions about its history and legitimacy (for example Foucault 1970, Clifford and Marcus 1986, Woolgar and Ashmore 1987, Bourdieu 1992). Major questions of the legitimacy of social scientific representation have different concerns. Rather than a problem to be overcome, Woolgar and Ashmore (1987:2) see reflexivity as offering new ways of addressing questions of knowledge. By analogy, this suggests that storytelling by social workers may have something to say about storytelling by sociologists, and vice versa.

Historical studies, in particular, have approached narrative as a problem, a source of falsification. To tell stories about the past means imposing literary techniques on 'the facts'. As MacIntyre (1984:214) comments "to present human life in the form of a narrative is always to falsify it." Norman (1991:121) sees historical narrative as "interpretative violence". For other historians this is not a problem, but an opportunity for asking questions both about the representation of the real and the imaginary. White (1987:170) calls for:

...an analysis of narrative, narration and narrativity that would take into account the many forms of storytelling met within world literature, from the epics through to the post-modern novel, and a reconceptualization of the possible relations existing between the three principal kinds of narrative discourse - mythic, historical and fictional - and the 'real world' to which they undeniably referred.

For White, representations of the real and the imaginary have much in common. 'Real' events can only be represented through narrative forms. Carr summarises Barthes (1986:119) concerning the relation between 'art' and 'life': "the one is constitutionally incapable of representing the other". For these writers, it is impossible to separate the representation of 'real' events from the narrative forms used to display them and it is to literary analysis that the historian should turn.⁽²⁷⁾

Barthes (1981:7) considers that "the narration of past events" has been subjected to the "sanction of historical science" and "bound to the underlying standard of the 'real'" and asks:

does this form of narrative really differ in some specific trait, in some indubitably distinctive feature from the imaginary narrative, as we find it in the epic, the novel and the drama?

Norman (1991:129) criticises the separation of narrative from the 'criterion of truth' as creating a "fissure between the natural and the human sciences." If however truth claims are approached not as a problem but as a project, the sociology of scientific knowledge can help re-affirm a sceptical approach to both science and the constructedness of 'facts' (for example: Woolgar 1988, Latour 1987).

Some of the main tenets of Garfinkel's work provide further support for an approach to narrative which does not attempt to arbitrate between claims of storytellers, but attends to the coherent, moral and interactive nature of storytelling performances. Garfinkel (1967:78) develops the documentary method of interpretation:

The method consists of treating an actual appearance as 'the document of,' as 'pointing to,' as 'standing on behalf of' a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of 'what is known' about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other.

Woolgar (1983) discussed possible stances to this 'problem' as researchers and actors tell stories which link an account and the underlying reality of that account. The 'constitutive' position associated with ethnomethodology is to offer no a priori link between accounts and reality, instead "accounts are the reality" (1983:245).⁽²⁸⁾ Such an approach is difficult to sustain since:

We presume a reality independent of our accounting practices, even though it is not possible to demonstrate this independence; each of our attempts to 'tell' reality inevitably involves the use of accounting practices (Woolgar 1983:246)

We can thus see that social work accounting cannot be approached as representing reality, since both social work and academic storytellers perform accounting and invoke narrativity. However delineating the functions and effects of social work accounts enables an investigation of how writers and readers can be seen to perform social work community - display professional competence, invoke entitlement and organisational narrativity. Reflexivity orients the analyst to the inseparability of form and content of the narrative and the methods, contexts and performances of that narrative (including the analyst's). To legitimate the telling of a story is to attend to the situated features of the performance of that story, both the

social worker's and the analyst's. Any comment on the practices of social work storytelling is equally applicable to the analyst's storytelling, including his/her construction of legitimacy.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This review has considered how theories of narrative can inform an investigation of social work accounting as text and available to be read as stories. At the end of chapter one, the thesis writer was faced by a mass of social work accounts and now faces a mass of theory. How does narrative theory and social work accounting interact? ⁽²⁹⁾ The argument of chapter 1 suggests we need a theory which can approach the local and complex nature of social work accounts, but link to wider concepts of accountability in communication. A theory is recommended which asks questions about social work accounting as text, as caught in a web of relations of construction and reception. A sceptical stance is required, aware of alternative readings but not slipping into solipsism. A balance is sought between the constraint on and creativity of the text writer and reader. How far do theories of narrative provide such an approach?

Theories of narrative are ubiquitous. When confronted with literary and non-literary texts, writers from various disciplines have deployed aspects of narrative, narration and narrativity. It has been demonstrated that storytelling is more than merely the realm of the literary theorist; that narrativity is a feature available in the reception and construction of all texts. ⁽³⁰⁾ There is, however, disagreement over many aspects of narrative with different questions and agendas. Does this discussion of narrative and narrativity pose questions appropriate to an investigation of social work accounting?

In this chapter, we have identified five key questions which theories of narrative pose for an investigation of social work accounts. First, how far are social work accounts linked to grand or local narratives? Second, to what extent is it the structure or performance of texts as stories, which demonstrates the nature of social work accounting practices? Third, can non-literary texts, like social work accounts, be better understood through the narrative features of plot, character and point of view? Fourth, in what way can the functions and effects of social work accounting be

located in performing social work community? Fifth, does reflexivity encourage scepticism and the celebration of alternative interpretations and versions of social work characters and events? In confronting these questions a coherent, if flexible and eclectic, theory of narrative and narrativity can inform this investigation.

First, theories of metanarrative were found to be inappropriate for this investigation. Large determining theories seem to engulf and oversimplify local smaller stories. The local investigation of narrative is preferred given the criticism of the metanarrative by post-modernism, the 'unfinalizability' of Bakhtin and the rich potential of micro analysis. In the second section micro analysis was seen as offering a number of advantages, but was criticised for the lack of scepticism and almost a return to a neo-empiricism; turn taking is seeable and hence real. It is thus important to maintain the original scepticism of Garfinkel when looking at local readings of stories, and seek interpretation in the reflexive reactions of writers and readers.

The implications for this study are that social work accounts can be approached as local narratives, performed and constitutive of contexts and occasions of doing social work. They are not to be read as determined by wider constructs, as a number of social work writers suggest.⁽³¹⁾ The implications for local and multiple readings of social work accounting is that they are not merely the product of an individual social worker, but enter an arena of complex and contested readings. The social worker, the client, the judge, the team leader, the foster parent, the child, the residential worker, the police, the doctor, the teacher, the journalist, newspaper reader, the politician - all participate in occasions of reading and writing of social work accounts; and on this occasion so do you and I.

Second, the review of theories of stories as structure or process has favoured an interactional investigation, but one in which the past, present and potential occasions of reading are available. Stories as recognisable through definitive structures, as suggested by Labov or literary theorists, are more appropriately examined as an interactional task. Features of story structures are not outside the occasion of the performance, but may be attended to by speakers and hearers in the process of the storytelling. Story structure is related to what constitutes relations appropriate to the local performance of competent, coherent stories. The implications for this study are that the structure of social work documents may be laid out in

terms of institutional conventions (a standard court report or memorandum), but the story then enters into a variety of readings based around the interactional production and reception of a social work account.

Third, the discussion of the literary text and narrative method has suggested that features of literary analysis can be applied to social work accounting. Heard as stories, social work documents can be investigated for their handling of plot, character and point of view. This raises important questions about whether character is made available through reporting events, or plot is determined by character. Furthermore, are characters able to question and subvert their construction? Whilst literary theory offers interesting questions about narrative and reading relations, it is recognised that there are major differences in reading social work accounts. In particular, the role, occasions and power of social work readings offer the potential for immediate and direct challenge and subversion. How far is the social work account able to present a defended, finalised version of the client or is it open to the free play of alternative readings?

Fourth, it has been suggested that social work accounting can be heard to fulfil a number of local interactional and rhetorical functions. How far can social work accounting be heard as performing community? In what way do accounts function to display competence and entitlement of writers and readers? How do social work accounts link local entities with organisational concerns, mandates and prerequisites? The implications of these questions are that this investigation should attend to the reader of the accounts; who is being addressed and how are they persuaded?

Fifth, acknowledging multiple readings directs us to a reflexive investigation. The analyst's claims about social work as narrative are also caught in a web of multiple readings. How the social worker substantiates his/her accounts may help with our storytelling. At the same time, it is suggested that not any version will do. The deployment of reading relations of a community of hearers may signal some versions as more appropriate than others.

Fundamentally, the ubiquity of narrative in accounting has been emphasised, albeit through varied and conflicting approaches and definitions. Herrnstein Smith (1980:232) indeed questions whether narrative can be seen as a distinctive discursive act.

Almost any verbal utterance will be laced with more or less minimal narratives, ranging from fragmentary reports and abortive anecdotes to those more distinctly framed and conventionally marked tellings that we are inclined to call 'tales' or 'stories'. Indeed, narrative discourse is, at one extreme, hardly distinguishable from description or simply assertion. That is 'telling someone that something has happened' can, under certain circumstances, be so close to 'saying that something is (or is not) the case' that it is questionable if we can draw any logically rigorous distinction between them or, more generally, if any absolute distinction can be drawn between narrative discourse and any other form of verbal behaviour.

Narrativity is available potentially in all discursive performances - conversational, documentary, scientific and literary. Other writers would recognise narrativity in historical texts (Mink 1978, White 1980), scientific texts (Myers 1990), legal texts (Bennett and Feldman 1981). As Butler (1990:13) notes:

All, then, is narrative, the literary and the non-literary alike. Even those stories intended, say by a speaker in deadly earnest, to be accurate representations of something that has just happened fall into the narrative patterns created by the inelectable semantic potential of words and sentences.

This suggests that to develop this investigation means taking seriously the implications of the claim for narrativity and to apply the methods of narrative analysis in a thorough way.

Whilst remaining aware of the danger of being overwhelmed by narrative,⁽³²⁾ one possible solution is to locate ourselves in the role of readers and critics. Several of the theories discussed posed questions in terms of readers and reading relations as a way of approaching of narrative and narrativity. Sacks (1992:228) considers that 'potential' stories are located in how speakers and hearers attend to the story. Lyotard (1984:24) is interested in the 'addressee', Bakhtin (1984:18) in the 'participant'. For Barthes (1977) the author is now dead, all texts are open to the play of reading relations. For Culler (1980:36), it is the listener who decides. Smith (1978:32) looks to instructions to readers, Garfinkel (1967:200) approaches organisational texts as made available for later readers, A reflexive response also suggests reading relations are a way of attending to how the analyst and social worker attempt to control readers. At the same time, not any reading of texts will do. What are the implications of locating preferred versions, whilst acknowledging others? The next chapter will

take the investigation further by studying the extent to which locating the reader can also locate preferred readings.

CHAPTER 3 SOCIAL WORK TEXTS AS STORIES WITH READERS

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to begin to investigate what can be gained by deploying theories of narrative in approaching social work texts. The theoretical positions outlined in chapter 2 offered a wide variety of approaches to narrative and narrativity. It was concluded that some theories pose important questions when approaching social work accounting. Briefly, it was recommended that in investigating the construction and reception of social work accounting as narrative and narrativity, there should be an investigation of local rather than grand narratives; story structure should be approached as interactionally accomplished; stories are to be located in their performance; literary concepts of plot, character and point of view offer useful methods of narrative analysis; the function of narrative can be located in performing community and a sceptical and reflexive stance should be maintained. It was concluded that these questions can best be approached through investigating the reader and reading relations.

The first part of this chapter examines what advantages there are in approaching social work accounts as narrative. Do they display some of the features suggested as indicative of stories in the theoretical discussion? Whilst chapter 2 suggested that delineating story structure was insufficient for developing an adequate notion of the performance of narrativity, its identification was recognised as an interactional task for both analysts and hearers. Are these accounts available to be read as stories? Do participants react to them as stories? What is the significance of such story recognition? There is also an opportunity to examine different versions of the 'same' story, thereby exploring the autonomous-interactional discussion of chapter 2 (section 3.1). The second part of the chapter examines the dialogic approach, in which stories are seen as interactionally accomplished. If stories are to be considered as available on the occasion of their reading, how is such a performance attended to? Through the examination of the construction of the reader, we consider how far the analyst has access to narrativity, its performance and

reception. The different versions of the 'same' story are approached here through the construction of the reader and the performance of community.

The social work accounts to be examined in this chapter consist of three documents concerning social services contact with one family - part of an interview between the researcher and the social worker working with this family, a court report on the family written by the same social worker and the notes from the social work case file. These kinds of document are typical of those which constitute the daily activity of social workers - conversational talk, formal documents and brief recordings of events for future reference. In addition, all three texts refer to the 'same' set of events - an incident which social services suspected was child abuse and their subsequent action. The analysis will concentrate on a part of the interview (see appendix 3.1); the court report and case notes are too long to consider in full. The family consists of a mother and 4 children aged between 3 and 13, with the father, who is the alleged perpetrator of the abuse, living outside the family but nearby.

1 SOCIAL WORK ACCOUNTS AS STORIES

This section explores three social work accounts in terms of whether they are available to be read as stories or display storyable features. In chapter 2, it was suggested by Smith(1980) and Butler (1990) that all utterances can be heard as narrative. Is recognising these accounts as stories or displaying narrative features helpful to our investigation of social work accounts as texts? How useful is it to distinguish how they are structured and accomplished as stories? Do participants attend to them as stories? How far does each version of the 'same' story display local and interactional features?

Whilst the various theories of story structure discussed in chapter 2 have different definitions of what constitutes a story, several outlined similar components of story structure. It was suggested that to be heard as a story, a text has an opening orientation, a complication, a resolution and an evaluation or comment. Rather than approached as a static view of narrative, such features are investigated here for their interactional significance rather than their definitional authenticity. How far does hearing stories and storyability contribute to the situational accomplishment of the social work account.

1.1 The Research Interview

An extract from a research interview ⁽¹⁾ appears as appendix 3.1. Whilst the text might be read as co-participants attending to an occasion of a research interview, the interest here is to what extent they are also collaborating in the production and reception of a story. Mishler (1986:69) notes how research interviews might be achieved through telling stories:

Telling stories is far from unusual in everyday conversation and it is apparently no more unusual for interviewees to respond to questions (in research interviews) with narratives if they are given some room to speak.

1.1.2 Opening

Before the tape recorder is switched on, the interviewer outlines the purpose of the interview. The opening utterances display the participants in some difficulty agreeing on the appropriate format. The respondent locates the starting point of these events as the date of the children's admission to care; it is the outcome which is to be explained. The truncated and contested nature of 'floor seeking' (Sacks 1992:681) in the initial utterances (lines 1-35) can be heard to create an unsettling set of exchanges - the interviewer is attempting to ask questions and receive answers, and the respondent is trying to introduce characters and events. The interviewer can be heard to undermine potential storytelling by cutting across the respondent's utterances to ask informational questions - race, gender, age - thereby interrupting any bid for an extended turn. For example, a strong bid for telling a story can be observed at line 14 "now the children..." which is interrupted by the interviewer - line 15 "sorry sorry race". The respondent can be heard to stop trying to tell a story and to revert to a question and answer approach - line 20 "go on".⁽²⁾ To take Labov and Waletzky's definition of a story, the opening of the interview is not structured by narrative clauses nor is there a recognisable story preface (Sacks 1992:226). There is rather a contested set of exchanges with different positions about the nature of the encounter.

The interviewer can be heard to acquiesce at line 21 and the respondent accepts this as a story invitation. A chronological starting point to the story and the case is offered as the initial intervention by the department to make the children wards of court (line 24). A further bid for an extended utterance can be heard in the

instruction to provide "a bit of background" (line 34), which the interviewer acknowledges. Not only can this be heard as a story preface (Sacks 1992:227), but further asserts that understanding the outcome requires a 'background', a story. Despite the initial uncertain nature of this exchange, a bid for an extended utterance, hearable as a story, can be seen as interactionally accomplished.

1.1.2 Orientation

The 'background' offers a description of particular features of family behaviour which might be heard as the problem, why social services is involved. It makes available a moral categorisation of the case and describes a particular state of affairs. The mother is young with four children. She has entered a pattern of moving home, because of the violence of the father of the children (line 42). The family is specifically constructed as a mother with her children (line 36); the constant reference to "the father of the children" (line 37) can be heard to underscore any basis for a relationship between herself and the man in the story. He is not, in the social worker's construction, a part of the family. This preferred family set-up establishes an initial state of affairs and offers a chronological and categorical starting point - they used to be like this. This initial state of affairs and preferred family setup is the focus of a set of interventions (lines 48 to 72), to "get her settled down" (line 71) and sort out the children's behaviour (line 73). The benefits of this state of affairs is demonstrated by a series of upgraded descriptions of the social work interventions: the family are not just re-housed but "a 5 bedroom house in a sought after area" (line 60); not just pre-school day care but "a community package" (line 66) and the safety of "an injunction against father to stay away" (line 62). A potentially satisfactory state of affairs can be heard.

1.1.3 Complication

A complication now occurs and a new state of affairs emerges. This change is marked with a approximate date (line 74) and the injury to the eldest child can be heard to signal a breakdown in the former state of affairs. It means the father is on the scene and hence there is a breakdown of the preferred family setup and the cooperation of the mother. The 'da da da da da' (line 77) is an important comment as it can be heard

to herald a domino effect of all the consequences that follow from father's presence in the family. It also acts as a pivot between the two states of affairs, signalling the obvious implications, which are not necessary to spell out. Furthermore, mother does not really seem to take it all seriously and was being deceitful (line 80). The very foundation of the previous state of affairs had been turned upside down.

1.1.4 Resolution (with a twist).

The breakdown of the preferred state of affairs can be heard to justify the strongest action available to the social worker - to remove the children against the mother's will (line 85). However, and to the surprise of the interviewer (line 91), the judge did not go along with the social worker's "side of the story", and the children returned home (line 90). That her formulation is described as a 'story', a version, rather unsettles the display (line 89) and the researcher asks for confirmation that their version did fail (line 93). It is a story but also a version, of which there may be several - the social worker's, the mother's and also now the judge's. The story is completed by the closing comment, line 105 "that's it in a nutshell really".

This account makes available features of story structure as suggested in chapter 2, which can be heard to have been interactionally accomplished. The possibility of hearing a story has been made available through the change between two states of affairs. A series of events and behaviours has been linked together, 'emplotted' (Ricoeur 1984). The speaker describes it as a 'story' in the sense of a version of events. As Sacks suggests, a 'potential' story has been interactionally produced, with both participants attending to its production. With the (eventual) establishment of an extended utterance and the tension between two states of affairs, this account is available to read as storytelling. How far can a story be heard in a written account?

1.2 The Court Document

The affidavit is a sworn statement by the social worker which was presented at the High Court to justify the removal of the children and request that they remain in care (Appendix 3.2).⁽³⁾ Whilst it may not be surprising for an unstructured research interview to be seen by participants as similar to conversational storytelling, a court document is unlikely to be denoted by participants as a story or a version of events.

Although describing the 'same' events, the affidavit presents major differences in structure and content from the interview. There is no detailed 'background information'. It concentrates instead on two encounters between the social worker and the mother. Given these major differences with the interview, can the affidavit be read as a story and what are the differences in the ways story structure is achieved?

1.2.1 Opening

The bid for 'floor seeking' by the social worker cannot be negotiated through turn taking sequences as with the interview, although other features of court procedure are conducted through formalised turn taking. The affidavit displays a standard introduction of legal protocol, which can be heard as seeking entitlement to present the report (lines 14-23).

An opening is made available by outlining the purpose of the document (lines 24-30)

I make this affidavit to apprise the Court of relevant developments which have occurred since the matter was last before the Court... None of the Minors are currently residing with their mother for reasons set out below.

The situation to be explained to the court is that the children are no longer at home. A similar explanation is provided in the interview as to why the children were admitted to care, but unlike the interviewer, the High Court can reverse the decision.

⁽⁴⁾ Such an opening can be heard to function as a story preface, a state of affairs to be explained. As with the interview, the outcome is offered at the beginning, available to be heard as a problem to which the report will offer a solution. As Smith's (1978:37) discussion of hearing an account of mental illness, here the listener will be provided with a "proper puzzle" to the solution "the Minors are not with their mother" (line 29).

1.2.2 Orientation

As with the interview, a preferred state of affairs is described, but not, as there, in the form of a description of family relations.⁽⁵⁾ Lines 44 to 82 make available a report of a visit by the social worker to the mother, after the incident was reported to the

social services department by the hospital, but before it was 'confirmed' as 'non-accidental injury'. This can be read as setting up a contrast between the mother's behaviour before and after the social worker knew 'the facts' two days later. The mother is heard to dismiss any claim by the hospital that the father was involved in the incident, and given her general manner, the social worker believes her:

Mrs.B was calm and collected and told me "There must be a mistake. They must have been mixing W up with another kid". I asked her if she had seen (father of children) recently and she assured me that she had not ... I felt inclined to believe her due to her calm and cooperative manner. (lines 61-66)

A state of affairs and preferred family set-up similar to that in the interview is undisturbed, and is recognisable in the "calm and cooperative" mother. The normalcy of relations is further made available through a conversation about day care (line 70-82).

1.2.3. Complication

The 'fact' of the "information received" (line 84) makes available a new state of affairs. The hospital confirmed that the mother had made reference to the father being involved in the incident and the police arrest him when he is discovered at the family home. The decision to go ahead with the admission into care is stated in a short and matter-of-fact way (line 96-98)

In the light of the above information (from the hospital and the police) Ms. L, my team leader, interviewed Ms B as a result of which (the children) were removed from their mother.

The description of the removal continues in some detail and the character of the mother can now be heard as in contrast to the mother in lines 61-83. In the later description, she can be heard as depicted as "agitated" (line 114), "distressed" (line 115), "hysterical and threatening" (line 118), "throwing objects around" (line 132) and "flung herself on the floor" (line 133). A further contrast to mother being out of control is the social worker and her clerk pictured as responding to the children - "reassuring", (line 123), "cuddling" (line 139), and answering the children questions in the car on the journey to the children's home (lines 138-162).

These contrasts can be heard to perform three tasks: First, the calm,

cooperative mother is discovered through subsequent information to be "dishonest" and deceitful, putting in doubt her apparent cooperation. Second, in her moment of hysteria she is never heard responding to her children, her behaviour sounds almost indulgent, "tell me what I've done" (line 126); she can only be heard as causing distress to the children. Third, the social worker is heard as calm and reassuring, thinking first about the children's welfare.

1.2.4 Resolution and Comment

The conclusion is available as an evaluation of the consequences of the present moral state of play between the social services and the mother (lines 162-167).

I share the concerns outlined (in other affidavit). In addition it is a matter of grave concern that (mother) lied to me concerning her involvement with (father). It is my view that (mother) needs a great deal of support which I have been endeavouring with others to offer her. I do feel that honesty is an essential ingredient in our relationship.

Such an appeal can be heard to display the difficulty of cooperation with this mother rather than the needs of and danger to the children - the broken arm is not mentioned in the conclusion. The social worker's discussion of "future long term plans" (line 168) is available as an appeal to the judge that the future is safer with social services in charge, the subject of the recommendations (lines 186-194).

1.2.5 Is this a story?

Some narrative theorists might suggest that this affidavit is a story. The move between two states of affairs is suggested by Prince (1973) as definitive of a story. Labov and Waletzky (1967) and others might recognise a story structure around an orientation, complication and resolution. Following Sacks (1992), the question to ask is whether it is a 'possible' or 'candidate' story, and to consider the next turn in the communication. Unfortunately, we do not have comments by participants as to their responses on reading occasions. It has, however, been indicated that there are similarities between the affidavit and the interview fragment in terms of story structure and contrasts between preferred and dispreferred states of affairs.

What this suggests is that the affidavit is available to be read as a story in that 'storyable' features can be identified. The story structure, the movement between

two states of affairs, an opening and an ending with a 'point' or interest satisfied are features which narrative theorists associate with stories and storytelling, and are available here. However, these features are only available in the reading of the account, and such a reading requires both instructions from the storyteller and appropriate responses from the reader. Attention to textual features must be accomplished by the reader in order for this text to be read as a story. It is not a story outside the occasion of reading, nor is there a story structure intrinsic to the text. For the reader to have drawn conclusions about storyable features from reading the affidavit has required following a series of textual instructions and taking part in shared and ratified readings of the social work community. For example, that social services taking on future planning for these children (line 168) is a 'resolution' to the 'complication' requires being part of the community of competent readers of social work accounts. Other readers, for example the parents, may not accept such logic. A considerable amount of interpretive work has already been accomplished if this text is read as a story.

It has been the conclusion of this investigation that stories and storytelling is a joint production, whether there is a listener present or not. It is to the detailed and complex reading relations whereby the reader is drawn into a shared and ratified reading that this study should now turn. Before such an investigation, it is worth asking similar questions of the story structure of the case notes.

1.3 Case Notes

Case notes are a series of entries in a case file, recording visits, phone calls, reports and letters on different occasions and by different social workers. How can they be considered a story given their disjointed completion? White (1980:13) notes that an annal, a historical document consisting of a list of dates with events, is a potential story since:

Nonetheless there must be a story since there is surely a plot - if by plot we mean a structure of relationships by which the events contained in the account are endowed with a meaning by being identified as parts of an integrated whole.

Is the structure of relationships in the case notes similar to the annal? Are the entries oriented to or constitutive of an 'integrated whole'? Social workers consider such file

entries as particularly important in child abuse cases, since like a policeman's notebook, they could be used as evidence in a future court hearing, therefore accuracy of dates and comments is crucial. Garfinkel (1967:198) however finds medical records full of inaccuracies and considers they should be approached as displaying a "therapeutic contract" rather than an accurate record. How are social work case records to be read, as a potential story, an accurate record or a contract?

The entries are presented as a series of occurrences - phone calls, visits, discussions, meetings - at specific dates. For example:

13/11. Phone call from (children's home) They had received a letter from Dr. C describing an interview with (mother) the previous Sunday and the examination of (child's) broken arm. He was very concerned about (father) being at the home and the injury to (child). I phoned (manager of hospital social work team) and asked him to get information for me as hospital still hadn't properly informed us of the incident. Dr.C phoned me she repeated the information given in the letter to (children's home). There could be no doubt that (mother) had described the incident as accidental caused by her husband. I asked whether the injury was consistent with the explanation especially being a fall downstairs. She said the break could only be caused by excessive force and of a severe blow. I said I would be informing the police as I said I thought it should be investigated and she agreed.

Does such an entry make available a potential story? Elements of a story structure can be identified: Opening - Phone call and problem which it presented. Complication - confirm new state of affairs, child was injured by the father and is in danger. Resolution - inform the police. There are however major differences from the other potential stories.⁽⁶⁾ First there is no detailed orientation, the initial state of affairs is assumed, taken as read. Also the resolution offers no comment or evaluative statement, the reader is expected to draw the appropriate conclusion from the display of information. By both the Prince and Labov definitions, this is not a story.

However, attention to the reading relations of this text enables this entry to be read as a story. Case files are read for their overall justification of concern and action.

As Garfinkel (1967:199) notes:

In our view the contents of clinic folders are assembled with regard for the possibility that the relationship may have to be portrayed as having been in accord with the expectations of sanctionable performances by clinicians and patients.

By entering the reading relations of case files, such an entry makes narrativity available in reading the case file as a whole. Indeed it is essential that this entry contributes to a larger narrative which is available to be invoked. The 'entitled' reading situation, as Garfinkel suggests, is for later readers to reconstruct an overall "therapeutic contract" of justifiable assessment and action. This entry can be read as attending to and contributing to two incomplete narratives, neither of which are explicitly discussed, but both required to be available. There is the original story, what happened on the day that the child's arm was broken. There is also attention to an on-going story, what should the social services do next? Neither of these stories are explicitly stated, but it is suggested that both are available in the construction and reception of the reading instructions and in performing the community of social work readers. In this way, as White (1980:13) notes of the annal, case file entries can be heard to contributing to a sense of plot, and as such are available to be read as stories.

1.4 Summary

It has been suggested in this section that to locate stories and storyable features in an analyst's identification of story structures is to ignore the complex reading relations involved in such interpretive moves. The orientation-complication-resolution structure is likely to be available in many accounts, given the rhetorical structure of the formulation (see Toulmin 1958 discussed in chapter 4). However, the identification of and links between such features requires following the instructions of the text and performing social work community. A further feature of the foregoing discussion is the extent to which accounts of the 'same' set of events offer major differences in content, form and contrasts made. The link to an autonomous story independent of these accounts seems difficult to substantiate. Each text is rather dependent on local and interactional features, which orientate that text towards particular occasions and readings. That the storyable features had to be looked for, suggests that approaching

a text as storyable depends on active reading, not fixed story structures. Whilst the narratologist might discover a story structure, the judge might discover evidence and a social worker discover professional competence. Roles, relations and occasions of reading would appear to be important features to explore. It is now proposed to investigate the reading of these texts as stories or storyable, located not 'in' the structure of the text, but made available by reading relations. The recognition of narrative and narrativity is to be sought in the interaction between the writer, reader, the text and occasion of reading.

Interviewer: It is so embarrassing. Did I really lead Social Worker so blatantly. It seems like she told me the sort of social work practice that I wanted to hear. All those instructions, not very subtle ones either, which forced her to explain things in the way I approved. Especially that one at line 35 where I appeared to reward her for telling me the 'bit of background'. And I was so inconsistent; at the beginning I was stopping her talking with all disruptive questions just to get the basics together. I wonder what I said to set up the interview in such an uncontrolled way, I can't remember now but that beginning was a mess. I obviously need to announce things better in future, get the basic information first, then it can flow better and I need not interrupt ... oh dear! perhaps I should look for another job.

Thesis Writer: Hang on now, I am not suggesting that your interviewing is deficient, inappropriate or even atypical. Remember Mishler (1986) notes how interviewers can't help hearing storytelling, the main problem is when they try to suppress them. I appreciate your 'unprofessional' approach to 'interviewer detachment', my point is that all accounting is interactional even if there is no explicit hearer. Indeed in the next section we are going to look at a variety of readers and hearers; some present, others not.

Narratologist: you might be happy with Interviewer but you seem to have brought me to this meeting under false pretences. I thought you were looking at the way social workers tell

stories, and you wanted my help identifying whether they are stories or not. You now seem to be saying that they are not stories with structures, points and all the other properties we have discovered, but only there in their reading. I can't see the difference.

Thesis Writer: This is important and something I find rather hard to sort out myself. What I think some of your colleagues are saying is that stories don't exist in themselves, they have to be read. How do you know that 'War and Peace' is not a shopping list or perhaps more appropriately a battle plan or copy from a war correspondent? You know in your reading of the book by picking up cues and your knowledge of writing and reading conventions.

Narratologist: Yes, that's what our work has been about, locating such features in the story.

Thesis Writer: Well, are they in the text or only discoverable in the reading? Suppose someone read the text with different conventions of what is a novel or battle plan, couldn't they make a mistake. More precisely, does a 'resolution' necessarily resolve a 'complication' for every reader? Some readers may remain unconvinced.

Narratologist: Some readers can make mistakes, especially with some of these newer novels, I get lost sometimes.

Thesis writer: Not so much mistakes as deviating from the reading instructions. So you agree, a story is only available in its reading. What this project hopes to do is investigate how those reading conventions work? What instructions are made available to guide the reader.

Sceptic: Are the instructions 'in' the text then?

Thesis Writer: I didn't invite you to this meeting. What do you mean?

Sceptic: Is any meaning available in a text - story structure, instructions to readers, performing community. They are all textual constructions. Is any reading better than any

other? I quite like the idea of 'War and Peace' as a shopping list.

Thesis Writer: Oh dear, I don't want to get so nihilist but I accept your point. Look, let's agree that anyone can read anything into anything else, given the appropriate reading relations. However if we try to find how certain readings are made available and more appropriate than others, then can we get at some sort of stability?

Sceptic: I doubt it.

Thesis Writer: Look, I will keep saying that certain readings are 'made available', 'can be heard', 'it can be suggested that' indicating that you will probably find others. I just hope that the reader will find mine convincing, persuasive, I'll try to use all the rhetorical and narrative techniques of the social workers.

Social Worker: I am pleased that you are going to use my persuasion as a guide, I wish just the judge had done so in this case. And you still haven't said anything more about child abuse, especially now we have come across some.

Thesis Writer: No, I am sorry we must talk more about that. But Sceptic had got me worried about something else.

Social Worker: Your petty navel gazing is irrelevant compared with children being hurt.

2 SOCIAL WORK ACCOUNTS AS A PRODUCT OF THEIR READING.

The rest of this chapter is concerned less with story structure, and investigates the reading relations and the construction of the reader. A number of key concepts for this study are raised here since narrativity is to be located on the occasions of performing the text. It is not possible for the analyst to re-enter particular encounters where texts are performed; to sit in the court where the report is read or observe a social worker consulting case notes. Even if this were possible, it is not clear that the judge would explain his/her reactions to the report or if such a description would explain how it was read. It is not suggested that studying reading performances

restricts analysis to particular occasions. Rather the social work account is performed whenever it is read, including the sociological analysis. Such performances draw the reader into a web of reading relations, making connections between entities and events and attempting to privilege some interpretations.

Identifying the reader of a text is not straightforward. Law (1986) and Rip (1986) discuss the reader of scientific articles, grant applications and patents and have no difficulty in locating the attributes and expectations of readers. Goffman (1981 chapter 3) criticises traditional notions of speaker, hearer and conversation as too "crude" He considered there are complex "participation statuses" and "production formats" within different "footings". The question to be asked is whether certain readings and roles can be heard as attended to more than others. Are particular features available which indicate more appropriate readings? How far is the reader constrained or does s/he ultimately re-write the text? In part 2 of this chapter, there is a review of theories of reader reception, in particular the dialogic approach to narrative. The same three texts are then analysed in terms of the way they construct the reader, the appropriate reading occasion and perform the reading community.

2.1 The role of the reader

The 'death of the author' (Barthes 1977) in literary theory has questioned the search for textual meaning in the intentions of the writer/speaker. If literary texts are to be approached in terms of the reception by the reader rather than the intentions of the author, then texts with more active and potentially critical readers, like social work accounts, should be examined for links between production, performance and reception. Narrative performed as books, reports, conversations, storytelling performances involves important differences in the construction of entities and contexts. At one extreme, a novel is usually performed by private reading, whilst at the other, the storyteller performs his/her story to an audience. Both can be approached as products of the interaction of writer, reader and occasion.⁽⁷⁾

Occasions and contexts for the performance of social work accounts have elements of these extremes, with different audience interactions and potential criticism. Social work reports are usually handed to the judge or passed round at the case conference to be read in silence. On such occasions writers and readers might

comment on the report, using it as a starting point for discussing the case.⁽⁸⁾ The reaction is not usually mere consumption nor agreement; the judge or case conference may ignore, applaud or criticise the report. Readers feel free to agree or disagree with parts of the report, and in particular, to comment on the connections between facts, conclusions and recommendations. Case notes and research interviews are more often performed as private, individual readings, with less opportunity for direct critical response. The private reader is likely to search for consistency of message or a specific piece of information, but such reading occasions entail a range of interests, for example to check dates, assess client response, evaluate social work competence. None of these interests are mere reception, though interpretations are not necessarily conveyed back to the writer.

2.1.1 How is reading achieved?

The literary text as the site for reader-text interaction has produced a number of different concepts of reading and readers. Does reading the novel involve the interpretation of messages and codes already potentially available 'in' the novel, or are interpretations related to the reading occasion and the activity of the reader? Iser (1974) considers that the reader concretises a potential text, making interpretations and filling in gaps that are already 'in' the text.

The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader. (p.274)

In the reading process, however, the reader has her/his expectations questioned and re-formulated, as s/he seeks coherence on the basis of sense making. Reading 'awakens' processes in the reader

... a process out of which emerges the actual content of the text itself. (p.276)

Although this moves away from the idea of a reader passively receiving the text, for Iser the reader still moves towards an understanding of the "ultimate meaning" (p.85) of the text. The text and the reader are both pre-existing entities which interact with one another.

For Fish (1980), there is no ultimate meaning of a text, only that which is

conferred on it by the reader. Everything about the text is a product of interpretation, there are no factual 'givens'. The only reason there are not many different interpretations of a text is that readers share some conventions of what constitutes an appropriate reading. What Fish calls 'interpretive communities' refers to academic conventions for interpreting literary texts.

Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning intentions ... (this) explains why there are disagreements and why they can be debated in a principled way: not because of a stability in texts, but because of a stability in the make up of interpretive communities and therefore in the opposing positions they make possible. Of course this position is always temporary (unlike the longed for and timeless stability of the text). (p.171)

Fish's interpretive community has been criticised (for example Shepherd 1989:97). It suggests a 'cosy' debating shop of academics, and does not resemble the potential conflict of reading texts in, for example, a court or case conference. It does however suggest the possibility of attempts at stability of interpretation based on constructing appeals to conventions of mutuality. This is not merely reading texts by a community of interpreters, but the active construction of community conventions in the performance of the text.

2.1.2 Dialogic Texts

Following from this approach to reading as located in performing community, social work accounts cannot be approached as containing fixed positions or mere descriptions, but are always anticipating answers and caught up in reading relations. White (1984:128) notes:

Every utterance is for or to someone, even if s/he is not actually present and the dialogic anticipation of response is always already inscribed in language as it is spoken.

Bakhtin (1981:280) notes the dialogic nature of all texts:

Every word is directed towards an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates.

Social work accounts approached as texts are not stable entities with fixed meaning nor are readers docile receivers. Rather the text and the reader anticipate and

construct one another. The reader makes interpretations influenced by aspects of reading occasions and her/his attachment to reading conventions. At the same time, the text is constituted through a range of stylistic conventions and communicative instructions of how to read entities and events. For Bakhtin, such activity is not the gentle persuasion of the interpretive community, but the clash of language and genre. It is not a simple determinism by either the text or the context, but an interaction of the two. Words have histories and conventions of use, contexts have to be constructed and mutually established:

The word, breaking through its own meaning and its own expression across an environment full of alien words and variously evaluating accents, harmonising with some of the elements in this environment and striking a dissonance with others, is able, in this dialogising process, to shape its own stylistic profile and tone. (1981:277)

Whilst texts and contexts are caught in competing dialogic relations, at the same time they are able to carve out a stability, a style.

Style organically contains within itself indices that reach outside itself, a correspondence of its own elements and the elements of an alien context. The internal politics of style (how elements are put together) is determined by its external politics (its relationship to alien discourse). Discourse lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another alien context. (1981:284)

Bakhtin calls this 'internal dialogisation', texts and contexts create stability through their relations with another and through the style or genre of the speech community.

... we speak in diverse genres without suspecting that they exist. Even in the most free, the most unconstrained conversation, we cast our speech in definite generic forms, sometimes rigid and trite ones, sometimes more flexible and creative ones... We are given these speech genres in almost the same way that we are given our native language. (1986:78)

For Bakhtin, then texts are cut across by a wide range of contexts and styles, which set up a continual dialogue with audiences over fixed and changing interpretations. Philips (1983:516) sees monologic/dialogic discourse as distinguishing between discourse which is under the control of the speaker or the questioner. For Bakhtin, all accounting interacts with an audience. Words and phrases carry with them past uses and generic conventions which readers and writers manipulate and react to.

In the 'Broken Arm' case, the child's use of the word 'dad' in the affidavit

indicates an unacceptable view of family relations, at odds with the social worker's. For the mother and her children, 'dads' can legitimately punish children:

(Child) asked "Why are you taking us away from our mummy? and later " You put our dad in prison... it's OK for dads to smack children". He later made reference to the fact that his father was entitled to hit him because "he's my dad". (line 138-142)

Whilst this dispreferred view of family relations is not explicitly challenged, a few lines later the strength of the child's protest is devalued and his formulation of family relations undermined:

After (child) had made his point of view he calmed down and then I was able to explain to him why he was being taken to a children's home (line 147-149).

This unacceptable version of 'dad' is heard to undermine any appeal to a dispreferred response to taking children from their mother, as the child himself is seen to acquiesce. The report also contains a similar use of the concept of Mum needing Dad's support, which is again undermined as unacceptable as it is negated by Dad's violence.

At one point (child) remarked "She needs daddy to support her". I agreed that his mother needed a lot of support but explained that his father had been violent towards his mother and this had meant that they had to move home on many occasions (line 149-153)

The constitution of acceptable and unacceptable family relations is achieved by establishing how the conventional use of the word 'dad' does not apply to this family, and hence legitimates the social worker's action to break up the family.

2.1.3 The Ratified Reader

How does the social work account as a text privilege some interpretations rather than others? A number of writers recommend an investigation of the preferred reader of the text, what conventions of reading and attributes of readers are being invited when reading the text? What sort of reader is drawn in and persuaded? Iser's concept of the 'implied reader' (1974) suggests that the text appeals to an 'ideal reader', whom the implied author invites to collaborate in the production of meaning. Goffman (1981:132) distinguishes between those who overhear, bystanders, listeners who are ratified hearers but not specifically addressed, and those who are ratified and

addressed. Garfinkel (1967:201) considers that medical records are constructed for an 'entitled reader':

The entitlement refers to the fact that the full relevance of his position and involvement comes into play in justifying the expectancy that he has proper business with the expressions, that he will understand them and will put them to good use... The possibility of understanding is based on a shared, practical and entitled understanding of common tasks between writer and reader.

The 'entitled' or 'ratified reader' is then someone familiar with and persuaded by the reading conventions of social work; s/he hears the values, mandates and working knowledge of social work. It is a reader who will make the logical step from complication to resolution, or concern to action. S/he will accept that a warrant justifies a claim, and hears the cues and instructions of the text. The 'ratified reader' is an important concept throughout this thesis.

There is also another potential reader above the reading occasion; some sort of guardian of standards or judge of legitimate action, before whom the account must eventually be justified. Bakhtin (quoted in Todorov 1984:110) discusses a 'super receiver':

Every utterance always has a receiver ... whose responsive understanding is sought and anticipated by the author of the verbal work ... But in addition to this receiver (the 'second') the author imagines, more or less consciously, a higher super-receiver (a third) whose absolutely appropriate responsive understanding is projected either into a metaphysical distance or a distant historical time ... it is a constitutive moment of the whole utterance, that a penetrating analysis can bring to light.

As Mecke (1990:209) considers:

In order for true dialogue to take place, the full understanding of a superaddressee is to be presupposed and becomes an a priori condition of communication.

Goodwin (1990) notes amongst adolescents a story could be told to one person but directed at another, what she calls an "absent audience". However, Bakhtin's concept is less an identifiable absent individual as an overall orientation in the construction of writer/speaker and reader/hearer roles to a shared reference, as epitomised in the superaddressee. Unlike the ratified reader, who agrees automatically with the reading conventions, the superaddressee is approached more cautiously and is yet to be

convinced. Perhaps the 'ratified reader' is the colleague or the friendly judge, whereas the 'superaddressee' is the less sympathetic judge who does not necessarily accept the conventions of the text.

2.1.4. Summary.

Social work accounts are dialogic in that they are always concerned with constructing and responding to an audience. Meanings of words and phrases may be contested and open to various interpretations; style and genre can stabilise readings. The speaker/writer can be heard to appeal to community-based conventions of readings and instruct the reader as to the appropriate interpretation. Social work accounts as dialogic texts enable and require an investigation of contested and stabilising reading conventions. It has been suggested that such reading conventions can be approached by locating the 'ratified' reader, and the 'superaddressee' who is constructed, persuaded and enrolled or not. The advantages of such an investigation are that detailed analysis of social work accounts can uncover the relations upon which reading social work is possible. Unlike social work researchers or even some narratologists, this investigation can ask important questions about how social work accounts are textually accomplished. How are entities formulated, endowed with attributes and linked to one another? What rhetorical and narrative features enable successful readings or allow subversion? It is proposed to investigate reader construction by returning to the social work documents discussed earlier. This analysis investigates the preferred, ratified reader. A study of alien voices and alternative readings which disrupt the text, 'the other', are explored in chapters 7 and 8.

2.2 Constructing the reader/hearer in the Interview

It is proposed to investigate how the interviewer and respondent construct a shared version of the 'broken arm' case and thereby accomplish a preferred reading of these events. In the analysis of the interview, the construction of the 'ratified reader' and 'superaddressee' are investigated in three ways: the set of categories manipulated by the speaker and hearer; the contrast between preferred and dispreferred behaviours and states of affairs; and the use of specific instructions to bind speaker and

listener.⁽⁹⁾

2.2.1 The use of categories and concepts which perform social work

A wide range of categories and phrases are available here which can be heard as social work talk, merely as they are typical of everyday social work activity. 'Ward of court', 'care and control', 'this area', 'contracts' are all phrases which have a specific use in social work, which would not be similarly used elsewhere. However, whilst such utterances begin to display knowledge of social work terminology, they are not enough to perform social work.⁽¹⁰⁾ It is the competent manipulation of such categories and concepts that brings off a successful account and enrolls the hearer/reader. This section examines some examples of such performance.

First, it is suggested that boundaries are made available which can be heard to frame both the story and social work. From the beginning the interviewee responds to the interviewer's request for information about this case by announcing the date and length of the admission to care (line 1). This can be heard as instructing the hearer that everything that follows is addressed to such an event, and is hearable in terms of that event (Smith 1978:33).⁽¹¹⁾ The speaker can be heard as positioned in the present and about to relate the events which will explain such an event as an outcome, the end of the story. In this way, storytelling as a chronological explanation is offered as a legitimate answer to the question 'how did these children end up in care?'

After the dialogue, the next orientating utterance (lines 22-27) makes available the other chronological boundary to the story, locating the beginning as the initial social work intervention. Such a beginning is constituted by outlining the legal basis of the case, why it constitutes a social work case is its legal identification:

these children were made wards of court ... with care and control to ... (lines 23-4)

Second, neither of these boundary markers have a description of agency. Is this enough to legitimate storytelling? The children 'came into care...' (line 1) without anyone apparently bringing it about and "the children were made wards of courts" (line 23) can be heard as just happening. Such action is heard as a 'black box' (Latour 1987:2) which the hearer is discouraged from opening up. They are normal boundary

events in social work activity, and can be heard to make a bid for 'factual' status, uncontaminated by individuals. The interviewer, however challenges such an impersonal formulation. Being an informed hearer, he knows legal events do not just happen and inquires where the storyteller fits in (line 28).⁽¹²⁾ This question can be heard to force the storyteller to delve deeper (reluctantly) "I suppose I'll have to give a bit of background" (line 35), which the hearer can be heard to support. Through negotiation then, it is suggested that boundaries to the story are chronologically established, storytelling rights legitimated and a mutually acceptable mode of telling agreed. The possibility of social work storytelling and listening has now been established, and the interviewer stops interrupting.

A third feature which can be heard as establishing shared social work storytelling also deploys legal categories. At line 47, "putting a stop to" undesirable states of affairs is elaborated to "putting a legal framework around it". This is developed at line 47-8, where a justification "for the children" is extended with the phrase: "y'know in the best interests of the children". Such a concept is widely used in social work literature and legislation as legitimation for social work intervention (for example Jacobs 1982). Here extending the justification "for the children" with "y'know" in the middle can be heard to link this instance with wider social work concepts. At the same time, it instructs the listener to share in the performance of social work community. Schiffrin (1987:282) notes the frequent occurrence of "y'know" with reported speech and here "in the best interests of the children" can be heard as reported speech from authoritative social work sources. Bakhtin (1981:342) notes that authoritative discourse is filled with sacred words or phrases, distance from the present utterance of the speaker:

The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher ... it permits no play with its framing context.

The utterance at line 47-8 then, can be heard to provide both sacred legitimation and create a shared understanding with hearers. Once such words are used, they bind speaker and hearer together in worlds removed from the here and now, and can be heard to provide for an approach to the superaddressee.

This section has thus demonstrated the use of legal constructions and

categories as a method of framing social work storytelling and legitimating action. At the same time, such legal/social work categories can be seen to bind the hearer into the legitimation process and together speaker and hearer can face the superaddressee. It is not suggested that deploying legal categories is the only appropriate way to frame a social work story, but it can be heard as particularly powerful here.

2.2.2 Contrasts

It was noted in section 1.1 of this chapter that the interview could be heard as structured as a move between a preferred state of affairs, where the mother was depicted as cooperative with the social services (lines 58 to 73) and a dispreferred state of affairs where she was uncooperative (lines 75 to 83). In developing the notion of contrasts, we can now examine how they do more than merely offer a chronological story structure (Prince 1973). It is suggested that contrasts can be heard to set up opposing categories of preferred and dispreferred states of affairs based on notions of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and hence enrol the listener into the community of ratified social work readers. Here is an example of story structure which is more than 'in' the story, but can be heard as a formulation for enrolling the moral order of the 'ratified reader' and hence enabling an appeal to the 'superaddressee'.

The contrasts in this account do not lay out the rule and the infringement in a direct way as Smith (1978) suggests.⁽¹³⁾ Unlike Smith's document, the enrolment of the reader in the interview appears to rely on the obvious nature of inferences, without the need to make an explicit comment on what is acceptable and unacceptable. For example, at lines 39 to 44, the problem of instability in the family is not set up by an explicit contrast, but by picking one feature of the family to illustrate deviance.

*and for instance A who's seven has moved in his lifetime about 30 times
(-) (line 39-40)*

The deviant feature of this family can be heard as illustrated rather than explicitly indicated. The hearer is expected to make the link that a seven year old should not move home so frequently and hence deviant family circumstances can be recognised. The upgraded nature of the description, "in his lifetime", moved "about 30 times",

followed by a pause, can be heard to offer the reader an opportunity to agree. Such a story preface (Sacks 1992:222) anticipates an extended explanation, "the reason for that is..." (line 40).

A more elaborate set of contrasts than Smith's rule breaking is available in this story structure, moving between the two states of affairs (as suggested in section 1.1). Each statement can be heard to contribute to the overall contrast between the state of affairs before and after the broken arm incident. Beginning with the seven year old's moves, the first state of affairs depicts the father's violence (line 42), the sudden moves of home (line 43), the social work intervention (line 48), the legal framework (line 49), and the disturbed behaviour of the children (52). This list can be heard to give a sense of completion to the description, as the interviewer now intervenes. The first state of affairs has been elucidated, and the appropriate social services response is outlined (lines 58-73). The second and contrasting state of affairs does not indicate changes in the mother or children's behaviour as more deviant. It is mother's non-cooperation with social services in maintaining the preferred family set up without father which signals the breakdown in the previous state of affairs. How can this be heard to justify taking the children away from home?

The listener is again enrolled as a ratified social work hearer, since the justification of stronger social work intervention is in terms of non-cooperation rather than deviance per se. A competent social worker hearer would be clearly aware of the obvious consequences of non-cooperation ⁽¹⁴⁾:

this meant alarm bells y' know father's on the scene da da da da da (lines 77-8)

With "y' know" and "da da da da da", the speaker instructs the listener to make obvious inferences. The reappearance of the father as constituting a new dispreferred state of affairs needs no elaboration. Both the "alarm bells" and the "da da da da da" are powerful instructions to the listener. A figurative formulation can be heard to sum up the drama of the change better than a list which contrasts with the detailed outline of the preferred state of affairs (lines 58-74). The sound of "alarm bells" can be heard as a metaphor for the call to action of the fire brigade, all aware of the crisis with no uncertainty or hesitation. The "da da da da da" figure, as mentioned earlier, can be heard as a 'domino' effect; the appearance of the father is enough information

to demonstrate that all the elements of the first state of affairs have collapsed. It too can be heard as a figurative communication, as one effect disturbs the next with rapid succession. If not the alarm bells themselves, it sounds like the call to action stations.

This section has shown that the use of a story structure based on contrasting states of affairs can be heard to construct a competent hearer/reader who is expected to follow the story without needing specific instructions about deviant and normal behaviour. By binding the reader into obvious inferences, any criticism would challenge the community of ratified social work hearers.

2.2.3 Binding Instructions

This section will consider two specific features which bind the listener to the community of ratified hearers: "y'know" and "we". It has already been noted that "y'know" at lines 48 and 77, as well as "da da da da da" can be heard to specify instructions to the reader. "Y'know" also appears at lines 50 and 52. Schiffrin (1987:284) considers that "y'know" in narratives can be heard as a story evaluation:-

"Y'know" enlists the hearer's participation as an audience to the storytelling by drawing the hearer's attention to material which is important for his/her understanding of why the story is being told ... it marks meta-knowledge about shared (either speaker/ hearer or general) knowledge. That is, once speakers produce in their hearers recognition that a story is about something with which they themselves are familiar - something which is shared knowledge - then much of the informational and interactional dilemma facing the storyteller is resolved.

The two sections where "y'know" appears are available as summaries of states of affairs - the first where the overall problem of the family is being outlined and the second where the new state of affairs is indicated. They can be heard, as Schiffrin (1987:283) suggests, as 'pivotal points' in the story. The first use (lines 48-52) displays a list of three "y'know"s, which Jefferson (1990) sees as a particularly strong method of tying together entities in a formulation. Here "in the best interests", "some legal framework" and "their behaviour" ties together three crucial aspects for justifying social work. A competent listener can hear a full display of social work justification - the professional, legal and personal. The second use, as has already been suggested, coupled with "da da da da da" instructs the listener that the event of the broken arm indicates a dispreferred situation. In both these uses of "y'know",

the obvious nature of social work inference is displayed. The logic of a social work justification is outlined, but not expanded since to a competent hearer it is clear. To a non social work hearer, the inferences might be made more explicit and not summary evaluations. "Y'know" is therefore heard as a strong inclusive feature to the ratified hearer.

As was noted earlier, the dialogue begins with negotiation over the use of active/passive voice and entitlement. Social services is portrayed as active, but the storyteller still does not associate herself with the organisation.

line 45 *social services having worked quite hard ...*

line 47 *social services decided that they ...*

line 49 *they went back to court ...*

The use of 'they' separates the storyteller from these actions, although in the next line she reverts to 'us'.

line 50 *it gave us some legal framework to work with J...*

Perhaps legal talk is seen as in some way bigger than herself and her colleagues, hence the impersonal form. The change to 'us' is linked to the description of the everyday "work with J".⁽¹⁵⁾ There is a gradual change of use from the impersonal to the personal pronoun as the 'background' is filled out and the story unfolds.

Following the adoption of the personal plural pronoun, the collective nature of action and evaluation remains throughout the rest of the account. For example:

line 60 *we got hold of a property in ...*

line 66 *we were trying to work ...*

line 78 *we talked to J ...*

line 81 *we felt that ...* ,

line 83 *we went to court ...*

line 85 *we expected mum ...*

line 95 *we were sort of seriously saying that ...*

line 103 *we needed time to think about it ...*

The collective nature of action even relates to circumstances in which one person in the group was engaged - line 78 "we talked to J". According to the case notes, it was the team leader not the social worker nor the area manager who interviewed J at this time. Again, at line 83, the team leader went to court to get the injunction. At line 89, "our side of the story" was put to the court by the storyteller, but it can be heard that it was the social services view of the case that she was presenting. The use of 'we' is thus deployed in all actions described, implying community-based support for all that was done; one person may have carried it out but they were all acting on behalf of the collective.

The continual use of 'we' in describing both action and evaluation can be heard to enrol the shared community of social services. Goffman (1981:144-5) notes alternative roles of a speaker:

Sometimes one has in mind that a 'principal' (in the legalistic sense) is involved, that is, someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what they say. Note that one deals in this case not so much with a body or mind as with a person active in some particular social identity or role, some special capacity as a member of a group, office ... some socially based source of self identification. Often this will mean that the individual speaks, explicitly or implicitly, in the name of 'we', not 'I'.

To speak on behalf of such a community is both to establish the community and to seek legitimation from it. The individual speaker is bound to the collective with its apparent agreement.

Does the use of 'we' also include the hearer? The background roles and relationships already mentioned suggest that the interviewer could be a member of the same community - his job, previous contact and relationship (footnote 1). The features discussed above - use of "y'know", contrasts, and community-based categories - could establish the interviewer as a community member, but the specific uses of 'we' do not include the interviewer. 'We' can be heard as a contrast to 'them' at line 89 - 'her side of the story'. The interviewer does distance himself from the collective at lines 91 and 93 by referring to the social services' actions as "you'd" and

"your preference", where he could have said 'we'd' and 'our'. This can be heard to create some uncertainty in the relationship between interviewer and social worker. The superaddressee, the judge, has been approached and not accepted social services' collective formulation, the children having been sent home. The social services collective has been undermined. Is the hearer now deserting the social services collective view, opening up the possibility of a critical response? In the next few lines (95-104), the large number of instances of 'we' appears to emphasise the gap between speaker and hearer, as the 'we' collective can be heard as united but unsuccessful. The possibility of the undermining nature of storytelling will be developed further in chapter 8.

2.2.4 Summary

This analysis has highlighted the possibility of shifting formulations of readings, as the roles of the ratified reader and superaddressee are negotiated. The reader/hearer has been constructed through a variety of binding instructions, contrasts and categories as a ratified member of the community of social services readers. Together the speaker and hearer have been heard to invoke a wide variety of rhetorical and interactional features to establish consistent roles and readings of states of affairs in order to jointly approach the superaddressee. However, success in establishing consistent roles and readings appears to have been challenged by the superaddressee, the judge. The reader is in danger of adopting a critical stance and deserting the social work collective. This analysis has demonstrated the dialogic nature of social work stories, as the speaker attempts to construct and enrol a sympathetic listener by appealing to a shared set of understandings in order to approach the superaddressee, but such roles and relations are uncertain and shifting. It is now proposed to investigate whether similar constructions can be identified in the court report.

2.3 The Reader in the Court Report

The court report writer does not have an opportunity to invoke shared agreements through binding instructions like "y'know", nor can the performance of community invoke only social work conventions. How then can the court report be heard to instruct and construct the ratified reader and superaddressee? We first examine

instructions to the ratified reader, and second, consider contrast structures and how the superaddressee is approachable.

2.3.1 Instructions to the Reader.

The layout and structure of the court report explicitly displays this document for a particular purpose to be heard in a special arena with an identified audience. It has a standard format on the first page and the status of the document is gravely introduced as 'an oath' with named 'plaintiffs' and 'defendants'. However this formal introduction is only apparent on the first page and there after the language uses a wide range of legal, occupational and colloquial discourses.⁽¹⁶⁾ The reader is heard as the judge and the court. S/he is explicitly addressed on a number of occasions, with specific instructions to look at other documents, consider particular information and, at the end, carry out specific action. There is the customary display of deference towards the judge in such instructions:

I crave leave to refer ... (line 21)

I make this affidavit to apprise the Court ... (line 24)

I shall refer to the Minors herein by their first names ... (line 27)

I respectfully request this Honourable court to make the following Orders:...
(line 185)

The opening and ending can be heard as standard protocol and sets up the document for a specific reader and reading occasion. Whilst a written document, these instructions anticipate the reading situation and point the ratified reader in particular directions.

2.3.2 Contrasts and the Superaddressee

In section 1.2, it was noted how this document can be read as storyable through the contrast of two depictions of the mother - as cooperative and trustworthy before the information was received from the hospital and police, and hysterical and dishonest after it is received. Whilst the earlier analysis of story structure highlighted the use of contrasts through character depiction, here the contrast is investigated for how the

reader is constructed and enrolled, and the superaddressee approached.

The reader is transported into two key encounters, both carefully set up (lines 49 and 109) and graphically illustrated with reported speech. The meeting between the social worker and mother before the information is confirmed by the hospital (13 November) can be heard as an amicable and wide-ranging exchange. Mother is told of social services concern, and she denies contact with the father. Two methods can be observed. First, an indirect approach - she is given the opportunity to tell her version of the incident, and is then challenged that the hospital said something different.

I talked to Mrs. B and W about how the incident had occurred. They both told me that W and (his brother) had been fighting on the stairs when W had fallen, thereby causing the injury to his arm. I explained to Mrs. B that we had received information to indicate that she (ie. Mrs B) had told the hospital that the incident had occurred in a different way as described above ... (lines 56-61)

Second, there is a direct question:

I asked her if she had seen (father) recently and she assured me that she had not. She stated that the last time she had seen him was ... (lines 63-4)

In between these questions is direct speech:

"There must be a mistake. They must have been mixing up W with another kid." (lines 62-3).

This section can be heard to function as a dialogue. The social worker describes her own utterances and reports the mother's. To the ratified reader - the Judge, and on this reading occasion - the court hearing, this can be heard to operate like a cross examination (cf. Atkinson and Drew 1979). The social worker, like a barrister, asks an indirect question, offering the opportunity to tell the truthful/preferred version. This is then confronted with other objectively verifiable information from the hospital. The direct question is offered to await later condemnation by objectively verifiable facts from the police. The difference here from 'real' cross examination is that the replies are also provided by the cross examiner.

The second encounter of the removal of the children by the social services with police assistance (19 November) reports mother's words and behaviour in

considerable detail. The reported speech charts the mounting hysterical behaviour of the mother:

She had been clearly agitated when the Police spoke to her, but on seeing me she became extremely distressed and shouted "Get her out of the house". (lines 114-7)

Meanwhile (mother) had run into the sitting room and was holding on to the pushchair in which (child) was sitting. She shouted "No no no, tell me what I've done" (lines 125-7).

Again this can be read as a form of cross examination; this time, however, the propriety of the social worker is being displayed. By carefully relating the incident as a first hand observer, the feelings and motives of the social worker are examined. The decision to remove the children is presented as 'no alternative', because dialogue with mother was impossible. The social services can be seen as rational in contrast to the 'hysterical' mother.

By mimicking and anticipating cross examination in the court, the judge is addressed as the ratified reader, but the superaddressee is the defending barrister. The defendant's own words can be heard as condemning, presenting points which the defence will be forced to confront. Did mother really behave in such a manner? Did she say such things? At the same time, the contrasting characters of mother and social worker set up depictions of reliable and unreliable witnesses. It has been suggested that the affidavit can be read as normal court discourse - detailed descriptions similar to those given under (sympathetic) cross examination and a defendant being heard to incriminate themselves when faced with cross examination and subsequent evidence. The ratified and addressed reader is thus the judge, invoked by court protocol, but the superaddressee is the defending barrister and the charges that must be answered.

2.4 The Reader of Case File Entries

We have already discussed Garfinkel's analysis of medical records, where he suggests that they can be read as less concerned with accuracy and more with displaying a 'therapeutic contract'. The concern here to locate ratified readers is similar to Garfinkel's suggestion that medical files are like a "conversation with an unknown audience" (1967:200). What sort of reader is addressed and enrolled in these case

notes? Garfinkel's 'entitled reader' who reads from "the perspective of active medico-legal involvement" (1967:201) suggests our concept of superaddressee.

Several readers and reading situations might be imagined in child abuse cases. There is first, the colleague looking for facts or assessment when the social worker is not available. Second, as mentioned earlier, such case file entries may be used in court reports and on occasion, the social worker may be required to read them in court as evidence. Certain court officials may examine files (notably the Guardian-ad-litem).⁽¹⁷⁾ Third, the social worker her/himself may use them as a note book for recording opinions and events, which may be used in future documents and discussions. All such readers can be conceived as having different reading interests - a single piece of information, a point of view, or an overall plot. There are still other potential readers - senior officers when resources are requested or reviews completed, the clients themselves, researchers, inspectors etc. Such readers are less likely to be ratified or addressed, but they may constitute the superaddressee. Given this potentially wide range of readers and reading situations, who is the ratified reader and is there a superaddressee?

2.4.1. Mere Facts.

Case file entries could be imagined to be 'mere facts', stating events and conversations, untainted by opinion or evaluation. They might be offered as raw material to readers to make their own assessment of events and characters. However, it will be observed that 'mere facts' can be seen to be doing work. For example:

- 18/11. *Phoned Health Visitor. Gave up-to-date information. She said (mother) had come in yesterday to the clinic but stayed 2 minutes and stormed off - reason unknown. Agreed to keep in touch. She asked if a case conference will be called. I said not at present. Needed to move quickly, then a case conference. Will do this through the High Court.*
- 19/11. *Team leader phoned (children's home) to inform them of our plans and confirm that (oldest child) will stay there.*
- 19/11. *Phoned Family Centre, informed them of current situation and plans.*

Whilst all these entries report phone calls to other professionals, they can be heard to do more than merely note events. They demonstrate that current action and evaluation is taking place in consultation with other professionals. The community of professionals is demonstrated as in active operation. The first entry, in particular, signals the inclusion of the health professional, an important ally from another welfare institution. This entry does not merely recruit her support, but displays the social worker's attention to the joint construction of an appropriate strategy of social work intervention and the shared experience of mother's unreasonable behaviour.

17/11. Message from Team leader. (Father) remanded in custody until 27/11. Need to discuss plans with (Area Manager) then (mother) before going to court.

Here, 'mere' information has consequences and sets up instructions to ratified readers, addressed to the social worker herself and colleagues. At the same time, the careful weighing of strategy is displayed. In summary, mere facts can be heard to perform community by demonstrating to readers an adherence to conventions of legitimate social work activity, notably constructing the welfare network and strategic action. A superaddressee would be impressed.

2.4.2 Points of View

Whilst the entries of phone calls above demonstrates other professionals being enrolled, other entries can be heard to recruit the 'point of view' of other professionals. For example:

19/11 Team leader phoned Legal Department. Spoke to Solicitor - advised to get a warrant to remove the children from home. This means that we need to go to High Court today to request a warrant. This would mean that if necessary the police would have the power to break or force entry. It was felt best for Team leader to go to High Court due to her being the person who spoke to (mother) on the 18/11 and which content we have based as our reasons for taking the children into care.

As well as reporting an action, consequences are identified and action outlined. The Legal Department can be heard to take the concerns of the social workers and turn them into a legal strategy. The action is no longer merely social work concern but legal process. Throughout the file entries around this incident, medical, legal and police advice can be heard to be recruited to the social work formulation, whereas family centre, day nursery, children's home, school are informed.

In the earlier entries, professionals are heard to be recruited and translated into the social work strategy; later however, such forces can be seen to desert:

19/11. Police informed me that (Police Doctor) was not prepared to give an opinion as to how the break on child's arm occurred. He has asked a forensic pathologist to give his opinion. (Police) made it clear that information regarding the break was dependent on this otherwise they have no evidence. They are not certain yet as to whether the arm was deliberately broken by (father).

26/11. Judge decided that children should return home ... Just before going into court we'd heard (father's) charges were dropped. Decision for children going home was based on this knowledge ...

It suggested that points of view, which are recruited to persuade the reader of the strength of the account, based on the network of professionals, can also be used as an excuse when things go wrong. Colleagues who read such entries are likely to sympathise, as other professionals are heard to let the social worker down.⁽¹⁸⁾

2.4.3 Plot

It was noted earlier that White (1980:13) suggested that events and dates of an annal can be read as a plot. Given our concern to investigate reading relations, is it appropriate to consider plot structure? For a social work reader, the reading of a plot is available in the sense of direction of the action. A 'rational decision making' investigation can be heard as the social workers are seen receiving information, interpreting its significance and taking action. This is made available particularly in the

activities of the social worker, Team Leader, Area Officer (Team Leader's boss) and a Principal Social Worker (a headquarters post responsible for tricky cases). These intra-organisational characters are depicted as the strategists, others only contribute. For example:

- 18/11.** *Met with (Principal Social worker, Team leader and self ; 1) Decided to find out (mother's) view about the accident, 2) Her view of (father) and him seeing the children, 3) Why she's not been honest with us and could she be honest with us about (father) in the future in order to have a workable relationship.*
- 18/11** *(mother not accept points above) ... she said she could not talk to (social worker) and didn't want any more mealy mouthed social workers interfering, just bribing her with carpets, washing machines etc... In my view (mother) is not prepared to accept any role in protecting the children from (father) and indeed felt SSD (social services department) were to blame for the fact that (father) was locked up. At this point I suggested she see her solicitor ...*
- 19/11** *Discussed with Area Manager, Team leader and myself. Decision to take the children in care today. Reasons: 1) (Mother's) clear statement that she will not work with Social services in any way, 2) Her view that (father) has a right to see the children and apparent need to have him around, 3) Dishonesty and the need for (mother) to be honest if there is any chance of working together.*

At each step of this plot, the social workers can be heard gathering and interpreting events and characters. Despite recruiting other points of view indicated earlier, facts can be seen as turned into interpretations and action.

Different readings of the case file entries however could locate other, plots especially given the benefit of hindsight. After the failure of the court case, could a social services reader identify what went wrong? Was the information inadequate to

warrant the action? Were procedures followed correctly? The careful instructions of facts, point of views and rational decision making can be heard as attending to any such accusation, especially the explicit links made between information and decisions in the 18/11 and 19/11 entries. As mentioned earlier, entries 19/11 and 26/11 can be heard to blame the police.

However, other readers might read a different plot - what would an Inquiry say? Did social services act too hastily? From the 13/11 entry (displayed in section 1.3), removing the children can be heard as inevitable. Was acting on the hospital doctor's point of view mistaken, given the later police doctor's refusal to support that opinion? The process of decision making after that was very careful, or was it? Who knows what conclusions the scrutiny of later readers might be. Could the information have been put to High Court before taking the children away, were they in such imminent danger? Is an accidental broken arm in father-son play so serious? Should children not see their father ever? On the other hand, were the police inept with their evidence and the judge mistaken? Questions could move from minor mistakes to the basis of the social worker's formulation of the case.

In summary, it is suggested that a number of plots could be read into the case files by later readers. The ratified reader and superaddressee are hard to separate here given the range of possible later readers. They may be persuaded by the gathering of facts and points of view, and a rational decision making display. On the other hand, later readers may construct a wide range of interpretations given their interests and positioning. Goodwin and Goodwin (1992) note how in the (first) Rodney King trial, the jurors were persuaded to see the defendant lying on the floor as a potential threat by accepting the police's everyday formulation of the appropriate use of batons in handling suspects. In this case, social services were unsuccessful in recruiting the judge by professional persuasion and, hence, any number of later readers could undermine.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated two important features of reading social work accounts. First, they can be heard as making available features of narrative and narrativity. Second, the construction of the reader, the performance of the shared community of ratified social work readers and the joint approach to the superaddressee offers important insights into approaching social work accounts as narrative.

In the first part of the chapter, social work accounts were considered against a set of definitions of narrative. It was possible to locate narrative features in the reading of these documents. However, it was suggested that such a process relates less to features of the text 'itself' and more to the process of reading: how narrativity is identified by the reader, how the reader reacts to the events and characters related in the text and constructs reasonable interpretations. Whilst narrative features could be identified in all three accounts, the differences between the texts were significant. Social work accounts that report the 'same' incident were seen as concerned to recruit different audiences.

The second part of the chapter investigated how far social work accounts can be analysed on the basis of different constructions of readers and occasions of reading. A dialogic approach to accounts as texts approaches discourse as responding to an audience. By identifying the reader, appropriate and consistent readings can be formulated. The investigation demonstrated that the concept of a reader is a complex notion with various roles. However, some readers appeared to be more addressed and ratified than others. Such readers could be identified in the categories and contrasts used, and in specific instructions which appear to bind writer and reader. Furthermore, the concept of the 'superaddressee' suggests reading relationships in which writer and reader combine to approach higher authorities in the justification of their 'emplotment' of events and characters.

The construction of the reader and reading relations is suggested here to be more complex than other writers suggest (Law 1986, Rip 1986). With these social work accounts, multiple and critical audiences can be seen as confronted on the same reading occasion, with attempts to recruit categories across genres. Social work,

medical and legal concerns are fused, but also anticipated and easily dispersed. The concept of the superaddressee, as addressed with the support of the ratified reader, is suggested as a way that readers and writers make links between local and more exalted reading occasions. Perhaps scientific texts may be more effective at combining stronger forces than the social work text, which has been observed here as dependent for its fate on the clash of readers' concerns.

This chapter has confirmed the earlier problems of treating social work accounts as more or less accurate representations of the features external to the text. Nor has an autonomous story been located to which all versions are structurally related. The implications for the rest of this thesis are that social work accounts can be successfully investigated as constructing narrative and narrativity. In particular, the construction of the reader offers an opportunity to investigate how social work accounts make available a wide range of instructions and features in attending to such concerns. Social work accounts can be heard to anticipate, persuade but not always convince later readers. In the following chapters, the construction of the reader, reading occasions and relations are treated as important features of textual interpretation. Different attributes of the writer-text-reader dialogue are investigated, starting with the handling of moral concerns.

CHAPTER 4 HANDLING BLAME AND CONSTRUCTING MORAL CHARACTER

I think you will know what abuse is when you hear about it. (a social worker 1992, overheard talking to a teacher who had suggested that child abuse was culturally specific)

There is no objective behaviour we can automatically recognise as child abuse.
(Gelles 1975:364)

INTRODUCTION

The last chapter developed the theme of this thesis, 'social work accounting as text and available as narrative, by investigating the concept of the reader. The reader is seen as a rhetorical and literary construction, available on occasions of performing social work community and constructing ratified reading relations. This chapter and the next explore how rhetorical and literary features are available to persuade the reader of the efficacy of the narrative. The aim of the chapter is to investigate how the reader might be persuaded by moral rhetoric. In chapter 5 the topic is factual rhetoric. The question to be explored here is what is to be gained by studying social work accounting as caught up in moral concerns.

We return to concepts more familiar to sociology, the construction of moral character in accounting. First, there is a discussion of theoretical approaches to moral construction and blame allocation. What do theoretical approaches to morality have to offer a study of social work accounting? Second, an analysis of social work accounts considers the moral construction of character through deploying ascriptions of blame and responsibility to characters and entities. The data studied are reports from a social work journal and a research interview.

The terms 'moral' and 'morality' are used widely in sociology, from different theoretical stances. The discussion in chapter 2 of the crisis of the metanarrative locates this study in the interactional and local siting of social work accounting. Hence a study of morals directs us to 'moral construction' and 'moral character' rather than

morality and morals. There is a focus on processes and formulations rather than externally constraining moral rules. The study of moral construction considers how far social work accounting is concerned with allocating blame and responsibility. In what way can social work accounts be heard as defended against potential criticism? Investigating moral character looks at how far characters and entities are depicted using concepts of good, bad; deserving, undeserving; blameless, culpable. An added dimension is the development of moral character both as a sociological investigation of rhetorical features and a literary concern with the depiction of character; how are traits and attributes of characters made available in narrative?

A further feature of moral character refers back to the last chapter, in that character development in social work accounting is also concerned with constructing the reader and community of competent hearers. Moral characterisations through which descriptions of actors and entities are constructed are dependent on interactionally available moral formulations. The deserving client, the inadequate mother can be heard as moral categories which enable social work accounts to be described, shared and hence constitutive of the community of competent social work hearers. In short, the investigation of moral character is concerned with rhetorical features (how is character constructed?); with narrative properties of character development (what character depiction is made available through narrativity?); and with interactional concerns (how do moral characterisations enable texts to be read as social work accounting?)

1 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO MORAL CONSTRUCTION

Moral character is central to decision-making in child abuse and neglect, as with any other type of deviance. (Dingwall et al 1983:80)

If a socially organised and intersubjective world stands or falls with the maintenance of this interpretative trust, then it is not surprising to find that it is attended to as a deeply moral matter (Heritage 1984:97)

The transcendental source of the a priori of moral action, Durkheim would propose, is society, whose existence is both anterior and posterior to that of any of its members. (Tiryakian 1979:210)

Moral concerns pervade theoretical and everyday accounting. Definitions of right/wrong, acceptable/unacceptable are, like narrative in chapter 2, so wide as to

be in danger of being meaningless. Yet deviance, and child abuse in particular, posit deeply held moral formulations, with vehement accusations and denials. ⁽¹⁾ In what way is child abuse morally constructed? Are responses informed by local interpretation or transcendental rules? How do morals enable the reading of social work accounting? This section considers first, general theoretical approaches to morality; second, the moral concerns of social work and third, processes of allocating blame and responsibility.

1.1 Moral rules or moral processes?

Viewed from a simplistic dichotomy, there have been two major sociological approaches to morals and morality - what might be called 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'. The former is generally associated with writers like Durkheim and Parsons, who see morals as externally constraining the activity of actors, and internalised through socialisation.⁽²⁾ For Garfinkel and Blum and McHugh (1971), morality is the product of the process of on-going interaction through which the moral nature of reality is accomplished by actors continually accommodating and accounting for the responses of others. Heritage (1984:83) calls these approaches 'regulative' and 'constitutive'. In the former, moral rules mark out proper behaviour and guide actors in the appropriate actions to take; in the latter, moral formulations are interactionally deployed to make sense of and produce a shared construction of the moral world.

Parsons takes external moral constraint to the point where it appears that the actor has no opportunity to make moral choices. The normative system, through internalising values in the psychological processing of actors, offers all appropriate and possible courses of 'rational' action. This depicts the actor as a 'judgmental dope' (Garfinkel 1967:68). The fundamental criticism of Parsons is his disregard of the common sense world of the actor.

The common feature in the use of these 'models of man' (the judgmental dope) is the fact that courses of common sense rationalities of judgement which involve the person's use of common sense knowledge of social structures over the temporal 'succession' of here and now situations are treated as epiphenomenal. (Garfinkel 1967:68)

Heritage (1984:36) concludes that the Parsonian framework is an "idealization almost entirely divorced from the gritty texture of reasonable actions in terms of the mundane

world it constitutes".⁽³⁾ For Garfinkel, the moral aspect of the social world is to be found in everyday interaction, in the way actors treat one another's actions as intelligible. Morals are not an a priori which pre-figure the actor's choice of action. It is rather in situationally constituted and negotiated evaluations, where the moral basis of mutual understanding of communication is achieved. Garfinkel (1967:50) calls this 'trust', "a person's compliance with the expectancies of the attitude of daily life as a morality". Through the famous 'breach experiments', Garfinkel demonstrates both the fragile nature of social interaction and the extreme moral sanction when common sense expectations are transgressed.⁽⁴⁾ Speakers expect, what Garfinkel (1967:42) sees as an entitlement to cooperative communication, which is morally sanctionable.

With a distrust of the metanarrative outlined in chapter 2, the idea of morals as externally determining rules is inappropriate for this study. To see morality as interactionally accomplished is in line with this project. However there are two aspects to this. First, there is an interest with how everyday procedures are morally sanctionable in order to constitute the intersubjective social world. Second, there is a more limited consideration of the everyday negotiation of moral concern. Here, the moral outrage of breaching everyday interaction, is less of a concern than the everyday construction of moral outrage.

1.2 Social Work and Moral Assessment

To what extent do social workers use moral constructions in order to carry off their descriptions and knowledge claims? It has been noted by a number of writers that moral assessment is central to the categorisation and processing of public, legal and welfare institutions and officials (Emerson 1969, Cicourel 1976, Dingwall et al 1983, Rees 1978). Delinquents, welfare claimants, even river polluters (Hawkins 1983) are characterised and categorised through conceptions of moral worth and culpability.⁽⁵⁾ In child abuse, social workers' assessments of injury to children involve complex moral formulations. Dingwall et al (1983) consider that child abuse is underreported through a "rule of optimism", whereby 'cultural relativism' and assumptions of 'natural love' neutralise possible allegations. More recently, the 'crisis' of child abuse throughout the 1980s and 90s has prompted formulations of 'dangerous families' (Dale et al 1986), with social workers more prepared to identify and intervene in child

abuse, especially child sex abuse.⁽⁶⁾ Social workers are surrounded by others ready to offer statements of authority as to the features and causes of child abuse, notably doctors (Kempe, Greenland and many more), journalists (Campbell 1988), politicians (Bell 1988) and judges (Blom-Cooper 1988 and several inquiry reports). Social workers do not therefore have a monopoly on authority claims in child abuse, and may orientate their comments to multiple reading communities. In such an atmosphere of uncertainty and outrage, how are assessments of good/ bad, right/ wrong, appropriate/ inappropriate, deserving/ undeserving handled?⁽⁷⁾

This approach to deviance as recognisable in the definitional activity of officials is heavily drawn on in this study. There is a long tradition of labelling theory or constructivist approaches which sees social problems as constructed by the officials who process them. Police and court officials construct crime (Cicourel 1976), doctors define mental illness (Scheff 1966), social workers construct child abuse (Dingwall et al. 1983). For example, Dingwall et al (1983:31) affirm:

Our basic hypothesis is that abuse and neglect are the products of complex processes of identification, confirmation and disposal rather than inherent in a child's presenting condition and, at least in some sense self evident.

Pfohl (1977) and Parton (1985) consider that there has always been child beating, but certain developments in political and professional appropriation enabled its recent conceptualisation as 'child abuse'.

There is concern about how far social constructivists are one-sided in their scepticism and relativity, seeing the constructedness of claims makers, but remaining realist about their own claims (Woolgar and Pawluch 1985). If however accounting is approached as equally applicable to the thesis writer, we can investigate in what way social construction is morally accomplished.

1.3 Handling Blame and Responsibility

One way that social work accounting through storytelling can be linked to moral construction is the study of processes of allocating blame and responsibility. As discussed in chapter 1, accounting has a large and small purview in the literature: accounting as communicating events and characters as describable, 'reportable, tell-a-story-aboutable' (Garfinkel (1967:33), as opposed to accounts to repair 'fractured

interaction' (Scott and Lyman 1968). The investigation of procedures of blame allocation lies between these two extremes, concerned not with repairing 'fractured interaction', but attending to local threats or potential threats of culpability (Watson 1978, Atkinson and Drew 1979, Cuff 1980, Potter and Wetherell 1987, Silverman 1987). This work looks at the way accounting in the sense of excuses, disclaimers and justifications, takes place in order to mitigate blame. Blame can be both allocated to those outside the conversation (Watson 1978), and handled within an on-going sequence of charge and rebuttal (eg. a cross examination in court Atkinson and Drew 1979). Much of this work has focused on the sequential nature of blame in naturally occurring conversation. There has been less interest in the way in which accounts without an explicit hearer allocate, anticipate and prepare for blame.

There are pointers in this approach to blame allocation as more than defending talk in interaction. Atkinson and Drew (1979:137) note how on some occasions, blame in cross examination is anticipated and countered, such that the rebuttal comes before the charge. It could be that in cross examination, witnesses anticipate questions and criticism, with rebuttals already prepared. Heritage's (1989:130) complaint-apology sequence (A: 'why don't you come and see me sometimes', B: I'm sorry. I've been terribly tied up lately.) can be heard as reassuring the hearer that a competent and acceptable story of 'being busy' is unspoken but available to counter the complaint. Stories are particularly good at handling morals, indeed the structuralist approach to myth would argue that this is their purpose, the display of deep cultural oppositions.⁽⁸⁾ Given the discussion of narrative and narrativity in chapter 2, how useful are plot, point of view and character depiction in observing blame allocation and the moral basis of competent social work accounting? How is the reader constructed and enrolled through allocations of blame and responsibility? There is a further aspect to accounting for child abuse. Silverman (1987:244) discusses handling blame by parents of children with diabetes, where the option of no blame is negotiated. In contrast, in child abuse, someone is to blame for the state of the child. The act of abuse, the circumstances, the environment, the prevention, the complicity - any number of 'actants' (Latour 1987:84) - people and things which act - are available for accusation.

In conclusion, what has moral construction as located in blame allocation to

offer in approaching social work accounting as a narrative? Treating social work reports and conversations as accounts which link assessments and interventions, blame allocation can be approached as one way of observing the telling of moral stories. How are characters constructed, events set in sequence and the two linked as blameless or culpable by a moral order? There is first an analysis of blame in news reports from a social work journal. The second analysis looks at how blame and responsibility are developed in a description of a social work case in a research interview.

2 REPORTING CHILD ABUSE IN A SOCIAL WORK JOURNAL

Appendix 4.1 presents eleven reports from a social work journal and one from a national newspaper of child abuse tragedies. It is not suggested that these examples are typical of child protection cases: they are some of the few cases that hit the headlines, as, in all but one report, a child has died. These are all the reports on child abuse cases which appeared in the journal between late 1989 and early 1990, following the highly publicised cases of Beckford and Cleveland. Similar reports were less widespread in the journal a year later as 'ritual abuse' and concern about residential care took over the headlines. Given their audience, these reports might offer the sort of explanations envisaged as reportable and hearable by social workers.⁽⁹⁾ They are in contrast to local and national press coverage, and can be heard as a professional and balanced response to other reporting. As Franklin and Parton (1991) show, the main theme of national press reporting during this period was to construct negative stereotypes of social workers.⁽¹⁰⁾

Chatman (1978:152) contends that narrative is different from political speeches or sermons because there is more than one point of view available in the text. These reports can be read as narrative rather than expositions, since alternative versions of events are acknowledged and sometimes directly contested. The reporter offers different versions, but is heard to endorse one rather than another. The alternative version is perhaps the blaming of social workers by national press reports, which had (probably) hit the headlines between one week (report 8) and two years (report 6) before the appearance of this report. Two reports respond directly to an alternative version. In report 4, the headline and the introduction make it clear that a version

offered by the Minister is dismissed in the Inquiry Report. In report 1, the Director of Social Services reacts to the press criticisms of the social workers as "unfortunate". The frequent and public reporting of these cases in the UK in the late 1980s suggest that such explanations are available for social workers to rehearse for any future public exposure of their case. Thus handling blame and responsibility can be investigated as an example of an available social work accounting repertoire (Gilbert and Mulkey 1984).

2.1 Headlines

The framing of a text by its heading has been noted by Woolgar (1980:251) as providing a guide to the reader of how to understand what follows, as well as summarising the message. In six of the reports, the issue of blame is the focus of the headline, while four others report the process of inquiries (report 2, 4, 9 and 10). The response to a potential blaming is immediately set out as either critical of the social workers or exonerating them. Those which resist blame are unequivocal in their instruction - report 5 "Death could not have been prevented" and report 6 "Boy's death no fault of social workers". Where social work culpability is reported, it sets up the lesser charge of making mistakes or poor judgement - report 8 "Avon director admits mistakes were made", report 3 "SSD was mistaken", report 1 "Judgements flawed says child death review". These can be heard as in contrast to headings like the Times (18/12/87) "Tyra Henry Inquiry says social workers to blame over murder". One method of handling blame is therefore to accept one (technical) aspect of the charge without necessarily admitting the full condemnation.⁽¹¹⁾ In over half the reports, the initial instruction to the reader can be heard as attempting to handle actual and potential blame.

2.2 Point of View

Given the widespread criticism in other media reporting, who is heard as the 'trusted teller of the tale' in these reports? (Smith 1978:34). It was suggested in chapter 2, that the 'point of view' of an account can help investigate how storytelling is accomplished. From chapter 3, the process of constructing the ratified reader and performing the social work community, is available through the way in which 'point

of view' is managed.

Two preferred 'points of view' can be heard in most of the reports - the reporting Inquiry Team or the response of the Director of Social Services. Inquiry Teams consist of commentators who are both 'objective' and 'informed'. There are not only social work, police and health representatives, but in the case of independent inquiries, they are chaired by lawyers - reports 2, 3 and 4. Hence, they can appear as legitimate critics and in contrast to the 'sensational' press. The Director is the receiver of the report and the spokesperson for the social services. S/he invariably accepts the Inquiry Team's conclusions and the Department's share of the blame; for example, report 1 "fairly balanced in its criticism". S/he can be heard to outline how things have been changed or will be changed in response to the findings. In report 6 the photograph of one Director shows a face of compassion (is that a tear in his eye?) The overall structure of most of the reports are similar - they offer the conclusions of the reports, with use of direct speech, some details of the case, followed by the response of the Director of Social Services. Findings generally criticise structures and procedures (reports 1,2,3,7 and 10), with individual staff portrayed as having "the best intentions" (report 1), "'conscientious" (report 2) "offering regular support" (reports 5 and 7), if on occasions mistaken (1,3,7 and 8).

The report does not criticise any of the individuals involved, but states it was the system which broke down "letting down those who worked within it" (report 3)

This strong defence of the individual worker can be heard to depict them as also victims of an inadequate system.

Overall, the two explicit 'points of view' in these reports, the Inquiry Teams and the Directors, can be heard to support one another in providing authoritative endorsement for the integrity of social work, though with provisos. Systems need adjustment, individuals make mistakes but individual workers are alright, the profession is not in crisis. This is in contrast to, for example, the Daily Telegraph (18/12/87), where social workers are considered "incompetent and insufficiently professional" and more recently "one hundred errors of welfare team in Orkney child sex inquiry" Today (27/10/92). Citing Inquiry Reports and the Director is not the only defence. Through what methods is a story made available which explains child abuse

and defends social work?

2.3 Linking the Actants in the Reports

Three major actants can be identified in the reports - the outcome of the abuse, a dead or injured child; the perpetrator or murderer; and the professionals and their procedures. The reports (and social work in general) can be read as attempting to link these entities in a way which is competent, balanced and reportable. The first entity is an indisputable fact, the body. It has been processed by doctors, police and courts, and the task now is to explain it. It is a retrospective task, the cause is already known:

Sukina was beaten to death by her father after she was unable to spell her name (report 1)

The boy was suffocated with a pillow by his mother (report 6).

Liam died from 16 spinal fractures at the hands of his father (report 4)

The outcome was unquestionably caused by the murderer and any uncertainty of the jury room is forgotten. The report attends to the question of how it is possible that such an outrage occurred. It is a task of moral (re)construction. With the legal proceedings over, the focus shifts from the act of the abuse/murder to the surrounding circumstances, and, in particular, to the activity of the professionals. Through the sequential process of reporting, child abuse becomes less a criminal matter and more a social service matter.⁽¹²⁾ Through what rhetorical methods can these actants be read as linked together? How can the outcome be explained and blame allocated?

2.3.1 'The Predisposition'

Some of the work of explanation is achieved by describing circumstances and attributes of the murderer/perpetrator. These are situational features around the time of the murder:

(the murder occurred) following a row between the woman and her ex-boyfriend. (report 6)

(the murderer) who was acutely depressed and also trying to kill herself... (report 5)

Moving further away from the scene of the murder, something of the background and character of the perpetrator is made available:

The court heard that Palmer was 16 and in council care... (report 2)

These explanations in terms of the character and circumstances of the perpetrator suggest the search for a 'predisposition' to child abuse. The abuse/murder can be located through such features, which, if recognised, might have prevented the incident. However, this sets up the possibility of a charge of culpability for not preventing by not recognising such a predisposition. A further account is made available to rebut any such charge. In report 6, the mitigation of "no SSD involvement" and "no evidence that her care of the child had been anything other than satisfactory" demonstrates no social worker access to 'the predisposition'. In report 2, the decision to allow the young man in care to set up with his girlfriend is backed by an account of "trying to work with the adolescent". In report 9, "no criticism" is linked directly to "keeping in regular touch".

On the other hand, report 5 locates possible social worker access to a 'predisposition' since "the woman was receiving considerable social work support at the time". The strong headline and opening state categorically that the social services department "could not have predicted nor prevented the tragedy", and these are the conclusions of two reports, one of which is independent. Furthermore, the woman was "acutely depressed" uses an extreme case formulation, (Pomerantz 1986), and may be heard as suggesting that the department did all it could and could not be blamed for not trying, although it was unsuccessful. The reduced culpability of the woman because of her depression was expressed in an earlier report on the same case (report 10). If the formulation - very depressed, needed and received social support but still social workers did not predict - has not convinced the reader, blame is further deflected as there was no criticism:

It was felt that the family needed help and support. Neither prosecution nor defence had criticised the SWD, he (the deputy director) said. (report 10)

It is thus suggested that one way that these reports can be heard to offer an explanation of events, and at the same time rebut any charge of culpability, is to construct child abuse in terms of a 'predisposition', to which the social workers did

not have access or were powerless to prevent. Other reports do not offer such formulations and the character of the perpetrators are viewed less sympathetically. (See section 2.3.3.).

2.3.2 'The Pattern'

Whereas there is in some reports a formulation of a potentially observable set of circumstances which 'predispose' families to child abuse, a further feature available for the social workers and other professionals (and readers) to recognise is a 'pattern' of abuse. Reports 4,7 and 8 offer previous incidents of abuse which constitute a potentially observable pattern of it occurring before. Having set up such a formulation, a rebuttal is made available as to why the pattern was not observed and acted on. If previous incidents of abuse have been reported and recorded, how was the fatal incident not predicted and avoided?

A defence is offered in several ways related to social work knowledge and information. The first level excuse is that social workers had no access to the 'pattern', as there was no contact with social services:

The committee's report on the case said there had been no SSD involvement with the mother. (report 6)

If social services did not have any information about the case, how could they be held accountable?

At a second level, there was social work contact, but no 'evidence' of child abuse. This level is less forthright in its excuse and implies an external constraint on potential action because of, for example, the law:

"We are satisfied that at no time was there evidence which would have allowed the department to have instituted legal proceedings" (report 2)

Similarly in report 8, despite information on the family's problems, it was "not sufficient to take (the child) into care". This can be heard to suggest that the social workers knew there were problems but were constrained from responding because particular evidence is necessary before court action can be taken. Alternatively, report 3 sees lack of information (as opposed to evidence) as a blaming:

The report finds that a decision made at a case conference to return the child to its home was based on "inadequate information and a superficial assessment of the case".

Cuff (1980:35) notes how the same construction can be turned round from an excuse and used as a blame. Lack of information or evidence of 'the pattern' appears to be constructed on the basis of differing conceptions of social work activity - a social worker reacts to information received or seeks out information to 'adequately' inform decisions.

A third level excuse of not having access to the 'pattern' is that the information was interpreted differently. Information of incidents, which are now suspected as child abuse, was at that stage not seen as abuse. In report 4, possible previous abuse was considered "accidental". In report 8, the medical opinion was that despite a broken limb, "in this family... abuse had not occurred". Again, this formulation can be inverted and used as a blame. In report 7:

Medical and SSD staff saw his earlier injuries as the result of 'poor parenting' and no one was willing to confirm abuse, the health authority report claims.

Thus the incorrect interpretation of instances as not being part of 'the pattern' can be made available for an excuse and a blaming.

Other reports are less explicit about access to 'the pattern' or 'predisposition', but still make assertions that the death could not have been prevented. In report 3, this is linked to "inadequate procedures and overstretched resources". In report 1, although "indicators" were unrecognised and there was "an unwarranted optimism" (the blame), still the death could not have been "anticipated and therefore prevented" (the excuse). Blame and excuse can be heard as linked together, with degrees of each - some blame ('mistakes') and yet an overall excuse.

The ability to observe, interpret correctly and act on a 'pattern' or 'predisposition' of child abuse can be heard to make use of the 'documentary method of interpretation' (Garfinkel 1967). There are incidents of injuries (the documents) that social workers and other professionals have access to, which point to child abuse (the underlying pattern). Dingwall et al (1983:80) note a prospective-retrospective view of moral character; past events now fit into 'the pattern':

This means that past events can be re-analysed to fit the actor's present status, as evidence, for instance, that a parent was 'really' an abuser all along, and to organise the unfolding present as yet further confirmation of the correctness of this ascription.

This analysis has observed the use of the documentary method in social work reporting by suggesting, not only the linking of instances to an underlying pattern, but also the possibility of blame (indeed moral outrage) when such a link is unrecognised. 'The pattern' and 'the predisposition' become important and contested features of reporting and accounting for child abuse. Their manipulation might be hearable as a rebuttal to a possible 'superaddressee': the Beckford Report, (1985:287) which concludes:

On any conceivable version of events under inquiry the death of Jasmine Beckford on 5 July 1984 was both a predictable and preventable homicide.

'The predisposition' offers explanations in underlying features of the circumstances and history of the perpetrator. 'The pattern' can be heard as an excuse at several levels - no contact, insufficient information, incorrect interpretation. However, all these excuses can be inverted and used as blame. The overall balance sheet of blamings and excuses, mistakes and competent (although unsuccessful) social work activity enables a normalising social work story to be heard. Reporting child abuse is depicted as a balancing act and a balanced view, and as neutralising the other press reporting. Report 11 from the national press covers similar material to the social work press report about the same incident (report 12), outlining and quoting the court and police comments. However, the last paragraph does not appear in the journal report, and can be heard as a blaming without any social work account:

(the social worker) said he had not had much experience of such cases but that he had said this to his superiors.

2.3.3 The Moral Character of the Perpetrator

It has been suggested that the reporting of child abuse can be heard to allocate blame and excuses to two opposing entities, the perpetrator or murderer, their circumstances and attributes, and the social workers, their organisations and related professionals. The two entities are not only related but are constitutive of one another. The circumstances and personal history of the perpetrator can be constructed on the basis of social workers' activities, and the handling of blame and responsibility by social workers is tied up with constructing the perpetrators. How is the depiction of the moral character of the perpetrator/murderer linked to handling potential blame

and justifying social work activity?

Some of the reports, like those in the national press, describe details of the murder and suggests a construction of the perpetrators as 'monsters' (Dingwall et al 1983:87). This can be heard as in contrast to the construction of moral character of 'the predisposed'. As was outlined above 'the predisposition' makes available a sympathetic excuse for the abuse - depression, history in care. 'Monsters' on the other hand are not offered such excuses. They are not constructed using pejorative terms, as in the national press, but by reporting particularly lurid details of the offence. In reports 1,4 and 8, such details are provided and significantly the nature of social work support is not discussed. Perhaps, if child abusers are monsters, they are seen as less likely to be receptive to social work help (support, counselling). In contrast, 'the predisposed' characters in reports 2, 5 and 6, are described through their use of and access to social work services, which also reduces blame of the social workers. The reader feels sorry for them and their predicament; the 'predisposition' is not their fault and blame is mitigated. In a later version of report 5 (report 10), it is suggested that the social workers considered the sentence too severe.⁽¹³⁾

We have thus far seen that the attribution of blame to the perpetrator and hence the construction of their moral character is inextricably tied up with demonstrating the competent operation or mistakes of the child protection and social work support systems. The 'predisposed' require and are offered help (even though it was not enough). Their predicament is understood, but is unpreventable as they had so many problems; hence blame is mitigated. Where the perpetrator is depicted as a 'monster', the aim of social work intervention is surveillance with the potential of removing the children if the risk is considered serious. In some of these cases, the risk was underestimated and, hence, 'mistakes made'. What was missed or ignored was 'the pattern' of child abuse, which would have warranted removing the children.

The moral character of the perpetrator/murderer can be constructed on the basis of 'the predisposition' and 'the pattern', which is linked to the appropriateness of social work help or surveillance. It suggests the availability of a number of potential links between, on the one hand - the less blameworthy, the predisposition and the offer of social work help, and, on the other, the monster, the pattern and social work

as surveillance. In either case, the social worker is not to blame. In the first set of relations, there were too many problems, and in the second, just uncontrollable monsters. It is not suggested that these formulations are stable, but they are available as resources and relations to be deployed flexibly in shifted stories.

2.4 Summary

This section has suggested that reports in a social work journal can be read as building constructions of moral assessment and character. Such formulations are made available through reading the construction of and relations between entities - child abuse, child abusers and social work activity. These entities can be linked to one another through formulations of 'the pattern' of and 'the predisposition' to child abuse and the moral character of the abuser. At the same time as the entities are configured, so the reports are available to be read as allocating and deflecting blame for the tragedy. They appear as strategic documents for the self preservation of social work. Such formulations of child abuse and blame allocation can be read as in contrast to (and perhaps rebutting) charges about the integrity and efficacy of social work reported in the national press.

Allocating blame is made available as the 'headline' instruction of many of these reports. Inquiry Reports are frequently complex and wide-ranging, yet blame for not preventing the tragedy is signalled as the predominant concern. Perhaps child abuse inquiries may be attended to as occasions where handling blame is isomorphic with circumstances of the inquiry. In a press release for a later Inquiry into Sukina's death (DOH 19/4/91), the rebuttal of blame is made clear:

We would like to emphasise that our evaluation and the analysis of the case, showed no indication that any one individual was responsible for the outcome. Critical decisions were made corporately. To attempt to apportion blame would both ignore the facts and deny the reality of the complexities of this particular case. It was not the social workers, health visitors, doctors, teachers or nursery staff who were responsible for Sukina's death - but her father.

This appears at the end of the release and in bold type. By directly highlighting the only appropriate allocation of blame, any charge is countered with an ironic contrast between the professionals and the perpetrator/murderer.

Other writers in media studies emphasise the importance of news reports in

representing cultural values through storytelling which is full of the morals associated with folk tales:

There must be villains and heroes in every paper, and the storylines must conform to the usage of suspense, conflict, the defeat of evil and the triumph of good that have guided the good sense and artistry of the past storytellers and controlled their audience's ability to respond. (Barkin 1984:30)

And yet these reports construct simplistic depictions with little suspense or triumph; perhaps blame and its mitigation is all they have space to attend to. Are journal reports of social work attending to different narrative features from other social work accounting discussed here? The temporal features are confusing and there is not a straightforward move from one state of affairs to another (as discussed in chapter 3). In short, the journal reports make available fewer storyable readings. Perhaps they operate by reassuring readers that competent professional stories are available and waiting to be heard from the social workers involved or from the Inquiry Team. In this way, the reports can be heard to support by inferring that a competent reading of social work exists. The ratified reader is invited to look further, but will be able to (re)confirm the integrity of social work. We will now turn to one such potential, competent story from a research interview.

3 CONSTRUCTING MORAL CHARACTER IN A RESEARCH INTERVIEW: 'THE FAILURE TO THRIVE' CASE

What can be gained from investigating blame allocation and the construction of moral character in a research interview? Appendix 4.2 presents the first ten minutes of a research interview concerning a case of 'failure to thrive'. The social worker provides an uninterrupted monologue telling the key features of the case. The boundaries of the story are marked with a clear beginning: the social worker demanding the floor with an instruction not to be interrupted (line 7 "well look I'll speak"), and finishes with "that's the position at the moment and that in summary is the case" (line 339). We investigate blame allocation by concentrating on the construction of the moral character of the mother and the professional. How is the depiction of the mother able to be read as constructing a moral order of child abuse and at the same time as handling potential criticism? What narrative and rhetorical features are available to achieve such depictions? It is first necessary to consider features discussed in the

previous section in this chapter: 'point of view', 'the pattern' and 'the predisposition' of child abuse.

3.1 . Point of View in a Research Interview: Institutional Voices.

From the initial invitation by the interviewer (line 1), the social worker can be heard to tell the case from his point of view, beginning with being allocated the case (line 9). Unlike the 'broken arm' case in chapter 3, where several turns of negotiation delay the telling of "a bit of background", here "the circumstances were..." (line 10) is immediately offered. Like that interview however, there is a similar temporal detour backwards from the allocation to the first social services contact (line 12 to 61). The re-emphasis of "I was allocated..." (line 62) can be heard to re-establish the point of view. This temporal repair at line 62 signals the return to the storyteller as 'camera eye' (Chatman 1978:154), where the action is in the presence of this social worker.

This sharp division between previous workers and the present worker can be heard as heralding a new and more competent intervention "I took it on with a clear objective..." (line 65). This is in contrast to the highly collective nature of the chapter 3 case, where it was suggested that this contributed to the construction of a community of competent hearers. Here there is a continual alternation between the 'I' and 'we' for example at line 91-93:

...I had called a further case conference and the case conference accepted my recommendation that we should go forward with care proceedings and that we should seek a supervision order...

I did a home visit to the family a joint visit with the family welfare association... we went to cover three things... (line 134-6)

...we tried to discuss this with mother but she wouldn't hear of it and regrettably I was forced into a situation where not only had I... (line 193-5)

Whilst there is a great deal of use of 'we', it can be heard differently to the chapter 3 case. It was suggested there that 'we' was available to bind the reader/hearer into the community of competent' social work hearers. Here, it can be heard as substantiating the collective and cooperative nature of joint action and the standpoint of the welfare network. The 'we' refers less to social work colleagues and more to a variety of other professionals, including doctors, health visitors and nurses. They are

not recruited in order to substantiate social work as a competent professional activity, but to unite the professionals against the family. In the examples above, the 'I' can be heard as more active, with the 'we' in a supporting role. The reader can hear a united front of various professionals, all of whom share the concern and difficulty in confronting this family. Armed with such a mandate, the social worker carries out the necessary tasks.

The importance of enrolling entities into an actor world and recruiting allies to an actor network has been developed by Latour and Callon (Callon et al 1986, Latour 1987). Callon et al (1986:24) consider that an actor world:

...associates heterogeneous entities. It defines their identity, the roles they play, the nature of the bonds that unite them, their respective sizes and the history in which they participate.

According to Callon et al (1986:28), simplification is the first element of an actor world, and here a wide range of entities can be heard to be reduced to simple roles and responsibilities: doctors, health visitors, family members, foster parents, police, judges, scales, charts, court orders and procedures, illness, violent behaviour, case conferences. The range is much wider than in the journal reports. Entities can be observed to move in and out of the story to support the social worker as the centre of the network.⁽¹⁴⁾

There is, in particular, a split between medical and social entities enrolled in the account, as noted by Dingwall et al (1983:31). The point of view of the doctors and their instruments are offered as the basis for the concern and the definitions of the condition.

...on being taken there erm the hospital felt that this was a clear picture of a failure to thrive the child was as I recall off the top of my head I think it was two and a half kilos under weight was very dehydrated and in fact had the situation been left further longer the child would have died... (line 36-41)

...the GP who felt further concerned and the baby was taken to Saint Toby's where it was admitted and a diagnosis was made of a very erm clear failure to thrive in that... (line 166-170)

To this medical evidence and opinion is added a social analysis, as the attributes of the family members depict social problems - young, homeless, a recently constituted family (line 17-24) and delinquency (line 89).

Juxtaposing institutional voices can be heard as stronger than the 'point of view' of a single character. The display of medical and social entities and attributes forms a link to wider discourses in the Foucauldian sense; that is, institutional voices which bring with them authority and legitimacy. It is not merely particular doctors or weights that are being enrolled, but the language of authoritative allies. The reader is being encouraged to hear respected and powerful voices beyond the words stated. In this social work account, 'point of view' can be heard as not merely an individual narrator, despite the emphasised use of 'I', but an actor supported by authoritative voices.

3.2 'The Pattern' and 'the Predisposition'

Are 'the pattern' and 'the predisposition' also available here in constructing 'failure to thrive' as child abuse? For 'failure to thrive', a 'pattern' is an essential resource for instructing the reader/hearer that this case is an example of the condition. The category 'failure to thrive' makes up only a small proportion of cases officially registered as child abuse. With no obvious physical signs or child's disclosure, weights, measurements, charts and feeding regimes provide the evidence. 'The pattern' is thus required. It is possible to construct 'failure to thrive' as not an issue of child abuse, but of 'normal' developmental delay or a 'small child'.⁽¹⁵⁾ The uncertainty of diagnosis problematises recognition and, in particular, culpability for the condition - is it merely slow development in which case no one is to blame or is it negligent care?

In this case, the social worker can be heard to construct 'failure to thrive' as child abuse through both 'the pattern' of the weights and scales, but also attributes of the parents, 'the predisposition'. Initially, this is in terms of their age, unstable housing and family relationships (line 19 - 25). To this is added criminal activity (line 88), and then considerable detail on a pattern of non-cooperation and violence. By constructing a 'pattern' of underweight and a 'predisposition' to various social problems, the social worker can be seen to link failure to thrive and child abuse. By portraying the parents as uncooperative, the social worker adds the extra element of 'parental incorrigibility', and hence is able to blame the mother for the condition. In order to investigate how the mother is constructed, we first consider the sequential

handling of blame in a rhetorical pattern available to be observed in the interview.

3.3 A Three Stage Feature

So far the analysis has concentrated on aspects of the account which the reader can hear in order to recognise narrativity - the point of view and a possible plot of entities associated with one another. Before considering the construction of moral character, we can investigate how some of these entities are related to one another through a rhetorical figure - the three stage feature.⁽¹⁶⁾ There is available throughout this account a repetitive motif, which can be heard to allocate blame to the mother and justify action. A three stage approach to performance and argumentation has been noted by a number of writers. Jefferson (1990) has discussed a three part structure to lists, and Heritage and Greatbach (1986) observed a similar structure in political speeches. They note that the list or pattern is heard as incomplete without the third item, which a hearer provides if it is missing. The three stage feature outlined here is slightly different from a list, and nearer to the structure of a claim, as outlined by Toulmin (1958:97). He draws a distinction:

between the claim or conclusion whose merits we are seeking to establish (C) and the facts we appeal to as a foundation for the claim - what I shall refer to as our data (D).

The link between the two in his model is a 'warrant' (W):

which can act as a bridge, and authorises the sort of step to which our particular argument commits us. (1958:98)

Schematically, his model is:

D-----> So C
since W

This model has been used by a number of studies to demonstrate the structure of an argument (Best 1987, Herndl et al 1991). In this interview fragment, a pattern can be heard based on moral warrants depicted as 'outrage'. The text can be read through a series of features, which display three stages similar to the data - warrant - claim sequence described by Toulmin. Thus the rhetorical pattern here can be heard as data - moral outrage - justification of social worker action.

This can be demonstrated between lines 42 and 46:

Data: *the mother erm the the staff found the mother very very difficult very hostile uncooperative erm*

Outrage: *and the the situation er caused so much anxiety*

Justification: *that a place of safety was taken and the child kept in hospital.*

Also at lines 58 and 62:

Data: *there was an incident however involving this worker when he was assaulted he was kicked and punched*

Outrage: *and it really was a very serious matter on the basis that this worker would find it extremely difficult to proceed*

Justification: *I was allocated.*

Similarly at lines 73 to 80:

Data: *we were in some difficulty because we felt that we couldn't arrange access in in the foster home as we normally would so what happened was that access had to be arranged in the area office*

Outrage: *which was a horrendous task*

Justification: *to overcome this and to enable me to assess this family's ability to care for this child we involved the family welfare association.*

Such a pattern can be heard first to describe some difficult situation, the data. The warrant directly instructs the reader as to the very serious nature of the situation. The necessary action is then inevitable and justified. The warrant is further achieved through a range of vocal pauses and emphasis which add dramatic tension to the performance of the story.⁽¹⁷⁾

This three stage feature can be linked to other rhetorical features, 'last resorts' and 'extreme case formulations'. The concept of 'last resorts' is discussed by Emerson (1987). He considers that 'last resorts' are constructed as dispreferred

options when all normal first resort responses have been tried and failed to contain the trouble:

In a last resort situation, then, the impending response does not simply rank at the top of the list of possible options; it is the sole course of action remaining (page 5)

A feature of the last resort is that the decision to carry out a particular action is straightforward and obvious; there is no discretion for the decision maker.⁽¹⁸⁾

In the 'failure to thrive' case, at each appearance of the three stage feature, intervention is heard as a 'last resort', as an inevitable and dispreferred outcome. There are first resort responses, for example, the assessment at line 85 and the supervision order at line 94. Such interventions, however, are heard as short lived successes as three stage features can be heard to structure the account as an inevitable move to the ultimate 'last resort' - the removal of the children with a police order at line 198. At line 121-8 the exhaustion of options is displayed:

Data: *it got to the point that by sort of January February nineteen eighty seven that none of us were actually able to work with the family at all and because they weren't allowing us in too and as I said they just stopped cooperating erm*

Outrage: *(-) our concern was that here we have a statutory supervision order erm and we were not able to work on it at all we were not able to supervise.*

Justification: *we attempted to hold case conferences where we could review this situation...*

As Potter and Wetherell (1987:91) note: " the greater the constraint the less the blame".⁽¹⁹⁾ Extreme constraint is demonstrated here by for example " ... and regrettably I was forced into a situation..." (line 195) or "I had no erm alternative but..." (line 199). There are other 'last resort' interventions at line 45 a place of safety, allocation of this social worker (line 62), access in the office (line 76), liaise through the agencies (line 152); each can be heard as dispreferred but no choice. The difference with Emerson's formulation of 'last resorts' is that he suggests a clear tariff

from preferred options through more coercive action to the 'last resort'. Here, the tariff is less clear and the 'last resort' option is not necessarily more coercive. It is rather the only and dispreferred option, whether more intrusive or not. 'Last resorts' are thus seen as rhetorical formulations and not specific interventions. On occasion doing nothing (or very little, line 152) is a 'last resort', as it is all that is available.

The other theoretical model which the three stage feature includes is Pomerantz (1986) 'extreme case formulation'. This can be heard as similar to 'last resorts', but it is the upgraded manner of the expression which creates the extreme case, compared with the nature of the action in 'last resorts'. The use of upgraded terms is a feature in legitimating claims, however the 'extreme case formulation' is associated by Pomerantz with situations of "complaining, accusing, justifying and defending" (p.219). It is thus appropriate in developing the notions of blame allocation and moral outrage; Jefferson refers to it as "an adversarial or defensive stance (p.220). She considers that:

Interactants use Extreme Case Formulations when they anticipate-or expect their co-interactants to undermine their claims and when they are in adversarial situations. In being prepared for others to scale down her alleged losses, the plaintiff formulates them as maximum cases. (p.222)

Extreme case formulations are more than upgraded terms like 'everyone knows' or 'we were completely ineffective', but are part of developing complex defences against accusations and blame. In this account, the extreme case can be heard as associated with the warrant and hence is pivotal in the development of the claim. Expressions in stage two of the feature, the warrant, are noted above - "it was a very serious situation" (line 61), "caused so much anxiety" (line 45), "a horrendous task" (line 77), and "not able to work on it at all we were not able to supervise" (line 129). This last example adds emphasis with the repeated negative. There is also an example of stage one of the feature 'data' as an extreme case, using complex upgrading: "very very hostile very difficult uncooperative" (line 43) adding to its strength with a three part list.

The warrant thus makes use of extreme case formulations and can be heard as moral outrage. Furthermore, it is available as a direct instruction to the reader to take these circumstances very seriously, to increase our sense of alarm. The warrant directly involves the reader/hearer, acting as an instructive pause between a list of

events and facts, and the explication of subsequent action. It shouts at the hearer to take note and enrolls him/her in the move to the next stage of the story.

These examples of 'extreme case formulations' and 'last resorts' can be heard in a research interview where the speaker is unlikely to have claims undermined nor to be required to defend them from criticism. This suggests that this feature might be more than a situational telling of the account, but may be available in other tellings of this case. It may have been constructed for a variety of audiences, some of which are likely to be adversarial or to undermine claims - the mother's barrister, the chair of the case conference. Blamings appear to have been well rehearsed.

3.4 The Moral Contrast of Characters

It has been suggested that a range of entities and their attributes have been heard as constructed through the performance of a social work account. Social workers, doctors, families, parents, children, child abuse, social services departments, the law, are resources for building a social work tale. Entities, endowed with attributes through rhetorical features, are crafted and read. Hence the pattern, the predisposition, the point of view, the institutional voices, the three stage feature are available to configure relations between entities, to allocate blame and to display competent, storyable accounting.

In chapter 8, the concept of character in social work stories is developed further; here we investigate how contrasts display the moral character of the mother and the social worker. In the 'failure to thrive' case, the main characters are the mother and the social worker, with others less significant and attached to one or other side of this divide. A clear division can be heard between the two - one culpable, the other competent; one violent and irrational, the other flexible and tolerant; one a villain, the other a hero. The villain appears overwhelmingly culpable, never reasonable, and the hero always flexible, never mistaken. There are contrasts with other actors, and contrasts with normal behaviour. Both can be heard as demonstrating the irrational and deviant nature of the mother.

The character of the mother is contrasted with that of many other reasonable people. She is uncooperative with a wide range of other actors and entities who appear as innocent and helpful. Thus with nurses (line 43), a chair of a case

conference (line 50), two black social workers (lines 53-61) two sets of foster parents (line 68-75), the family welfare association worker (line 146) the GP and health visitor (line 155) and the case conference (line 182); she is respectively "very very difficult, very hostile, uncooperative" (line 43), "physically assaulted" (line 50), "very difficult" and "assaulted" (lines 54 and 60), "hostile" and "frightening" (lines 69 and 71) nearly "physically assaulted" (line 148), "not cooperating" (line 155), and "went off in a temper" (line 182). Whilst there is no direct instruction to the listener that this behaviour is unreasonable, the contrast is achieved by the tender or innocent nature of the actor whom she abuses - nurses, foster parents, social workers - compared to her violent behaviour. Furthermore, the sheer number of actors with whom she is aggressive is overwhelming. Each telling of an incident not only stresses a pattern, but further confirms the obviousness of the categorisation of the villain - the 'documentary method' is pushed almost to capacity.

Contrasts with normal behaviour are displayed by violent reactions and non-cooperation, which are heard as inappropriate to the circumstances. The mother continually fails to meet the expectations of normal client behaviour by breaking agreements (line 111), just stopped cooperating (line 126), not turning up at case conferences (line 132), failing to keep hospital appointments (line 166), not allowing access to a child under supervision (line 189). Such contrasts with normal client behaviour can be heard as preventing the delivery of normal social work. Not only is cooperation rejected, but surveillance is also refused.

Normal behaviour is most explicitly contrasted in two examples. First, the proof of failure to thrive in lines 171 to 179 is demonstrated by the child's failure to gain weight when at home compared with increasing weight in hospital under a "normal regime" (line 179), hence depicted the mother's handling and feeding (line 181) as deficient. Second, the depiction of the grandparents in lines 335 to 354, portrays them as in stark contrast to their daughter. They are "very cooperate and no problem" (line 343) and:

oof no problem no problem they're happy and they've always been very helpful to us (line 354).

This latter comment is a response to the interviewer's question and can be heard as a forthright rebuttal to any suggestion that the welfare agencies might be unfair with

this mother - even her own parents are "disgusted" (line 343).

The depraved character of the mother is made available through a very large number of contrasts with normal reasonable people and entities. There are few points where her behaviour is anything other than unreasonable. Even the successful assessment (line 85) which resulted in the supervision order, is heard as the success of the social worker, rather than the cooperation of the mother. The mother is never described as cooperating and the success is achieved by the actions of the social workers - 'I managed to develop a relationship with...' (line 86).

In contrast, the social worker appears throughout as reasonable and committed. This can be demonstrated in four ways - he is reasonable with the mother, is supported by other professionals, is concerned with the welfare of the child and acts professionally.

First, with the mother, as mentioned above he is initially successful (line 86) - a contrast itself with the later events, as it shows he was prepared to recommend a 'low tariff disposal' at court. He offers a wide range of services - counselling (line 116), parenting skills (line 118), a two weekly family aide (line 120) . When cooperation breaks down, he wants to know 'why' (line 142) and even when the ultimate sanction is being prepared, he twice tries to negotiate (lines 193 and 198). Second, other professionals and the grandparents are enrolled at many points as already discussed, in contrast to the mother who only has the 'delinquent' father as an ally. Third, although the 'welfare of the child' principle is not explicitly invoked, as in the 'broken arm' case, at several points the children's health and welfare is portrayed as the immutable referent. At line 128, the 'statutory supervision order' is heard as the state's instruction to safeguard the child, as is placing the baby on the register (line 141). The further hospital treatment of the baby at line 187 is another prerequisite. These are 'non negotiables', standards which cannot be breached. Finally, the informed social work reader can recognise a full range of possible interventions and professional rhetoric being used - a clear objective (line 65), assessment (line 66), use of and liaison with voluntary and statutory organisations, case conferences. At no point could a charge be made that an appropriate intervention was not on offer. Can any hearer accuse this worker as being anything other than competent and reasonable and the mother anything other than culpable? Our social

worker/hero contrasts with the ultimate depravity of the villain - there are no excuses, no mitigating circumstances. At the same time, our hero is long suffering and professionally competent.

But wait a minute! How come the child was "developing acceptably" when the police raid took place (line 204) - a misjudgement? an unnecessary use of coercive action?. The interviewer was surprised 'oh' (line 205). And later in this interview, the judge considered that social services had "overwhelmed the family with support" and "suggested social services should take a back seat". And in the file, there is record of a phone call from the health visitor which does not suggest good inter-professional cooperation:

5/11 Telephone Call from (health visitor) used a very rude and abusive tone of voice. 1) Neither she nor (her colleague) were attending the informal meeting. 2) Procedure dictated that a case conference should already have been called. 3) She had written to (the Principal Officer: Child Protection) and received no reply. 4) she and her colleague had made "all the running so far". She had visited the baby in hospital and liaised with the midwife. 5) Social services had clearly not planned or prepared. At her request, I gave her the name of my team manager and Area manager. She also said that everything had come to her through "rumour".

And besides can anyone be as depraved as this mother, surely she must have done something reasonable 'methinks thou dost instruct the reader too much'. And so the 'unheard story' of the mother threatens the strength of the social work story and sets the scene for the chapters 5 and 8.

3.5 Summary

The three stage pattern and moral contrasts are available throughout this account and can be heard as a progressive and cumulative series of clashes between the social worker, supported by his allies of doctors, scales etc, and the parents with their predispositions and patterns of deviant behaviour and violent reactions. The overall effect presents a contrast between the social worker and the supporting professionals as united, competent, trying all sorts of negotiations and interventions, and the mother being deviant, life threatening (to the children and the workers) and uncooperative. The warrants consist of statements of moral outrage, which locate the

blame for the situation entirely with the family.

Compared with the broken arm case in chapter 3, this account moves through more and complex encounters to arrive at the same intervention, removing the child with police help (line 196). There are a series of episodes using the three stage feature to "a rather climax" (line 131) where the breakdown of cooperation occurs, the situation would never be the same again. The repeated use of the three stage feature can be heard to offer an on-going pattern of communication with the hearer/reader, within which a series of morally charged encounters make available a competent social work story. The various entities are invested with moral attributes and the characters provided with roles of heroes, allies and villains. As with the 'monsters' described in the journal reports, the parents here are given no voice, point of view nor any legitimation for their actions. Rather, the use of the three stage feature and moral contrasts serve to present them as only culpable and morally devoid. Unlike the journal reports, blaming is not directly raised as an issue aimed at the social worker, but by depicting the mother as the only source of intervention and resistance, any such suggestion can be heard to be (over)killed off before it starts.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has investigated the construction of moral character and the allocation of blame in the performance of social work accounts. It has suggested that morality is not inherent in entities but actively made available in performances and reading relations. A range of textual accomplishments draws on contrasts and rhetorical features, littered with appeals for the reader/hearer to side with the forces of rationality and blamelessness. In none of the data have there been explicit moral categorisations, no one is described as 'monsters' nor as 'undeserving'. There is no direct description of the mother in the interview, but the subtlety and power of the storytelling enables a complex description to be made discoverable in the reading of encounters. Morality can be heard through everyday storytelling. Similarly, blaming can be discovered in the depiction of characters and events, without direct rebuttals or excuses.

We thus see that social work accounting makes available to the reader deeply moral storytelling features. The power and excess of the moral formulations can be

heard to attempt to bind the reader to the appropriate reception of the moral tale. Significantly, disagreement would involve taking a morally abhorrent stance. In the journal reports, critics are directly embarrassed - Mr Mellor (report 4), the press (report 1) and national press reporting generally. In the interview, how could a critic side with such an aggressive and violent mother against so many reasonable professionals and such flexible invitations to cooperate.⁽²⁰⁾ The interviewer's surprise at line 205 can be heard as a marker that he had been convinced.

In terms of the overall progress of this thesis, this chapter has demonstrated the usefulness of moral construction and blame allocation in social work accounting. Whereas the last chapter showed that a ratified and competent reader is constructed in order to read social work accounts, this chapter has been concerned less with the identity of the reader, and more with accomplishing moral persuasion. In this chapter, the reader has been more generally addressed as a 'reasonable' hearer who can distinguish between right and wrong. The journal reports speak to a social work reader by definition and can be heard to champion the social work cause. The interview, as in the chapter 3 'broken arm' case, binds the reader through mutually accepted views of appropriate client behaviour, but here plays more on the sheer moral depravity of the mother - this is someone for whom it is impossible to have sympathy. In the next chapter, the investigation of the persuasion of the reader explores use of facts rather than morals; the reader as an empiricist.

How does a discussion of morals inform this investigation? How do we construct morality and deflect blame? There are a number of worries.

First, this chapter has included a range of features which demonstrate the analyst as using similar techniques to the social workers and journalists. Inevitably, the documentary method has been a feature of the analysis, as patterns of textual organisation are uncovered and considered to stand for an underlying reality - the normal activities of accomplishing social work. Social work is ironised as no longer a set of working practices, skills, principles and beliefs, but, in its place, there are storytelling features and rhetorical patterns. What right have we to ironise? A definition of 'irony' in Collins New English dictionary (1964:534) notes:

(it is) accompanied by an implied conscious superiority, of what is the true state of affairs.

And yet the analyst is clearly reluctant to offer a true state of affairs, given Woolgar's (1988:29) key principle of 'uncertainty'. Rhetorical features may have been demonstrated as 'facts' with extensive quotes and finger pointing - look here! and there! Can we claim a moral basis for such superior knowledge?

Second, is social work accounting merely avoiding blame? Surely such an accusation needs attacking somewhere. Relativism espouses impartiality to claims making. Woolgar and Pawluch (1985:223) note how social constructivism moves between objectivist and constitutive formulations. They suggest such 'ontological gerrymandering' is essential to claims making, a phenomenon requires some objective state "whereby authors can 'get on with' the argument... and live with tension and contradiction". Whilst the social worker in the interview overwhelms the hearer with details of the mother's depravity, has the analyst overwhelmed the reader with textual finger pointing? Is reducing social work to (merely) rhetorical and narrative practices being impartial, even if the analyst admits his complicity?

Well I haven't merely slagged social workers off in the name of impartiality.⁽²¹⁾

And I haven't said they are nothing but moral police.

I have done the job, you know.

And I never was very good at explaining professionally, competently, observably, reportably how social work should be described. I was just too sceptical even then.

So I have always worried that performing social work (like research findings) is all something of a display, a con trick, somehow deceptive.

We all need something to hide behind - for the social worker it is being professional, extreme cases, moral rhetoric. For the social scientist it is the quotes of others (texts and gurus).

Am I reflecting uncertainties which many social workers (and researchers) confront, but prefer to cloak in good performances.

Note how a 'superaddressee' of Social Worker reappears even when s/he does not speak.

And I still worry about children who have been abused or rejected, by parents or social workers, well don't we all?

Third, the quiddity of child abuse returns to haunt this discussion. I know that child abuse is a product of how it is represented and hope to make a contribution to that project, but it still feels like a 'cop out'. Pfohl (1985:230) sees truth as only temporarily embedded, in "a ceaseless repetition of an indeterminate act of differentiation between colliding practices". Schneider (1985:223) considers "the contained can only be seen through the containers". Yet children die or are hurt, and on those occasions the representations are 'truly awesome'. Who can remain impartial? As Hacking (1991:259) notes:

Child abuse is an intrinsically moral topic. Abusing a child has come to seem the most heinous of crimes. There is a long tradition in British empiricist philosophy of distinguishing 'is' from 'ought'... A mere description, it is said, never implies an evaluation. But it is not possible, in our times, to describe someone as a child abuser without thereby making a moral condemnation.

Is this a point to stop being relativist but morally reflexive? Does this suggest that being some sort of realist (I know child abuse exists and although I can't describe it, I can feel it) perhaps begin to link to reflexivity of a deep nature (all the methods available for representing child abuse are mere performances, cop outs for the occasions of its occurrence, including this one). Even reflexivists believe in the reality of performances and occasions, perhaps certain performances are not constituted merely by rhetorical features nor narrative structures, but body movements and physical pain. However, all subsequent representations of these performances involve rhetorical and narrative features. Admittedly, social workers and social scientists have no access to such occasions. Similar notions would presumably apply to rape, AIDS, hunger, ... death and furniture? (Edwards, Potter and Ashmore 1992). Well no, not the latter, as the morality of the former is so overriding that it would be inhuman to react in any other way. The difference between occasions adds moral force to their reality. Hacking (1991:285) appears to agree when he makes a distinction between abusive actions and child abuse:

There is only one viable attitude: child abuse is bad and we'd be glad if there were a lot less of it. But when we turn from abusive actions to the idea of child abuse there is and should be no unanimity in attitudes.

As he and others have shown, child abuse, as opposed to abusive actions, is malleable and uncertain. It still worries me, but what type of investigation can handle the quiddity of child abuse? Social work has tried to speak about child abuse and am I suggesting that it is not

succeeding, (merely) telling moral stories? Surely the collapse of the metanarrative and the scepticism of this project does not justify strong, ironic criticism.

Fourth, an approach to post-modernism suggests we should go amongst the people and hear their stories. Seidman (1992) criticises the concentration on foundationalism in the social sciences and suggests it is abandoned. In its place should be the concern for "discourse as a practical - moral project" (p.60). Sociological theorists should become:

...fluent in moral analysis... It would abandon the quest for a transcendent moral reason or, for that matter, for any appeal to universal ethical principles or values... Moral inquiry must take the form of appeals to cultural tradition or current social conventions and ideals to justify social practices or norms (p.73)

Seidman considers that such a programme would focus on current social concerns, and engage with a wide range of participants, critics and interests.

Social criticism in a post-modern mode would lose its current rhetorical and often socially obscure character, because it would be forced to articulate its critique in a way that would be useful to social movements, legislators and policy makers. As social criticism became more local and more pragmatic, perhaps it would become more relevant to the larger public. (p.74)

Can we discuss child abuse and remain outside moral constructions? Can we ironise without the facts or the morals? Can we undermine social work formulations without offering anything but endless uncertainty? As quoted at the beginning of this chapter, some social workers consider recognising child abuse is straightforward. Giovannoni and Becerra (1979) found professionals and others had very similar conceptions in distinguishing child abuse. Why should we contemplate Gelles' (1975:364) view that it is not 'automatically recognisable' (also quoted at the beginning). Can the two aspects of post-modernism be carried off - affirm endless uncertainty but promoting local moral storytelling?

CHAPTER 5 EXPLAINING THE 'FACTS' AND CLAIMING ENTITLEMENT

I'm called a philosopher, a theologian, a historian, a psychologist, sometimes a psychiatrist. But basically I'm a storyteller and I'm interested in what makes stories powerful.

William Golding (*The Late Show* 23/6/93)

INTRODUCTION

So far the investigation of social work accounting as texts and available as narrative has been concerned with first, the construction of the reader (chapter 3), and second, the moral dimension (chapter 4). The last chapter demonstrated how moral concerns and blame allocation are made available through a range of rhetorical and narrative features, persuading the reader that the storyteller is virtuous and believable. Such formulations guide the reader in (re)constructing social work accounting as a moral enterprise and enable the reading of social work as a moral tale. This chapter and chapter 6 further investigate the textuality of social work accounting by looking at how 'facts' are constructed and endowed with attributes. Can social work accounts be heard as powerful and authoritative, as opposed to ethical and virtuous. Moral and factual concerns and formulations overlap.⁽¹⁾ In the last chapter, we saw how social work accounts enable readings which constrain the listener by strong appeals to shared moral formulations. The persuasion of the last chapter encouraged the reader to make inferences on the basis of the storyteller's integrity, and by attending to depictions of the client's depravity, through contrasts of blameless/culpable, normal/deviant, supported/isolated.

To attend to an account on the basis of its factual status is to appeal less to the virtues of the storyteller and more to his/her accuracy; to be right rather than righteous. A 'fact' is outside personal interpretation, anyone would read an entity in this way. How does an investigation of 'facts' help in approaching social work accounting practices? Social work accounts are perhaps concerned less with (merely) establishing facts, as identifying attributes, relationships and the significance of entities. In the last chapter, we saw how entities like 'failure to thrive' were

established by doctors. In the 'broken arm' case (chapter 3), doctors and police were heard to negotiate the factual status of the injury; the social workers could only create explanations around the fact construction of others. Child abuse or delinquency are 'givens', undisputed entities, but medical/criminal entities. Social work accounts make statements and explanations about the 'how' and 'why' of child abuse, not the 'what'.⁽²⁾ Faced with such 'black boxes' (Latour 1987:2), how do social work accounts make available explanations which indicate the significance of the 'facts'? The 'facts' are already known and undisputed by all the parties, it is their explanation that is required of social workers.⁽³⁾

Latour and Woolgar (1986) investigate the construction of 'facts' in science. They note the difficulty in studying fact construction since something is a 'fact' when its construction is no longer discussed:

A text or statement can thus be read as 'containing' or 'being about a fact' when readers are sufficiently convinced that there is no debate about it and the processes of literary inscription are forgotten (1986:76).

They further suggest that establishing an entity as a 'fact' involves no longer being concerned with its social construction nor with its history. This chapter and the next consider fact construction in these two ways. This chapter investigates the construction and negotiation of 'facts' in social work accounting; to what extent can social work accounts be read as concerned with 'facts', or do they make claims on the basis of the personal agency of the storyteller? The next chapter follows a social work account through some of its history, how do later reading occasions re-interpret the 'facts' of a social work story?

The procedures through which 'facts' are established and their significance interpreted is investigated in order to see to what extent social work accounts are heard as authoritative and robust. In what way do social work accounts enrol entities, define attributes, establish relations and thereby convince the reader? The sociology of scientific knowledge has studied the social construction of scientific entities as 'facts' through the activities of building strong and impenetrable networks and associations.⁽⁴⁾ Whilst this important work is drawn on in this chapter, there are significant differences when considering the construction of social work entities. First, social work accounts are inextricably tied to human agents and depictions of people.

The entities of social work accounting are mainly human characters, their behaviour and attributes. This suggests that fact construction is more appropriately approached through storytelling and character depictions, rather than expositions or inscriptions.⁽⁵⁾ Second, for scientists like those in Latour and Woolgar (1986), establishing the 'facticity' of an entity is the end product; others take the 'fact' of the 'discovery' as a basis for developing wider claims and uses. Latour and Woolgar (1986:108) note that for many (later) users, the chemical TRH is 'an unremarkable white powder', merely a tool; for the subjects of Latour and Woolgar's study, it was their lives' work. For social workers, the 'facts' of child abuse or delinquency are not unremarkable, but they have been discovered by others - police, doctors, teachers. The social workers' job is to account for entities and relations around these 'facts', as well as recommend appropriate action.⁽⁶⁾

Interpreting the significance of the 'facts' and displaying the right to make such links are thus the focus of this investigation of the authority of social work accounts. Approaches to authoritative displays of accounting are explored in Smith's (1978) analysis of factual accounts and Shuman's (1986) study of storytelling rights. These studies are concerned with rhetorical and narrative methods, which entitle the storyteller to tell strong stories. The telling of 'facts' is not clearly separated from displaying personal credentials. Discussion of these approaches to 'facts', entitlement and robustness is developed in the next section. This is followed by an analysis of events and character depictions in, first, different types of social work stories, low risk and serious situations, and second, in the case of a teenager, Donna.

1 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO FACT CONSTRUCTION, ENTITLEMENT AND ROBUSTNESS

There are a number of interrelated theoretical approaches to fact construction. Facts, authority, entitlement and robustness cover similar concerns about how the writer is able to convince the reader of the independent status of entities and their attributes, and hence the authority of the account. These concepts are discussed here and illustrated with examples from various social work accounts.

A 'fact' is defined as an entity devoid of ownership (Latour 1987:23). It is "independent of the wishes of the observances" (Smith 1978:34). 'Robustness' is

similar to Latour's (1987:123) concept of 'resistance', "to resist dissent (and) modification" (p.76). Woolgar (1992:65) notes:

A robust text is one that will be interpreted in the same way by a wide variety of readers, all communicate with representatives of the site of production through a carefully controlled point of access (the obligatory passage point).

However, Woolgar (1992) considers such robustness is only achieved on certain highly protected reading occasions; most reading relations are unable to control flexible interpretation. Facts can be relativised or undermined by the reader; achieving robustness requires a control on interpretation which social work accounts rarely achieve. Even so persuasion through appealing to 'facts' as independent of the storyteller can be explored in social work accounts; how is strength achieved?

Conversely, entitlement involves establishing the storyteller's personal capacity to relate events or make descriptions. Shuman (1986) offers an approach to the storyteller's display of entitlement. Smith (1978:34) explores the methods of the storyteller in authorising their version of events and entities. How are they displayed as the trusted teller of the tale? Taking fact construction and entitlement together, how does the storyteller balance the 'out-there-ness' of his/her account with displays of personal authority?⁽⁷⁾

Furthermore, the establishment of ratified readers and authorised reading occasions concerning the factual status of entities suggests that concepts like 'mental illness' or 'child abuse' are made available through the organisation of accounts. As Woolgar (1980:245) argues:

Both the existence and character of a particular phenomenon can be established through the negotiation of interested parties; the out-there-ness of a phenomenon is accomplished in establishing its attributes... On each and every occasion that participants refer to a fact they do so in such a way that the facticity of the phenomenon is re-established.

Such phenomena cannot be recovered outside such performances. 'Facts' are available only through representations: telling stories, writing reports, weighing babies. Smith (1978:35) notes that events or entities are not 'facts' in themselves. To be turned into a fact involves an account which displays that "proper procedures have been used to establish it as objectively known". As Smith (1978:37) argues in the account which depicted K as mentally ill:

The problem presented by the account is not to find an answer to the question 'what is wrong with K?', but to find that this collection of items is a proper puzzle to the solution 'becoming mentally ill.'

Enough information is made available to the reader in order to display and constitute the performance of the category. Through such methods, social work accounts can be seen to perform the factual status of entities like child abuse and delinquency.

This discussion suggests important opportunities for investigating the concerns expressed in chapters 3 and 4, as to the 'quiddity' of social work entities. First, it has been suggested that social workers (like sociologists) are concerned with representations already distanced from the 'actual' events and established as 'facts' by others. As was discussed at the end of chapter 4, we can explore 'child abuse', not 'abusive actions' (Hacking 1991). Second, explaining, manipulating and re-establishing the significance of 'facts' however, re-constitutes entities and their attributes and is available to later readers through exploring accounting procedures. The doctor may identify failure to thrive, but the social worker has the opportunity to re-construct such a condition through professional displays of accounting. Child abuse, then, is available in social work accounting, as long as 'proper procedures' of storytelling are established. Strong (if not robust) stories can be told. We now explore further such 'proper procedures' through fact construction, personal agency and bringing in witnesses and entitlement.

1.1 Fact Construction

For Latour (1987:23), a 'fact' can be heard when it has 'positive modalities':

...those sentences that lead a statement away from its conditions of production, making it solid enough to render some other consequences necessary. We will call 'negative modalities' those sentences that lead a statement in the other direction towards its conditions of production and that explain in detail why it is solid or weak instead of using it to render some other consequences more necessary.

A 'fact' has no trace of ownership or self construction. In contrast, an artifact is a metastatement, concerned with its own construction. Such features of a statement, says Latour, lead the reader in different directions - either further into the sentence and the controversy of its disputed construction or on to other questions on the basis of an affirmation. For example, at the beginning of a case conference report in the

case of Donna (Appendix 6.1, discussed in chapter 6), the mother's version of events is treated as uncertain and open to dispute:

(Mother) has indicated that she thinks she can manage with one daughter (ie sister) at home. She wishes to keep her daughters apart. Donna is seen as immoral and badly behaved and if (sister) misbehaves it is invariably seen as Donna's fault.

This version of events is reported using ironic terms like 'she thinks' and 'Donna is seen', which can be heard to suggest that this version is only supported by one person and hence untrustworthy. The mother's view of family relations is further relativised when in the next sentence, the report writer displays the mother's version of events, as not only biased, but masking her own inadequacy:

(Social Worker) did not think that Jane would be at home for long as (mother) does not have the emotional capacity to cope with adolescents.

The latter statement is a fact with no qualification, the mother's care is the problem. The previous statements are artifacts; they are claims which are not substantiated. The report can now proceed on the basis of an authorised fact, centred on the mother as the problem, and an ironised artifact that Donna is the problem.

Latour and Woolgar (1986:75-81) delineate five levels of statement from fact to conjecture. Type 5 statements need no comment, they are self evident. They are taken for granted by ratified readers, so much so that they are rarely heard within the community of competent hearers. In Type 4 statements, a relationship between entities is treated as uncontroversial but is made explicit, for example "M is a likeable pleasant girl" (interview 9.1). Type 3 statements indicate that entities are related, but the use of modalities relativise the statement "She likes to be her own mistress I suppose and take charge of things." (interview 9.1). Type 2 statements are claims rather than 'facts', as the modalities draw attention to the circumstance of the relationship. For example, the type 3 statement in interview 9.1 above is further relativised in the next sentence by localising M's maturity "... but I think she still needs guidance although she does seem quite mature and able to cope with most things". Type 1 statements are conjecture or speculation " I'm struck by her unhappiness, she's going through a lot of changes" (interview 9.1).

All these statements are from the same description of a young person by a social worker, and indicate the wide range of fact, claim and conjecture used in an

utterance. Latour and Woolgar (1986:80) note the change from one statement type to another does not necessarily indicate a change in the degree of facticity. For example, by deleting the modalities from a type 3, we would have a type 4 statement. However, without the support of the reference, would it be more authoritative? Is the more relativised description of M's possible maturity less persuasive than her depiction as 'pleasant and likeable'? This suggests investigating how 'facts' can be strengthened or weakened by human agency.

1.2 Facts and Personal Agency

There are important differences between scientists' 'facts' as discussed by Latour and social work 'facts'. In science, it is the factuality of an entity which is disputed, for example the structure of the chemical GHRH (Latour 1987:23), or the accuracy of new Soviet missiles; what makes them the entity they are. In these social work accounts, a number of elements constitute the 'facts' in question. Some 'facts' are already given, for example, a child is hurt or Donna and her mother do not get on. What is to be explained are the attributes around such 'facts', as mentioned earlier 'how' and 'why' questions. The 'facts' could be events, states of affairs and characters, but also the activity of social workers. Linking diverse and shifting entities into a community-recognised story constitutes the main task of a social work account. It may mean answering questions like how could a home become so disorganised and children so neglected as in interview Z.3.7 (states of affairs), how could a child be found wandering the street as in interview X.4.1 (event) or how could a mother be so rejecting as in interview 10.1 (character). The determining and dependent entities and their relations to one another can be seen to vary between and within the accounts. Sometimes events determine character, other times character determines events (Todorov 1977).

Shuman (1986:195) notes that personal narratives are concerned with the occasion of the telling rather than the content of the story.

In stories about actual occurrences, the assessment of tellability requires an assessment of the teller's accountability.

Shuman (1986:195) quotes Sacks' lecture:

the point of the witness's story about the car accident was the ways in which, in this case, she's making the automobile wreck something in her life... Stories are plainly ways of packaging experiences. And most characteristically stories report the experience in which the teller figures. And furthermore, in which the teller figures - for the story anyway - as a hero. Which doesn't mean that he does something heroic, but that the story is organised around the teller's circumstances.

Personal agency can foster fact construction by attending to 'pathing devices' (Woolgar 1980:256) or 'interpretative frames' (Smith 1978:29), as readers are encouraged to follow the path of the storyteller. Through observations, relations and events the journey of the storyteller enables the discovery of the independent 'fact', as Smith (1978:35) notes "whether I wish it or not, whether I admit it or not, it is a fact". Such routes enable the use of personally-orientated storytelling, the opportunity to introduce entities and characters to the reader through, for example, chronological markers, institutionally recognised events and processes; what we all know about social work and clients. For example, it has been noted in both the 'broken arm' case (chapter 3) and the 'failure to thrive' case (chapter 4) how the opening of the account was linked to being allocated the case. This can be seen in several openings:

I got allocated it not long after I started the job I'd discussed it with the senior and probably spoke to the previous worker (interview 1.1.2)

It was one of those case I was given when I arrived (interview 5.1.2)

Such accounts lead the reader through court proceedings and case conferences, home visits and office interviews. The personal testimony of the storyteller acts as the reader's guide through such a maze. Indeed, the construction of 'facts' as a social work case is isomorphic with being guided through specific social work relations and institutional processes. Such processes provide the storyteller and competent listener with a range of pathing features to construct and configure events and entities recognisable as a social work case. Shuman (1986:181) refers to 'contextualisation' as a way that the listener is instructed as to what occasion of storytelling is being performed, and how it should be interpreted, similar to Smith's 'proper procedures'.⁽⁸⁾ Atkinson (1990:55) notes how factual accounts do not rest only on congruence with a given type of genre, but an internal coherence, 'true to itself'. Social work entities

as 'facts' thus become recognisable through the display of community based familiarity with institutional processes and competent storytelling, as experienced and performed by the storyteller.

Wooffitt (1992:103) investigates paranormal stories, but notes the absence of personal agency. He distinguishes between events that happen to people and those which are a product of intention, planning or decision making:

By formulating their paranormal experiences as an 'it' that 'happened', speakers in the anomaly accounts are thus trading on conventions which inform the way that we refer to events the occurrence of which were not contingent upon human agency and involvement.

Paranormal stories are brought off by describing events which are entirely non-human in origin, not traceable to any human action or perception, but imposed on the individual. Social work accounting, on the other hand, is heard as bound up with human actions, intentions and relationships, both in constituting the client and in fashioning a response. With characters and events approachable through relationships, feelings and impressions, 'facts' appear less easily separated from personal involvement. Entitlement and credibility through community invocation appear particularly important in social work accounts which establish authority to represent events and characters.⁽⁹⁾

1.3 Bringing in witnesses

Establishing facts and strong stories can be further located in the progressive and cumulative nature of narrativity in social work accounting. Smith (1978:36) notes the gradual addition of trusted witnesses to the account as reinforcing the status of a 'fact'. The witnesses are also heard to be independent of one another. This solidarity of allies was observed in the 'failure to thrive' case (chapter 4). As with Angela (the storyteller in Smith, 1978), the social worker does not produce all the allies and supporting witnesses at the beginning of the interview, but rather brings them in gradually and cumulatively: GP (line 26), first hospital (line 36), hospital social worker (line 52), other Area social worker (line 61), first foster parent (line 69), second foster parent (line 74), family welfare association (line 79), case conference (line 92), court (line 96), family aide (line 120), GP and health visitor (line 153), second hospital (line 155), police (line 197), grandparents (line 201).

This crowding of the text with allies and supporters can be heard to make available independent and trusted witnesses, who agreed to follow the social worker on his project; they too experienced the mother in the same hostile way. That they are brought gradually into the unfolding narrative, displays them as involved at different times and in different contexts - there is no conspiracy, all these people (and the institutions they represent) had the same experience.

For Latour (1987:79) stacking literature, machines and laboratories in stronger and more expensive scientific networks overwhelms the dissenter. Whilst the allies in social work accounts may be less costly, they are no less awesome. Personal experiences, morality stories, the allies of the welfare network and their discourses confront the critic with strong barriers to dissent. Is it easier to say your laboratory is deficient or you just don't know your client very well?⁽¹⁰⁾

1.4 Entitlement and Authority

The preceding discussion suggests that displaying the attributes and status of the storyteller, and their right to tell stories are key issues in substantiating social work 'facts' and creating strong texts. Fact as 'out-there-ness' has been noted by Smith (1978:35) in the way that the teller of the tale demonstrated constraint in recognising entities and their attributes, as would anyone in the same position.⁽¹¹⁾ This is balanced with entities constructed through personal experience and the support of others.

An alternative bid for entitlement would be to claim privileged status to relate experience and make statements about entities. This might be as a unique observer of events or by demonstrating special expertise, authority or positioning. In Shuman's study (1986) of adolescent fight stories, entitlement to tell a story was as important to negotiate and defend as the content of the story. She sees authority and entitlement as closely linked:

Authority and entitlement are related concepts, the first referring to the right of the storyteller to tell a story in a certain way and the second referring to the negotiable right of any person to tell a certain story. In the first case, it is the mode of telling that is in question; in the second case, it is the relationship between the teller and the events described. The two concepts invoke each other, and when one is called into question, so is the other by implication. (p.61)

Shuman's adolescent girls had to negotiate the right to tell stories about their

classmates, and similarly some of Latour's scientists struggled to be heard (Latour 1987:152). Social workers, however, are required to report on the private lives of their clients. They do not need to negotiate the authority to tell the tale, but still must display entitlement. A poor performance or inadequate information can be dismissed as incorrect, inaccurate or just not convincing enough to enrol listeners.

In court reports, elaborate and formal markers to demonstrate authority and entitlement can be observed. The affidavit described in appendix 3.2. begins with an entitlement explicitly linked to the connection between the writer and institutional support - the identification of place of work, departmental affiliation, access to departmental records and knowledge of this case. In another affidavit, professional qualifications were described. An authoritative position is the position of the allocated social worker. This status can be heard to carry with it privileged access to encounters and a history of contact, which entitles such a social worker to talk with institutional and personal authority.⁽¹²⁾

Oh Mark the bane of my life. (comment by social worker when asking for an interview, case 2.1)

As Stuart becomes more comfortable in a situation and ceases to feel threatened he relaxes and becomes more amicable and friendly... and therefore it is only the people who are closest to him that begin to understand this. (court report case 7.2)

An entitlement to talk for the client may be extended to claim professional expertise to represent the clients' history, attitude and behaviour. Such a performance must still be brought off as competent and appropriate; the danger is that it is heard as biased.⁽¹³⁾ The social worker may automatically be given the floor at the case conference or at court, but what is said and how it is delivered and received constitute the performance of professional efficacy. A difference can be observed when a report is presented by someone other than the case holding social worker, where entitlement to speak is heard as less assured and hence less authoritative:

...I can't remember why we did that (-) you see I was the team leader in this case (-) let me ring (social worker)... (interview Z.5.3)

Shuman (1986) offers three concepts which enable an analysis of authority and entitlement - contextualisation, the use of reported and described speech and mediate and immediate storytelling. All these features control the distance between the

storyteller and hearer/reader. The first has already been discussed in section 1.2; how an account produces 'context' and instructs the listener as to what this occasion of storytelling constitutes. The second concept, reported speech, has been noted by Bakhtin as a key feature in providing a text with speech of other places and speakers (discussed further in chapter 7). This is a prime example of 'authoritative discourse' in that the words of a higher authority are presented from the outside, uncontaminated by the author.

The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher... The degree to which a word may be conjoined with authority - whether the word is recognised by us or not - is what determines its specific demarcation and individuation in discourse; it requires a distance vis-a-vis itself (Bakhtin 1981:342-3)

Shuman (1986:160) considers that texts from other sources create distance and hence authority. By referring to other narratives, reported speech assigns authorship to another narrator, either in support of the storyteller or as was noted in chapter 3 to undermine the client.

The third concept of mediate and immediate storytelling is particularly important here as the social worker takes stories from other periods and makes them relevant for telling in the case conference, court, supervision session or research interview. At the same time, the relationship with the audience is negotiated and mediated. As Shuman (1986:55) defines:

...a mediate relationship presents stories as stored over a long period of time, as part of the storyteller's repertoire. The stories and the occasions on which they are told may have several possible mediated relationships... In contrast in an immediate relationship, a story and the occasion on which it is told are explicitly connected such that the story is about the current occasion.

Mediate storytelling relates the past in a way which explains current events and hence displays authority. A key feature of social work accounts is making connections between present and past stories, the authority to display how the past is relevant to and determines the present.⁽¹⁴⁾

...I think some of S's behaviour patterns which sets him into a circle of needing special placements has a lot to do with his background how he was brought up... (interview 7.1.1)

...her attitude was that this baby was hers the only thing in her life that she could say was her own and she called him N after her father (-) she used to call him my little Mr. S (-) her father meant a lot to her... (interview 1.1.10)

...then two or three sessions about the family when he almost was crying (-) he talked about how his dad always favoured his sisters about the pain non-specifically at first (-) talked about pain outside the family a girlfriend he went off the rails he said and he was linking up his behaviour with pain... (interview 2.2.1)

These examples of mediate storytelling can be heard to locate social work accounting in key stories which sum up how the character of the client is as s/he is - because of early childhood relations, particular events, actions, contingencies. That they are distant and uncontestable allows them to represent the metastory of the case. If you understand this story, you will understand why the client acts as s/he does now.

1.5 Summary

This review of theoretical approaches to fact construction, entitlement and robustness has suggested similarities, but important differences with other approaches to accounting, particularly the sociology of scientific knowledge. Unlike science, social work is primarily concerned with human entities and does not have access to such a range of fact making machinery. However, the problem of how to constitute their clients in terms of 'out-there-ness' remains. How do social workers seek the reader's cooperation in authorising their depiction of clients, their attributes and behaviour?

A number of possible lines of investigation have been suggested, some of which have been illustrated. First, social workers are presented with 'blackboxes' by others; concerns about people, events and states of affairs which they must explain. Fact construction enables links to be established between characters, their attributes and circumstances. Second, with little inscription-making machinery, the 'facts' of social work are displayed through personal testimony and community-recognised pathing procedures. The account guides the reader through competent social work practices and evaluations. Third, witnesses are recruited; other authorised storytellers rather than bigger laboratories. Even so such agents can be powerful, especially the police and doctors in the cases in chapters 3 and 4. Fourth, entitlement and authority can be explored through rhetorical and narrative features, which persuade the reader of

the social worker's right to speak and be taken seriously. Examples of such methods are the manipulation of distance between speaker and hearer through contextualisation, reported speech and mediate storytelling. In the next sections, there are analyses of social work accounting, concentrating on how character depictions are deployed to establish definitive versions of clients, their behaviour and circumstances.

2 DEPICTING CLIENTS AND THEIR ATTRIBUTES

It has been suggested that social work accounts are concerned with people, their attributes and behaviour. How are the 'facts' of social workers' clients depicted? In what way are attributes ascribed and definitive portrayals made available? This section compares different approaches to social work accounting related to the investment in and distance from the characters and events of the account. Shuman (1986:48) notes the lower level of investment in stories about fights told after the event. Social workers work with cases with varying degrees of intervention and concern. How far does the account change when the crisis is over, and intervention is no longer considered appropriate? A distinction is offered between 'low risk stories' and 'serious situations'.

2.1 Low risk stories ⁽¹⁵⁾

Some accounts describe situations considered 'low risk'; the social worker no longer envisages on-going contact with the family, and can be heard to downgrade any sense of alarm. In these examples, it is accepted that not all the problems have been solved, but the social worker persuades the interviewer that characters and events can no longer be constructed in social work terms. The link between events and character depictions can be heard as significantly different from 'serious situations'.

Interview X.4.1. concerns a case of a single mother and young child. The social worker has just closed the case, believing the client does not benefit from her contact. The case had been known to the social services previously, with reports from the health visitor of mother's attempted suicide. The interview has concentrated on the events of a one night admission to care. The child had been found wandering with

no knowledge of mother's whereabouts. The account offers no discussion of why the admission had occurred, only a chronology of the times and responses. The child returns to the mother the next day after an interview with the duty officer, but given the previous concern, the case is considered to warrant a social worker being allocated. Contact does not develop however, and the case is closed. The interviewer says this case does not match his research criteria.⁽¹⁶⁾ As the interview closes, a summary of the present state of affairs is heard:

Interview Extract 5.1.

Social Worker: *it was just a long sort of (-) catalogue of her not being at the (bed and breakfast) hotel and things it's not (-) the whole thing's not satisfactory but (-) I don't think there is anything else we can actually do at the moment.*

Interviewer: *no I mean it's not the sort of case in which you would imagine er reception into care's going to happen in anything but the odd situation.*

Social Worker: *I wouldn't be surprised if this came up as an emergency again yeah but in terms of mother and what she says about the child and her situation (-) erm there is nothing we can do I mean she is saying basically she's got things sorted out ok moved out of the B and B (bed and breakfast hotel) to live with erm someone that she knows she's saying that she doesn't need help I mean our only concern is that the child is developmentally behind but that's being dealt with by the health centre really and I mean they know the situation so they'll contact whoever if they're concerned (-) so I think it is one of those that you have to live with really*

The social worker and interviewer can be heard to cooperate in reducing the evaluation of future risk and what social services can do. A 'low risk' category is negotiated around "not the sort of case which will happen again" and "it might happen again but it's one of those that you have to live with". For the first time in the interview, the mother's circumstances are now made available - she has got things sorted out and is no longer in B & B.⁽¹⁷⁾ The interviewer now suggests an alternative

intervention which the social worker can be heard to reject:

Interview Extract 5.2.

Social worker: *No I don't know I mean I think she's erm (-) she came over from Ireland erm I think about a year ago and I think she's not been able to settle at all since she came over from Ireland but certainly she erm (-) she's dependent very much on erm (-) well her kind of network seems to be well there's a lot of these there's a lot of single Irish blokes who sit over on the common and they seem to be her reference point really although having said that she actually presents as a sort of respectable person I mean not that they are not respectable but erm I mean she is involved in (family centre) which she goes to sometimes but I I actually feel that she needs some work done with her around how to deal with children and stuff and erm (family centre) would be quite good in helping her with that but she uses the toy library down there she is not saying that she doesn't want to look after (child) or that she finds that a strain and I feel very apprehensive about removing children from parents*

Interviewer: *oh sure (-) so some sort of help with parenting skills...*

The interview moves to an ending with no further discussion of this case, except to compare it with 'other priorities'. This utterance is of interest because, after a pause, a detailed depiction of the mother is offered. Her character, history and relationships are made available in a definitive form that has not previously been heard. Such details could form the basis of a formulation of high risk - unsettled, associates with not respectable Irish men on the common, ⁽¹⁸⁾ the need for some work on parenting. However, this display of detailed information and assessment can be heard to reassure the interviewer that the social worker understands this woman's situation. Appropriate resources are available, but elsewhere. Finally, an extreme case formulation can be heard to mock the interviewer by overexaggerating his suggestion - surely, you are not suggesting this kind of mother should have her child taken away.⁽¹⁹⁾ The hesitant beginning suggests a reluctance to go into this detail, but

precise contrasts, through complex modalities, depict the mother as someone who is now coping pretty well. A careful character depiction, grading her respectability and coping, is made available, categorising her as not a social work case.

A similar feature appears in interview Z.6.3. which also ends with a character depiction. In this interview, more detailed previous contact is described, but only at the end is this summarised into a categorisation:

Interview Extract 5.3.

Interviewer: *as far as future contact with the department is concerned*

Social Worker: *erm I think the only contact that G will need (-) from the department whether it be from whatever social service office will be for nursery I don't think she needs anything else G is a survivor she is able to survive on her own and I think as (child) is getting older she is actually going to do more and I actually think the relationship with her and her own mother will actually right itself*

Interviewer: *you don't think she needs help looking after after the baby*

Social worker: *I don't think so*

Interviewer: *ok thanks*

Despite earlier reporting concerns by the day nursery about the mother's ability to look after her child, the categorisation of a "survivor" undermines any reason for further intervention. The future only offers improvements - three uses of "actually" can be heard to pinpoint the definitive 'facts' of the case - the restrictions of a young child, her relationship with her mother and the social worker's own definition of the state of affairs, "I actually think". None of these concerns require further social services contact.

In summary, these accounts of 'low risk' cases can be heard as presenting only chronological events. When the social worker is challenged to justify no further contact, a character depiction is made available. The definitive portrayal of the mother does not bring in witnesses nor reported speech to create 'out-there-ness'. However,

'pathing devices', complex categorisations and contextualisations of weighing up priorities enable the competent hearer to locate these cases. "I actually think..." is heard as a strong bid for trusting the storyteller's assessment. Character depictions are a stock in trade of social work accounting, but in these examples, they are deployed interactionally to construct cases in terms of local strategic concerns. In contrast to Smith (1978:33), who suggests that the categorisation as a fact is offered at the beginning of an account to instruct the reader, here the categorisation is offered at the end to close off further debate.

2.2 Serious Situations

In contrast to low risk cases, there is no reluctance to offer background circumstances and character depictions at the beginning of an account, where the case is formulated as serious, allocated to the social worker and long term contact is envisaged. Attributes are easily allocated to characters, as Smith (1978:33) suggests, to instruct the reader that the account s/he is about to hear can be read through this categorisation.

J is a very complex young woman very inward and holds things in very unwilling to share much with anybody... (Interview 8.1.1)

I think she is quite independent now and seems to know what she wants there are a lot of things I could say but that's where she is at moment... (Interview 1.1.1)

Each opening can be seen to include a strong instruction that this is the definitive portrayal - the first has a three part list using 'very', and the second tells the listener that 'a lot' of information is available to back up the assertion.

Not all accounts in the interviews begin with a definitive categorisation,⁽²⁰⁾ but most soon offer features of background or character, to enable the reader/hearer to make a provisional categorisation. Interview Y.8.5. concerned a possible adoption of a newborn baby. It first explains the racial background of the family as influencing decisions: grandfather's 'undue' pressure and the uncertainty of the mother's reaction to her new baby. After eight minutes a character depiction is made available, which can be heard as instructing the interviewer as to the definitive state of affairs:

Interview Extract 5.4.

Interviewer: *that (placement) would have been for mother and ...*

Social worker: *no just the baby because mum at that time was not prepared to leave home*

Interviewer: *(-) oh I see*

Social worker: *no*

Interviewer: *I see*

Social worker: *she's a girl that (-) she's a girl that to some extent is quite weak willed on the personality basis but also caught into her culture and she didn't in fact feel able to leave home until very recently*

Interviewer: *right (-) right*

Social worker: *so whatever happened with the baby had to happen separate from her because she wasn't prepared to leave home at that time it took her a long time to actually (-) develop the the courage and the skill and the confidence to actually leave home she wasn't ready at that time*

The use of 'actually' and 'in fact', three repeats of 'not prepared to leave home' and a three line list 'courage, skill and confidence' can be heard to establish this formulation as the definitive portrayal which determines the overall state of affairs. The interviewer has at last been made to understand the uniqueness of this case, and agrees with the social worker that the usual range of mother and baby facilities are not appropriate here.

To summarise, these social work accounts can be heard to manipulate and configure the entities of social work - character, events, states of affairs - in various strategic and local forms. It is in making available the depiction of character, background and circumstances that the reader is enabled to locate the 'facts' of the account. The use of a range of rhetorical features - three part lists, 'actually', extreme case formulations, repetitions - can be heard as pinpointing definitive states of affairs. These accounts do not offer all the approaches to fact construction suggested in

section 1 of this chapter. In particular, the depictions of clients are not separated from the views of the storyteller. Instead, character portrayals are made available and authorised by the social worker's entitlement to make assessments.

Offered at the beginning of an account, such character depictions can be heard as instructing the reader that what follows is the client as a type of person (Smith 1978:23). Heard later, it can signal the 'evaluation' of narrativity (Labov and Waletzky 1968) or the 'warrant' for a 'claim' (Toulmin 1958), the point where the reader is put straight. To describe these accounts as 'low risk' or 'serious situation' does not imply that all low risk cases will be related as event oriented or vice versa. This title is used merely to note the late and strategic use of character depictions in the former in order to close off discussion. Events, character and state of affairs are available flexibly and interactionally in these accounts, offering definitive portrayals to persuade the hearer/reader of the factual status of the depiction.

3 TELLING A STRONG STORY: DONNA

So far features of social work accounting have been displayed as 'facts' by indicating specific moves or formulations. In this section, a single account is investigated as a site for reading a text as persuasive and intriguing. 'Facts', claims and conjecture are not only constructed, but used to manipulate and fascinate the reader. In social work accounts, in contrast to science, it is the overall display to which the reader reacts and the overall trajectory of the argument along which the reader is carried. The reader may be unhappy with parts, but such dissent is irrelevant when faced with the decision to accept or reject the account as a basis for action. It is in the overall reading of the account that persuasion is attended to. The text (appendix 5.1) is the first report produced at the beginning of the case of Donna, and hence does not offer features which have been developed as a result of repeated storytelling. This second aspect of fact construction and persuasive accounts is considered in the next chapter when the story of the case of Donna is followed through later reading performances.

In August 198_ Donna's mother contacted the social services department and asked for her daughter aged 14 to be received into care of the Local Authority. The social workers made inquiries of other welfare organisations, and, whilst refusing the reception into care, agreed to help the family with their problems. There was some

contact over the next few weeks, but at the end of August, Donna ran away from home. When the police returned her home a few days later, her mother refused to have her back. Donna was taken to a children's home and it was decided to request a full social and psychological assessment in order to decide what to do next with Donna.

3.1 Creating the Ratified Reader

The document in appendix 5.1 is a report from the social worker to a Principal Social Worker asking for his agreement to proceed with a 'Full Assessment'. The ratified reader is specifically addressed, being the recognised access to the resource. The purpose of the text is to convince the Principal Social Worker that the situation is serious enough to warrant a Full Assessment. As already discussed a categorisation of events as an entity is isomorphic with the textual organisation of that entity (Smith 1978:27). The categorisation 'a serious breakdown in mother-daughter relations' is not separate from the performance of that assertion in the various activities of social work, in this case, a report. This is achieved, however, not by laying out 'facts' which then suggests a conclusion of serious breakdown and thus the action of full assessment, but rather affirms the categorisation of a case of serious breakdown/full assessment which is rendered observable by the events recorded. The 'proper puzzle' (Smith 1978:37) is a display of the categorisation of serious mother-daughter breakdown.⁽²¹⁾

The lay out of the report produces the context for reading the account as a request for action. The heading 'CASE-HISTORY (SUMMARY) SHEET' might be expected to summarise the history of the case. However lines 3 and 4 signify a memo with 'FROM' and 'TO' indicating a particular channel of communication from one specific actor person to another. In the space after 'RECOMMENDATIONS' (line 48), the recipient writes 'agreed', also treating the document as a request. This document is thus not attended as a summary nor case history for the purposes of any reader of the case file who is looking for a definitive version of the case of Donna. Rather, it is to be read as a request for agreeing an action and the proper site for reading is the Principal Social Worker's office.

Whilst a request for full assessment is not an unusual response to a mother-

teenager dispute, a more favoured strategy would be to work with the family with the young person remaining at home.⁽²²⁾ Full Assessment commits expensive and hard pressed resources, to which the ratified reader (the Principal Social Worker) controls access. Hence, an alternative reading of the case of Donna might be that the mother and daughter are having a few problems, which is normal in some families with teenagers. The request could be refused, recommending that the young person be returned home, with social work intervention more appropriately located there. It would also be cheaper.

This account can be heard to negotiate these alternative formulations of the situation, as the justification for social services involvement is re-produced to configure characters and events as constituting a legitimate social services case. The reader is thus constructed as the location for justifying professional action and rhetoric through the manipulation of the categories - 'serious breakdown of mother-daughter relationship' and 'Full Assessment'; which are set against 'normal teenager upset' and 'work in the home'.

3.2 Fact construction and Entitlement in Character Development

The construction of 'facts' has been considered above to be an important feature of persuasive accounts. We have seen, in particular, how social work accounts trade on entitlement through the social workers' experience and privileged status, and less on the establishment of 'facts' as independent of the storyteller. Unlike accounts where professional affirmation is based on long term contact, in this case there has been little previous work. The report writer can be heard to manipulate external 'facts' with initial impressions to display the 'proper puzzle' (Smith 1987:37).

Reporting events and introducing trusted witnesses are presented at the beginning as setting the scene. Both pages begin with uncontestable 'facts' - "Donna was received into care on 2nd September" on page 1 and "Donna has never been received into care before" on page 2. The introduction of the police provides not only external witnesses, but also an external measure of the problem. The police not only support the 'facts' of the situation, but add to the seriousness of the problem: "Police failed to get mother to take her back" (lines 8-9).

The main witness of Donna's character and her "maladjusted behaviour" is her

mother, with some confirmation by the education welfare officer (EWO) (line 15).⁽²³⁾ The mother's assertions (lines 13-15) about Donna's behaviour appear to offer extra support for the proposition of 'maladjustment', with a strong list "steals, lies, rude and abusive" (line 14). This is more than a three line list (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986), as the third item consists of two linked elements "rude and abusive", offering a strong rhythmic pattern. The state of Donna's unhappiness (line 23) trades on the entitlement of social worker assessment; despite only having two meetings, the social worker offers an initial assessment of the child's state of mind. A three line list is again heard: "very unhappy, withdrawn, totally shut off emotionally". A provisional categorisation of Donna as unhappy and disturbed is made available.

The character of the mother involves a complex reading. On the one hand, she is treated as the 'trusted teller of the tale' (Smith 1978), but, on the other hand, she is presented as a rejecting mother (line 32); hardly a reliable witness. The words of the mother can be heard as accomplishing both tasks: to provide an external witness of the events, but, at the same time, to indicate the seriousness of the mother's rejection. This is a serious situation because of what mother reports and the fact that she reports it. The on-going poor relationship is presented through mother's 'described speech' "Mother saying Donna maladjusted..." (line 13) and "Mother saying Donna completely bad and she never wants to see her back" (lines 44 -46). However, irony can be heard in the trust given to the mother. First, she is seen as manipulative - "agreed to discuss problems but when it did not get results... she refused to have her back" (lines 42-44). Second, the extreme case formulations attributed to her description of Donna (lines 13-14 and 45-46) could be read as someone who might be overreacting.

It is mother's description and reaction to the sexual activity of Donna, which moves the case from a fairly serious mother-daughter dispute to a young person in moral danger, and hence appropriate for social services action. Donna is portrayed as a possible teenage prostitute.

Mother requested RIC after she discovered that Donna had had some sexual contact with a 37 yr old pimp. (lines 39-41)

This can be heard as the most serious, but unsubstantiated 'fact' in this account and

raises the stakes over appropriate categorisation. The only witness is the mother, and the lack of police involvement (the appropriate external informant) is accounted for: "Mother reluctant to inform Police" (line 41). There are other comments on her possible sexual activity, but all are mother's assertions: "she might have had sex" (line 32) and "discovered had had some sexual contact" (line 39), which are reported as the main basis for the mother's present rejection. Perhaps the 'maladjustment' might have been tolerated. The possible sexual behaviour can be heard as such a serious claim that, even if not eventually proven, to ignore it would be negligent. Hence, mother must be taken notice of since her 'facts' are a plausible cause of concern. Even though mother is an unreliable witness and is morally suspect by rejecting her daughter, the situation being suggested 'teenage prostitution' cannot be ignored. Whilst not a 'fact', rumour and conjecture are heard as a serious claim.

The mere suggestion of such a serious categorisation can be heard to invite a reader response that the hint of such powerful words demands a reaction; it needs no further factual substantiation to require grave concern. Pithouse and Atkinson (1988:193) note a similar reaction to the term 'incest' in a case presentation by a social worker to her supervisor:

It is significant how the term 'incest' is introduced early in the social worker's account. It hangs in the conversation without qualification, elaboration or clear attribution ('some sort of incest'). The term is not attached to any members of the family nor to any behaviours. Here, as in other accounts of the sort recorded in the same setting, there are hints, clues, innuendoes and unverifiable guesses.

Pithouse and Atkinson suggest that such talk demonstrates shared occupational assumptions. Here, however, it appears less an example of the 'et cetera principle' (Cicourel 1973:86), where the hearer fills in the gaps, than the use of authoritative words to posit an unheard proposition that cannot be substantiated, but cannot be ignored. The least 'factual' part of the report is the strongest statement; the consequences of substantiation would be so serious that the reader is required to invest in its possible truthfulness.⁽²⁴⁾ Child abuse, teenage prostitution and incest are moral entities, which by their force enable everyday events, concerns and witnesses to be sorted into moral categories and characterisations which demand action.

Unlike the construction of K's mental illness by Angela (Smith 1978), there is

available here a less explicit relation between the category and the 'facts' which constitute it. The account is heard as positing a categorisation of 'mother-teenager breakdown', but with the categorisation 'teenage prostitution' not proven but possible. To have ignored it would lower the moral force of the story and the legitimacy for the Full Assessment. It is also early in the development of Donna as narrative.⁽²⁵⁾ Social workers telling accountable stories means covering all possibilities, especially the worst case. Facts, claims and conjecture all require attention, with perhaps the 'facts' the least interesting.

3.3 Strengthening Claims through Reading Narrativity

In chapter 2, it was suggested that narrative and narrativity are less a set of necessary features indicating a story outside the context of its performance, and more a way of performing reading relations. This report offers an opportunity to study aspects of an account which has both a narrative and non-narrative structure. Page 1 is a series of answers to questions, whereas page 2 offers the opportunity for an extended report, available as a narrative. How do the narrative and non-narrative sections contribute to a strong story? Goodman (1980:115) considers that a psychological report can be presented in a narrative or non-narrative form:

A psychological report recounts a patient's behaviour chronologically. It is a story, a history. But rearrange to group the incidents according to their significance as symptoms - of first suicidal tendencies, then claustrophobia, then psychopathic disregard of consequences - it is no longer a story but an analysis, a case study. Reordering of the telling here turns a narrative into something else.

Page 2 is hearable as a story in a number of ways. It can be heard as a chronology of events and divided into the elements of story structure, similar to Labov and Waletzky's model (1967), discussed in chapter 2:

Setting: "Donna has never been received into care before." (line 37)

Orientation: "There have been many problems with Donna's behaviour." (line 38).

Complication: "She agreed to discuss problems but when it did not get results ie Donna received into care and Donna ran away, she refused to have her back" (lines 42-4)

**Evaluation: "Mother saying Donna's completely bad and she never wants her back."
(lines 45-7)**

Resolution: "Recommendations (if any) Full Assessment." (line 48)

The 'Resolution' as the request for Assessment can be heard as an important aspect for reading narrativity, since it would be an incomplete story if the Assessment is not agreed. Prince's (1973) story structure as moving from one state of affairs to another can also be read as a contrast between a period where the family problems could be discussed at home, to a situation of complete rejection. A third approach to narrative is the 'point' or claim that the story warrants, the answer to the 'so what?' question. The account starts with 'Donna has never been in care'(line 36) and ends with the claim that mother 'never wants her back' (lines 45- 46). The reader seeks narrativity in the move between these two statements, and whether the recommendation of the line 48 is substantiated. This account then can be read as narrative in the process of constructing the context of a request for full assessment.

One way that narrativity is accomplished is the use of tenses. The work of 'mediate storytelling' discussed earlier, links various past events with the present situation. The first sentence "Donna has never been received into care before" (line 36) can be heard to 'set up a problem for the reader.'²⁶⁾ That this is a request for full assessment for a teenager who has not been in care before may be heard as unusual. Most admissions concern children with previous experiences of care. Is this a low risk case? The account has to override such a charge.

The main body of the narrative begins with use of the imperfect tense 'have been' (line 38) indicating many problems have been occurring and still are. The continuing nature of these problems can be heard to escalate with mother's request for RIC (reception into care) (line 38) and the next few events are established as recent occurrences. This is achieved through another contrast with the previous sentence - "there have been many problems" (past continuous), now it had reached a request for RIC (recent past). There is no grammatical indication of this stage being the recent past, but the immediate move to mother discussing the problems and then refusing to have her daughter back (line 44) can be heard as events changing quickly. The change to the present tense in the last sentence brings the situation up to date

handled. The ungraded phrases "completely bad" (line 45) and "never wants her back" link to the "never" at the beginning of the narrative (line 36) and also mark the complete turnaround in the story - never in care, now never to go back. The escalation of the events, moving from "many problems with behaviour" (line 37) to "sexual contact" (line 39) to "completely bad" (line 44) can be heard to move from normal to abnormal teenager/mother problems.

It is thus suggested that the strength of this account is made available by hearing narrative features - the contrast of states of affairs, events and tenses as the sudden escalation of problems is displayed. The 'pathing device' (Woolgar 1980:256) is therefore chronological, unfolding and increasing alarm.

The non-narrative on page 1 does not offer the reader an opportunity to read characterisations and events within a narrative structure. However, answers to questions offer 'data', which set up the narrative overleaf. If the reader looks at page 1 first, s/he is offered a series of sentences, which can be read as contributions to a story which is waiting to be heard. These are 'facts' in search of a framework, hence they can be heard as worrying but not tied to a narrative of 'serious breakdown'. Parts of a potential story are available - the 'circumstances' question (line 6) offers an 'orientation', Donna received into care. The 'maladjusted category' (line 12) and her unhappiness (line 21) offers 'complications', but there is no resolution nor evaluation. Some answers make use of extreme case formulations and three part lists - "a very unhappy, withdrawn, totally shut off emotionally" (line 23), "never had a good relationship... now totally rejected" (line 31).

In summary, the narrative and non-narrative parts of this report combine to offer a strong story, which can only be resolved by the Full Assessment. The strong formulations in the non-narrative can be heard as 'over the top' statements, not tied to a framework. In contrast, whilst having fewer upgraded terms, the narrative is heard to use tenses, chronology and a rising sense of alarm to rebut alternative versions.

3.4 Narrative Puzzle

There is a further narrative feature available to the reader of this report, which will be followed through other texts and other occasions of reading in the next chapter. This

is a 'narrative puzzle'. Recognition of the 'narrative puzzle' can be heard to set up a reading, which is unresolved and thus encourages the reader to go further. Such a feature can be heard to add an extra dimension to the narrative work of this text, making it more persuasive and intriguing, and hence stronger.⁽²⁷⁾ The 'narrative puzzle' is an uncertainty as to the 'true' nature of the problem, with two suggestions as to where to seek an answer. The trajectory of the story is to a future resolution of this 'puzzle' in the conclusion of the 'Full Assessment'. The request for the 'Full Assessment' is hence irresistible.

The narrative puzzle revolves around the status of Donna's sexual activity. It was noted earlier that authoritative words, 'teenage prostitution', are dangled before the listener without clarification and set up a series of possible worries. The category 'teenage prostitution' is not explicitly offered, but enough elements of the entity are outlined to alert the reader to its presence. Furthermore, its existence is hearable as real and at the same time illusory, as the teller of the tale is not to be trusted. As already mentioned, the mother is the only reporting witness, and, having been presented as a rejecting mother, the evidence of Donna's sexual activity can be read in two ways.

First, the sexual activity may be heard as an indicator of the depth of Mother's rejection rather than a 'fact'; Mother is making these serious accusations about Donna to justify her own concerns. It is thus unlikely to be true in itself, but does signify Mother's deep feelings. This reading can be supported by noting that each mention of the sexual activity is preceded by positioning Mother in the claim. At line 32, Mother's rejection is "on the basis that she might have had sex". The "many problems with Donna's behaviour" (lines 37-8) are introduced as "according to mother" (line 38) and the important conclusion before the recommendation begins "Mother saying..." (line 44-5). At each point Mother as the sole witness is re-stated.

Second, a distrust of Mother's allegations is never made explicit and an alternative reading is that the claim may be true. The description of "a 37 yr old pimp" (line 40) offers some evidence of a tangible evil entity in this scenario. A cumulative sense of alarm of the state of affairs is hearable as the claim moves from "might have had sex" (line 32) through the description of the pimp (line 40) to the "completely bad" at line 45.

Both possibilities are available, and having both creates the 'narrative puzzle', which only a 'Full Assessment' will resolve. Having both keeps options open, but, more important, the request for Full Assessment is strengthened by the presence of competing versions. Hearing both together, the status of Donna's sexual activity and Mother's reaction offer an unsettled puzzle, with which the reader is intrigued enough to follow further through the Assessment process. An unresolved story can thus carry incompatible versions, and, by tantalising the reader, still can be heard as competent and strong in its claims. Indeed by offering reasonable alternatives, it is harder to undermine and may be heard as fair minded and flexible. Later versions of the story of Donna make much of the 'narrative puzzle', with some emphasising different versions, but ultimately accepting both - blow! I've nearly given the game away. Chapter 6 follows this story further, but be reassured that there remain further twists in this tale.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has investigated some features of social work accounts, which can be heard as 'facts', claims and conjecture. 'Facticity' in terms of Latour and Woolgar's Type 4 and 5 statements, has not been seen as central to social work accounts. First, some 'facts' are received by social workers from others - doctors identify 'failure to thrive', the police define Donna as an abandoned child. The social work account is somewhat removed from the process of initially establishing the problem, but then an account is required to configure attributes and relations between entities, and set out appropriate action. Donna as a rejected child is a 'fact' discovered by the police, the social work account must establish why. Second, the personal agency/'out-there-ness' balance has been observed as tilted towards the former. The 'facts' of the mother's character and circumstances in interview extracts 5.1/2 are known, but contrasts and contextualisation through, for example, establishing priorities, enable professional categorisation. Third, 'facts' and claims have been seen as only a starting point for conjecture and possibilities. Persuasion has been achieved through flexible, provisional, intriguing readings. Donna was found to be rejected by her mother (police-established fact); this is more than a temporary breakdown (claims of progressive and long term problem); the cause may be mother's incapacities or Donna's sexual risk

(intriguing conjecture). Despite the shortage of highly protected robust 'facts', these accounts could be seen to achieve their objective - the low risk cases were discussed no more and Donna had a Full Assessment.

A number of rhetorical and narrative features have been discussed. Some features involve the use of strong rhetorical formulations - three part lists, extreme case formulations, definitive markers. Fact construction has been observed in pathing devices, linking past and present stories, bringing witnesses and displaying entitlement. It has however been suggested that the definitive and tantalising portrayals of characters and their attributes has been accomplished through reading narrativity, enabling the reader to follow paths and chronologies, building tensions and offering resolutions. In the last section, enticing the reader through a 'narrative puzzle' suggests a way of intriguing rather than explicitly persuading. Has the 'power' of the Golding's story been equal to the robust texts of Woolgar? Are 'puzzles' as strong as 'facts'? This investigation is followed into the next chapter, as the outcome of 'the puzzle' is sought.

A clear separation into moral and factual construction has all but disappeared. The form of some features could equally be made available using moral or factual content, indeed which is which? Are the character depictions in chapter 4 different from the character depictions here? Is the blame for a child failing to thrive based on good/bad contrasts or legitimate/illegitimate information states? And how can you tell the difference? The scales might not lie, but the move from readings on scales to court involves a series of transformations, which are depicted as both moral and factual. In the 'broken arm' case in chapter 3, did the police not pressing charges and the judge sending the children home mean the broken arm was less of a 'fact'? The 'fact' of the broken arm clearly changed in its moral and factual significance by such an event. It no longer spoke for the existence of child abuse. Facts do not speak for themselves and morals need entities and characters. Is Donna's mother constructed as a fact: she is really a rejecting mother based on evidence (that she has locked Donna out, said certain things etc), or is she constructed morally as rejecting: a more ephemeral overall 'rejection' which damages Donna's character? Perhaps the answer might be sought in the interaction of the former with the latter, how are events related to the depictions? It also suggests the documentary method: how 'documents'

relate to 'underlying patterns'.

Given the lack of 'out-there-ness' available in social work accounts based on personal entitlements, morals and 'facts' are not easily separated. It is rather narrativity and literary features, which can be heard as the site for investigating constructing activities. How characters in stories are made available to be read, involves interlocking moral and factual attributions.

CASE-HISTORY (SUMMARY) SHEET

FROM Chris Hall
TO Examiner

NameFacts Chapter

Date of Birth ...DARG Exeter 1991

Circumstances....This chapter first appeared at a DARG Workshop where a number of competent and professional hearers said it was ok but needed further work on it.

Category....fact construction, moral allocation, narrative structure + surprise.

Basic information....This chapter has been revisited on a number of occasions, having been very unhappy with it. It still does not feel robust, neither convincing nor intriguing enough.

Relatives.....The mother Chapter 4 appears much more confident in its claims and Sister chapter 6 has a more interesting end.

REPORT and case history (brief outline)

This chapter came from an observation by a friend that he was surprised that a social work story remained consistent in different texts. Robustness from this Latourian approach suggested following the story into later readings, now chapter 6. Only when working on the CASE HISTORY (SUMMARY) SHEET and reading Woolgar's (1992) paper on the robust machine text did the idea of a separate chapter emerge. How restricted readings of a single text would bring off strength through instructions to readers - 'facts' from independent authorities, entitlement from hearing professional competence. However two versions remain unresolved, whether this story succeeds through fact construction and strong instructions or tantalising and intriguing inducements to readers. Chapter 4 Mother still says moral construction is 'completely bad' (in the Michael Jackson use of that word).

RECOMMENDATION...carry swiftly on to chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6 RETELLINGS: FOLLOWING THE SOCIAL WORK STORY

INTRODUCTION

This thesis of how social work accounting practices construct entities and set up relations has investigated social workers' documents and conversations as storytelling occasions and performances, concerned with characters, their attributes and the emplotment of events. The last chapter suggested that social work accounts make available strong and intriguing character depictions of social workers' clients, in order to categorise them and make claims for appropriate action. The portrayal of character and plot involves a wide range of narrative and rhetorical features, persuading the reader of the authority, efficacy and plausibility of the storyteller. This chapter studies how such characterisations change over time and occasion. Taking Latour's (1987:15) recommendation to follow how claims are turned into facts, we investigate how social work accounts are heard as stories, how they are retold, scrutinised by various audiences and accepted, rejected or ignored.

It was noted in the last chapter that social work accounts are concerned less with merely creating entities as 'facts', as telling persuasive accounts through a wide variety of narrative and rhetorical features. 'Facts', claims and conjecture are made available to contribute to a 'powerful' story. Which features are the more significant in persuading the reader: the strength of the 'fact' or the intrigue of the 'puzzle'? Furthermore, the 'facticity' of the clients of social workers is not just who they are and what they do, but how should social workers react to them. Some will have been clients of social workers for many years with a variety of interventions, others had minimal contact. How do the stories and categorisations of clients change and stabilise, or remain contested and elusive? How do conceptions of crisis or stability interact with such formulations? A major problem for social work accounting to handle is that definitive formulations of character and strategy do not guarantee a successful outcome, and conversely stability might not be the result of an accurate assessment.⁽¹⁾ Assessment, prediction, action and evaluation are closely intertwined.

In chapter 3, we noted how different documents about ostensibly the 'same'

events constructed different audiences, and hence, different reading relations. This chapter investigates the similarities between performances of the 'same' case. For Latour (1987:25) the fate of a claim depends on later readers, who have the opportunity to stabilise entities and use them for wider claims and strategies. Each retelling involves local and occasioned features of presentation and persuasion, but, at the same time, the authority of earlier reading occasions sets the agenda for present concerns. What can be gained by following a social work case through a series of retellings? To what extent are character depictions in social work accounts stabilised into institutional stories? Following the case of Donna from chapter 5 offers the opportunity to investigate the retelling of a social work story. We first discuss theoretical approaches which consider links between texts and occasions, and then follow the case of Donna.

1. THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Two theoretical concepts inform this analysis - 'intertextuality' and 'blackboxing'. The former has a wide use and was discussed in chapter 5 in terms of reported speech. Authoritative stories enter texts, offering strength through the words of others. Blackboxing is a related concept, following how entities are shaped into texts which become closed and no longer available for scrutiny. This chapter is less interested in the facts or morals of single accounts, as it follows a story through other texts, resisting opposition and shaping other encounters. Narrative as the focus of this analysis involves following how 'a' story becomes 'the' story. The institutionalised version of events and characters is rehearsed, the rough edges smoothed out and prepared for further scrutiny from wider audiences.

1.1 Intertextuality

This is a major concept in literary theory, but is approached here in a specific way. Barthes (1977:126) is concerned with the way that novels incorporated references, themes and genre from other texts:

We know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of

culture.

Novels are seen as the ultimate arena for texts linking to one another. The author is no longer a focus for interpretation, instead there is a concern to uncover structural features beyond the individual reading, notably the form. In contrast to formalism, recent approaches to intertextuality are less interested in formal structures, as reading relations between texts and contexts. There is a recognition that all texts are constituted not merely by 'quotations' from other texts, but from many historical, social and institutional discourses, genres and reading conventions. Such reading conventions are made available on the occasion of the reading through the interaction between the writer, reader, text and context. Thibault (1989:184) notes:

All texts, whether spoken or written, have the meanings they do in relation to other texts within a given speech community as well as historically prior texts. However, it is not quite exact to say that a given text is meaningful in relation to a background of other texts. Texts do not stand in given static or neutral relationships with other texts. Instead, the relationships between texts are always constructed by text users.

Similarly, Bennett and Woolacott (1987:45) contrast their approach with Kristeva's concept of intertextuality which:

...refers to other texts which can be discerned within the internal composition of a specific individual text (whereas) we intend the concept of inter-textuality to refer to the social organisation of the relations between texts within the specific conditions of reading.

Texts refer to other texts, but also to other occasions of the use of texts, and to relations between texts and readers. When a social worker's court report sits in a filing cabinet, it might well have certain features in relation to style of writing or form similar to other social work reports. But as soon as it is read, it becomes a part of the social relations of the occasion of the reading. Woolgar (1992:65), as discussed in chapter 5, considers the robust text strives to restrict possible readings, using strong rhetorical and narrative features, and controlling the point of access. In chapter 3, it was suggested that features of a social work account, when read as a text, restrict readings by constructing the ratified reader and performing social work community. Thus, reading a social work account both anticipates and constitutes the reading occasion. In the report of the case of Donna in chapter 5, the ratified reader was constituted as the Principal Social Worker, and its restricted reading rested on

performing a specific reading occasion.

When the 'same' events and characters appear in other accounts at other reading occasions, in what way is a similar or different story performed? It might be anticipated that different reading relations are constructed and thus the story of Donna changes considerably. Without the need to persuade the Principal Social Worker that a Full Assessment is the only way to proceed, the story of Donna may take on different features. However, whilst different occasions do indeed suggest different constructions and audiences, the intertextual relations of other occasions include and react to the first social work report and the history of persuading the Principal Social Worker. In what way, does the first text write the reading relations of later versions of the case of Donna? How far are subsequent texts read through the relations configured in the first report? Whilst it is one account amongst others which constitute future versions of the case of Donna, the institutionalising processes of social work accounting practices require an orientation to a stable reading in order for its processing through administrative channels; she must become black boxed.

Intertextuality is thus approached in a restricted sense, investigating the relations between performances of the 'same' story in different accounts on different occasions. How do different performances tell the 'same' story?⁽²⁾ What features restrict and configure later performances, and what features can be heard to travel between occasions? At the same time, the wider use of intertextuality, where words, genres and discourses enable the reader to make connections between texts, is recognised in the reading of community-established reading conventions.

1.2 Blackboxing

This concept has been developed in the sociology of scientific knowledge, and is considered here as it applies to the historical reading of social work accounts. What are the similarities and differences in 'blackboxing' between science and social work? It has been suggested above that the action orientation of social work accounting requires that depictions of characters, plots and strategies are (at least provisionally) stabilised. Decisions, plans, meetings, forms, reports attempt to display the RDM process of gathering facts, assessing alternatives and choosing strategy, as discussed in chapter 1. Blackboxing is essential, but also provisional.

For Latour, the strength of a text depends on later users. A fact is constitutive of later occasions and texts, and, at the same time, its closure is dependent on it becoming unquestioned in its use, and eventually silence. Latour (1987:2-3) notes a black box:

...is used by cyberneticians whenever a piece of machinery or set of commands is too complex. In its place they draw a black box about which they need to know nothing but its input and output.

In chapter 5, we noted the use of positive modalities in type 4 statements, which refer outside their own construction and can be used as building blocks for other statements. Black boxes must not be reopened, since this would force readers to revisit the site of previous controversies, questioning a statement's construction. Latour (1987:1-17) notes how scientists unquestioningly handle entities, like a computer or the structure of DNA, which on previous occasions were the site of controversy and uncertainty. How an entity moves from unconnected fragments to unquestioned building blocks involves following scientists' claims through the many trials and struggles of a wide politico-scientific world. Claims are not only constructed through 'normal' scientific activity at the lab bench or in the scientific journal, but also the deployment of bigger machines and the enrolling of many diverse interests (funding bodies, political patronage, non-human actants)⁽³⁾. For Latour, a scientific fact is dependent for its strength, not only on textual construction in reports, articles and research proposals, but how it is used by the next generation:

A sentence may be made more of a fact or more of an artifact depending on how it is inserted into other sentences. By itself a given sentence is neither a fact nor a fiction; it is made so by others, later on. (1987:25)

The link with the concept of intertextuality is clear. The movement towards a fact or artifact involves a period when a claim is undermined and threatened, its very basis questioned, even ridiculed. As more and powerful entities are enrolled, the facticity of a (successful) claim becomes accepted, appropriated by others and no longer a source of debate - the box is closing. Eventually the claim is no longer associated with the writer, and becomes part of the tacit knowledge of the group of users. This leads to its incorporation into the claims of others. The 1 to 5 types statements, discussed in chapter 5 (section 1.1) are explored as a historical journey from conjecture to fact, facing trials along the way. A successful journey can be

outlined, based on Latour figure 1.6 (1987:44)

Original statement (A is B): Donna is in need of a children's home.

Negative modalities M-(A is B): No! Donna needs to sort out her relationship with her mother and should stay at home.

Positive and negative modalities M+(A is B): Various contested voices on the appropriate intervention with Donna, some more powerful than others.

So and so has shown that (A is B): The case conference agreed that Donna needs a children's home.

No modality at all (A is B): Request to children's homes for vacancy.

Tacit Knowledge (silence): Donna, the children's home resident.

Incorporation (instruments): Girls like Donna are appropriately placed in children's homes.

In social work, however, challenges to 'facts' as building blocks are available from a number of sources. First, categorical claims (Girls like Donna are appropriately placed in children's homes) can be undermined, because of different character formulations. A counter claim, but Susan is different from Donna in various ways, is acceptable. Second, whilst claims are dependent on later users,⁽⁴⁾ they are also dependent on evaluations of outcome, increasingly in the hands of others. There may not be a vacancy in the 'right' children's home; Donna might not settle in the children's home, despite everyone agreeing that it is an appropriate place. Social workers' formulations are provisional, since the trials through which claims must pass, become increasingly outside their control. Success or failure could be attributed to a wide range of contingent factors outside those which substantiated the original claim. Social workers' claims face immediate and testing trials, only tentatively in the control

of the social worker, compared with the scientists' laboratory, which aims to control all variables. Social work facts must be quickly operationalised into strategies, and inevitably make contact with unenrolled entities. It is likely they are hedged with provisos.

In summary, by treating social worker accounts as intertextual stories, we are able to follow the stabilising or subverting of social workers' claims. Unlike scientists' claims, where a factual status appears achievable (at least for a paradigm, Kuhn 1970), social work stories are attended to as provisional, liable to be soon undermined by trials. To what extent is the concept of 'blackboxing' helpful in following stories where things change so quickly? Do any features survive the trials of uncertainty and disruption faced by social work claims?

1.3 Retellings

Two studies have looked at several occasions of telling of the 'same' story. Bauman (1986) looks at 'tall stories' performed by a folk storyteller. The occasions of the retelling were for small groups of tourists, at public folk festivals and performances for the author. Shuman (1986) investigates different people telling the same story about a fight amongst adolescents. Whilst there are important differences from the documents concerning Donna, both studies investigate the proposition that the 'same' story is being retold.

The 'tall story' that Bauman considered increases in length and detail over the three performances. Bauman (1986:92) compares the different versions, using a modified version of the structural schema of Labov and Waletzky (1967). He considers that the additions to the first telling are produced by:

taking advantage of the structural opportunity afforded by the ellipsis already established in the first telling.

He considered that the additions increase the cohesion of the story, and different codas in particular "enhance the performative efficacy of the narration" (p.93). Bauman suggests that the additional features which comment on the story, are important instructions to new audiences unfamiliar with background features understood by earlier listeners:

All of these, like the more extended metanarrational statements, have the

effect of bridging the gap between the narrated event and the storytelling event by reaching out phatically to the audience, giving identificational and participatory immediacy to the story. (p.100)

Bauman discusses the distinction between the narrated event and the narration event, noting other features developed for less knowledgeable audiences. The expansion must not go too far since it may lose the tension of the story, as the storyteller told Bauman:

I like to make it a little longer because it keeps 'em from hearin' the end of it all at once, you know, keeps 'em in suspense a little bit longer. (Bauman 1986:104)

The storyteller can be heard to create context, not only by the instructions to the audience, but managing their reaction. Even so features of content, plot and style remain across different retellings. In the private version for Bauman, the storyteller begins 'well folks'. As Bauman (1986:105) notes: "he is a public storyteller now, whether or not the public is present".

Shuman (1986) considered several versions of the 'same' event told by different people on different occasions about a fight between two adolescent girls in a high school. Like Bauman, she is concerned about the relationship between narrated events and narration events, which is developed through Young's distinction between the 'story realm' and the 'tale world' (p.140). The former refers to the occasion of the telling and the latter to the world inhabited by the characters in the tale. Shuman considers that entitlement and contextualisation are linked to the ability of the storyteller to justify his/her right to represent the 'tale world' in the 'story realm'. Some 'tale worlds' have almost universal access, fairy tales or detective stories; others are more restricted. For the adolescents who witnessed the fight, the version in the newspaper told the facts, but misrepresented the 'tale world'. It made inferences about violence in the school without understanding the context of the school and the relations between those involved. As Shuman (1986:142) comments:

In each retelling, the teller demonstrates his or her relationship not only to the fight but also to the text.

Stories told immediately after the fight were concerned with how the authorities were or should be reacting. When the incident was over, the point of the telling was to

make claims to listeners about the importance of the incident and the implications, Labov's 'evaluation'.

The significance of stories told after a dispute was resolved was not a matter of currency or immediate relevance to the listeners, but had to be demonstrated in the telling. (Shuman 1986:48)

Unlike Bauman, Shuman considers that evaluation of the story is more important than suspense. Most of those who tell the fight story already know the outcome, but it is their explanation of the significance of the characters and events on which their retelling is assessed.

The concept of evaluating significance seems particularly appropriate to an investigation of social work accounting. However, this should not underscore the importance of suspense in hearing social work stories. It suggests two different extremes of ratified audiences. 'First-time hearers' are unfamiliar with events and characters, and must be given 'the facts', as well as their significance. They might include the judge, the researcher, the manager, or when it is a new case. 'Informed hearers' are similar to those discussed by Shuman - they know the 'facts', but are interested in their evaluation. This would be the old case, the colleague, other professionals, and especially case planning meetings and reviews.⁽⁵⁾ There are a wide range of potential listeners between these extremes, not only informed about 'this case', but with differing access to commonly known scenarios amongst competent listeners. In the case of Donna, the ratified reader of the Document 1 (appendix 5.1): the Principal Social Worker, would not know 'the facts' about Donna, but would be familiar with these types of cases and their potential categorisation and significance. He may need to be held in suspense, in order to bring off appropriate categorisation, as was suggested with the 'narrative puzzle'. How important are the different relations to facts, categories, evaluation and suspense in reading social work stories?

Bauman and Shuman agree that retelling the 'same' story includes similarities and differences. The audience determines the nature of the telling, the 'story realm', but the 'tale world' or narrated events bears a relationship to other tellings, what might be called a 'trace'. Indeed each telling adds to the story, and, as Bakhtin (1981:277) notes, a style is shaped:

The word, breaking through to its meaning and its own expression across an environment full of alien words and variously evaluating accents,

harmonising with some of the elements of this environment and striking a dissonance with others, is able, in this dialogized process, to shape its own stylistic profile and tone.

For Bauman, the storyteller expands later versions by emphasising the performance of the story. In contrast, the 'assessment story' of Donna decreases through various performances, as it becomes 'blackboxed'. Having become more of 'a fact', a precis of the story is enough to outline the situation, (merely) to remind ratified and informed listeners of the circumstances they all know. Shuman also notes the closure or resolved aspect of stories which are retold. When they are told outside the 'tale world', they are less likely to be challenged and more likely to become 'blackboxed':

Stories told following the resolution of a conflict were often recounted to people removed from the situation described. When the situations had no direct consequences for the listeners, entitlement was less likely to be challenged. In contrast, stories told during an ongoing dispute often had immediate consequences for both listeners and tellers. (1986:50)

In summary, we have seen that retellings of the 'same' story involve a complex range of processes, which set agendas and display styles, genres and conventions for later versions. At the same time, local and interactional reading relations and audience construction configure a variety of informed and first-time readers. How far does an investigation of the 'assessment story' of Donna enable us to understand later retellings in terms of evaluation/suspense, 'story realm'/'tale world', and informed/first-time readers? In particular, how is 'blackboxing' achieved, as the requirement for closure and categorisation enables an institutional, if provisional, story to emerge?

2 FOLLOWING THE 'ASSESSMENT STORY' OF DONNA

The account of the 'Case-History (Summary) Report' (Document 1, appendix 5.1) was discussed in chapter 5. It is the first report of the case of Donna, and the request for Full Assessment was accepted by the Principal Social Worker. In this section, we investigate what can be gained by following some later documents of this case? How does the 'assessment story' set the scene for later tellings, and in what way does it become 'blackboxed'? The 'assessment story' is observed as new narration situations revisit and appropriate the narrated events.

The features of the 'assessment story' are as follows. First, the plot was that this was a case of a 'serious' dispute between mother and daughter; problems had been developing over a long period. Second, work with the daughter remaining at home was unsuccessful, resulting in Donna running away and Mother refusing to have her back. Third, the characters were portrayed as a rejecting mother and an unhappy daughter. Fourth, Mother's reaction to Donna's sexual activity was considered the key feature, with a hint at teenager prostitution. In what way do later texts retell the events of the admission? Later documents configure different ratified readers and reading occasions, some of them are informed readers, others are first-time readers. Of particular interest is the handling of the key claim of the story - Mother's complete rejection of her daughter and Donna's sexual behaviour. This was described in chapter 5 as 'the narrative puzzle', which must be answered by Full Assessment.

2.1 Document 2: Report of Assessment Conference, 23 October

The 'Report of an Assessment Conference' (Appendix 6.1) is the minutes of a case conference bringing together all those involved in the assessment process. Six weeks after Document 1, Document 2 does not have a persuasive imperative, (merely) reporting the key points of the discussion of the meeting. It is produced by a minute taker, and the audience are the informed readers who attended the meeting and contributed to the assessment process.⁽⁶⁾ Being informed and ratified, these readers look to the report for description and evaluation, rather than suspense or persuasion. How does the 'tale world' of Donna fit into the 'story realm' of assessment and placement processes? The report makes available a structure which follows what may have been the form of the meeting - reports from the social worker, the school and the children's home, followed by recommendations for action. Competent readers will recognise how a case conference should proceed, as the report regularises the contributions. The report is hearable as a case conference, proceeding normally.

The 'assessment story' made the case for a Full Assessment, because of a serious breakdown between mother and daughter, and the second document reaffirms that state of affairs. At lines 13-18, the mother's rejection is made available through described speech:

Donna's social worker (different from the writer of the Document 1)

reported that (mother) has indicated that she thinks she can manage one daughter (ie. sister) at home. She wishes to keep her daughters apart. Donna is seen as immoral and badly behaved... (social worker) did not think that (sister) would be home for long as (mother) does not have the emotional capacity to cope with adolescents.

The opening can be heard as oriented to the 'assessment story'. There is no explanation of the events of the admission to care, with an audience of informed hearers to whom it is tacit knowledge. It is 'silenced' (Latour 1987:44). There is a reaffirmation of the state of affairs - mother's rejection because of Donna's sexual behaviour - but here, the mother's rejection is supported by the social worker's assessment, giving it more factual status. Whereas the use of Mother's voice in Document 1 suggested rejection, here the authority of the social worker changes it to a professional explanation of a character fault - she cannot cope with adolescents. The 'narrative puzzle' is beginning to be solved, it is mother's fault. A further witness also blames Mother: "(maternal grandmother) sees the problems as (mother's) responsibility" (line 19). Later the mother's 'preoccupation' with Donna's promiscuity is turned from self reporting to a further character flaw, indeed hypocrisy.

Donna's mother is preoccupied with the idea of Donna's sexual promiscuity. (Mother) does not see the birth of her two illegitimate daughters in the same light as Donna's behaviour. (lines 26-28)

The claim that Mother is overreacting is backed up by 'objective' evidence, since in the children's home, there had been no sign of the "provocative behaviour described by her mother" (line 28-9). This is repeated at lines 51-55. The long term aspect of the problem is reaffirmed at line 33, with a description of earlier contact with a child guidance clinic. Overall, Document 2 can be heard to reaffirm the key instructions to the reader of the 'assessment story', displaying further evidence that amplifies the original assertions. Where Document 1 uses the mother's voice to tell the story and make the claim of 'serious rejection because of sexual behaviour', in Document 2 the social workers are the main speakers. The mother is constructed in an unsympathetic way and strong notions of blame attributed to her, hence answering 'the puzzle'. The events of the admission to care have been silenced, 'blackboxed', but the claims of the 'assessment story' have been reaffirmed and extended.

Further stories are made available offering the reader evidence that mother's rejection can be displaying dramatically, rather than merely asserted. A second story

can be heard as a synecdoche (Atkinson 1990:51), describing mother's attendance at an assessment appointment:

Since her admission Donna has had no contact with her mother. They met in Dr. ____'s office on the 21 of October but (mother) was late for the appointment and did not acknowledge her daughter. Donna was extremely upset by this encounter. (line 56-59)

The extent of the mother's rejection is illustrated, and the impossibility of work towards reconciliation is displayed. As with the event of the admission to care, this story becomes a myth in the case of Donna: an event which dramatically displays the realities of the case of Donna that a mere professional assertion could not achieve. The tension of the event can be heard by initially asserting "no contact" (line 56), but then describing a meeting where the mother did not acknowledge her daughter's existence. Not just as no contact but complete rejection; mother was in the same room as her daughter but denied her presence. Such a formulation does more than illustrate rejection, it constitutes it.

A third story revisits 'the puzzle' of Donna's sexual activity. Whilst at the children's home, there is no problem (lines 28-29 and 52-6). An incident outside the home suggests there may have been trouble in the past.

However, (previous social worker) walked through (town centre) with Donna one day and it became apparent that Donna is very well known by her peers, and they were subjected to a series of cat calls and obscene suggestions by various groups of boys. (lines 29-30)

Another myth is made available about Donna, also based on observation of an event by a key spokesperson of social services.⁽⁷⁾ A synecdoche illustrates the dark and worrying aspect of the case, is she promiscuous? 'The puzzle' is temporarily resolved by implying that it may have been a trouble in the past, but it is being handled better in the children's home than by her mother:

It was felt she may be benefiting by being able to stand back at (children's home) and form better relationships with boys rather than granting sexual favours as alleged by her mother. (lines 54-6)

Document 2 uses observed events to turn Donna's behaviour to a condemnation of the mother's handling of her daughter. The report of the O.I.C (the officer-in-charge) describes Donna's willingness to be "more forthcoming with information about herself and her situation" (lines 49-50). It can be heard as a sign that she is cooperative and

entering into the helping process.

In summary, Document 2 can be heard to confirm and develop features of the 'assessment story'. Where Document 1 uses the mother's voice, Document 2 instructs the reader through social worker commentary and evidence. There is indeed a major breakdown in the mother - daughter relationship, but the mother's depiction of Donna as "immoral and badly behaved" (line 15) is ironised and turned into a blaming of the mother. Donna is now depicted as cooperative, reflective, vulnerable, yet beginning to deal with her problems; mother is rejecting, emotionally lacking, and hypocritical. 'The puzzle' is partly resolved: mother is to blame for the rejection because of her own incapacities, but the factuality of Donna's sexual behaviour remains uncertain. The recommendation of the case conference is described with no discussion of alternative courses of action - a children's home is being sought with possibly a family placement later.

The 'blackboxing' of the 'assessment story' can be heard in two strong assertions about the future. First, "She should understand that she is not being prepared to return home" (line 85-6) confirms Mother's rejection, with no return home considered. Second, the strength of the social worker's control over the story of Donna and her Mother is displayed at the end: even if Mother changes her mind, social services will stop her reclaiming Donna:

If Donna's mother interferes and attempts to prevent action by Social Services a section 3 resolution should be implemented. (lines 88-89)

To threaten the use of a section 3 resolution ⁽⁸⁾ in this situation, can be heard by a competent hearer as indicating extreme resolve, certainty of direction; in short 'blackboxing'. In contrast to the cases in chapters 3 and 4, where the police helped remove children, here the law is available to retain the child in care. The 'assessment story' has become 'blackboxed', being revisited, reaffirmed and a basis for strong assertions. Such a claim relies on a direct link between the 'tale world' and 'story realm'; the world of Donna is resolved by social services intervention and control. There is no suspense in the story, but considerable evaluation is available.

2.2 Document 3: Profile, 5 November

This document (Appendix 6.2) is sent to the managers of children's homes (the

O.I.Cs) which may admit Donna, and is written by a residential social worker at the children's home where the assessment is taking place. The audience are first-time readers and may scrutinise the report for suspense, (oh, what problem are they sending now?). It is a more comprehensive document, providing considerable information and evaluation about Donna. It can be heard to 'sell' her as a potential resident: how the 'tale world' of Donna might fit into the 'story realm' of a children's home. Her appearance, interests and relationships with her peers and staff are described, all hearable as no problem:

She maintains a good standard of personal hygiene and takes considerable pride in her appearance and dress. (lines 4-6)

Donna's interests are listening to music, watching television, collecting foreign currency, some reading and will participate in whatever activities are on offer. (lines 39-41)

Recently Donna has formed one close relationship with a 13 year old girl here at (children's home) who she shares a room with. This relationship is one of confidence. Her relationship with other girls is of an easy friendship. Donna takes an active interest in boys and enjoys their company, and can be found at times holding 'court'. (lines 43-48)

Staff here at (children's home) have found Donna to be quite forthcoming with information regarding her personal life and feelings... She tends to somewhat kick against authority, but realises that when in need of support and advice that these are the people she needs to seek out. (lines 49-55)

Donna can be heard by a residential O.I.C as a reasonable, almost perfect candidate for their children's home. Many of the features displayed are not merely descriptions of Donna, but outline the hazards of managing children in a residential home - personal hygiene, arguments between children, threats to authority, cooperation in facing problems. In all of these, Donna can be heard as no problem. She is not perfect - that would sound unreal - but there appears to be enough positives to justify taking her on. School attendance is also depicted in this vein - it was a problem when she was at home, but has got better since admission to care, and she is bright enough to make it a worthwhile enterprise (line 30-8). There may be problems with Donna, but in the last analysis, she will not put up too much resistance to successful social work help. To work with Donna can be heard as potentially rewarding, with little resistance,

but also potential success in education and therapeutic support.

Much of this information has not appeared in the other documents; the character described is Donna, the children's home resident. Documents 1 and 2 construct Donna as the rejected daughter, and develop her character as a victim of a hard-hearted mother. The 'assessment story' reappears in Document 3, but is less closed. In Document 2, details of the admission had been silenced. Here, the admission to care (lines 9-13) makes available a reasonable history of Donna, 'how she has got into care and so recently'. An O.I.C might wonder why social services has not been involved until now. Furthermore, it can be heard to offer a description of the 'non existent relationship' between mother and daughter (lines 15-20). Such 'facts' provide a 'proper puzzle' to the solution: this family has split up and a children's home can feel able to work with the young person without the interference of the mother. The mother's 'rejection' can be heard as completed, rather than concurrent as with the earlier documents. Donna also concurs with the state of relations:

According to (mother) she wants no dealings with Donna, nor to have her return home. Donna's feelings also coincides with mum in that she has no wish to return home, or resume her relationship with mother. (lines 17-20)

There are no modalities in the description of relations. It is now 'blackboxed' being heard as an unquestioned state of affairs; it is in the past, but not silent, as it offers the children's home a job to do.

The reader might ask why there are certain omissions of information. There is no mention of 'the puzzle', the concerns of sexual activity and possible prostitution which dominated Document 1. It might be suggested that such 'deception' avoids scaring off the children's homes. Describing Donna as "beyond her (mother's) control and having a bad influence on her sister" (lines 10-11) are linked to the mother's formulation. None of the 'maladjusted' descriptions of Document 1 are available. 'Deception' might also be interpreted in the way the children's home is seen as the preferred option, supported by Donna not wanting fostering (lines 64-5). This is not what Document 2, the conference minutes, reports:

... a children's home is being sought but not necessarily for the next 3 years. She could still be prepared for a family as she might benefit from the challenge to form relationships in such an environment. (Document 2, line 82-5)

It is suggested that Document 3 makes available aspects of the 'assessment story', both to frame a hearable history of a typical admission to care, and to link the problems of Donna with the job of residential social work. Document 3 can be heard to both describe the task of a children's home and to celebrate its potential, in contrast to a rejecting mother or a foster home. Unlike Document 2, where the 'assessment story' is revisited to substantiate mother's rejection, it is appropriated here to reaffirm the positive nature of the job. The rejection of Donna is heard as an unquestioned state of affairs, but attempts to enrol the O.I.Cs. It is no longer controversial nor replete with recriminations, rather it offers a closed past and directs the reader to the potential future in a children's home.⁽⁹⁾ The link between the 'tale world' of Donna and the 'story realm' of the children's home is direct and persuasive, if deceptive.

2.3 Document 4: Progress Report, 18 November

This report (Appendix 6.3) was written by the same residential social worker as Document 3, for the next review meeting. The audience is informed readers, who probably attended the earlier meeting. Much of the detail is concerned with recent events in the children's home - absconding, relationships with staff and children, health and education updates. It is dated only two weeks after Document 3, but now Donna can be heard as a major management problem. There is a mixture of suspense and evaluation, in that the informed reader who attended the earlier meeting might be surprised at the range of new problems. Is she still that thoughtful girl whose sexual activity was her mother's preoccupation? She can be heard as absconding (lines 30-46), having 'fluctuating' relationships with staff (line 48) and having contacts with "friends of 'dubious reputation'" (line 87). The listener is brought into the 'tale world' of the children's home.

There is a detailed description of attempts by staff to encourage Donna's contact with her sister and grandmother, and mother's rejection from 'assessment story' can be heard to enable an interpretation of these events. The report begins with a reaffirmation of the state of the relationship between mother and daughter, using the same expression 'non-existent' as Document 3:

Since Donna's conference on 23 October 198_ up until the present, relations between (mother) and Donna have been non-existent. Donna has made no attempt to enquire about her mother nor has she shown any

desire to do so. (line 4-7)

Unlike document 3, the 'non-existent' relationship is not couched in the past, but in the on-going present. Further illustration of the 'rejection' is offered by a detailed description of a telephone call to her sister:

At no time during their conversation did Donna enquire about her mother, but stated that whenever she telephones again, she hopes her mother will not answer the 'phone because she does not want 'rejection' and the receiver hung up on her. Prior to Donna making this call, she had refused outrightly to talk to her mother if she did answer the telephone, and requested staff to remain with her just in case this should occur. (lines 11-18)

This story can be heard to reaffirm the 'rejection' of the 'assessment story'. The reader can hear in a single incident the dynamics of how the state of affairs between Donna and her mother is constituted. Such a cameo illustrates the current state of relations through a description of action which stands for underlying feelings. At the same time, the 'rejection' of Donna can be heard as appropriated into the everyday life in a children's home: the telephone call home. There is no discussion of other conversations where Donna talks about her mother to residential staff nor 'professional' assessment. Like the story of the walk through the town centre and the encounter at the assessment interview, these cameo stories have begun to take on mythical proportions, providing events which illustrate and constitute the state of affairs.

The word 'rejection'(line 14) in inverted commas can be read as reported speech: Donna saying she does not want a rejecting reaction by her mother on the phone. It is unlikely that the report writer heard or expects the reader to hear Donna use the word 'rejection'. Whatever Donna said, it is heard as performing the state of 'rejection' as opposed to hearing the word rejection. This is 'what she is really saying'. The reader can link the cameo with a wider psychological concept of 'rejection', which underpins 'assessment story'. A small piece of action is again able to be heard as evidence for the wider claim.

Further evidence of the extreme nature of this 'rejection' is available in the contrast with Donna's harmonious relations with her sister and her grandmother. After a phone conversation with her sister she "sounded quite pleased to hear her voice"

(line 11). The contact with the grandmother is exuberant, with ungraded terms and a building sense of achievement - phone call, weekend stay that went well, planned Christmas stay and alternate weekend stays in future (lines 19-26). Such a contrast can be heard to display Donna hard at doing family work, whilst at the same time, being rejected by mother. The characters of the rejecting mother and harmed, but family centred daughter are reconfirmed.

The sexual behaviour of Donna is no longer only the mother's version of events, being taken over as a management problem for the residential staff. 'The puzzle' returns and is less resolved than in document 2. Her sexual activity is made available as a feature which has been around for some time:

Donna's interest in the opposite sex has not lessened, but has taken second place at the moment for some unknown reason.

Such a comment is in contrast to Document 2, where it is presented as not a problem in the children's home but maybe outside and a preoccupation of the mother. Here, it can be heard as an on-going concern which is temporarily quiet. Later, there is concern expressed about her wishing to make contact with an older woman who "used to be a prostitute" (line 89). Mother's picture of a promiscuous girl with contacts in prostitution can be seen to transfer from mother's (irrational) 'preoccupation' to a major concern for the residential staff.

In summary, the 'assessment story' is being appropriated, added to, but also modified. The key features of relationship breakdown and mother's rejection have been revisited and reaffirmed. The response to Donna's sexual behaviour and absconding has changed to become a major management issue, and is now hearable as an on-going concern. Donna is summarised thus:

Donna continues to need firm and consistent control. In saying this it has been noted that Donna tends to be more accepting of certain points and comments where her attitude is concerned and it is felt that with this consistency that we might see some positive results. (lines 96-100)

Donna is still heard as appropriate for 'consistent' residential care, but it is not so easy now. As the mother can be heard to move further away from everyday involvement in Donna's affairs, her sexual 'preoccupation' is less necessary to illustrate the source of the breakdown, and can/must be taken over as the legitimate concern of the children's home. Document 4 reports on the 'tale world' of residential

care, with the controversy of the entry into care lost in on-going tasks of control. It still appears necessary to revisit and reaffirm the 'assessment story', since it offers explanation of an underlying state of affairs with on-going features. Furthermore, its retention legitimises why Donna is where she is, and why social work with her is necessary. In reaffirming the rejection, we reaffirm social work.

2.4 Document 5: Interview with the Social Worker, the following May

This is a long and complex account,⁽¹⁰⁾ produced eight months after the events above, between the second social worker and the thesis writer. The interviewer is uninformed about this case, and the 'tale world' and 'story realm' juxtaposed in the research task - social workers making their everyday world available in an interview (see earlier discussion on interviews in chapter 1 section 3.3.1) This social worker had not written any of the previous documents, but can be heard to revisit and reaffirm some of the stories made available there. Not only can the 'assessment story' be heard, but also some of the other myths and cameos - the walk through-the town centre, the assessment interview where mother ignored her daughter, though not the telephone story. The characters of mother and daughter are presented with much greater information and evaluation. The mother is not only depicted as hard-hearted, but a detailed character assessment is offered. Information is made available about her history in care, family relations and links to the fatalism of Thomas Hardy, in order to explain her rejection of her daughter. Donna is also hearable as a more rounded character - bright, mature and 'sexually very aware'.

Whilst it might be expected that eight months of social worker contact has enabled further 'data collection' on the case, the 'assessment story' continues to be heard, both in an unaltered set of words and in the formulation of characters and states of affairs. Blackboxing has partially occurred with controversial features of earlier documents reaffirmed and enhanced, but there is little in the way of 'silence'. If anything, there is more 'noise' in that each feature of the 'assessment story' is repeated and accounted for. Such a deluge of information and opinion constructs the audience, the interviewer. A description of the case from the initial contact has been invited, allowing the social worker to revisit and recount eight months of stories and occasions of storytelling for a first-time hearer. Retellings have rehearsed and polished

the story, which can be heard as detailed, logical and coherent.

As with other interviews presented in these data, the opening description is long and (largely) uninterrupted, making available events and detailed descriptions of characters and states of affairs. The 'assessment story' can be heard at several points. First, the admission to care was because of long-standing problems:

I first became involved because the children came into care there'd been child care problems for some time with mother complaining about Donna mostly (-) she's bad and (sister) is good... (line 61-63)

Mother as the complainant and Donna depicted as 'bad' can be heard again.⁽¹¹⁾ A similar formulation of mother as someone not capable of looking after adolescents is also made available:

I met with mother and that in one way intransigence and intensity I thought the prospect of Donna going back very remote cos I don't think Mum is able to meet the needs of adolescent girls and she's held out on that but I didn't foresee Donna being placed back home and the thing was to get her in a place of safety and security cos she was heavily involved with sort of sexual activity... (lines 101- 110)

The sequence of this document makes available mother's character, her 'intransigence/fatalism' setting the scene for the story. The reader is able to discover her character as explaining how the events of the story unfolded: a 'psychological' narrative (Todorov 1977). In the previous documents, we have heard events with little character development.

As with Document 4, Donna's sexual activity can now be heard to be appropriated by the professionals as the problem they face, but it is also offered as a result of mother's character. 'The puzzle' of whether mother was over-exaggerating or Donna's sexual behaviour existed separately from mother's 'preoccupation', is laid out:

...but her concern over Donna was that she was sexually acting out all over the place and this was shocking and terrible and monstrous and sex was (-) the way she talked they were both virgin births (-) sex just didn't exist... (lines 38-41) ⁽¹²⁾

...she's sexually very aware has had a great deal of experience (-) that I'm sure about (-) it has been mooted that it might be fantasy and because of the stuff she's written in her diaries it's extremely graphic and I think based on fact... (lines 47-50)

Donna's sexual activity is true and an overreaction by mother. 'The puzzle' has been resolved by agreeing with both versions of the story.

As things have moved on, so 'the puzzle' is no longer controversial. Mother's rejection is no longer a proposition which must be justified, as it is available in the continuing non-contact for eight months. The need to lay all the blame on mother for both the rejection and the 'preoccupation' is no longer necessary. A sympathetic depiction of mother's character can be made available. At the height of the crisis, such a view would not have been heard, as the justification for admission to care required categorised depictions - a rejecting mother and harmed daughter. Now the response can be softer. Shuman (1986:48) notes that at the end of a dispute:

(a story) could be reported without exaggeration, often the triviality of the offense specifically mentioned.

It is not suggested that exaggeration or triviality of Donna's circumstances has occurred; the use of such terms suggests an objective level of reporting. With Woolgar (1980) and Smith (1978), we see events and their representation as inseparable. Even so, the force of the rhetoric can be seen to have altered, as the story is 'blackboxed' and no longer controversial. Character depictions are relativised and complex; there is no longer a need for character assassinations to justify action. (Character depictions are discussed further in chapter 8). This sympathetic hearing of the mother can be contrasted with the moral condemnation of the mother in the 'failure to thrive' case in chapter 5, which is still disputed and controversial.

Another element of the 'assessment story' was the formulation that, as a result of the serious breakdown/rejection, it was no longer appropriate to attempt to work with the mother and daughter together. This is available in the work of the Documents 2 and 3, offering a role for residential social work. Similar conclusions are offered here, but with a twist:

...I'm not doing any family work but there's no one else to take it on...
(line 73-4)

And later this is linked to the 'assessment appointment' myth:

...so really it was from that point on that one felt there was no return home (-) and Donna herself didn't want to discuss returning home... (lines 153-4)

But it could have been otherwise. At the beginning of the description of mother's character, an alternative formulation of the nature of the case is offered:

...a few years ago if the case would come it would be in terms of having long term casework with Mum which I'm sure she would actually be able to benefit from but as there's no motivation from her at the moment at all I'm not investing my time in that... (lines 18 -21)

and again near the end of the interview:

...as I said earlier if the clock went back ten years I would probably be working avidly in building up a relationship and all that with mother and I would see that as a tool (unclear) piece of work to do that but I can't be bothered to make the investment now... (lines 315-319)

At the beginning and end of this account, it is now even possible to suggest that the last eight months of constructing the breakdown/rejection formulation as the basis of this case, could have been done differently. Instead of responding to the crisis by admitting Donna into care and permanently separating her from her mother, an appropriate (if old fashioned) intervention could have aimed at counselling Mother. Such intervention could be imagined as potentially quite different - working on Mother's problems, possibly looking to her becoming aware of why she was having problems with Donna, perhaps Donna going home - all unthinkable in mid October.⁽¹³⁾ Such a direction is heard to be rejected because of time and interest, and is contrasted at the end with a different way of working that this social worker now favours:

...I'm more interested in (mother) and Donna maintaining their family relationships their relationship systems rather than going into their internal world and start plucking around there... (line 354-6)

A contrast can be heard as two conceptions of this case, but also different approaches to social work are being juxtaposed in a preferred/dispreferred comparison. Either way a different (although dispreferred) trajectory to the whole story is now being offered and rejected. Telling social work stories can be heard to manipulate and juxtapose versions of what constitutes events, characters and social work.

CONCLUSION

Following the 'assessment story' has proved relatively straightforward. The story has

been 'blackboxed' to some extent and on some occasions, but not necessarily because it is accepted unquestioningly by all participants. It has been heard to be closed and opened as the occasion demands. At the same time, retelling occasions have reacted to the clarity and simplistic justification, which the 'assessment' story made available and the crisis required. The 'assessment story' and the need to resolve 'the puzzle' has been heard to play an important role in revisiting, affirming or modifying states of affairs. Document 2 can be heard as reaffirming much of 'the assessment story', and beginning to offer a strong view as to the resolution of 'the puzzle': it was all mother's fault. Document 3 trades on these version of events, whilst ignoring the 'narrative puzzle' which had set it up. It appears too concerned with its marketing role. Document 4 appears to move on from the possible resolution of Document 2, opening up 'the puzzle' for a different interpretation, Donna's sexual activity was real enough. Finally, with the controversy over and the long term future of Donna marked out, Document 5 can retell the story and be more circumspect in its claims and sympathetic in its blamings, even suggesting alternative versions.

The 'assessment story' did survive to some extent the various trials and reaffirmations. Throughout the eight months the state of affairs of the relationship between Donna and her mother was told in the same way - it was a rejection, a serious irrevocable breakdown. From an institutional viewpoint, it was unchanged, a placement away from home was needed. There were variations for different audiences, and over time, there was reformulation, modifications and just generally things calming down. The controversy subsided, being strong did not matter so much; until 'it might have been otherwise'.

Is the 'assessment story' a basic story on which are based all the other versions, as Chatman (1978) suggests? We have suggested that the 'assessment story' has become an institutionalised version of a state of affairs. At retelling occasions, familiar features are available. All the documents can be read to affirm that there is a serious breakdown in the mother-child relationship, all but the last blame this on the mother, all but Document 3 have a 'puzzle' about Donna's sexual behaviour. Whilst there are similarities, locating the 'assessment story' needs investigative work on the part of the reader. Furthermore, the additions and modifications are such that the 'assessment story' is placed in differing relations with

newer stories. They could be heard to support it, as long as there is an informed reading. For example, to see the 'telephone call story' as extending and adding to the 'assessment story' requires a ratified reading that 'rejection' is being demonstrated. Imagine a residential O.I.C, having received Document 2, turned up at the Progress Meeting (Document 3) - how would s/he be able to hear the two portrayals of Donna as compatible? We can, as we know about the 'puzzle'.

This suggests that 'blackboxing' takes place on at least two levels: the story and the reading. In the first, groups of events, experiences and descriptions are formed into stories, which float around social workers' storytelling performances. Second, to be made available for reading, such stories need to be appropriated and turned into synecdoche. They are added to the stock of available stories, which are read as supporting the accepted state of affairs. This state of affairs is so simple that almost any story could be interpreted in these terms. Hence, the 'telephone story' is read to support the 'blackboxed' and institutionally accepted 'assessment story'. Although the 'assessment story' is not challenged until Document 5, its relations with the newer stories shift. Eventually, it becomes silenced because it is no longer relevant. Other stories take over: Donna as the children's home resident, Donna as the absconder, Mother as a fatalist. By Document 5, the silenced story is even available to be reopened, altered and seen as a version. The newer stories are strong enough and caught up in other concerns, not to worry about its demise.

This chapter has confirmed that features discussed in chapters 4 and 5, moral characterisations and fact construction, when combined with 'narrative puzzles', are able to form strong and ratified versions of events. Through a series of constructions of informed and first-time reading situations, the 'tale world' of Donna is made available in the 'story realm' of a variety of institutionalised reading occasions. Events and characterisations are presented and evaluated; the suspense of the 'narrative puzzle' answered differently on different occasions. The 'assessment story' was heard to go through at least five stages: first, it was told, posited as a synecdoche and made available to be read; second it was institutionally appropriated, rehearsed and 'blackboxed'; third, it became the metanarrative against which other stories were measured; fourth, it was silenced and bypassed, and fifth, it was re-opened to be re-evaluated. A network of interconnected stories and storytelling encounters can be

heard to set up alliances and strong formations, which, for a time, appear so strong as to be tacitly accepted. Actor network theory studies the construction of associations, alliances and networks, where entities are brought together and temporarily form apparently unassailable formations. Law (1986:70) describes a process of 'interessment':

(interessment) may be defined as the action of interesting, enrolling and translating. It will be recalled that to translate is to speak for others, to make oneself indispensable and thereby determine and allocate roles and to decide what may be exchanged between the occupants of those roles. It is, in short, to impose a structure upon others.

Could a different network of characters and entities have been configured? Just suppose that the social worker did have time and belief in the alternative version, could he have interested, enrolled and translated the residential social workers and the case conference. Suppose that the then department policy of placing children in families was insisted on by the Principal Social Worker, would a strong story have constructed Donna, the foster child. Suppose that the new stipulation in the 1989 Children Act was in force to require the investigation of placement with the extended family. Suppose the recent move to stress family responsibility had been interpreted to refuse a placement in care in the first place, suppose... suppose... so many alternative versions but the child care assessment system can only cope with one at a time and tries hard to 'blackbox' a strong story to direct future action.

Coda: 'It might have been otherwise...'

Much has been made of 'it might have been otherwise...' This is a member's formulation, identified in Document 5. What if it is turned round on Thesis Writer? The reader has so far heard the case told in a chronological way, starting with the first report of September, and moving through various documents up to the following May. Thesis Writer, however, did not approach the material in that way, as his entry to the case was via the interview. He looked at the documents later, hence he was not so surprised by the changes in the story. Does this suggest that his retelling has manufactured the suspense, in order to support a contention of 'narrative puzzle'? It may be that the interview can be read as juxtaposing versions, as the social worker introduces the idea that he could have read the situation in another way (line 18-20, quoted in section 3.4 above). Heard at the beginning of the telling of the case, such a formulation does not trade on narrative surprise, but in several

exchanges, at the end, can be heard as a justification for one version of events rather than another.

It is not a surprise, as the Thesis Writer has attempted with the reader, but a justification of why one version was accepted and worked to, and another (quite feasible) one was not. There is furthermore justification of why a role of a social worker was presented in a particular and possibly unconventional way. At the end of the interview, the social worker outlines his present role in the case. After re-emphasising his decision not to offer long term casework with the mother, he outlines his role with Donna:

*...similarly with Donna my contact with her is not the traditional child care officer role (-) I see her every three to four weeks (-) I see the primary caring unit is (new children's home) doing their work and I'm involved peripheral to that (-) but any negotiations that it's helpful to do then I'll do them (-) but I'm not in to activating things because I have the responsibility (-) rather it's the other way round isn't it they've got the day to day care they should have the responsibility rather than me saying this that or the other.
(lines 360-7)*

Has the reader been misled? Has the narrative surprise been manufactured to ironise the strength of the early texts which the thesis writer knew from the beginning could have been read differently?

Does this not re-emphasise the temporary configuration of reading relations? Surely, we saw that the early documents when read in isolation offer a strong and 'blackboxed' institutionalised story. But there are so many reading relations with these texts without access to Document 5. This laid-back chat with a researcher about a case that is no longer causing much trouble and where uncertainties do not matter, should not be seen as any more definitive than the others. For example, the O.I.C's which received Document 3 may not see Document 4, and can be said to have heard half the story. A case conference participant from Document 2 may be surprised by the change in recommendation in Document 3; what happened to the family placement suggestion? The analysis has tried to present the ratified reading occasions around these documents, but new and surprising information is always available to disrupt. We are privileged readers, not ratified readers. It is being therefore suggested that there is a wide range of stories and reading relations around these texts which produce versions and versions of versions. That a robust story and a narrative puzzle was available across at least some texts and reading occasions is all the more remarkable.

But 'it could have been otherwise' theoretically as well. The description of rhetorical features and the overall metaphor of 'blackboxing' has made use of theories which, whilst not concerned with

realist versions of events, do attempt to suggest a certain version of events privileges a particular reading of data. The construction of facts, the allocation of blame and the 'narrative puzzle' have been pointed out to the reader as being available, can't you read them, look, there as well? Isn't this a pretty convincing theoretical approach to reading versions, or is it one amongst many?

Hak (1989:76) discusses an alternative approach first quoting Silverman and Torode (1980).

With this alternative, Silverman and Torode leave ethnomethodology. Their criticism of this tradition is that, although it refrains from an advance description of an 'ideal' reality, in retrospect the sociologist thinks him/herself capable of inferring a common constructed reality from the scattered expressions by 'members'. In the opinion of Silverman and Torode such a reconstruction still imposes the sociologist's own conception of reality - even if only implicitly - on the 'practical description'.

I lied earlier. There is another attempt to trace a story through several texts. Hak (1989) considers several texts concerning a psychiatric case, consisting of transcripts of interviews and a final report. He approaches the data differently to Bauman and Shuman, concerned less with the story, as with the 'transformation' of one phrase 'sex(ual) life'. He is also concerned with imputing into the report the use of 'psychiatric knowledge'. His conclusion is that:

Thus, the report is an interaction of two simultaneous 'reading processes'. On the one hand, a situation is read for 'findings' and on the other hand psychiatric 'knowledge' is at the same time consulted for diagnoses. 'Psychiatric practice' apparently consists in the ability to have both processes simultaneously resulting in a common product: a case that represents the situation of a particular person and a 'knowledge' all in one (Hak 1989:87-8)

Why the deceit? Why the worry about this approach? Isn't the conclusion in line with the approach here - that events are presented as hearable in terms of a professionally competent reader and, hence, construct competent professional work?

The formulation 'it may have been otherwise' can be heard to raise a potentially undermining alternative and then reject it. The concern about Hak is less with the conclusion as the methods. First, he is concerned with seeing one phrase as 'transforming' through the texts to produce a particular reading. Second, he attributes specific statements to professional knowledge. With the help of Hodge's (1989) criticism of Hak, I will now attempt to reject this alternative version and reinstate the version so far presented, hence following the 'it might have been otherwise' formulation.

Hak attempts to offer a 'formal method' of analysis, in particular

a 'transformational method'. His aim is to 'describe literally' (1989:76) rather than interpret. To do this, Hak (1989:78) makes use of Foucault's idea of genealogy. He considers Foucault developed this in order to "relate unique events with underlying structures", not as identical but 'difference' (p.78):

The relation between two utterances is not located any more in their common origin in an underlying structure but instead in the transformative mechanism that produces the one (the paraphrase or reading) from the other (the origin)... It is my contention that this literal description of reading processes provides a sociological description of social practice. (Hak 1989:78)

Hak establishes 'genealogical chains', whereby the final text is considered to be the product of transformations of utterances from the earlier texts. Drawing on Pecheux and Harris, he is interested in a formal method, where utterances are considered for their form and positioning in a text; the placement of identical words. He considers, quoting Pecheux, that such transformations offer an 'objective' analysis:

... without using any knowledge of the meaning of its morphemes or the intentions of its author... the use of effective algorithmic procedures (is) free of any 'subjective' addition. (p.77)

As Hodge (1989:101) notes, the core of Hak's claim is to be "objective, formal and scientific". Hak considers the transformation sequence which he follows, 'sex(ual) life', is changed from a denial by the father, to a discovery of incest in his own words and to a cover up by the psychiatrist. However, as Hodge (1989:103) notes, Hak is not clear about the attribution of utterances to utterer:

In fact it is clear that in the interview the girl did give descriptions of activities which could legitimately be labelled 'her sex(ual) life'. It is difficult to justify that the father has any monopoly of the term. So the transposition Hak notes (from "(my = the father's) sexual life" into "her (=Anna-Lize's) sex life") has as its primary agent not the psychiatric assistant nor psychiatry itself, but Hak the analyst.

Hodge goes on to offer another analysis of the text. The use of 'objective and scientific' by Hak suggests a lack of the scepticism, which has been a feature of the approach here. This analysis has been concerned with both content and form of utterances, the construction and display of meaning are seen as crucial to occasions of readings. To read Hak's 'sex(ual) life' statements as representing formal relations outside the occasion of the reading is contrary to an approach which is concerned with reading made available through many possible relations between writer, reading, text and context. Blackboxing has been demonstrated in Donna's story as less the transformation of particular statements through 5 texts, since

the 'same' words were not necessarily used or transformed in such a formal way. It is the concerns of readers and writers to respond to and interact with other significant occasions of the telling the 'same' story. In particular, the telling of the 'same' story is a feature which is attended to and revisited in each occasion of the reading. It is this which is the institutionalised version, the occasion of re-reading the 'same' story when it is (re)constructed, not when a particular utterance reappears or is transformed.

The second objection to Hak's analysis is his attribution of particular utterances in the psychiatrist's report to psychiatric knowledge, rather than the event of the interview. He adds together the utterances in the report and suggests 30 of the 45 statements in the report were from 'psychiatric' knowledge and 14 transformations from the informant. Hak relates particular statements in the report to passages in a psychiatric textbook, and considers that such statements through their link to 'psychiatric knowledge' form a 'psychiatric event'. Whilst the psychiatric assistant concerned may not have read such a volume, such phrases can be identified as "paraphrases of a common 'knowledge' existing in psychiatric practices." (1989:85):

(Psychiatric knowledge) may serve as a kind of interpretational framework, which can 'organise' a small group of statements from the report into a 'psychiatric event'. (p.84)

A similar connection between text and knowledge is offered by a rather different approach to discourse analysis. Cicourel (1987) attempts to link the local production of texts with macro concepts of professional power through the display of medical knowledge.

The fragments of background knowledge shown above (a lecturer talking about his course) represent a few aspects of a schematized formal knowledge base with which the House Staff should be familiar before asking questions of a patient. (p.357)

He considers the way that a patient with an eye infection is discussed through different encounters with different professionals. In these encounters, the case for the infection is subjected to on-going "top down or hypothesis - directed reasoning" (p.360) - examinations, tests, charts, results, consultations. A confirmation of the doctor's local reproduction of such 'schematized knowledge' is provided by the comments on the examination by a senior doctor:

The I.D. attending confirmed the resident's reproduction of knowledge about septicemia and bacteremic shock syndrome in particular, thus providing the reader with an independent assessment of the meaning of the exchange between patient and resident. (p.361)

Whilst this project has been concerned with events and the display of

professionally hearable discourse, it is assumed that the two are inseparable. Unlike Hak and Cicourel, it has not been suggested that professional knowledge, located in textbooks or professional affirmation, can be attributed to particular comments by professionals in specific texts. The description of an event without any explicit professional utterance is equally to be heard as professional discourse, since reading the utterance performs professional work, and configures the ratified professional reader. For example, the 'myth of the assessment appointment' in Document 2 is described as an event with no reference to a professional terminology. Reading the description provides a competent reader with adequate information and reading instructions to hear it as an example of serious rejection, and hence, as a professional statement. Whilst instructions to competent professional hearers may make use of professional jargon and formulations, such statements attend to local, strategic features of production and performance, rather than operationalising formulaic constructions. Professional knowledge, it is suggested, is locally negotiated and constituted.

Conclusion of Conclusion

This chapter has offered an extended coda, in which it has been suggested that the storyteller uses the formulation 'It may have been otherwise' both to offer up alternative versions, but also to reject them. It can be heard as a strong feature to demonstrate to the reader that the storyteller is aware of how things may have been different, to offer a twist in the story, but also in these cases to confirm the original formulation.⁽¹⁴⁾ For the social worker, the formulation was able to demonstrate that an alternative was available and professionally acceptable, but would not work here. For the researcher, it has been used to revisit the problem of attributing meaning from 'scattered expressions of members'. Rather than look to formal methods, which offer 'objective' readings of texts or external knowledge schemas, the project has re-affirmed a focus on reading occasions of the factual and moral narrative by competent and ratified professional readers. Both the social worker and thesis writer are displayed as fair-minded, open to other ideas, eclectic, but pretty confident of their direction.

CHAPTER 7 REPORTED SPEECH: HEARING THE WORDS OF THE CLIENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter marks something of a change of direction from the approach in chapters 3 to 6. It is thus an appropriate place to pause briefly to review the direction of the argument so far presented, and to set a context for the discussion in the rest of chapter 7 and chapter 8. It is not suggested that chapters 7 and 8 invalidate the approach thus far, but a different role for the reader is envisaged. It was made clear in chapter 1 that there are potentially many readings of social work accounts when they are approached as texts. Social work accounts are no longer seen as offering definitive meanings, but are investigated as a site for reading relations. Whilst it is not proposed to consider a wide range of other readers, unrati ed and unaddressed, it is necessary to investigate the possibility of a more active reading. As has been seen in, for example, the 'broken arm' case in chapter 3 or the 'failure to thrive' case in chapter 4, social work accounts are easily overthrown by powerful readers. Whilst a large number of factors contribute to a failure to persuade and enrol the reader, what can be gained by investigating other ratified but critical reading relations? The judge, the team leader, or the senior officer, whilst ratified readers, are also active, and may disagree or subvert formulations which offer gaps and slippage.

This chapter is divided into three sections. There is first a review of the approach in chapters 3 to 6; how far have the persuasive strategies of the text writer succeeded in enrolling the reader? Second, there is an introduction to the concept of 'the other', as a site for subverting preferred readings. In the third section of this chapter, 'the other' is located through a study of reported speech: the words of the client. In chapter 8, 'the other' is investigated in representations of adequate character depictions.

1 THE PERSUASIVE TEXT AND THE PASSIVE READER

This thesis is an investigation of what can be gained by approaching social work

accounting as narrative. How far are social work documents and conversations available to be read as stories with characters, plot and other narrative and rhetorical features? Stories have not been approached as recognisable in particular structures, which are independent of their performance on reading occasions. When a social work report sits in a filing cabinet, it is not considered that it contains particular narrative features. However, once it is picked up and read, a wide range of relations are available to be invoked and attended to by the reader. It has been demonstrated that by reading social work accounts as stories, persuasive and convincing portrayals have been made available, what Culler (1981) investigates as verisimilitude or 'vraisemblance'. They are truth-like rather than truthful. Chapters 3 to 6 have demonstrated some methods by which persuasive narrative performances are made available.

In chapter 3, it was shown that by attending to the ratified reader, a competent and shared performance of social work and legal reading conventions enabled the text to configure reading relations and legitimate reading occasions. Characters and events are made available and understandable by locating them in the performance of a story. To read a change from one state of affairs to another, to hear illustrations of events as signifying underlying conditions, to be drawn into an interpretation by an invitation to join a shared community of readers constrains the ratified reader from doubting the social worker's formulation. And yet the 'broken arm' case failed to persuade the judge.

In chapter 4, persuasion was located in the moral construction of reading relations. Contrasts between a culpable client and a flexible professional, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, enabled the reader to draw the only possible conclusion that social work intervention was based on moral rectitude. Following stories of unfolding patterns and predispositions, blame was always located elsewhere, and the intervention was no choice, a last resort. The warrant instructed the reader it could not have been otherwise. And yet again a judge did not agree: he said that the intervention had been too much. In chapters 5 and 6, social work accounts were read as strong and factual stories. The social worker was not easily removed from the construction of account, but, by drawing in allies, claiming entitlement and eye-witness reporting, authority was displayed. And yet, whilst in the crisis the story was

unquestioned and blackboxed, later we hear that it could all have been otherwise.

Social work accounting practices attended to as stories thus offer the reader ways of locating how texts attempt to configure characters with attributes, and events with consequences. By binding entities into a performance of narrativity, the reader is morally persuaded, factually convinced and bound to the community of ratified and competent social work listeners. A large range of rhetorical features could be heard to support such constructions - three part lists, extreme case formulations, contrast structures, pathing devices. Yet examples of gaps and slippage have emerged.

It is not merely that the judge is not convinced, but the text offers opportunities for critical and subversive readings. In concentrating on the benign building of texts, the investigation so far has constructed a passive reader. Such a reader has accepted the reading conventions, and is easily persuaded by the moral and factual nature of the formulations and relationships set up - a supportive colleague, a gullible manager, an 'unbiased' research interviewer. However, it is clear from the many critics of social work that readers, even ratified readers, are liable to find gaps in logic and configurations which do not stand. Latour (1987) has shown that the actor network depends on binding the reader into the story, and persuading her/him that his/her interests coincide with those of the storyteller. But at any moment, the strength of the network can evaporate; as Callon (1986:25) comments of the failure of the development of the electric car: "Translation becomes treason." The police did not charge the father in the 'broken arm' case (chapter 3), the scales did not support the social worker's concern in the 'failure to thrive' case (chapter 4), and later tellings of the 'assessment story' of Donna (chapter 6) are subverted, as other events take over.

Given the constructedness of benign text building, are there opportunities for a critical, though still ratified, reader to recognise and subvert such constructions? Can the reader step briefly outside his/her enrolment and recognise narrative features and rhetorical formulations as tricks to deceive the reader? Tyler (1990:297) graphically illustrates the 'tricks' of rhetoric:

Obscured here beneath these purple robes of sanctimony is rhetoric, the dark twin of sweet reason, whose black instrumentality is the means of the speaker's domination of the hearer. Not through reason, but by

stirring the emotions, the trickster's bent and twisted truth persuades and convinces without belief in order to gain some illegitimate advantage over unwary listeners.

Whilst not supporting 'reason' above rhetoric, we might ask what are the implications of the reader recognising such tricks and asking questions about his/her constructed position. Is an alternative approach to consider processes of deconstructing the text? London (1990:7) comments that recognising a text's "constructedness" also suggests acknowledging its "fictionality". What can be gained by considering the way in which texts are available to be undermined, as well as constructed? How can they be seen to disintegrate from within and from outside; entities no longer in control, strength evaporates, friends desert and knots untie. As Eagleton (1983:133-4) says:

The tactic of deconstructive criticism is to show how texts come to embarrass their own ruling systems of logic; and deconstruction shows this by fastening on to the 'symptomatic' points, the aporia or impasses of meaning, where texts get into trouble, come unstuck, offer to contradict themselves.

It is not suggested that the constructed, persuasive efforts of the text writer should be overthrown. Reading social work accounting as stories, which construct a ratified reader, first requires an openness to be persuaded by truth-like and moral claims. A ratified reader is after all constructed in order to facilitate appropriate interpretation. The analysis so far has offered important insights into the performance of social work accounting practices. Has not the reader of this thesis been convinced that social work accounts 'make sense' when treated as stories? Persuasion is what the enterprise of text writing and reading is all about. However, it is incumbent on this investigation to interrupt the cosy construction of preferred readings, since subversion is commonplace in the everyday reception of social work texts. Subversion is, after all, what the storyteller is expecting and trying to guard against.

The reader of the next two chapters is attended to as critical and informed. S/he is not an unrated nor unaddressed reader - social work texts will not be read as shopping lists. Nor is the aim to offer an opportunity for the client, his/her barrister or the Daily Express. Rather as with Eagleton (1983) quoted above, we remain within the "ruling systems of logic" of the text. We have already seen occasions, where things do not seem quite right - the 'deception' of Document 3 in chapter 7, the

contrast between the formulation of a united welfare network in the 'failure to thrive' case in chapter 4 and the health visitor's phone call. As privileged readers, you and I have been able to delve into restricted texts and make ironic contrasts. We have placed versions next to one another, and in so doing, have demonstrated the local and temporary nature of their formulation. What can be gained by going further with such questioning, and exploring the subversive potential available in reading texts? By allowing the reader to be critical, but remain within the logic of the text, we can investigate not only the preferred reading, but the dispreferred versions which the writer tries to suppress. We no longer merely marvel at the 'artful practices' of the storyteller, but seek out gaps and slippage.

2 THEORETICAL DISCUSSION: THE OTHER

Otherness, 'the other' or alterity is an important concept in recent philosophy, although it is not planned to offer a synthesis of these approaches.⁽¹⁾ This section reviews the concept of 'the other', and sets up questions for chapters 7 and 8 ; how far can 'the other' help in an investigation of subverting and undermining voices available in reading the social work accounts as texts. Such an approach is investigated in section 3 of this chapter through reported speech: what are the implications of bringing the voice of 'the other' into the text? In chapter 8, 'the other' is located in the reading of adequate/inadequate representations of character in social work accounts: in what way can the reader resist and challenge the character depiction of social work accounts?

Otherness suggests that for every representation or knowledge claim, alternative and competing versions are available, which the text attempts to counter and suppress. In the work of Lyotard, discussed in chapter 2, otherness is central to the distrust of the metanarrative, which aims to subsume or suppress other voices and narratives. Carroll (1983:66) comments:

For Lyotard, a justice of the postmodern condition can no longer be conceived in terms of universal laws that resolve diversity, difference or contradiction; rather it demands that the alterity of 'the other' be respected and that the conflictual diversity of social space itself, which can then no longer be determined in terms of history, a theory or a model, be maintained.

Otherness is concerned to make available alternative voices and interpretations, avoiding finalised claims or definitive representations.⁽²⁾ It opposes the authoritative and the monologic text, which tries to tie down meaning and interpretation. Bakhtin (1984:292-3) writes:

Monologism, at its extreme, denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another I with equal rights (thou)... Monologue is finalised and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any decisive force. Monologue manages without the other, and therefore to some degree materialises all reality. Monologue pretends to be the ultimate word. It closes down the represented world and represented persons.⁽³⁾

How far is a social work account a monologic text, attempting to be the official word on and definitive representation of the client?⁽⁴⁾ It has been demonstrated in the moral and factual stories of chapters 4 to 6 that social work accounts aim (indeed are required) to provide official versions of inexplicable and deviant family life. Whilst not always successful in their strategic ambitions, social work accounts were seen representing people and their circumstances in reports, files and conversations, which may become fixed and authoritative. The mother in the 'broken arm' case (chapter 3) still had an injunction to keep the father from the home; the mother in the 'failure to thrive' case (chapter 4) remained uncooperative; Donna's mother (chapters 5 and 6) is still rejecting. By seeking out 'the other' of social work accounts in alternative depictions of the client, how far can authoritative readings be undermined? One way to locate 'the other' is to approach representation as appropriation.

2.1 Appropriation

Representation, as seen in the construction of facts and moral allocation, seeks to tie down the subject (the client) to a categorisable object. Appropriation enables an investigation of the official use of the voice of 'the other'. How are the words of 'the other' taken over by the official text, and turned into the authentic, definitive evaluation?

Many attempts in literary theory, for example, to display the 'real voice' of the author or his/her characters involve claims to authenticity, representing the legitimate interpretation of their work. As Marcus (1987:xi) notes in discussing the conflict over versions of Virginia Woolf, appropriations are "a kind of custodial battle for her

reputation". Dollimore (1985:9) notes:

...such appropriations are not a perversion of true literary reception, they are its reception... the socio-political effects of literature are in part achieved in and through the practice of appropriation.

Any claim to represent authors, texts or characters are attempts to appropriate, capture and finalise. Theories of relativity and multiple voices, however, resist final versions, and question the basis of such authority. London (1990:12) discusses appropriations of Conrad, Forster and Woolf:

...the competing critical voices cannot be easily reconciled; engaged in a struggle for meaning, ownership and authority, they call into question the integrity of authorship - the possibility of a single voice, however expansive, we can rely upon.

The problem of depicting and representing 'the other' is faced by some anthropologists. Reacting against the scientific ethnography of Malinowski or Mead, they are concerned about claims to speak for the indigenous person. Criticism centres on the anthropological enterprise as ethno/Eurocentric, attempting to represent 'the native' through Western eyes. Clifford (1988:25) notes:

If ethnography produces cultural interpretations through intense research experiences, how is unruly experience transformed into an authoritative written account? How, precisely, is a garrulous, overdetermined cross-cultural encounter shot through with power relations and personal cross-purposes circumscribed as an adequate version of a more or less discrete 'other world' composed by an individual author?

A number of writers have returned to classic anthropological texts in order to uncover the techniques used, for example: Stocking (1983) on Malinowski, Clifford (1988) on Evans-Pritchard. They note some of the literary and rhetorical devices already discussed in earlier chapters - narrative constructs, use of active voice, illustrative dramatisations of the author's discovery process. These early anthropologists approached 'the other' by producing fixed and stable versions of their world as culture. This is now questioned. The anthropologist may attempt to be sympathetic to 'the other', but by explaining away his/her strangeness, his/her efforts can only exclude. 'The other' is not the subject of a dialogue between equals but becomes a third entity, an 'it'. As Kauffmann (1990:187) quotes Serres: "To hold a dialogue is to suppose a third man and seek to exclude him." 'The other' is therefore not spoken

to, but spoken of, an object of the discourse:

Appropriation can be seen as an attempt to represent 'the other' by claiming to speak on her/his behalf. How do social workers authoritatively and definitively represent the behaviour and strangeness of their clients in order to appropriate and control? In this chapter, appropriation is investigated through a study of reported speech; how the very words of 'the other' are plucked from encounters, to represent and finalise. At the same time, studying processes of appropriation offers an opportunity to exploit gaps and slippage, in order to see how using the words of 'the other' are available to be heard as unsettling official versions.

2.2 Approaches to Reported Speech⁽⁵⁾

Reported speech in literary and everyday texts offers an important opportunity to investigate the words of 'the other'. Voloshinov (1973) considers that any act of understanding resembles reported speech. It involves taking in an utterance and preparing a reply to it, as Morson and Emerson (1990:163) say "like a citation and commentary". In chapter 3, it was noted that reported speech can be heard to add strength to an assertion, as developed in conversation analysis - Holt (1992) Wooffitt (1992). However, a wider view of reported speech necessitates an investigation of the potential unstable reactions of telling stories using the words of another.⁽⁶⁾ There is an opportunity to hear counter claims of 'the other': the quoted words were incorrect, were not said, are out of context or meant something else. It thus introduces the possibility of subverting the claim by an informed but critical reader.⁽⁷⁾

Wooffitt (1992) investigates paranormal stories, using conversation analysis. He is interested in the methods used by the storytellers to warrant claims that the events they are describing could only be supernatural. He sees the use of reported speech as "powerful inferential devices" (p.186) to corroborate the claims of the storyteller. The words of others are brought in to add credibility to claims that entities and experiences can only be paranormal. Holt (1992) looks at the introduction of reported speech in newspaper articles. She suggests that they appear immediately preceding the main claim of the report, adding authoritative support. Can a critical reading of reported speech take issue with comments where witnesses are brought in? Do the words of the witness necessarily support the claim, particularly when the

quotation is depicted as incorrect or condemning? Is a gap offered for reversing the reported speech and to challenge the whole formulation?

Other writers outline more complex varieties of reported speech. There is first a distinction between reported and described speech. Shuman (1986) observes important differences in use and entitlement to relate another's speech:

Reported speech was used to exaggerate the insult or to confirm or substantiate a described accusation. The person who reported an insult could herself be challenged for interfering in someone else's business, and such challenges often rested on inaccurate reports. Described speech was often considered inaccurate since it was not what the person had actually said...(the adolescents) understood the potential consequences of using different forms. (1986:160).

For Shuman, the use of reported or described speech made an important difference; if contemporary and local, the right to report the other's exact words is examinable and contestable. Distance from the encounter diminishes this threat; described speech is less contentious but also less authoritative. Reporting 'the other' can be attended to as highly contestable, depending on the circumstances of the encounter, and whose words are being reported. It offers an opportunity to challenge the use of reported speech as misappropriation, thereby questioning the veracity of the formulation.

Voloshinov (1973) pays less credence to the form of reported speech (direct or indirect), but considers there are important differences in style. He makes a distinction between pictorial and linear style (1973:122-3). In the latter there is a clear difference between the reported speech and reporting context, the speech is stylistically from another realm, and hence, authoritative. In pictorial speech, however, the boundaries are less clear. The reported speech comments on the context, and even begins to cast doubt on the reporting author.

Bakhtin develops these distinctions further, and in 'Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics' (1984:199), he offers a complex (and sometimes confusing) typology of 'Discourse Types'.⁽⁸⁾ Reported speech not only presents the words of another, but also their intonation or style, the appreciation of which is shared with the audience. Bakhtin makes a distinction between 'single- and double-voiced words'. In 'single-voiced words', the words of 'the other' are offered as unproblematic, assumed to be representative and typical of a character or group. This is monologic discourse, as

Morson and Emerson (1990:149) comment:

... no dialogic relations exist between the author and his character; they do not lie on the same plane and so they can neither dispute nor disagree with each other.

In double-voiced discourse, the second voice is a part of the aim of the utterance. It is inserted into the purposes of the text, but retains its own form and expression. There are two types, passive and active double-voiced words. In the former, the purposes of the author and 'the other' are similar, and the author remains in control. Bakhtin describes 'stylization' as when the author adopts a discourse of a different era or genre. Parody is where another style or discourse is introduced and criticised or ridiculed, suggesting that the author's speech is in some way superior.

Active double-voiced discourse is, for Bakhtin, the most interesting, as it resists the purposes of the author:

In such discourse the author's thought no longer oppressively dominates the other's thought, discourse loses its composure and confidence, becomes agitated, internally undecided and two-faced. (Bakhtin 1984:198)

Bakhtin looks at the way that characters in Dostoevsky appear to talk in one kind of speech, but, at the same time, allude to another, which is never articulated. Such discourse, by remaining uncertain and at the mercy of the characters, is out of the control of the author and caught up with defending itself against possible hostile unspoken voices.

2.3 Summary

It is not proposed to consider reported speech in social work accounts in terms of each of these categories, but to investigate a number of examples where the words of 'the other' both support and subvert positions and knowledge claims, and thus the authority of the author. Reported speech is considered as a site of appropriation of the words of 'the other'; it is introduced to represent, picture, categorise and finalise the client. The representation of the client is heard as requiring the appropriation of their own words, the affirmations of the social worker not being sufficient. How far does this suggest an uncertain representation, which a critical reading can challenge? There may be such opportunities where the words of the client are the primary source of the

formulation. The next section considers examples of reported speech as subverting and supporting the storyteller.

This theoretical discussion has described a number of approaches to 'the other', which are developed in this chapter and the next. The problem of how to represent another has been located in the encounter between critic and author, ethnographer and native, social worker and client. It is cut across with complex relations of appropriation and representation. In particular, it is having the final word. The questions to be asked are: how far does depicting 'the other', the client, by the social worker, mean speaking from an official and monologic standpoint? How are such formulations open to the disruptive voices of 'the other' in a world of heteroglossia and alternative readings? Dialogic approaches to 'the other' offer alternative versions and acknowledge the fragility of their own construction. In the analysis which follows, there is an attempt to search out some of these previously unheard voices. The monoglossic reports of the social worker are not only considered for their construction, but the occasions of their destruction are investigated.

3 ANALYSIS: HEARING THE VOICE OF THE CLIENT

It is not proposed to seek out the voice of the client by asking their views of social workers or social work systems.⁽⁹⁾ It is suggested instead that the voice of the client is available to be read in social work accounts as 'the other'. It is proposed to explore to what extent the voice of the client is available in reported speech. How far do the client's words make available an alternative to the social worker's formulation? In reading reported speech, the words of the client are read, and the reader has the opportunity to hear his/her words, point of view and style of speech. As already noted, there are a wide variety of possible relationships between the storyteller and the words of the character. How far is the voice of the client in social work accounts heard to support the formulation of the storyteller or are there opportunities for hearing alternative and undermining versions?

As discussed above, Wooffitt (1992:159) sees reported speech as confirming the objectivity of accounts of supernatural phenomena. Holt (1992) similarly sees reported speech in newspaper articles as bringing in supportive allies. Shuman (1986:168), however, sees occasions when entitlement to report the words of

another are scrutinised and opportunities for challenge are provided. How supportive are the words of the client in social work accounts, and what are the consequences of challenges to the strength of the story?

3.1 The Client's words support the Social worker's claim... or do they?

We have already come across examples of reported speech in the interview and the court report of chapter 3. In lines 78 to 82 of the interview (Appendix 3.1), direct speech is used to present the mother's view of the situation:

...and because we talked to J and she seemed to think well it's ok for dad to see the children I'm not really bothered erm and because of that attitude that she hadn't been honest with us we felt that the children's sort of long term future was at risk...

Here the mother's words are part of the social worker's construction of a second and unsatisfactory state of affairs (as discussed in chapter 3). The mother's words might be heard, as Wooffitt suggests, to support the social worker's claim that a new state of affairs exists, which the mother's words demonstrate. However, by line 89, the social worker's claim has been relativised to the extent that it is "our side of the story", and subsequently, the judge endorsed the mother's version. Given this twist in the story, to the surprise of the interviewer at line 91, the words of the mother can be heard to take on a new significance, as an alternative version of events has been allowed into the story: 'fathers should be able to see their children'. Perhaps the judge and defending barrister supported such a formulation. The reported speech, whilst initially heard as ironic, 'that attitude' which is clearly unacceptable, is now available to be re-interpreted as possibly reasonable, and ultimately, a successful proposition. The irony of 'that attitude' is available to be reversed; a not-what-it-seems formulation is maybe what it seems. The reported speech has here a clarity and simplicity which lingers over the story, possibly to be revived at line 89. The words of the mother have been allowed into the story, displaying an alternative formulation. The mother's words do not directly subvert the social worker's, but they are available to contribute to its relativity.

In the affidavit, direct reported speech is explicitly marked, and can be heard as bringing the words from another occasion to illustrate the problems of this occasion, what Shuman (1986:168) calls 'recontextualisation'. On several occasions, the

mother's words appear in direct quotation marks. For example:

"Get her out of my house" (referring to myself)... (line 116)

"No no no, tell me what I've done"... (line 126)

In chapter 3, it was suggested that this direct speech is heard to support the social work position, offering condemning words hearable in a mock cross examination. The lack of relativity in this document is nearer to Wooffitt's view of reported speech as supporting a claim. Furthermore, the content of these extracts can be heard as hysterical outbursts rather than stated positions; the mother's point of view is not being represented but her (unacceptable) behaviour is displayed. However, as later informed readers of this text, we know the outcome of the court case, and have the opportunity to revisit the reported speech as a source of an alternative and now possibly believable formulation. Can an alternative reading allow the mother's words to be heard as reasonable, even protective of her children? Later in the interview, the social worker gives a clue as to how such extreme words were not taken by the judge as condemning:

I think basically because the judge felt that there is no better place really for the children to be than with their mother unless we can come up with some better reasons as to what is you know (-) can the mother harm them. (interview Z.1.1)

The ratified reader of the affidavit does not have access to such later rationalisations. We are privileged readers, with access to later texts and outcomes. Such readings are not ratified nor addressed by the affidavit. But a later 'entitled reader' (Garfinkel 1967:201), approaching the file for what went wrong at court, might re-formulate the reported speech as a possible legitimate version of mother's fight for her children and an inadequate presentation at court. The strength of the reported speech in supporting the report writer remains discoverable only in terms of the reading occasion. In summary, reported speech as supporting a claim depends on a complex set of reading relations, which can be reversed to subvert the claim on some reading occasions.

3.2 What the client is really saying?

Wooffitt (1992:161) considers that some speech is reported as direct speech when

"in fact it is unlikely, or, in some cases, impossible, that the words so reported were actually said in that way".⁽¹⁰⁾ He considers that the storyteller is designing utterances 'as if' they are said. This is a more complex notion than Wooffitt suggests, since he does not investigate whether the hearer might react critically to such deception. If the hearer agrees with Wooffitt that the words were unlikely to have been said, although they are reported as such, they are now heard as a construction of the narrator, and no longer objective. They cannot be heard to 'confirm objectivity' (Wooffitt 1992:159).⁽¹¹⁾

There is a formulation, available in some of these social work accounts, where speech is reported as spoken by the client, but the source of the formulation (if read critically) can be heard as that of the social worker. In interview 2.1.7. the social worker is reporting how a young man, Ray, is uncertain about moving into a hostel:

Interview Extract 7.1

Social Worker: *...Ray at that time didn't seem able to commit himself to not smoking dope which says quite a lot about whether he was committed to the hostel or not and basically he was saying you won't be able to tell if I smoke outside... (5.23-5)*

(He is asked to leave a hostel, because of a number of rule infractions)

Interviewer: *so what went wrong*

Social Worker: *I think Ray jeopardised it more than anything else when he actually got evicted from the hostel (-) it wasn't so much that he was drunk the night before (-) that they would have contained and handled (-) it was that the next day he actually sat on the bed and openly smoked dope in front of them and that was the final thing and the hostel actually clearly says that the young person has got to want to work with us and Ray was clearly stating to them that he didn't want to work with them... (7.8-15)*

A similar formulation is available in Document 4 in chapter 6:

...(Donna) stated that whenever she telephones again, she hopes her mother will not answer the 'phone because she does not want 'rejection' and the receiver hung up on her.

In these utterances, it is not clear if the reported speech of the client is heard as his/her words, or the social worker's assessment of what the young person is 'really' saying. In the interview extract 7.1, the social worker's description of Ray's words can be heard as an affirmation of his position over the hostel, using direct speech. The critical reader might point out that such an affirmation is not set in the context of, for example, a question 'I asked him if he would abide by the hostel rules to stop smoking dope and he said 'well you won't be able to tell if I smoke outside'. The words are taken to signify his uncertain commitment to the hostel. In the second and third examples (the second part of 7.1 and Document 4) the use of 'state', rather than 'say', can be heard as less clearly reporting direct speech. 'State' suggests formulating a position rather than merely reporting an utterance. Reading the full account of Ray does not depict him as the sort of young man to utter definitive versions of his state of mind, and communication is presented as a problem on occasions - "Ray does not seem to be able to listen to advice" , " he doesn't seem to be able to sort out his position at all." When used to state the client's position, reported speech is not heard as direct speech at all, rather, it is what the client would say if they knew themselves and their behaviour as the social worker does. The formulation 'what they are really saying' is heard as the social worker interprets from behaviour to deeper feelings and intentions. This suggests that a critical hearing of such reported speech might wonder about the objectivity of the words.

Other examples of reported speech can be heard as formulating a state of affairs, but again it is not clear whose words are being reported. In Interview 3.1.4, Mandy has been asked to leave her older sister's home, and the social worker is considering where she might go. The clients' words are offered to justify the decision taken to place her in a children's home rather than a foster home, which might have been more expected.⁽¹²⁾

Interview Extract 7.2

Interviewer: *you'd never considered fostering at this stage*

Social worker: *well Mandy was dead against fostering because she said I've been in so many family experiences (-) we were talking about a year really because when she reached 16 and left school we would like*

her to move to an independent unit which was what she wanted as well and she said I've had so many families I can't really give my loyalties to somebody else... I think our aims were very clear when she went to (children's home) what we wanted and also there was consensus on these aims.

Interviewer: *ok so she went to (children's home)... (3.20-34)*

Are these the words of the client brought in to support the workers' formulation as Holt and Wooffitt might suggest? Unlike with Ray, throughout this account, Mandy can be heard as a character who is depicted as capable and independent - "she has coped well with moves (between care and home)", " (at the sister's) she spent helluva lot of time actually alone and she'd coped with that and never abused it". Her thoughts and feelings are regularly made available as the determining factor. For example, before the 'decision' not to send her to her mother in the West Indies, her viewpoint is heard:

Social worker: *...Mandy was adamant she wanted to stay in England she said she didn't really know (island) she'd been there once and didn't like it she wanted to continue her education here she'd got nothing to gain by going to her mother she didn't know her mother's new boyfriend... (1.23-27)*

The story offers several similar points at which Mandy's words determine action. Despite hearing a story apparently directed by the client, a critical reader may wonder about the justification of the decision not to pursue fostering. As document 3 in chapter 6 about Donna (the Profile) can be heard as outlining the management problems of a children's home, so the formulation in 7.2, "dead against fostering", can be heard as a counter description of fostering for teenagers. As mentioned earlier (chapter 6 footnote 9), at this time fostering was rapidly being established as the preferred placement for all children in care, including teenagers. One aspect of the new enthusiasm was that all children were 'entitled to an experience of family life'.⁽¹²⁾ The use of the phrase "so many family experiences" can be heard as a direct rebuttal

to a charge 'Mandy needs to experience family life'. The inappropriateness of fostering is further supported by the claim over the timing of fostering, being heard to solicit the support of a competent social worker hearer, who is aware of the time it takes to find an appropriate placement. A critical reader could challenge whether these words were uttered by Mandy, since she is not likely to know the appropriate features of fostering, which 'her' formulation "dead against fostering" is heard to rebut.

In both these extracts, words are offered as if they were the words of the client. A critical reading can however reformulate them as the words of the storyteller. The listener is being deceived into thinking the social worker's formulation is based on expressed wishes of the client. However, there is equally not an overt expression of the formulation 'what the client is really saying', which would not be heard as reported speech but as social work assessment. In these extracts, then, there is no identification of the client's speech as social work assessment, and yet the reported nature is also uncertain.

3.3 The client sets the agenda

The account of Mandy above was heard as apparently directed by her own wishes, but, on reading critically, the social worker's point of view can be heard to direct Mandy's words. In extracts 7.3 and 7.4, we investigate the implications of using reported speech, where the words of the client are heard as the strongest voice in legitimating the claim, thereby weakening the authority of the storyteller.

Extract 7.3 (from interview Z.3.1) displays the social worker describing the process of court procedure and negotiations with the parents. The children have been admitted into care on a place of safety order,⁽¹³⁾ following the police finding the children unattended and the parents drunk. It was decided to institute care proceedings for a full care order, but with a programme of rehabilitation, working towards discharging the order. The narrative is told through reading out entries from the case file plus the social worker's recollections.⁽¹⁴⁾ This extract appears towards the end of the interview, when the narrative has been completed. The interviewer queries the decision to ask for an interim care order after the emergency order had run out, if the aim was rehabilitation. This might be heard as inviting an 'evaluation' (Labov

and Waletsky 1967), where the storyteller is encouraged by the interviewer to reflect back on the implication of the story.⁽¹⁵⁾

Interview Extract 7.3

Interviewer: *why therefore did (Melchester SSD) suggest care proceedings and not return the children home after eight days*

Social worker: *your guess is as good as mine*

Interviewer: *oh (laugh) right*

Social worker: *erm (18 secs looking at the file) erm hang on though the children were actually removed on the twelfth which meant that we had to go to court on the (-) nineteenth (-) erm I am sure that we went to court on the nineteenth and obtained an interim care order this is all as a result of work done afterwards after the first interim was obtained ok so (Melchester SSD) came to that conclusion (to institute care proceedings) after after some thought*

Interviewer: *oh I see their initial response was really to say ...*

Social worker: *protect the child now...*

Interviewer: *go for an interim order...*

Social worker: *protect the child now whilst we think about this (8 secs) erm all the evidence from the children's home and the foster home indicate that these children were wonderful that they had a strong bond with their parents parents were visiting regularly in fact they were coming collecting the children and taking them home and bringing them back at night there was very very regular access and the parents were doing brilliantly with the children so that was all very positive (turns the page and 6 second pause)*

Interviewer: *it is erm (-) it's not for me to say but... sorry go on*

Social worker: *the other issue was the parents were stating categorically that they were prepared to cooperate*

Interviewer: *yeah*

Social worker: *that they were prepared to cooperate with social services and in the face of a parent saying that you have very little grounds for*

insisting on an order especially when you are proposing to return the children home

Interviewer: *yes*

Social worker: *erm (turns pages 8 seconds) and the guardian ad litem was also saying erm (15 seconds reading file entry) the guardian ad litem actually asked for an adjournment for three months to test their behaviour she was sufficiently concerned to ask for an adjournment erm the family were very opposed to this and court heard from the guardian ad litem erm in court but wouldn't agree to an adjournment so the care proceedings were dropped we didn't offer any evidence and the children went home after that court hearing*

Interviewer: *right*

Social worker: *on the eleventh of August...*

There is an unusually disrupted flow to this exchange, as the social worker is reading the file, and the interviewer unsure of how to ask questions. Throughout the dialogue, it seems that the interviewer is wanting, in a so far unspecified way, to question the appropriateness of the action taken. He had already queried the initial decision to institute care proceedings. In anticipating such an intervention, the social worker is telling the story by relating the file entries, but, at the same time, interrupting the interviewer's interventions and answering the questions she assumes he is trying to ask. As with Bakhtin above, an unspecified possibly critical discourse is being attended to, whilst the chronology of the file entries is made available.

In responding to the initial query the social worker agrees, but then tries to search for an explanation from the file entries. In the first paragraph, the procedure of dates of court hearings shows that it could not have proceeded otherwise. Next the interviewer's acceptance is met with what can be heard as a 'put down'; where the interviewer is merely talking procedures - 'response', 'orders' - the social worker is talking principles - "protect the child". Such a 'put down' silences him temporarily. Here the use of direct 'sacred' speech is monologic and authoritative, as with Bakhtin's 'single-voiced words'. In the third paragraph, the depiction of the children as "wonderful" and the success of the parents is described in upgraded terms, and

with no pause. The utterance is built on three propositions - evidence from the carers of a strong parental bond, regular visiting and even taking them home. This is further upgraded with "very very regular", "doing brilliantly" and the summary "all very positive".

A long pause gives the interviewer an opportunity to begin what sounds like it will be a strong criticism - "it's not for me to say but...". This is immediately rebuffed by the use of indirect speech and the voice of the client: "the other issue was the parents were stating categorically that they were prepared to cooperate". This comment is unlikely to be available by reading a file entry, but is heard as providing an evaluation of the state of affairs. It can be heard to establish both a fact and a principle: cooperation and the positive voice of the parents cannot be resisted. It is delivered with upgraded terms "categorically" and with emphasis "especially". It determines all other action. The repeat of "they were prepared to cooperate" with the interviewer's "yeah" in between further enlists his support. After this explication of principle and enforced cooperation, the interviewer is silenced, even though other chances to intervene are available, with several long gaps. This formulation is further supported by outlining the position of the guardian ad litem, who had an opportunity to present an alternative version of the case, perhaps similar to that of the interviewer's unheard complaint. This alternative version was heard by the court, but also rejected, as it was opposed by the family.

It is thus suggested that in this exchange the social worker is heard to use 'double-voiced discourse' of both relating a story and rebuffing a presumed critical intervention. It is with the appropriation of the voice of the client, albeit in indirect speech, that the impossibility of an alternative version of the state of affairs or action is demonstrated. The use of indirect speech, backed up with upgraded terms and sacred principles can be heard as the strong formulation that finally silences the critic, the ultimate persuasion, the trump card. From that point, the 'categorical' words of the parents hover throughout the rest of the story, as determining the outcome. Can the described speech be heard as the ultimate rebuttal to silence an unheard criticism?

The gradual build up of this formulation can be seen to use a wide variety of strong features. First, the upgraded term "stated categorically", followed by the indirect speech. Second, it is backed up by the principle of cooperation. Third, the

repeat of "cooperate" around the interviewer's agreement, "yeah". Then the emphasised contrast of "especially", denoting the nonsense of an alternative approach. Finally, the guardian ad litem's potential criticism was available for scrutiny and rejected. Such a build up can be seen to deploy a mass of rhetorical features, principles and allies, but the words of the client are central to the formulation. Without the indirect speech, the formulation can be heard as not strong enough to counter criticism. Whilst not opposing the storyteller, only the unequivocal words of the parents can silence the unheard critic. In contrast, the social worker's description and assessment in the early part of the formulation do not stop the questions. Throughout the rest of the interview, the reader awaits the words of the client to direct and legitimate any claim.

In another case (interview X.3.7), the reported speech is similarly heard to determine the direction of events, but in a way that the social worker did not want. After the social worker has described the events of the admission to care, the interviewer summarises the role of mother and social worker, and asks about subsequent activity:

Interview Extract 7.4

Interviewer: *right ehm so it was essentially (mother) who asked for reception into care but you wanted to see how things were going you wanted to do all the assessments and so on (-) right did you work out a particular contract with her*

Social worker: *at that time no but then I saw her within say three days of the children going into care because (sigh) and and you know I had to really chase her to get that and I saw her and we worked out that the children it was then that she started saying I don't want them back ever*

Interviewer: *ah*

Social worker: *and then we started saying well no this was not the plan*

Interviewer: *right but three days afterwards you right ...*

(The interview continues, discussing placement and school arrangements, and five

minutes later, the interviewer returns to overall plans)

Interviewer: *so (6 secs) ok so after oh so how what was your initial view of what the likely stay would be*

Social Worker: *we actually thought that we would be doing a rehabilitation programme with mum (-) and getting them back home*

Interviewer: *within a few*

Social worker: *well I think we would say like within four five months that would be the longest we would want that would be by then sort of mum having a new house cos we had to wait for mum to be offered new accommodation...*

(Social worker describes the rehabilitation programme and mum's non-cooperation for two minutes)

Social worker: *...and so it was sort of doomed to failure I think*

Interviewer: *and so at what point did you realise that it sort of...*

Social worker: *(sigh) well I think that mum as I said at the beginning had been oscillating between you know first of all she didn't want to see them again (-) then wanted them and she wanted them adopted and then she didn't want them adopted then she wanted them back home and we said right if you are saying back home that's it so we quickly throw in a rehabilitation programme (sigh) and then mum just never played ball with it and you know it was like never give up hope and even after five months she was still saying I want them I want them you see right you know we'll try again (-) so I think now you know we're in a situation Mum is expecting again and these children have been in care since then*

Interviewer: *oh really*

Social worker: *and you know they have not been home and the visits have been very rare so I think adoption is now*

Interviewer: *right*

Social worker: *right for these children*

(Discussion continues around where they are currently living)

These three extracts from interview X.3.7 can be heard as the points at which story evaluations are asked of the social worker, the rest being descriptions of placements, transport, visits. As with extract 7.3, they are invitations for evaluation after the events of the narrative have been presented. Again, the words of the mother are heard to set the direction of the case, but, here, are resisted by the social worker. The first picture of the social worker's approach to the mother has her 'chasing' the mother; already the mother is seen to be calling the tune. The utterance is confused and hesitant: "because (sigh) and and you know... we worked out that the children it was then that..." as the social worker struggles to outline the direction of her work.⁽¹⁶⁾ Abruptly, this is resolved by the mother's words, sounding clear and unarguable. The direct speech "I don't want them back ever" is presented as a 'categorical assertion' (Lyons 1977:809), with added emphasis "ever". The interviewer's response "ah" can be heard to acknowledge this as the definitive state of affairs. In contrast, the social worker's position is now introduced as tentative: "we started to say...". It uses first direct speech "we said no", then indirect speech "this was not the plan": hearable as a drop in emphasis. It can be heard as a retort, rather than an assertion, after a strong position has been set by the mother's words. Changing from direct to indirect speech can be heard to reduce a challenge to the mother's position.

In the second extract, the rehabilitation programme is set up and plans for a return home envisaged - the social worker's position. Again it is introduced with reservation: "we thought that...". A critical reader might question the mother's affirmation to give up her children, as not what she 'really' thought or see it as unacceptable to want to give up one's children so soon. No social worker should act on it. However, such a position is not made explicit. In the six minutes since mother's categorical statement of her position, the social worker's position has not been reasserted, nor a change in the mother's position described. A description of the failure of the rehabilitation programme ends with the assertion that it was "doomed to failure", re-emphasising perhaps that the mother had never accepted it.

In the third extract, the interviewer invites the realisation of the ultimate state of affairs. In response, the social worker refers back to the mother's words, though differently. In the first extract, the mother's words indicated only one direction, not

wanting the children back. She is now described as "oscillating". Yet no such change of mind has been made available to the reader; the mother's position has remained unequivocal, until now. The section describing the changes is complex and rushed, not merely describing 'oscillation', but performing it. Could it be that it is the social worker who has been "oscillating", not the mother, imposing on a reluctant mother a programme with which she was never in agreement? It was social services who "never give up hope" that was "doomed to failure", a weak and contradictory position.

It has been suggested that by bringing in the mother's words as categorical and unchallenged, a state of affairs is made available in which the voice of 'the other' is heard to direct and legitimate the plot of the story. The strong words of the mother are in contrast with a confused, reactive and 'oscillating' social worker. The reported speech of 'the other' can be heard not to support the social work storyteller's position, but to subvert it. The critical reader looks to 'the other' for a sense of direction; the storyteller is merely a reporter of events with the characters out of her control.

Social Worker: Hang on isn't this going a bit too far. Characters out of control of the storyteller? Surely the social worker is merely describing an ambivalent mother. I mean, you seem to think that by inventing this 'critical reader' you can come along and make all these criticisms of social work. In the previous chapters, you have merely pointed out how a social work description is produced. I don't object to that bit. I can see that building up descriptions does involve a thoughtful presentation. But now you seem to be very critical, rather arrogant, I might say.

Thesis Writer: Oh dear, does it come over that strong? Look, as I have already said, I'm not trying to question whether particular social work interventions were appropriate or say that descriptions were wrong. I am listening as an informed reader to the storytelling of the social worker, and anticipating possible responses which reading occasions suggest. And the character of the mother in extract 7.4 appears to be out of control in that her words and position can be read as clear and unequivocal, compared with the storyteller's confused words or position. The mother can be heard as more authoritative, and, hence, it is the character who appears to determine the direction of the story. I think this is what Bakhtin suggests of Dostoevsky's characters.

Social Worker: Well, you can hardly compare Dostoevsky to a social worker's description of a client. And all this reliance on storytelling, as if the story is more important than the actual social work.

Thesis Writer: I'm not sure of whether we can easily separate the account from the action, as Garfinkel would say. And yes, you are correct that there are important differences between characters in novels from those in social work descriptions, but that does not mean that similar storytelling features are not available to be read. That is the whole point of this thesis, and the depiction of character is one of the most important aspects. I'd be very worried if this line of inquiry is challenged.

Social Worker: Well ok. But my main point is how do you justify your criticisms, how is your critical reader's point of view any more valid than anyone else's? If you are a critic of social work, then you need to show your credentials, your entitlement as you outlined in chapter 5 - you don't know very much about social work nowadays do you? You seem to have forgotten the difficulties there are in working with people's ambivalence.

Thesis Writer: Well, as I said, I am interested in your storytelling, and, as someone who listens a lot to social workers talking and I have read your reports, I do think that concepts of how I read things are valid - if you want my entitlement, I have been a social worker, team manager and researcher of social work for 20 years, so I think I can hear when social work conventions are being deployed...

Social Worker: Yes, yes we have all had lots of experience but...

Thesis Writer: but you are right of course, when you say that other interpretations of the storytelling of social workers are equally valid, as long as they come from informed readers. I am happy to listen to your contribution.

Social Worker: Ok. In that last case, I did not read what the social worker said in extract 7.4 as a weak or inappropriate interpretation of the situation. If a mother says she wants to give up her children, there are likely to be all sorts of ambivalent feelings floating around, and it is only correct to try out a rehabilitation programme, and allow her the opportunity to think carefully about it.

Social Worker 2: Well no, I don't agree. You are just one of those 'Kinship Defenders' ⁽¹⁷⁾ aren't you.

Social Worker 1: Who are you ?

Social Worker 2: I suppose I'm a 'Society as Parent Protagonist'.⁽¹⁷⁾ I happen to believe that children's needs come before the prevarications of parents. If a mother is that rejecting, that clear so soon after her children are taken away, then there is very little hope for a successful

rehabilitation. My complaint is that things didn't move quicker, I mean 5 months waiting is a long time in young children's lives...

Social Worker 1: and you think you can come up with a satisfactory permanent family for these children, all four together...

Thesis writer: Hey, now stop, this is getting out of hand. I did not intend to question that what was done was appropriate or inappropriate. It is quite possible that the mother (in other texts, on other occasions, to other audiences) said different things. I am not suggesting that mother or social worker had a consistent position outside the text...

Social Worker 1: It was a very consistent position, allow the mother to sort herself out, although I'm not sure if she was given enough help with that difficult process. There could have been more input.

Social Worker 2: Well, I think the consistent position was the mother. She said from the beginning she did not want her children, ever. That's what Thesis writer said as well didn't you?

Thesis Writer: Don't pull me into this. Haven't you both provided support for my suggestion, that there are many available positions, all equally valid. What my critical reader does is try to question those that s/he reads, without supporting either the position or its alternative. My aim has been to take what appears to be the preferred version of the storyteller and inquire how that can be subverted.

Social Worker: Ok, myself and my colleague have different views. But you talk about weak and strong positions, don't you, as if some versions, with which you seem to have privileged access, are more valid than others?

Discourse Analyst: Yes, I have my doubts about your version of the social worker's version. You have said several times that you are interested in constructing and reading alternative versions and meanings, yet you seem to have constructed a definitive version yourself. I know that in yours the client's version apparently is 'stronger', but what is your warrant for showing 'strength'?

Thesis Writer: I was worried that you might show up. Well, I have tried to be guided by you to some extent. I have pointed out strong features of texts - three part lists, extreme case formulations, positive modalities.

Discourse Analyst: Yes, that is true, but we have not pointed to weak texts so much. We have mainly been interested in showing how particular utterances can be read as strong. Neither have we tried to go beyond the utterance to some overall strong or weak reading of the whole story. Where do you get your justification for this overall definitive reading of how the story should really be read?

Thesis Writer: Oh hell. This is very difficult. I am not saying 'should' be read, but 'can' be read. Look how often Wooffitt uses 'is', for

example, "is therefore a resolution' (1992:179). I have tried to suggest that my readings whether critical and/or ratified are only one alternative – how many times have I said 'can be heard' 'are available' to avoid saying 'is'.

Discourse Analyst: Yes, that has become very boring.

Thesis Writer: I am sorry about that, but I made a deal with an illusive character called 'Sceptic' back in chapter 3. I haven't invited him back since. But I really want to move above being stuck with analysis merely at the level of the sentence. That is why I think stories are a more appropriate approach, because we read stories as a whole, how they hang together, how they are convincing or not, why characters and plots are intriguing. I am sure that this is more than each reader, on each reading occasion, having a different version. Some readings are more 'robust' than others, and yet there are always gaps and slippage, allowing alternative versions.

Discourse Analyst: And these gaps are directing the reader to more definitive readings?

Thesis Writer: No. They just offer pathways for alternative readings, which make available subversion of the preferred version. Not all readers are likely to follow such gaps, the interviewer clearly missed most of them. But I have tried to show that they are ratified readings and yet subversive. Surely you agree that in reading texts, we get an overall sense of strong and weak voices, characters whose point of view we are more likely to listen to than others. In extract 7.4, the mother's words did seem so clear, whereas the social worker's were heard as confused. The storyteller was able to use that clarity to shape and justify her story, but, in doing so, has lost authority in her own assessment. The reader is only convinced when s/he hears the client's words.

CONCLUSION.

This analysis has suggested that there are a number of positions in relation to reported speech. Wooffitt's view that it supports the "objectivity" of the storyteller needs to be reassessed. Reported speech, direct and indirect, can be read to support or subvert a claim, depending on a wide variety of reading relations. Other contested readings of reported speech could be envisaged. We have not come across situations described by Shuman, where the reported speech is directly contested by the speakers; what did the mother in the 'broken arm' case (discussed in 3.1 of this chapter) say in court, when reading how her speech was reported in the affidavit? In this chapter, a variety

of story features enable a critical reading of reported speech as appropriation of the words of 'the other'. If the reported speech is in the 'evaluation' of the story (as in extract 7.3 and 7.4), it can be heard as stronger and determining action, compared to being part of the description (as in the extract from chapter 3 interview). Subsequent twists in the story can suggest a re-evaluation of the words of 'the other', as do opportunities for later reading.

In the section 3.1, we saw how the mere appearance of words of 'the other', offer the reader an alternative version of events. Although depicted as dispreferred, changes to reading relations can offer the opportunity to formulate alternative versions: for example, hearing the outcome of the court case. In section 3.2, it became difficult to recognise when speech was reported as from the client, or was heard as the assessment of the storyteller. At what point does the critical reader question the reported speech as not the voice of 'the other', but a deceptive concealment of the social worker's views in the client's voice? In section 3.3, the words of 'the other' could be read in some stories as the strongest voice in the text, setting the direction of the story and determining action. The storyteller appears to lose control, as her assessment only worked when supported by the stronger words of 'the other'.

It has been suggested that the strength of the other's version is linked to the use of categorical assertions or emphasised features. The other's speech is not relativized or modalised (Palmer 1986). The storyteller does not provide evidence nor commitment to the formulation, the other's words are strong enough and the narrator loses control. Furthermore, the position of the reported speech in the sequence of the story is important. In examples 7.3 and 7.4, they can be heard as the evaluation stage of the story, where events have been outlined and comment invited. In contrast, in examples 7.1 and 7.2 they are part of the claim formulation, and less evaluative. The words of 'the other' initially appear to support the proposition, and only subvert on later reading occasions.

The implication for this analysis is that reading reported speech can set up a wide variety of reading relations and responses. Here is an opportunity to seek out 'the other'. Following Bakhtin, it has been demonstrated that a story is 'double-voiced'; putting forward a position, and, at the same time, rebutting an alternative

position. However, by presenting the words of 'the other', even if they are depicted as condemning, the gaps and slippage are made available. An opportunity is made available for a sympathetic reading of the unheard alternative story. Noticeably in the 'failure to thrive' case (chapter 4), no reported nor described speech is marked; 'the other' is not offered a platform. Perhaps more serious for the storyteller, the appropriation of the words of 'the other' can be heard as deceptive and a challenge to the veracity of the storyteller, "I've had so many family experiences" (extract 7.2). should be read as "I've had so many "family experiences"." Mandy's words are appropriated to challenge the authoritative words of departmental policy (see footnote 12).

To seek out 'the other' in reported speech is an occasion on which an alternative depiction is made available for re-reading. In the next chapter, we investigate how alternative readings are offered by reading character depictions.

Client: And you have still not let me into this thesis, have you? I mean a chapter called 'hearing the words of the client' does not let the client speak at all.

Thesis Writer: Would that not be yet another form of appropriation, taking your words for my own purposes, as I suggested the social worker and other consumer research has done (footnote 9).

Social Worker: Well that's what you have done with my words.

Thesis Writer: Oh, have I? I suppose I have. I haven't been unfair, have I. I mean I did play down that definitive bit, and I haven't tried to criticise your work just your storytelling, and.....

CHAPTER 8 DEPICTING CHARACTER: READING ADEQUATE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CLIENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues the exploration of 'the other', by investigating how the client is characterised in social work accounts. The last chapter introduced a more active reading of social work accounting as texts, and this chapter develops this approach through an overall reading of the portrayal of characters in stories. Depicting the character of the client through reading social work accounts as narrative has been shown to be an important feature of their construction and reception. In chapter 4, the moral construction of character was explored, showing the way in which characterisation relied upon depictions of good and bad, culpable and blameless. In chapter 5, the factual construction of clients and their attributes showed how displays of entitlement and the support of witnesses, enabled characters to be depicted as independent of the construction of the storyteller. The 'narrative puzzle', however, provided an uncertainty in characterisation, which encouraged the reader to investigate further. The uncertainty of Donna's and her mother's character persisted throughout chapter 6. The depiction of character, then, has already been discussed in some detail.

Chapter 7 introduced features of a more active, critical reading, which was explored through reported speech. Whilst the reported words of the client offer an important opportunity for a critical reading of social work accounts as texts, reported speech is only a part of the overall characterisation of clients, made available in social work accounts. The approach of chapter 7 requires attention to a further study of character depiction, through features of active reading. This means, first, developing the concept of 'the other', by re-orientating investigation towards alternative and unheard versions of the story. What depiction of character is the story advocating and resisting? Second, a critical reading explores how character is made available to be read. Is it adequate? Are we convinced? Third, rather than exploring a benign

construction of character through rhetorical features, critical reading assesses overall narrative reception. What is the critical reader's overall reaction to how the character is depicted? Are there gaps and slippages, where the character depiction can be undermined? It is thus suggested that investigating the reading of character depiction in social work texts is an important way of critically questioning the activity and adequacy of social work representation.

The post-modern concept of the decentred subject has much in common with alternative readings of character depiction. It was shown in chapter 7, that in Bakhtin's analysis of Dostoevsky, characters appeared as unfinalised, no longer under the control of the author (section 3.3). Recent post-modern novels frequently include dialogues between the author and character.⁽¹⁾ This chapter asks to what extent 'the other' in social work accounts provides further opportunity to question monologic representation, by re-examining character depiction. In chapter 7, we saw how reported speech offered an opportunity for hearing the alternative words of 'the other', the client. An alternative to the post-modern pejorative critique of character is to question the adequacy of character depiction: to suggest, not that the subject does not exist, but to critically inquire into the reading of strategic depictions and categorisations. The question is not to ask whether or not individuals exist, but to investigate the consequences of attempting to represent them.

The overall aim of this chapter is thus to investigate the adequacy of character assessments and representations of clients by social workers. What sort of characterisations are made available in social work accounts, and what are resisted? Is a critical reader convinced of the adequacy of the depiction? What opportunities are offered for gaps and slippage, which undermine characterisations? First, there is a discussion of approaches to character in literary narratives and sociology. Second, the analysis explores the depiction of three clients in various social work texts: Mr King, Sarah and Stuart.

How far can you and I, critical and informed readers, develop a subversive reading of social work accounts? What 'trials' will we put the text through before we believe the author (Latour 1987:53)? In chapter 3, it was demonstrated that reading social work accounts as texts involves performing social work community. The role of the ratified and addressed reader was explored as the preferred reader, who is

constructed as attending to competent social work reading conventions. How can we now play the role of a critic, questioning adequacy of representation? How are we convinced that the client is being appropriately and accurately portrayed? As already discussed, we are critical from within the reading relations of social work texts. How far can we go beyond the construction of the ratified and addressed reader? Is this asking too much of a sceptical project? What form of substantiation is required to justify our critique? Adequacy should be approached carefully, unpretentiously.

1 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO DEPICTING CHARACTER

This section considers the usefulness of some approaches to character in literary theory and sociology. For literary critics, the adequacy of a character is a frequent concern, and used as an occasion to evaluate the aesthetic value of a work. Reading in this scenario is concerned with competence.⁽²⁾ Occasions of reading social work accounts involve intense scrutiny of the adequacy of character representation by ratified and critical readers - the judge, the barrister, the senior officer, the client, you and me. Some of these readers can seriously question and subvert the social worker's claims and formulation, and ultimately re-write character.⁽³⁾ Convincing such powerful readers that the social worker's depiction is believable 'literally' puts the social worker on trial, as well as the client.⁽⁴⁾ Given the concern with depicting character, what can be gained from literary theory?

1.1 Character and Plot in Narrative

In formalist and structural approaches, character is merely a product of plot. For Propp (1968), the character does what the fairy tale requires. Chatman (1978:112) sums up such an approach: "characters are means rather than ends of the story". Recent approaches see the attribution of traits to characters in novels as an important approach to literary analysis. Todorov's (1977) distinction between psychological and a-psychological stories, with character or plot as more determinant, was noted in chapter 3. Barthes (1975) in his, later work stresses a psychological understanding of character. This 'process of nomination' of personality traits is, however, recognised as open to reader interpretation:

To read is to struggle to name, to subject the sentences of the text to a

semantic formation. This transformation is erratic; it consists in hesitating among several names: if we are told that Sarrasine has 'one of those strong wills that know no obstacle' what are we to read? will, energy, obstinacy, stubbornness etc. (p.92)

For the reader to name and categorise traits of characters in social work accounts, might equally leave room for uncertainty and reader choice. Social work accounts are likely to make available a wide range of attributes, with differing emphasis. How are attributes portrayed as important, and what are the consequences of such selection for the reader? It was shown in chapter 6 that 'Donna the rejected daughter' was in an uneasy balance with 'Donna the sexually at risk adolescent'. Different reading occasions attended to different concerns.

Another important feature of social work accounting is the link between characterisations and action. What characteristics warrant particular social work responses? A powerful reader, the judge, may not dispute the character depiction, but may not consider the social worker's suggested action is warranted. The judge in 'the broken arm' case (chapter 3) may have accepted that the father was violent and the mother unpredictable, but perhaps did not consider that the children remained in danger, and they were returned home. In the 'failure to thrive' case (chapter 4), the judge was aware of social workers' and doctors' 'proof' of failure to thrive and of the mother's uncooperative portrayal, but still considered there was too much rather than too little intervention. Reading plot and character are intimately bound together in performing social work accounts as texts, since action inevitably follows (or precedes) the depiction and reading of characters and their attributes.⁽⁵⁾ How far are character depictions made available, which are determined by plot? Is an intervention envisaged, and the appropriate characterisation provided, or, conversely, is the complexity of a client's attributes offered to the reader to enable selection of strategy?

1.2 Round and Flat Characters

A number of approaches to character depiction from literary theory have looked at the adequacy of character.⁽⁶⁾ It was noted in chapter 7, how Bakhtin sees Dostoevsky's characters as unfinalised, with continuing uncertainty, and dialogue between author and characters:

Dostoevsky creates not voiceless slaves but free people, capable of

standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him. A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices...
(Bakhtin 1984:6-7)

It is not suggested that the depiction of characters in social work accounts offers the same free play of dialogic character/author interaction as in Dostoevsky or post-modern novels; social work accounts aim to be monologic and finalised. However, Bakhtin's approach to unfinalised characters is appropriate for this investigation in two ways. First, the occasions of reading social work accounts involve challenges to monologic characterisation. Cuff (1980:32) suggests that situations like courts involve a "principled position of doubt", with participants expecting accounts to be scrutinised. Second, rapidly changing depictions of clients (as described in chapter 1 section 3.2) demonstrates how fragile social work constructions appear easily overthrown by new requirements. Opportunities thus exist for the critical reader to re-interpret character depictions as adequate and/or believable, even in monologic texts. The question to investigate is how far social work texts handle uncertain and changing character depictions, and what opportunities exist for critical and informed readings to locate alternative depictions.

An interesting distinction from literary theory is that between 'round' and 'flat' character (Forster 1974:46-54):

Flat characters... are sometimes called types and sometimes caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality: when there is more than one factor in them. we get the beginning of the curve towards the round. The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence... (1974:46-7)

Flat character depictions are easily recognisable and categorisable, whereas round characters are more complex, displaying a variety of traits, not always consistent nor predictable. Forster does not suggest that flat characters are incapable of making an important contribution, but they are simply less easy to remember. Round characters, on the other hand, inspire a strong sense of intimacy, even though they are more puzzling. As Chatman (1978:132) notes:

We remember them as real people. They seem strangely familiar. Like real-life friends and enemies it is hard to describe what they are exactly like.

Such a distinction has important consequences for reading character in social work stories. Forster (1974:48-9) quotes Norman Douglas in criticising 'flat' characterisations in biography:

...it selects for literary purposes two or three facts of man or woman generally the most spectacular and therefore 'useful' ingredients of their character, and disregards others. Whatever fails to fit in with these specially chosen traits is eliminated; must be eliminated, for otherwise the description would not hold water... The facts may be correct so far as they go, but there are too few of them: what the author says may be true, and yet by no means the truth.

If characters are depicted as 'flat', easily categorised but limited, a critical reader has an opportunity to question their authenticity. As was shown in the 'failure to thrive' case (chapter 4), could the mother have been so depraved and culpable? If characters are 'round', on the other hand, which features are attended to when social work intervention is proposed?

Chatman (1978:119) suggests a similar 'open theory of character', the reader being encouraged to construct the character from more than is available in the text:

A viable theory of character should preserve openness and treat characters as autonomous beings, not as mere plot functions. It should argue that character is reconstructed by the audience from evidence announced or implicit in an original construction and communicated by the discourse.

This concept is important for this project, since speculating about the character's actions in situations outside those made available by the account, is precisely the concern of the ratified reader of a social work account; how will a young person, with these attributes, function in this or that setting? Whilst criticised on occasion for being idiosyncratic, the judge is allowed a broad reading, possibly taking into account other contextual factors - the protection of society, the plea of the defendant, the presentation of the social worker - before making his/her decision. The senior officer can challenge the social worker for being unprofessional or not following departmental guidelines. The case conference may be handling and negotiating many versions of the client. The negotiation of characters and strategy are tied together in contested performances.

In summary, reading social work accounts offers ratified and addressed readers (the judge or the manager) and informed and critical readers (you and I), an

opportunity to speculate about characters, their attributes and the future. Characters in social work stories are unfinalised and temporary, shifting as new occasions require. Read as 'round', 'flat', 'unfinalised' or 'open' characters, contested depictions of clients in social work accounts allow, and anticipate, critical reading and negotiated re-appraisal. The implications of applying concepts from literary theory to social work accounts means attending to character depictions of clients as a critical, yet informed reader. How is character depicted? How is the depiction heard as adequate and believable? How are attributions of character turned into strategies for action?

1.3 Versions and Categories

A literary approach to unfinalised and contested character depiction in narrative has much in common with sociological concepts of versions and categories. Both concepts are concerned with investigating how people and entities are represented, and how typical characteristics are attributed. As with the reading of character discussed above, sociologists have rejected the stable psychological trait of categorisation as representing objective, cognitive processes. Rather, the manipulation of categories and versions is approached as an interactional and occasioned accomplishment.⁽⁷⁾

Categories and their discursive manipulation have been discussed at length in sociology.⁽⁸⁾ An interactional approach involves seeing categorisation as a method of depicting people and entities, but as also negotiating that depiction. Attributes associated with categories can be negotiated and provide opportunities for subverting that categorisation. Particularisation involves the active relativising of categories, where instances are separated from the overall formulations, thereby generating endless subcategories.⁽⁹⁾

Constructing alternative versions is discussed by Smith (1978). She identifies how the storyteller provides for an authorised version of K as mentally ill, but suggests that in uncovering these features, the reader is able to question the authenticity of this version. She conjectures that it is possible to construct a version of K as being frozen out by her friends, and not mentally ill.⁽¹⁰⁾ Cuff (1980:31) criticises Smith for moving from a members' to an analyst's reading, and for suggesting that

her version of K is "equally plausible and possibly more convincing". He notes that she describes her initial hearing of the account as 'taken on trust', and only with later scrutiny "a rather different picture of the goings on could be drawn" (1978:25). Cuff (1980:32) points to the importance of establishing how reading occasions routinely make available subversion, if accounts are suspected of being biased but:

In general, however, we suggest, following Garfinkel, that members will take accounts 'on trust' if they can and will not usually invite the possible interactional troubles that can arise by introducing a sceptical or 'scientific' attitude in situations where they see such an attitude to be both unwarranted and uncalled for.

As mentioned earlier, he contrasts 'trust' with situations like courts, which scrutinise what is being said from a 'principled position of doubt'. This supports the possibility of informed and critical reading as a key feature of social work accounting, since such scrutiny is part of the task of the ratified and addressed reader. The reading relations of social work accounting expect and anticipate scrutiny and doubt.

A critical reader can take the scrutiny of social work accounting further. Not all features of the social work account are examined in court or case conference. The social worker provides the audience with 'information' as well as 'analysis' and 'recommendation'. 'Information' is less likely to be contested; it is the step to 'analysis' and 'recommendation' which is available for scrutiny. As was demonstrated in chapters 4 and 5, the reading relations of social work accounts construct ratified readers on the basis that they are persuaded by a range of rhetorical and narrative features. For the ratified reader, it is the hearing of the overall performance of the narrative to which the reader looks in order to be persuaded, passing over 'mere' details. As critical readers, we are able also to question the detailed display of 'information' as a rhetorical process, as well as the overall story. A range of positions of doubt and acceptance are available in reading social work accounts, and, freed from the decision-making of the ratified reader, the critical reader can push scrutiny further.

In summary, it is suggested that reading character in social work accounts can be developed further than the benign construction offered in chapters 4 to 6. If the client is approached as 'the other' of social work stories, then undermining and

alternative character depictions are already a part of the reading relations of the text. A range of concepts enables an investigation of alternative depictions. First, characters can be read as unfinalised and changing, 'round' and 'flat'; what are the consequences for such reading in drawing conclusions about adequate or believable depictions? Second, categorisation and naming enables typifications of characters, and hence, fits them into routine responses; how far does particularisation undermine action and create endless subcategories? Third, social work reading occasions and ratified readers already attend to scrutiny and doubt; how far can a critical reading go beyond the scrutiny of the ratified reader?

2 ANALYSIS: CHARACTER IN SOCIAL WORK TEXTS

Texts from three social work cases are examined for how the character of the client is depicted, attended to, and how such depictions are linked to social work activity. In line with the theoretical discussion above, we address three key questions of how clients are depicted as characters in social work stories: how are depictions heard as adequate, how does categorisation warrant action, and how does the critical reader go beyond the scrutiny of the ratified reader? The main part of the analysis considers texts concerning two young people, Sarah and Stuart. First, we study briefly an example of the direct link between character categorisation and action in a case conference.

2.1 Characterising Mr King as a child abuser

The interrelation of character depiction and action can be observed in a radio programme about a child protection case conference.⁽¹¹⁾ The question is whether Mr. King has sexually abused his partners' daughter, Jane, and what to do about it. Having agreed that Mr. King probably has abused Jane, possible action is now discussed.

Radio Extract 8.1

Chairman: *why would you rule out the possibility of Mr King coming back to the family and erm there being some therapeutic work with them all to try and unpackage all of this I mean*

- would you rule that out absolutely*
- First Social Worker: *yes I would Stewart because basically you can't erm do therapy with someone who is not acknowledging that there's a problem*
- Second Social Worker: *Yes*
- First Social Worker: *and that is the problem with Mr King erm all that's going to happen if he goes back is that erm the pressure will be placed on Jane to retract her story and she'll do it*
- Second Social Worker: *and the abuse will start again*
- Chairman: *ok ok that's a view expressed*
- Playgroup Leader: *but do you feel that if Mr King has a chance to see the video he may then come clean he may then realise what a terrible thing he has done and with help he could be allowed back within the family*
- First Social Worker: *call me a twisted old cynic if you like but erm erm I've come across very few men that have confessed to these things*
- Playleader: *it does seem a shame though that the child has got such a lot other than the sexual part obviously from Mr King that she's going to lose everything*
- Second Social worker: *I think that's preferable to being abused again and since the sexual abuse is addictive behaviour and I agree with John it must be acknowledged by the perpetrator before it can be worked with and I feel it's inappropriate for this child to be living in the same house as Raymond King.*

This complex interchange is towards the end of the meeting, rather like the evaluation discussed in chapter 7 section 3.3. It is discussed here to display the strong link in social work texts between character depictions, categorisation and action. How Mr King is negotiated and blackboxed will determine official attempts to control the relationships amongst these people. The problem which the conference faces is that, as there is not enough evidence to prosecute Mr King, there is no legal way of removing him from the family.⁽¹²⁾ Just before the extract above, the descriptions of

Mr King are positive. The health visitor⁽¹³⁾ and the playleader⁽¹⁴⁾ both describe how he appeared to help Jane's development, although the playleader's observation is immediately underscored by the chair, as not much background information.⁽¹⁴⁾ Next, Mr. King is summarised as a support to Jane's mother by the family social worker,⁽¹⁵⁾ but he assumes that Mr King cannot return to the family under any circumstances. Such an assumption is ruled as 'out of order' by the chair,⁽¹⁵⁾ but it sets up the discussion of appropriate action.

Despite there being little information on Mr King amongst the speakers⁽¹⁴⁾, his behaviour is used to depict his character, and hence, what to do. The category being attributed to him is 'child abuser', with all the outrage of that ascription. However, he is a child abuser, who has provided support to both mother and child. A subcategory of 'child abuser' is negotiated: 'abuser-unsupportive' as opposed to 'abuser-supportive', with agreement on the latter. This is an action as well as a character problem, since mother will not welcome his departure,⁽¹⁶⁾ whereas she may have agreed to evict an 'unsupportive abuser'. A further subcategory is offered: is he the kind of 'supportive-abuser' who can be treated, reformed and return to the family? Both the chair and the playleader can be heard to suggest a therapeutic subcategory: 'supportive child abuser who might be reformed'. Two social workers reject such a subcategory, with a further subcategory: 'abuser who confesses may be reformed.' However, in the next two utterances, the social workers deny such a subcategory. The first social worker considers such men do not normally confess, and the second social worker denies the possibility of reform, and anyway it is too much of a risk.

In extract 8.1, negotiation over appropriate categorisation displays both agreement and dispute in the depiction of the client. Offering subcategories can be heard to relativise the main category, but this is resisted by other speakers. All speakers agree that Mr King is a child abuser, and that he is supportive. Some think he can be reformed. The two social workers reject the 'supportive' attribution, and impossibility of reform makes the supportive status irrelevant; he is a child abuser, and hence a danger to Jane. Undermining the therapeutic viewpoint is achieved both rhetorically and through appeals to entitlement: depicting the character of child abusers and the speakers' right to speak affirmatively. The first social worker starts his utterance with what can be heard as a stand - "yes I would (rule out therapy)".

Using "basically", a categorical statement is made about the character of all child abusers - therapy is impossible unless they confess, and further compounded as they don't normally confess. The "twisted old cynic" depiction of himself plus "I've come across very few..." portrays this social worker as someone who knows about child abusers through long experience and numerous contact.

The second social worker starts her utterance with a strong contrast rebuttal to the playleader - it is better to lose Mr King than be abused again. This is followed by another categorical statement about child abusers: "sexual abuse is addictive behaviour..." Next, a more relative comment about agreement to therapy forms an alliance with the first social worker. The three comments, in descending strength, are rounded off by a personal statement about what should happen. Both social workers can be heard to use a variety of strong rhetorical devices in countering therapy.

This analysis of the negotiation of the character of a child abuser has demonstrated the manipulation of categories and their associated attributes. Subcategories are seen to emerge which attempt to resist the main category. Such resistance is undermined, as rhetorically strong statements about the main category are heard to neutralise attempts at relativity. Categorical, monologic and flat characterisations appear to enable straightforward action, and in the rest of the case conference, there is no longer any consideration of Mr King being allowed to return to the family. Complex, relativised attributions have no place in an arena, where competent, professional assessment and decisive action are required. We now consider examples of categorisation and relativity across different texts and contexts.

2.2 Sarah - 'the angry child'

Sarah is depicted in two accounts 17 months apart. The first is the beginning of a research interview, and the second a report to the Director (Appendix 8.1). In chapter 6, the character of Donna's mother changed from an unsympathetic categorisation of a rejecting and uncooperative mother to being heard as a more sympathetic character, with the potential for "long term casework". The character depiction moved from a monologic, 'flat' categorisation to being more complex, diverse and 'round'. It was suggested there that the change was related to distance from the crisis, and a less strategic, more relaxed storytelling occasion in the interview. With Sarah, the

relativised depiction heard in the research interview was prior to the categorical depiction in the report.

2.2.1 The Interview

The first account of Sarah is a research interview, took place with her social worker in March, when Sarah was aged 16. The interviewer's initial question offered an opportunity for a character depiction, and two apparently conflicting versions of Sarah are made available:

Interviewer: *how would you sum up Sarah in a sentence*

Social Worker: *oh god (-) there's two sides one is a fiery character gets angry very very quickly and feels deprived whatever you do you're always unfair in some way (-) that's accompanied with a very shy side and as she's got older she is fairly (-) I'm a bit surprised that she is keen on talking about boyfriends jobs school dreams which is really quite surprising and she'll allow me to talk with her what it might mean or not mean (-) she can say it's rubbish but she is creating a space in which we can talk which is quite interesting*

In this characterisation, Sarah can be heard as complex, 'two sided' and unpredictable. She is depicted through her dealings with the social worker, in which she is "fiery" or "shy", argumentative or discussive. Both "sides" are rhetorically matched, with three line lists, but with an addition. In the first, she is "a fiery character", "angry very very quickly", "feels deprived" plus "you're always unfair". The second version lists the subjects she talks to the social worker about - "boyfriends jobs school dreams". The fourth item in each list moves the depiction on to opposing planes. The first uses direct speech to locate the hearer in an argument; the second takes us to her fantasy world. Both additions can be heard to picture Sarah and the social worker in a variety of discursive encounters, thereby reinforcing the social worker's entitlement to depict her. The use of "accompanied with" indicates that these traits appear together, although there is a temporal aspect, linking this development to her growing up - "as she's got older" and becoming more

cooperative "she'll allow me..." Sarah is heard as moving from one characterisation to the other, deploying professional and everyday concepts of maturation and adolescence. That it surprises the social worker, can be heard to add a note of unpredictability. Such a depiction is thus heard as complex, round and unfinalised, but competent and authorised by long term contact with Sarah.⁽¹⁷⁾

2.2.2 Report to the Director

The second account, Report on Sarah (appendix 8.1) is written by an Area Manager (manager of the social worker's manager). It is 17 months after the interview, the social worker has left the department and Sarah has gone through a series of crises. Sarah is portrayed in a report to the Director, asking agreement for payment of a bill at a bed and breakfast hotel (B&B), and a criticism might be anticipated.⁽¹⁸⁾ A defence of poor practice is made available through a characterisation of Sarah. This depiction is categorical and finalised, and trades on contingencies outside anyone's control.

The character depiction at line 9 can be read as categorical and negative - she presented "numerous problems", a list of three and an unmodalised categorisation "she remained an angry child" and "at best a handful" (lines 10-11). That a foster placement breakdown is now reported (line 14) can be heard to suggest that her character and behaviour caused this.⁽¹⁹⁾ The depiction of Sarah is offered as a partial explanation of the events which follow. It is juxtaposed with another list of three contingencies related to staffing problems - the social worker left, then the team leader, the residential unit had staffing shortages. These two sets of problems can be heard to trade on one another - the "angry" and "increasingly difficult to engage" adolescent, and the inability of social services to respond because of staff shortage.⁽²⁰⁾ The staffing problems are presented as secondary to Sarah's behaviour since they "exacerbated" the situation. Furthermore, that Sarah's categorisation is presented in three and a half lines, whereas the staffing problems takes up eight lines, indicates the apparent necessity to make available staffing problems to bolster the excuse. The third paragraph relates the move to the 'last resort' placement through Sarah's absconding, and inability to make her own arrangements successfully. The B&B is "finally" achieved (line 27) confirming its last resort status, everything else had been tried.

The depiction of Sarah as a difficult character, staffing problems and Sarah's increasing non-cooperation has brought the reader to the request for payment. Woolgar (1980:252) has suggested that the framing of a report in the title or the opening utterance, instructs the reader how to read what follows. Here, the request for payment appears first in the last sentence (line 35). The reader has heard a story of an increasingly difficult child and staffing problems, not a request for payment. Perhaps the structure of this story instructs the Director about the problems of managing difficult young people in a situation of staff shortages. In such circumstances, this report can be heard as minor (and irritating) administration.

A sympathetic, uncritical reading of the report might accept the categorical depiction of Sarah, the extra staff shortages and see the B&B bill as unfortunate, but no one's fault. The Director agreed to the payment, which suggests he endorsed such a reading. However, on an accompanying form he writes: "Jim, Please do not place teenagers and families at (this B&B) hotel". This comment can be heard as an extra criticism of the episode beyond the request for payment - not only is the request bad practice, but the hotel used is in some unspecified way inappropriate.

A critical reading of the text, however, suggests major weaknesses in the formulation, not merely because of contingencies, but the instability of the categorisation of Sarah. Not only is the professionals' action acknowledged as bad practice, the storytelling can be heard as deficient. With the case of Mr King above and Donna in Document 3 (chapter 6), categorical character depictions seem to be linked to action formulations. Here, only difficult, uncooperative adolescents are heard to end up in last resort placements.⁽²¹⁾ A number of further uncertainties can be pointed out by a critical reading of the structure of the story and character depiction.

First, the narrative provides for a chronological before and after formulation - before the foster placement breakdown, and after the crisis of the period of homelessness. Most of the report is concerned with the crisis (lines 14 to 27), and yet, we read that it lasted only about eight weeks, from Christmas to late February. The use of "eventually" and "finally" implies a long period of crisis and struggle. Is this extreme case formulation heard as too strong for a relatively short period of disruption?

Second, is the character formulation too negative? The period of disruption was

short and the foster placement breakdown had only just occurred. When a foster placement breaks down, social workers often expect a sad and angry reaction, and a subsequent disruptive period would not be surprising.⁽²²⁾ Furthermore, the apparent stability of the subsequent five months in the B&B hotel, suggests a young person who can survive in what is considered by many social workers (politicians, journalists) to be a difficult environment. Here is a 17 year old, until recently in a foster family, having stayed for five apparently uneventful months in a hotel, where (according to common knowledge) there are poor facilities, no support, often expected to wander the streets, inhabited by all sorts of misfits, even the Director thinks it should not be used for teenagers nor families... Is not the reader wondering about Sarah's apparent tenacity and powers of self preservation?

Third, where is she when the report is written in August? We are not told this. Given the categorical character depiction, any subsequent disaster might have been imported to confirm the inevitability of the formulation. That nothing is described, suggests to the critical reader that perhaps things are not as bad as we have been told. Indeed, six months later the case was considered less of a priority.⁽²³⁾

In summary, a critical reading of this report can challenge the categorical formulation of Sarah's character. Presenting her as uncooperative, angry and disruptive may have been strategically successful for the task of getting the Director's signature and a mild rebuke. However, as an adequate character formulation in the telling of a competent story, it is a categorical, monologic and finalised depiction, which can be heard as weak and misleading by a critical reading. Such a superficial character formulation glosses over complex events and traits, available to depict Sarah. If examined by a critical audience - her solicitor, the previous social worker, Sarah herself - the depiction could be easily challenged. Does it matter, after all the important audience was convinced? We, critical and privileged readers, cannot forget hearing the optimism of 17 months previously. An alternative formulation might have been to depict Sarah as a complex character, who was making the difficult move to independence. This she achieved unconventionally through a break with traditional routes, and a period of radical self preservation in a B&B hotel. She is an heroic figure not a victim, who social services has helped on her way to independence. Such a formulation has no more credibility than the categorical depiction. However, it

demonstrates that, as with the alternative depiction of K by Smith (1978:51), a critical reader is able to reorganise the 'facts' to produce an alternative characterisation. In the next section, we follow Stuart through more complex character depictions.

2.3 Stuart - an ambiguous character

This section investigates character depictions which are unfinalised and uncertain, but far from producing 'round' characters, can be heard to display an ambiguous character. With Stuart, the different traits attributed to him are not heard as elaborating his character depiction, but can be heard to confuse it. Such character depictions are difficult to hear as convincing formulations, and are unhelpful in guiding appropriate action. Events and characterisations are heard as uncertain in the work done to relate them to one another. In the analyses of Sarah and Mr King, weak and strong, categorical and relative, round and flat depictions are made available to clarify a course of action. With Stuart, categorisation is heard as less straightforward, since depictions, actions and events appear to undermine another. In short, Stuart, events and social work action are not adequately and consistently depicted nor interrelated, and the reader is left uncertain of what sort of person and course of action is being suggested. Material is drawn from three texts: an interview with Stuart's social worker in April, case file entries on Stuart between April and July and a court report in December.

2.3.1 The Interview

As with other interviews, the researcher starts the interview with Stuart's social worker, with an invitation for a brief characterisation of Stuart:

Interviewer: *how would you sum up Stuart in a sentence.*

Social Worker: *oh it's going to be very biased actually I like Stuart a helluva lot I think he's a really nice kid on top of that I think some of Stuart's behaviour patterns which sets him into a circle of needing special placements has a lot to do with his background how he was brought up and a lot of it is also a cock up on our part because*

certain things were made quite clear at the early stages of his care history and for various reasons didn't take off (-) so Stuart is nice but has had difficulties and I don't think we have helped to make those difficulties any better (1.2-8)

The opening - "oh this is going to be biased" - can be heard to instruct the hearer that the storyteller's version of Stuart will be personal and subjective. It further suggests that an alternative, unheard version of Stuart is available, which might be heard as 'objective'. In this opening statement and throughout the interview, Stuart is characterised by ironicising and relativising categorical depictions. At the same time, the problem of how to handle Stuart can be heard as woven into the depiction. Unlike with Sarah and Mr. King, the link between depiction and action is not resolved.

Elements of personal reaction, behaviour problems and failed action are made available in the opening utterance. First, the "biased" reaction is positive towards Stuart. It is bolstered with upgraded terms - "a helluva lot", "a really nice kid", suggesting to the reader that an 'objective' version might be less sympathetic. Second, the personal reaction is contrasted with Stuart's "behaviour patterns" needing "special placements". This aspect of his character is "on top of" him being really nice. It is extra to the positive characterisation, not instead of it, as with the two sides of Sarah. The repeat/summary at the end of the paragraph reiterates the two aspects, and uses "but" to signify the unstable link between them. With Sarah, the "two sides" were linked temporarily with one seen as (hopefully) replacing the other. With Stuart, however, the two characterisations occur together, and can be heard as difficult to maintain at the same time. This "nice but has difficulties" might be maintained, but has already been identified as "biased". Should the reader construct an 'objective' unheard version around "behaviour patterns" and "special placements", and not accept the "biased" version as "really nice"? Third, explanation and blame for Stuart's "behaviour patterns" are located in his background and upbringing, and in inadequate social services intervention. Stuart can be heard as not primarily to blame for his behaviour patterns; the unheard version may well make the mistake of such a blaming.

The two versions of Stuart's character are not merely opposites, as the 'biased'

version depicts him as "nice", but also acknowledges his "difficulties". This character depiction is developed through a series of 'ambiguity contrasts'. Stuart conforms to a category, and yet does not. A category is presented but then relativised. This pattern of 'X yet not really X'⁽²⁴⁾ is heard as the storyteller instructing the listener that her 'biased', unfinalised, dialogic, relativised version is more appropriate than an objective, monologic, categorical version of Stuart and events. This pattern is demonstrated through three aspects of the account - Stuart, his behaviour and handling, and social service intervention.

2.3.1.1 Stuart as 'X yet not really X'

Stuart can be heard as depicted through a number of attributes which are presented, and then relativised. In sections of the interview, a categorisation is made, but relativised by linking it to a particular audience or occasion, and hence challenging its universality. In the opening, he is summed up as "nice but has had difficulties". Later in the interview, "X but not really X is displayed in his "mixed race".

...he's got this image of himself I know that sounds social worky I don't mean it in that sense (-) Stuart wants to be the big macho and very much (-) he's of mixed race and I think that may be the source of confusion for him... (2.8-11)

The problem of being black yet not black is presented as an important aspect of Stuart and a source of his problems.⁽²⁵⁾ Towards the end of the interview, when discussing him as appropriate for fostering, he is further described as nice but with 'these worrying periods', and also little yet big:

...he'll get a lot out of a family and I think he's a little boy he's nearly 16 and he's big but (-) he (-) it sounds sippy doesn't it but he's a nice kid (-) put it this way the last social worker felt that if her home circumstances were different she would be prepared to take Stuart home and I felt I'd be prepared to take Stuart home actually do that type of thing because he's just a nice playful kid (-) it's just these periods which are quite serious and quite worrying... (11.8-15)

The struggle to handle him being 'little yet big' is attended to by bringing in a trusted witness and a personal positioning. Such an affirmation of potential personal commitment is unusual in these data, and is offered as an extreme case formulation, needing a strong justification. The "put it this way" (rather than another way)

formulation is a further relativising construct, telling the reader that there are different ways to see things, and here is a personal one, linking back to her initial "biased" positioning.

At other points in the interview, a categorisation is made of Stuart without a relativising contrast. When asking permission from a council committee to apply for admission to a youth treatment centre (YTC), a categorisation of 'at risk to himself and others' is made.

...we were saying that out of concern for Stuart we were saying that he is at considerable risk if he is left in the wrong place and getting into very serious trouble and other people were at risk because he could hurt them because when he blows (-) I don't think he realises what he is doing and we were saying that unless we take the necessary steps Stuart is going to end up in very seriously trouble and we haven't offered any protection at all in trying to come to terms with the anger he is feeling (-) if you don't let him go (to the YTC) he's going to cause havoc. (6.23-31)

Here the categorisation "at considerable risk" is oriented to a specific audience, and to avoiding potential blame. Whilst it is not suggested that the "we were saying" formulation excludes a "we believe" element, the description is offered as strategic for the committee, warning them of potential criticism and "havoc", if they do not act. The categorisation is for a specific audience, and thus relative. A few minutes later, when the interviewer asks about the violent outbursts, they are underscored by an alternative, categorical version of Stuart:

When he was at (secure unit) I don't think they could understand why we were taking it all so seriously what a nice lad he didn't present much hassle so in that sense he just (-) Stuart can get annoyed at the simplest things.... (7.8-12)

Another version of Stuart is presented from a different trusted witness, who can be heard to relativise the version offered to the committee. The use of reported speech 'what a nice lad' is here used to provide a supporting voice. Another audience is, however, seen as reacting differently to a categorisation of violence:

Interviewer: *did the children's homes come up with anything*

Social worker: *personally I don't think so 'cos you've got into wanting to see the report (-) this is a violent child (-) and a bit of me can cope with this ok I've not done residential work and a bit of me can cope with the*

staff feeling it's important wanting the kid they take in to mix with the group that's already there and there won't be too much violence but the other bit of me thinks damn it we've got to take the risk not put him outside to other risks... (10.3-10)

The two 'bits' of the social worker can be heard to debate the two sides of Stuart, as the depiction of violence is related to a specific, local concern of residential staff, rather than an 'objective' categorisation. The audience is shown to be the warrant for a categorisation, and the hearer is thus instructed not to use the reactions of residential staff as a basis for a categorical depiction.

This section has demonstrated Stuart as depicted in a variety of 'X but not X' formulations. He is nice but has difficulties, he is black but not black, he is little but big, he is at considerable risk when reporting to a council committee, he is violent when considered by a residential worker.

2.3.1.2 Stuart as difficult to handle but easy

The 'X yet not really X' formulation is also made available in describing Stuart's violent behaviour and its handling. There are examples of the violence being acknowledged, with descriptions of him being out of control and unpredictable:

...(he needed) specialist help because when he blows he blows... (2.11-12)

...I don't think he realises what he is doing... (6.27)

...on the whole I would say that you cannot be clear when it's going to happen it might be the slightest thing... (7.26-8)

On other occasions, however, the violent behaviour can be heard as relative. The 'X yet not X' formulation is applied in three ways. First, his violence is not as bad as a categorical depiction implies. He has been involved in violent incidents, but on closer study they are not that violent, considering the context or his history.:

...I think basically he came into care because he tried to strangle his little sister which sounds awful but she's an awful little kid do you understand me you've got to put it in those terms... (2.6-8)

...he was also on a rape charge but he was involved in so far as he held down the girl whilst the others did what they had to do so he was very much on the periphery... (3.29-31)

Interviewer: *were there a lot of offences*

Social worker: *no I wouldn't say a lot (-) what he has done has been serious I think (looking at the file) I can't remember but not a lot considering what he has been through you'd have expected more... (12.17-21)*

The reader is given explicit instructions about how apparently clear categorical violent or delinquent behaviour, can be re-interpreted and not taken at face value.

Second, the social worker questions how far the categorisation of violent behaviour can be separated from its handling.

...if you say Stuart I'm not going to be perturbed because you know this is the situation there's reasonable bits to him... (1.28-9)

...Stuart was causing problems at (residential school) and they were like it was on the balance but equally I was a bit concerned about the help that Stuart needed whether he was getting it there... (2.30-33).

Third, and related, Stuart is seen as in some way in control of the outbursts:

...he knows that people have an idea of how violent he can be and he will use it... (1.27-8)

...Stuart responds to that sort of regime (a secure unit) he knows how far he can go and he knows the consequences... (6.33-4)

...he's got this image of himself... Stuart wants to be the big macho... (3.8-11)

Thus, despite agreeing that Stuart exhibits violent and uncontrolled behaviour, the storyteller relativises any categorical depiction as a violent character through deploying context, history, handling and Stuart's own manipulation of his violent reputation.

2.3.1.3 Social Services Intervention

The third feature in categorising Stuart is, what sort of social services intervention has/ought to have been offered? A grand theory might interpret this as a 'justice versus welfare' issue - should a character like Stuart be punished or treated? On

occasion, the social worker appears to attend to such a dichotomy:

...it went to court and we were hoping that rather than Stuart going to youth custody which we felt wasn't going to do him much good we were trying to argue could we have some sort of long term secure order so that we could actually put Stuart in a specialised place a youth treatment centre but they (the court) wouldn't agree with that and he went back to youth custody... (4.5-10)

Youth custody is seen as punishment and youth treatment centre as treatment. Closer examination of the work done by the social worker and the interviewer, however, shows that such an opposition is persistently challenged and made uncertain. The problem for the reader is to wonder what constitutes punishment or treatment, and further how Stuart is depicted in relation to regimes and institutions. First, a secure unit is depicted as a place where Stuart is sent when "he blows", both because it is a lock up but further because he gets on well there:

...Stuart responds to that sort of regime he knows how far he can go and he knows the consequences so he's quite well behaved in that sort of setting... (6.33-7.1)

...he ended up going to the secure unit which is something which Stuart responds well quite well he likes well not likes but the limits there are no hassle to Stuart this is a sort of peculiarity with him (2.24-7)

The formulation that Stuart likes, well not likes but copes with secure units, is reflected in the earlier comment (in section 2.3.1.1) of the secure unit staff being recruited as supporters of the depiction as "a nice lad". That he likes (no tolerates) secure accommodation is offered as further meta-assessment on the constructing of his unusual character - he is unusual because it is unusual to like (no tolerate) secure accommodation.

Second, the status of both youth custody (YCC) and youth treatment centres (YTC) are not clearly separated into treatment or punishment. The YTC has some disadvantageous features of custodial regimes and YCC offers treatment:

...this man (at the case conference said) you're talking about a boy who is easily influenced if he goes to to YTC he's going to be mixed up with those types... (4.30-2) ⁽²⁶⁾

Interviewer: *(YCC) tries to sell itself as offering treatment*

Social worker: *yeah they have a psychologist there and she was trying the*

behaviour relaxation model... (5.13-16)

Third, a series of other treatment interventions were tried and their failure outlined. The 'X but not X' feature is made available. The appropriate intervention is heard as unsuccessful, he needs treatment but when offered it does not work. The formulation is different, in that the quest for treatment is not relativised but excused. It is not suggested that Stuart will not benefit from treatment, even when challenged by the interviewer. Rather, the treatment offered so far had been inadequate in a variety of ways. He remains X (a suitable case for treatment), but this attempt did not work.

Social worker: *from when he was nine I think the psychologist at that point was saying that he did not feel that the normal school environment was suitable for Stuart (-) he needed a specialised place from nine*

Interviewer: *and that is what he had*

Social worker: *yeah but those specialised places that we have attempted to find have not fitted the bill not at all... (11.27-32)*

At the time of the interview, Stuart is in a B&B hotel and an application for YTC is continuing. Despite the many uncategorisable aspects of Stuart, the social worker still seeks that elusive treatment that Stuart needs. The interviewer, perhaps ironically, sums up the gap between the interventions which are being pursued:

Interviewer: *so in fact the options are about as wide apart as they could be ultimate control to ultimate freedom*

Social worker: *yeah (-) bizarre he's caught in that... (12.12-4)*

One reader appears to have taken on the two possible constructions of social services intervention. The social worker retorts by re-emphasising the dilemma as directly because of Stuart's unfinalised, unpredictable character. Such an immediate response can be heard as a defending against any move which might blame the current situation on something other than Stuart's ambiguous character.

In summary, in this interview, the depiction of the character of Stuart, his behaviour and the possibility of social services intervention are heard in various 'X but not really X' formulations. The storytelling frequently comments on its own use of 'X but not X'. This is an important formulation. The construction of depictions and categories, which see apparent contradictions as co-existing in the same characterisation, offers a way out of Gilbert and Mulkey's (1984:14) abandoning the search for consistency and definitive versions of events and people. People can exhibit opposing attributes of categorical oppositions. It suggests that the dialogic, unfinalised character in novels since Dostoevsky are commonplace in everyday character assessment. The more we know people, the less we are likely to be able to make categorical and finalised assessments of them. Is this formulation restricted to interviews?

2.3.2 Case files notes

Entries from the case file, in which depictions of Stuart are made available, are presented in Appendix 8.2. They cover the period around the time of this interview and the next three months. As was discussed in chapter 3, case file entries can be read as a 'contract' recording 'normal transactions' between client and agency (Garfinkel 1967:198). They record activities which are available to be pieced together by an 'entitled' file reader. Whilst files do not always record all activities, the many events of this period describe almost daily activity by a 'duty officer'.⁽²⁷⁾ During this period, Stuart stayed in the B&B hotel until the end of May, and then embarked with a friend on a spree of burglary and car crime across the country. In July, he moved into a hostel where he stayed until a court case in December.

Latour (1987:41) notes that the success of knowledge claims depends on later readers. Were the duty social workers who acted during this period in B&B placement and the offending spree, guided by the team leader's X but not X character depiction? Did they characterise him as 'nice but with difficulties' in their dealings with other institutions and officials?

The file entries describe the work done by the duty officer - a telephone call, letter, office interview or visit. It is a record of action with those outside the office, the writing of which informs the next duty officer of what has been done, and

possibly what needs to be done next. On occasion, messages to later readers of the file include not only details of action, but also characterisations of Stuart with suggestions as to what to do next. Appendix 8.2 includes those file entries between March and July which included such characterisations, assessments and hints as to the way that Stuart was being depicted by the duty officers.⁽²⁸⁾

Unlike the interview, the duty officers' characterisations of Stuart make use of a straightforward and easily categorisable depiction - he has a history of disruption and is violent. Such a categorisation can be read to inform much of their activity. The depiction of his history of violence is attended to as matter-of-fact in dealings with potential placements, and is reported as one of the main reasons for lack of success. In the entry of 6/3, a voluntary organisation reports that, along with his age, "his violence" is the reason for there being no placements. Similarly, in the 17/3 entry his "character" and "past history" are made available to account for the refusal of two children's homes.

The summations do not make available any further explanation nor refinement, since such a categorisation is enough. In the first 17/3 entry, the existence of a vacancy in a children's home is nullified by "Stuart's character" which is "a risk to other children and indeed staff".⁽²⁹⁾ The latter comment adds an extra upgrading of the "risk", not merely to children but staff. It cannot be toned down or ignored (as in document 3 in chapter 7, Donna's profile to children's homes). Even the remand unit in entry 5/6, which it might be assumed is used to young people in serious trouble, is made aware of "his previous history", and warns of a repetition of "previous behaviour of a violent sort". The term "past history" can be read as synonymous with his violence, as in the 17/3 entry, concerning the second children's home. Whilst the social worker in the interview has depicted Stuart as complex and not easily categorisable, the duty officers respond to the violent attribute, apparently to the exclusion of the "nice bits".

The social worker in the interview had commented on, and illustrated, how Stuart should be handled (section 2.3.1.2). The instructions to carers and file readers are to handle with care. The 7/3 entry can be read as warning the B&B owners and justifying their capacity to cope - previous foster experience and school caretaker. The duty officers themselves report continual difficulties - not giving into his mood 28/5,

threatened to go thieving 16/6, extremely difficult and rude 18/6. These incidents are not depicted as beyond what the duty officer can handle, but they are heard as typical when handling Stuart. Unlike in the interview, there is no implied criticism of those having to handle him. Furthermore, the overall social services intervention is doubted by one of the duty officers. Whilst the social worker in the interview had continued to seek treatment, the duty officer of 11/6 presents an alternative approach - let him sort out his own problems. This is reported not merely as a description of action taken, but can be read to challenge the team leader to re-orientate social services' approach to her 'plan' and asks for support and comments. No reply is recorded.

It has been demonstrated that the relativised depiction of Stuart presented in the interview has not informed the construction of character in the case file entries. A categorised depiction of Stuart as violent is made available in the case file entries, which was suggested as unheard but attended to in the interview. Such a categorical depiction can be heard as deployed as the determining factor of events and responses, and is directly tied to describing action - how to report on decisions taken and their justification. Perhaps the 'violent' category is a particularly strong aspect of character in these sorts of situations, and its mere suggestion warrants strong rhetorical attention. The social worker in the interview does not deny his violence, but attempts to explain, and hence underscored it. No similar relativising of Stuart's behaviour is made available in the case file entries.

In summary, categorical and relativising work can be read in contrary ways in the research interview and the case notes. There is no suggestion of 'X but not X' in the case notes; Stuart is depicted and attended to as 'X'. In the interview, Stuart remains ambiguous. The case of Donna in chapter 6, offers similar categorical and relativising reactions to her sexual behaviour. Indeed, most social work reports contain topics which could engender high moral panic - drugs, absconding, self harm, bizarre behaviour. Categorisation and particularization appear to be attended to in a variety of ways. Differences of audience, reading occasions and perhaps topic can be heard to engender different degrees of relativity. For the duty officer finding a resource, it is suggested that their daily communication with resource providers depends on monologic character depictions and clear categorisations - what sort of person is this, and, in particular, what sort of handling problems will they present.

2.3.3 Court Report

In December, Stuart appeared in court for a range of offences committed during this period and later. From July to December, he had a more stable period in a hostel and a new social worker. However, the offences had mounted, and he was asked to leave the hostel just before the court appearance. It was unlikely that he would receive anything other than a custodial sentence, and the social worker's report does not suggest an alternative to a custodial sentence:

Due to the seriousness of the offences in question, I feel I cannot make a recommendation. (lines 30-1)

The absence of an explicit recommendation is unusual in court reports.⁽³⁰⁾

The structure of the court report offers sections headed 'Social History', 'Background' and 'Stuart'. The last section is presented in Appendix 8.3. The 'History' and 'Background' make available a chronology of his earlier childhood, his family relations and the range of unsuccessful social services interventions. 'Stuart' offers a character depiction. Unlike the categorical characterisations of the case file, Stuart is now hard to categorise, and presented in a complex 'X but not really X' formulation. A clear recommendation can be heard as impossible given this complex character. Perhaps the apparent inevitability of the outcome allows the social worker the licence of an uncategorisable formulation. It can also be read as an excuse for the many previous failed interventions. A straightforward recommendation would have offered a straightforward character depiction.

The section headed 'Stuart' is split into two paragraphs, making available first, a depiction of Stuart, and second, his behaviour. Such a split can be heard to echo the "nice but has had difficulties" summary, which opened the interview. The person is separated from his difficult behaviour. The initial description as a "sturdy, energetic boy who immediately adopts an offensive nature" (lines 2-3) offers the reader a description of someone who could be capable of the history just described. However, this depiction is underscored as an unintentional reaction of someone scared by "new situations", not of deliberate aggression. It is also caused by "his insecurity", which had already been linked to his relationship with his mother. Any aggression is thus heard as situational and not his fault - it is underscored in both occurrence and blame. He is therefore X but not in all aspects of the category.

The not X description can now be heard as a contrast, signalled by "however" (line 4). Structuring the description in situational terms, reveals those occasions when he "relaxes and becomes more amicable and friendly", "pleasant and lovely" (lines 6-7); terms with a strong alternative depiction, contrasting with the aggressive depiction. However, the not X description is itself relativised, since the pleasant/lovely aspects are only reserved for a few people. As these privileged/patient people are not identified, they are not able to speak on his behalf. Stuart remains an enigma, as not only are the categorisations 'aggressive/lovely' juxtaposed, but they are available in only limited situations. The reader is left wondering what he is like the rest of the time.

The second paragraph continues the pattern of setting up descriptions to undermine them. He looks older than he is, but degenerates to be younger (lines 10-11). He requires intervention to place boundaries around his behaviour, but is becoming too big for it (lines 11-17). The final sentence begins "on the other hand" as a hope against the abandonment of effort, which the previous sentence implied. However, there is further undermining of any hopeful outcome - he craves affection but his response is only superficial (line 20). In summary, he requires treatment but is getting too big, he can respond sometimes, but only superficially. Every claim is relativised and hence undermined. At all points, the reader is stopped from making any categorical assessments.

The court report returns to and extends the 'X but not X' characterisation of Stuart. The monologic, categorical depictions in the case file enable the duty officers to justify their action on clear characterisations. Here, no course of action is legitimated, even the treatment approach of the interview is no longer a realistic option. The conclusion begins:

Stuart has some very serious emotional problems that require expert help in unravelling over a long period of time. (lines 27-8)

There is however an unheard recommendation in the conclusion where he is depicted as responding "only to those (establishments) with a strict regime where boundaries have to be strictly adhered to". This is not merely a negative recommendation - I don't know what to do, do what you think. "Strict regime" echoed by "strictly adhered to" can be heard by the judge as a clear recommendation for a custodial sentence. There

is no recommendation but then again there is.

2.3.4 Summary

This analysis of three texts which depict Stuart, has suggested that they offer different versions of his character, behaviour and social work intervention. The 'X but not X' formulation can be heard as a rhetorical feature, which continually categorises and relativises Stuart, his behaviour and what to do. The uncertainty for the reader is how to hear these characterisations. They can be heard to confuse rather than convince us that Stuart is being adequately represented. The ratified reader of the interview may accept the picture of conflicting attributes, but can they be resolved? The ratified reader of the case notes might also accept that the duty officer is constrained by many other audiences. The ratified reader of the court report may accept that there is no alternative to a custodial sentence, and concur with an opportunity to let the court know both how hard the department has tried, and that not all has been a failure. But the critical reader is only confused. S/he might suspect that the unheard objective version of Stuart is overpowering any attempt to depict him sympathetically; he is really a pretty difficult character, and, as one duty officer suggests, should be left to himself. 'X but not X' depictions of Stuart appear in two of the three texts, and far from building a round, dialogic complex depiction, the reader is likely to be more influenced by the unheard story.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has developed the search for 'the other' by considering how clients are depicted in social work accounts. Three questions were asked at the beginning of the chapter. First, were unheard versions available to be discovered, 'the other'; second, what opportunities were there for gaps and slippage, where the text undermined its own logic; and third, were character depictions heard as adequate by a critical reader, as opposed to the ratified reader? The analysis of the three clients has offered different characterisations, in terms of a categorical/relativised depiction. Mr King was constructed in categorical terms: he is a child abuser. The negotiation of the case conference and display of rhetorical power of the social workers could be seen to dismiss attempts to relativise the category into subcategories. The outrage of the

ascription, child abuser, was re-established. Future action was clear, the alternative version not given a chance. With Sarah, despite an earlier complex and 'round' character depiction, the later report aims to depict her in categorical terms. This can, however, be read as weak, defensive and possibly, deceptive. A critical reading suggests gaps and an alternative heroic depiction of Sarah. The third case, Stuart, moves between relativised and categorical depiction in different texts in different contexts. However, the relativised depiction 'X but not X' is not heard as 'round' but as confusing. The character depiction and its unheard alternative are intertwined, the latter appearing to overpower the former.

Overall, readings of these social work texts for adequacy of representation have shown that character depictions of clients can be undermined, with gaps and slippage exploited by critical reading. Alternative versions have been made available, suggesting that 'the other' is accessible. These alternative depictions - Mr. King as potential for treatment, Sarah as a heroine, Stuart as a violent character - are, of course, not offered as superior to the preferred depictions, and other depictions might be envisaged. The importance of this analysis is that social work representations of character face intense scrutiny in arenas of 'principled positions of doubt' (Cuff 1980:32). Unless the reader is tightly bound to the community of social work hearers and are ratified readers, then doubt can be anticipated.

Another implication of this thesis is how the link between depiction and action is negotiated. It was suggested with Mr. King, that strong categorisation enabled strong action, whereas with Stuart, confusing depiction was tied to uncertain action. Action and depiction are tied to one another, they mutually elaborate one another. Does this suggest that monologic, categorical depictions are a product of their being determined by the straightforward direction of action? Plot determines character, a- psychological stories. Mr. King is constructed in categorical terms, as the only action available requires decisive decision, he is a child abuser and must be excluded from the house. The treatment possibilities are not available, hence the therapeutic categorisation is not acceptable. Where action is uncertain or multi-directional, then complex depictions can be made available. Character depictions are heard to overpower plot, justifying the uncertainty of action. Stuart's ambiguity is heard to render any action as inappropriate. The middle of these two extremes, where action

is less contested, for example in the interview with Sarah, depictions can be heard as 'round'. There is less requirement to depict character in order to justify action. Action and depiction are separated, as they are less mutually accountable.

Has a critical reading been taken too far? Perhaps we should pull back from asserting that action determines depiction, or that social work depictions are weak and inadequate, easily replaced by the unheard story. The more modest claims of this chapter should be that depicting character in social work accounts is complex and variable, with a variety of categorical and relativised formulations of clients being made available. Such formulations are likely to vary with audience and reading occasion. Chapters 7 and 8, on the search for 'the other', and more critical reading, are offered as possibilities for wider debate in a field of research, reluctant to go beyond describing benign construction. In the next chapter, the conclusion, we discuss further links between construction, deconstruction and what claims can be made from this research.

CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

Social Worker: You haven't really handled my questions about the abused child, have you? You have ignored them since chapter 4.

Thesis Writer: You mean those 'quiddity' problems. No, that has been a disappointment. I did 'cop out' like other writers. I merely separated texts about child abuse as the construction of professionals, from the abusing behaviour, and said that it is impossible to move from one to the other without massive storytelling and rhetorical activity.

Social Worker: Well, that's not much help to me, is it? Can't you tell me anything about how I can get better at predicting and preventing child abuse? How can I know what is going on out there?

Thesis Writer: You misunderstand me. At the beginning of this research, I had so hoped to come up with some answers which would help you (and the children, of course!). After struggling with 'data' and writing this thesis, I have only uncovered more questions, and undermined more positions. But such scepticism is not aimed at social work, anymore than at social science or social policy. All attempts at representation are equally available to be scrutinised for their rhetoric and narrativity.

I am not claiming that you aren't as near to the 'whatness' of the phenomenon as anyone can be - perhaps you are, I don't know. What I think I can help you with is your efforts to describe and report on issues like child abuse or delinquency. I'll discuss it later in this chapter. The individual I am letting down is the abused child, not you. How can we help her or him? I'm not sure what theory would help us approach that problem, perhaps Foucault's later work?

Social Worker: So you don't agree with the Daily Express, that we don't know what we are doing and have too much power?

Thesis Writer: Well, I don't subscribe to the media's view that some foolproof system of policing people and deviance is waiting to be discovered. But I do think you are unaware of your own rhetorical and narrative activities in constructing your clients, their problems, and your intervention.

Social Worker: You mean like the Tory Government's recent claims to have the right policies, but not getting them over properly? Getting our public relations improved?

Thesis Writer: Oh not that, although performance is about presentation to some extent.⁽¹⁾ What I have tried to show is that your assessments, descriptions, decisions, plans, theories, conventions, meetings, reports all depend crucially on your rhetorical and narrative performances. By

paying attention to how you perform social work accounting practices, you might be better able to sort out what is helpful and what is not. I am not suggesting policy suggestions do not follow from this study, but the implications are up to you. I have already made more preferred/dispreferred statements than I should.

Foucault (1981:12-3) goes further. When asked whether 'Discipline and Punish' stifled attempts at prison reform, he does not consider that the answer is in the hands of the social workers:

My project is precisely to bring it about that they (social workers) no longer know what to do, so that the acts, gestures, discourse which up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult and dangerous... What is to be done ought not to be determined from above by reformers, be they prophetic or legislative, but by a long work of comings and goings, of exchanges, reflections, trials, different analyses... The problem is one for the subject who acts.

I would support Foucault's position to the extent that constantly questioning how your assessments are constructed and listening to alternative voices, may encourage you to be more circumspect. I think there is a major difference, however, when protecting children; you (and I) cannot leave reform to the clients. They are too young and vulnerable, but policies to give them a voice can perhaps be encouraged (yes, I know this is already happening and was criticised in the Orkney Report⁽²⁾, so it isn't any answer in itself - but no 'policy' ever is). I have been more impressed by your round/relativised character depictions than by your flat/categorical ones. I liked your struggles to fit people into boxes rather than your confident assertions about culpability. Such struggles are ultimately more persuasive of critical readers, as Forster (1974:54) suggests:

The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat. If it does convince, it is flat pretending to be round.

Social Worker 2:⁽³⁾ This sounds so indecisive. Do you want to turn the clock back to those days when children were 'drifting in care' (Rowe and Lambert 1972); when social workers did not make effective plans quickly; when we were rightly ridiculed for being woolly-minded. You want to step back from the progress of the permanence movement...

Thesis Writer: No, please. I refuse to get embroiled in the rights and wrongs of social policy. Like Foucault above, it is local "comings and goings" that seem to me important, not some overarching movement. This thesis has, I hope, demonstrated the influence of local and interactional constructions and readings. Any grand concept is easily subsumed in local activity - a trans-racial placement is justified (as in case P.1), a residential home is preferred to fostering (as in Mandy's case, chapter

7) - both contrary to policy.

Social Worker: I think, in general, you have been relatively sympathetic to our dilemmas, even if you have not really helped us with what to do about them.⁴

Thesis Writer: I don't think you will be able to get easy answers from other sources. Whilst I haven't provided you with recipes, you should be sceptical about others who attempt to do so. And I have suggested that looking to local and interactional features of reading occasions might offer opportunities for understanding your performances.

Sceptic: I will not be won over quite so easily.

Thesis Writer: I was worried you might reappear.

Sceptic: Yes, I'm your 'other', your unheard voice. These dialogues and multi-logues are all very interesting, but they are not enough to disguise some of the realist tendencies in your work. I have three complaints.

First, let's face it, you have not been consistent about stories as existing only when they are read - that they are interactionally produced on reading occasions, as opposed to being fixed entities, containing a structure outside their consumption. You have kept wanting to say social work texts are stories. All this 'available to read as...' could easier be replaced by 'is', with little change to the sentence. Did not Collins and Yearley (1989:32-3) re-write Callon's 'radical symmetry' in the "conventional language of the history of science." Aren't your commentaries on the texts frequently suggested as more accurate versions of what the reading occasion is 'really' about. So in chapter 4, the social worker is not describing an external reality, but he is performing a blaming. It 'is' a blaming.

Second, you say that stories only exist in their reading, but, especially in the last two chapters, you were moving from text to reality rather easily. You seemed to imply that some stories, like the first text about Sarah, was somehow nearer to the 'real' Sarah than the second text. That Sarah exists out there, and the first text was more accurate than others at capturing her. Surely, your placing of texts next to one another to make ironic contrasts implies that the texts are about the 'same' case. But it is you who has set up the contrasts, and you who has juxtaposed one version against another.

Third, you are also really quite taken in by stories as organising reality, aren't you. I bet if pushed you'd agree with Carr (1986) that stories already exist as ways of organising our experience, or with Labov and Waletzky (1967) that stories have a structure, which anyone can read. Isn't that what a number of the champions of theories of narrative think? That stories are pretty independent of reading relations. Most of the

sources you quote do not claim relativism like you do.

Social Worker: I kept wondering about the basis for some of your claims. It is rather nice to hear them put under the microscope for a change. I am pretty fed up with being the only one making all the narrative slips and rhetorical deceptions.

Thesis Writer: Well, this is pretty strong criticism, and, coming at this point of the thesis, rightly puts into perspective any claims I may try to make in this Conclusion. I agree it has not been easy to keep a consistent line. Now it is my turn to be defensive.

It is true that I have not been wholeheartedly committed to the deconstruction project concerning 'reality', although I do go along with the criticism of metanarrative and the focus on local stories. I accept Social Worker's everyday dilemmas about what is real or not, and the quiddity discussion earlier is something I would have liked to have developed further. I did not want to get into an endless series of 'meaning variance'. Actors are pretty good at reading meaning, 'for all practical purposes', even if it is temporary. On the other hand, I am conscious how impossible it is to move from representations to an uncontested reality. So representations, texts, versions, stories are all we have; they are reality. As Woolgar (1983:240) notes 'the problem' is:

what grounds provide the warrant for the relationship between the objects of study and statements about those objects?

Is 'reality' made available or constituted by accounts? As Woolgar notes, we all tend to move between positions in relation to 'the problem'. I have tried to suggest to Social Worker that any reality is only available through her/his representations. These are complex constructions, not neutral instruments by which entities can be clearly observed (remember the telescope discussion from chapter 1). So I'm caught in the middle of wanting to gain access to a 'reality', but realising that it isn't possible. It's hard to remain consistent in treating representations as occasioned, interactional, local, available only on the occasion of their reading, when 'reality' appears so... real.

Whilst it has been tedious to continue to use "can be heard as... is available as..." etc., it is very important to take seriously the precise use of words, as this thesis has demonstrated. The reluctance to affirm interpretations is central (and remember the controversy that followed Collins and Yearley: Woolgar 1992a, Callon and Latour 1992). I have not claimed that my commentaries on the texts are superior versions of what is happening. In chapter 8, I did suggest how alternative versions could be made available. Sarah as an heroic character or Mr. King as potential for therapy were 'possible' stories, which, with changes in reading

relations and occasions, could have been envisaged as adequate readings of the 'facts'. More important, I was interested in pointing to the rhetorical and narrative features, which enabled the story to be read; how are reading occasions achieved? (How does the scientist interact with and achieve images of Mars rather than how accurate is that image, to repeat the metaphor). I was drawn to make comments on how accounts made use of weak or strong formulations. I thought I said that these formulations 'could be heard as' weak or strong if you are the right kind of reader - the ratified reader or superaddressee. I was clear that other readers may have different interpretations. Yes, the juxtaposition of texts was ironic, but these documents came from the 'same' file or talk about the 'same' case, so others were attending to them as the 'same' case, person or topic.

Your third point that I was taken in by stories. Yes, again I am drawn to the idea of storytelling as a way of organising experiences and reading reality. These accounts seemed like stories, as do so many accounting practices - sorry, they are available to be read as stories. Social workers explain their clients, their work and justify linking the two, not by assertions of professional categorisation, but by telling stories, as I think I have shown. For example, in the 'failure to thrive' case in chapter 4, the social worker could have said 'this is a 'failure to thrive' case as Dr. So-and-so proved with his scales, so we did X and Y'. Instead, we were able to hear a detailed 'story-like' account which set people, events, scales into a complex chronological formulation with heroes and villains, trials and resolutions. No, I am sure these accounts accomplish communication with readers and display and constitute social work on the basis of rhetorical and narrative features. Yes, I am taken in by the 'power' of storytelling, but I'm in pretty good company.

SO WHERE HAVE WE GOT TO?

At the beginning of this thesis, the problem outlined was how to approach social work accounting. The factual/rational approach had already been abandoned, has the sceptical/textual project been more successful? Have we a 'clearer' view of social work, or just more uncertainties? What has been gained by problematising the 'facts' of social work? This thesis has offered a wide-ranging investigation of social work accounting practices as texts and as available to be read as stories and storytelling performances. This conclusion offers a review of where the argument has brought us. What have been the main themes of the thesis? What issues have not been

adequately explored? What claims can be made? What are the implications for sociology, social policy and social work?

1 THEMES

The main theme of this thesis has been to investigate social work accounting as narrative, in contrast to the conventional 'realist' approach. This conventional approach sees social work documents and conversations as (more or less) accurate representations of social work interventions, social workers' clients and their attributes. Initially, this research explored the 'realist' approach, but found it to be flawed, as it ignores the textual nature of representations, and was found to be inoperable. The alternative presented in this thesis has approached social work accounts as available to be read as stories, as texts constituted through rhetorical performances and reading relations.

The theme of narrative or stories was found to be of increasing interest, with many theoretical positions from different disciplines. The preferred approach of this thesis has been to investigate the local, interactional and occasioned nature of stories and storytelling. Social work accounts as narratives have been explored in their performance, the occasions on which they are read. Such stories make available story structures, with heroes and villains, plots, character and point of view. Investigating stories has been far from straightforward, since it was not proposed to rely on identifying story structure as available independent of the occasion of reading. Stories are only available in the activity of reading, and hence the construction of the reader is required in order to read story structure. Having accepted this prerequisite, social work accounts approached as stories could be heard to be structured around, for example, changes between one state of affairs and another, the reaching of critical pivotal points and definitive events. The development of narrative plot could be heard in the movement from critical situation through complication to resolution. A chronological structure was also made available as a 'pathing device', to help guide and instruct the reader to travel the route with the storyteller. Other narrative features were the 'narrative puzzle', where unresolved stories encouraged the listener to go further, and synecdoches, where small stories were made available to stand for larger claims.

The approach to narratives has taken on a large and small purview. Narrative features have been located in reading whole accounts as stories - interviews, reports; and in the analysis of fragments of textual organisation - exchanges, descriptions, contrasts. Reading stories involves piecing together episodes, synecdoches, cameos, incidents, as contributing to an overall performance of accounting as 'the' story of the social work case. At the level of the sentence or turn, there has been an exploration of rhetorical structures, which enable claims to be postulated, warranted and used to build the story. A number of persuasive devices have been seen to enable formulations to be constructed and received. For example, extreme case formulations, lists, contrasts and binding instructions have been heard to convince the reader of the strength of the proposition. Weak and strong formulations have been located on the basis of such features. Furthermore, the construction of facts in stories has been observed through building strong networks of entities and allies, which can be heard to support claims and constrain the storyteller. These large and small narrative and rhetorical features have been seen to construct and draw into the story the right sort of reader.

The construction of the reader has been the main approach to reading narrative. What sort of reader and reading relations does the text attend to? A number of reading roles were investigated. First, the ratified reader was constructed to represent the appropriate hearer of the text. What community of hearers was being performed, attended to and persuaded? It was suggested that the ratified reader of the text varied with context and audience addressed. Second, a variant of the ratified reader was the 'superaddressee'. It was suggested that, in some texts, a nonaddressed audience was attended to by reading a text in terms of its appeal to external authorities. The ratified reader is invited to join with the text in approaching the 'superaddressee', the ultimate referent for justification. A third reader was identified as the critical reader. This reader was familiar with the reading conventions, but was encouraged to critically examine the adequacy of the story s/he was reading.

Narrative features have been explored in terms of character, plot and point of view. The depiction of social workers' clients as characters in stories is an important feature. It has been approached in two ways, how is the characterisation constructed, and is it available to be read as an adequate depiction? As regards the first question,

characters were approached as constructed through a variety of moral and factual depictions. Characterisations vary with the occasion of reading, and with the audience being addressed. However, themes of culpability, cooperation, moral integrity and personal history constituted the depictions. The second question of adequacy offered tentative critical readings of character. It was not suggested that characterisations were inaccurate, but depictions could be read as categorical or relativised, round or flat, unfinalised or the last word. By following gaps and slippage, contrasts and juxtaposition, a critical reading could make assessments (Sceptic: be careful!)... could offer interpretations to enable the reader to decide whether or not s/he found the characterisations convincing. Plot and character were seen as intertwined in a variety of ways, with events and strategy frequently being heard to determine character. On other occasions, clients were depicted as too complex to be easily located in a story plot or social worker's strategy. Overall, the depiction of character was found to have been a key variable in distinguishing the telling of complex or cursory social work stories.

Versions and variability is another aspect of investigating social work accounts. There were found to be a mixture of similarities and differences between versions of the 'same' story. Different audiences were clearly addressed differently with presumptions displayed as to the reading conventions of courts, colleagues, resources providers and research interviews. This is seen as more than merely different versions of a definitive construction made available strategically to different audiences. The variability is such that versions, which appear to be definitive, institutionalised and blackboxed, sooner or later, are discarded. While a particular version is being institutionally supported, there are intertextual links between versions and occasions of reading. Strong stories, especially synecdoches, can be heard to be regurgitated. Often similar words and phrases reappeared from previous reading occasions to structure new occasions. In this way, it is suggested that texts constitute and elaborate one another. 'Sameness' or 'difference' are situationally negotiated.

The themes have drawn on a wide range of theoretical constructs, which have not necessarily been integrated nor the contradictions solved. The tensions have been between form and content, structures and interaction, creativity and constraint.

2 LIMITATIONS

Any study has limitations and reservations about the claims that it may make. These are in part the scope of the study, but also the strength of the argument: how confidently can claims be substantiated? How far can themes from literary theory be successfully combined with sociological concepts? In particular, can the range of narrative features, developed from the study of novels, be transferred to an investigation of non-literary texts? One problem has been how to balance an interest in both the analysis of small scale rhetorical formulations, and hearing the 'whole' story. A conversation analyst might criticise this thesis for not developing, for example, the three stage feature of chapter 4 in other texts, while a narratologist may wonder why the structure of a social work story is not studied for its "discernible organisation" (Chatman 1987:21). Recognising and balancing the importance and limitations of both rhetoric and narrativity is not easy.

Any micro-sociological study is limited by how far claims can be generalised from a small number of cases. In this study, 43 social work documents and conversations have been analysed, concerning 28 children and their families. There have been 5 major cases analysed, which account for 16 documents. 12 documents are the journal articles in chapter 4, and there are 9 other fragments of documents analysed in some detail. A further 6 documents have been mentioned as illustrations. Of the 25 documents considered in some detail, 13 were from interviews, 11 from reports and case notes and 1 radio programme of a case conference. Whilst this might be considered a large corpus of data, compared with many micro-analytic studies (Potter and Wetherell 1987:161), it is obviously insignificant compared with the daily production of documents by Social Service Departments, or the social work researchers.⁽⁵⁾ The documents come mainly from one Social Services Department collected between 1986 and 1990, and to some extent are already out of date.⁽⁶⁾ I have however spent time as a researcher in four other Social Services Departments, whilst working on this project, and the documents collected for this study do not seem atypical. These data are offered as typical of the conversations and documents of social workers, but this cannot be substantiated further than by claiming the entitlement of this researcher's experience, and supportive comments of social workers who have read earlier draft chapters.⁽⁴⁾

Criticism might be made about the concentration on accounts in which social workers report on their cases. There is no investigation of social worker-client interaction, and only little discussion of meetings. Of the limited amount of research available on social work discourse, most is concerned with such encounters.⁽⁷⁾ This research explores rather different concerns, especially sequencing (Rostila 1992, Stanley 1991) and bio-power relations (Stenson 1987). Accounting is, however, recommended as an important aspect of exploring how social work is constituted. We do not agree with Stanley's (1991:124) suggestion that studying accounts of social work is less constitutive of social work than analysing social workers' encounters with clients.⁽⁸⁾

An important aspect of this project has been the constitution of weak and strong claims. What resources are deployed to display and warrant claims as weak or strong? To inquire into the claims of the researcher is likely to display a reluctance to make strong assertions. This is compounded by the nature of textual analysis, where generalising from a fragment of conversation to the entire world of social work, requires caution. The commentaries on the accounts are not offered as superior versions of what is going on (despite such an interpretation from Sceptic). The aim has been to show how alternative versions are available to be read. It has also been an aim to suggest how accounting is accomplished rather than what it really means. As discussed above, the uncertain positioning of stories as accomplished on the occasion of reading compared to most narrative theory based on stories with definitive structures, might cast doubt on the appropriation of some concepts.

Overall then, the reservations are many, but self deprecation is a well rehearsed strategy for displaying modesty before making inordinately overblown claims.

3 CLAIMS

The main claim of this thesis is that social work accounts are available to be read as stories. 'Made available' has been approached in two ways: first, 'made available' in the sense of placed before the reader - the performance of the storyteller, and second, 'made available' by the reader seeking out reading relations. In the first, the storyteller is heard to persuade and perform, in the second the reader (re-)constructs the reading circumstances. This has been seen in terms of the ratified and the critical reader.

What is the nature of this claim and how has it been substantiated?

Social work accounts as narrative offers a relationship between the writer, text and reader different from more conventional approaches to such accounts. It does not attempt to assess the accuracy of a claim - is the social worker's report right about Donna? Rather, the aim is to uncover the conventions and reading relations by which it is possible to read the report - how is the text made available to be read as accurate, as a report, as about Donna, as by a social worker, as for a particular reader? Although much has been made of the contrast between 'social work as facts' and 'social work as narrative', the two projects have little in common. They ask different questions and seek different answers.

This project, however, does impact on the 'realist' project, in that, if supported, it suggests a proposition that social work accounts are better approached as stories than reports on an external reality. The history of this project would suggest that this is indeed being proposed. The initial part of the research (as described in chapter 1) failed to discover how social work accounts can be accepted as reporting on external entities. The accounts were found to be too variable in their constructions, and the outcomes too contingent, to allow claims of definitive versions to be identified, let alone tested. It was this failure to link variable versions to an external reality, which changed the direction of the research reported in this thesis.

In substantiating the success of this project, it is claimed that we have demonstrated the availability and the necessity of narrative and rhetorical features to enable the reading of a wide range of social work accounts. The data were not collected with the intention of hearing stories, nor of uncovering rhetorical formulations. The interviews were embarked on in full support of the realist claim to find out what social workers were 'really' doing. The interviewer considered he was hearing about real people, events and social work intervention; he was a participant in a conversation about how social work is constructed, and he played a full part in that construction. The reports were collected as available in the case file, no deliberate selection was intended.⁽⁹⁾

The social work accounts were found to be replete with opportunities and requirements for reading through narrative and rhetorical formulations. It is suggested that reading would be impossible without such instructions, and it is recommended

to seek out more such features. Social workers' claims could be observed to be achieved through contrasts, warrants, displaying factual independence from the storyteller and with the support of allies. Narrativity could be heard constructing characters and their attributes, events and their consequences. More fundamentally, hearing and telling stories enabled entities to be structured into a moral schema, which configures people and events, and set up relations with one another. In this way, the reader and reading relations could be seen to have been made available. Some interviews were oriented to describing people and events with less evaluation or resolution. Even here, descriptions made use of chronological pathing devices and persuasive features to make available an adequate description, if not a 'full blown narrative'. The prevalence of narrative and rhetorical features supports the conclusion that constructing and reading social work accounts would not be possible without such features. To this extent, seeking out narrative and rhetorical features is a fruitful approach for understanding how social work accounts are constituted.

Such a conclusion is in line with an growing interest in textual and discursive approaches to the social sciences. The predominance in conversation analysis and sociolinguistics of studying 'naturally occurring conversation' has been mirrored in the study of professions by concentrating on the professional-client encounter.⁽¹⁰⁾ There is a small amount of research on narrative and narrativity (Pithouse and Atkinson 1988, Hyden 1992). The wide-ranging interest in the study of narrative in literary theory and the human sciences, discussed in chapter 1 and 2, has yet to be developed in the study of the professions, and social work in particular. The claims of narrative theorists to have uncovered storytelling as 'what makes us human' (see chapter 1) are grand, but if developed further could help link the study of social work to wider theories of rhetoric and explanation. Social workers are no longer 'inept', 'do-gooders' nor 'politically correct', but, like the rest of us, trying to tell competent and persuasive stories.

These claims can be further substantiated by the story of this project and the thesis writer. It was never intended at the beginning of this project to come to the conclusion that social work accounts could be approached as stories. The project has been constrained by the material, its possible reading and the author's exposure to other reading communities. When the project was started, I was a social worker

aiming to improve social work practice. This study was associated with (and perhaps related to) a move away from being a social worker. It is easier out of the job to develop a sceptical approach and question sacred conventions. However, having 'been there', I feel able to make claims, recognising that the work is hard, the dilemmas many and the criticism unending. Now, as a researcher involved in social policy research, I remain in the arena of critically observing and commenting on social work practice. Unfortunately, policy does not flow easily from this research, although I remain supportive of social workers' efforts critically to examine their practice.

4 IMPLICATIONS

As later readers, can we return to these cases to discover the apparent 'success' of social work stories? What happened to the children and their families? Did the social work stories discussed in these cases remain strong and definitive, directing future action? Information on the children was collected about two years after the interviews, when returning to the files.

The family in the 'broken arm' case (chapter 3) continued to have problems, and were not able to cooperate with Social Services. Two years later, all the children had been made the subjects of care orders, and alternative family placements were being sought. The children in the 'failure to thrive' case (chapter 4) moved to live with their grandparents soon after the court case, and two years later were still away from their parents. The social worker considered the case was of low priority now, and wondered what all the earlier fuss had been about. Donna (chapter 5 and 6) went through a very disruptive period, constantly absconding from the children's home, with all sorts of allegations of promiscuity. Eventually, she was placed in a secure treatment unit, but this did not last long. When last heard of, she had returned to live with her grandmother, and the case had been closed. Sarah went through a number of unsettled B&B hotels, and, with no social worker, lost touch with the office. The last record was of her making contact with her mother again. Stuart received a custodial sentence, and was away for 6 months. On his release, supervision was passed to the Probation Service. These updates are offered not as the 'real' outcome, since the children, young people and their families have become characters in many other events and stories. As social work cases, however, it is end of the story.⁽¹¹⁾

Whilst many events and stories could have been involved in the changes in the lives of these children, it seems that for most the social work story we heard was short-lived and soon abandoned. Bullock et al (1993) found that a large proportion of children in care return home eventually. Cleveland or Orkney Inquiries note the precipitous nature of strong social work decision-making. Many of the constructions of characters and evaluations changes beyond recognition in the short time they were being observed as a part of this research.⁽¹²⁾ It suggests that social worker' stories are rarely able to blackbox a character in a social work story for long. So why are the stories we have heard apparently so strong and morally protected? Why are characters constructed as categorical and monologic? Why is outrage deployed in situations which are temporary and not easily described? Why, in short, are social workers so apparently sure, and yet, so often apparently 'wrong' (according to their own readings)?

There is, of course, no answer to these questions since 'accuracy' in social work accounting has been approached as an occasioned, rhetorical accomplishment. The success of social work stories should not be sought in their apparent accuracy, but how far they are able to tie entities and characters into their network. The Daily Express has not been tied in, but, in general, judges do not ignore social workers' recommendations. As a group of public workers, they have not been subjected to 'privatisation' as much as other groups, and they have been provided with more rather than fewer responsibilities in the Children Act and the Care in the Community legislation. But a general discourse on the state of social work has not been the subject of this study.

To see social work accounts as received by readers as stories suggests two mutually opposed policy directions for social workers. Make your stories stronger, more robust, more morally persuasive; but accept that they are stories, temporary formulations which will soon change. Perhaps, I do not need to tell social workers to use all the persuasive tactics at their disposal; we have seen that they already do that. The suggestion that they should be aware of their own deception is perhaps something new. They may benefit from recognising the rhetorical and narrative reading relations in which they are involved. For example, whilst a social worker may have access to round, complex depictions of their clients as characters in stories,

decision-making systems can only cope with categorical, monologic ones. Think about your reports in terms of story structures, make your recommendation offer a resolution to a narrative puzzle, which you have set the reader. Simple instructions are important to readers, and categorical statements are heard as demonstrating strength, but can be also easily challenged as 'flat'. The more witnesses the better, even if they do not technically agree with the way they are deployed.... But don't think that you are telling 'the truth', nor be taken in by your own rhetoric.

For social policy research, textually orientated projects are rare and, on the face of it, not easily linked to attempts at social change. Following the failure of so many projects of social engineering, could social policy research embrace the scepticism of recent human sciences? The suggestion of Foucault earlier to avoid large policy changes as the only solution to problems, offers the possibility of fruitful research, focusing on the 'comings and goings of subjects who act'. Silverman (1987:223) advocates various policy suggestions which follow from research of patient-client encounters in clinics. Post-modern writers suggest social sciences should be getting out amongst the people, concerned with local narratives rather than grand theory (Seidman 1992:70, Huyssen,1986). Indeed, collaboration between social policy research, and the aims of post-modernists would seem essential for both sides. The social policy researcher can offer the links with government and the persuasion of 'policy implications'; the social scientist can offer theories of narrative and discourse analysis.

We have already described the increasing interest of narrative analysis across a broad range of the human sciences. How can this interest be combined with the more established areas of micro-sociology, conversation analysis and sociolinguistics? It is likely that formalist and empiricist tendencies in such traditions would need to be subjected to the scepticism of the reflexive and post-modern projects. It does, however, suggest embracing theories of narrative analysis from diverse traditions. Uncovering the power of stories, can link detailed analysis with exploring networks and institutions from below. The end of foundational theory, an interest in local narratives, and the instruction to get out amongst the people, surprisingly, offers encouragement for collaboration between *Space* the interests of social policy researchers, sociologists, social workers and their clients.

Client: I don't see how this is of any help to me? Why should you and your friends help my situation? You haven't in the past.

Thesis Writer: The record of the social sciences has, I admit, been pretty dismissal. But I'm sure that bringing together the established position of social policy research, the humility and scepticism of recent social sciences, and the bite of post-modernism can offer a sharper, and more pervasive critique of society. As Seidman (1997:71) suggests, sociology should be concerned with 'moral analysis':

As general or global analyses of (social problems) give way to densely contextual, local narratives, it would be likely that such studies would be respectful of the complex experiences of the people under study. Discourses of victimisation or heroism would give way to more morally ambiguous accounts. Local narratives are more likely to articulate the viewpoints and concerns of their subjects. In this way, social analysis could function as an important vehicle by which socially marginal or disempowered people gain a public voice.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 1.

1. The case of Maria Colwell concerned a four year old who was returned to her family from foster care and was killed by her stepfather. (Colwell 1974)
2. Adoption used to be seen as an interesting and fairly easy part of social work. A team manager recently told me that social workers are now more reluctant to take on such cases, seeing child protection as 'more rewarding work'.
3. The term 'professional' is not used in this thesis to denote a specific set of occupational characteristics or to discuss issues of power and knowledge. (see for example Friedson 1986). Social work is not always accepted as a profession in these sorts of discussions, being termed a 'semi profession' (Toren 1972) or 'bureau profession' (Dingwall et al 1983). Here social work is approached as a set of occupational activities in a network of other professionals performing tangential and overlapping tasks. The term 'professional' or 'occupational' is used as shorthand for these activities. To use the term 'client' to refer to the users of social workers' services does not infer particular 'professional-client' relations, but is a term commonly used by social workers. The term 'case' is used more often.
4. The depiction of the 'early morning raid' to remove children is a rare occurrence, but may form part of popular conceptions of social work. Since the Children Act 1989, the number of care orders has reduced with many more voluntary arrangements (DOH:1992). With juvenile justice work often specialised, many social workers spend less time in court; when I was first a social worker in the early 1970s it was a weekly occurrence.
5. I was a social worker for 15 years and this thesis was begun in a School of Social Work. The initial aim of the research was to find out why social workers were not planning adequately for children under their supervision, and was rooted in professional concerns and concepts. The change to a sceptical and relativist approach has involved a remarkable reorientation. I no longer work as a social worker.
6. Social workers are also employed by voluntary organisations, the Education Department and the Probation Service. All receive the same training, under a single training council. Another large group of social workers work in residential and day care establishments, but until recently have not received the same training or are untrained. It might be suggested that child care social workers are archetypical. Child care issues receive most press scrutiny and criticism. It is in child care social work where there are some of the strongest legal sanctions, the ability to remove children from their family and provide alternative families. There is also use of court orders and a wide range of social work techniques and resources are deployed.
7. Some social workers are duty officers who deal with first time inquiries and emergencies, assessing and gatekeeping access to resources or directing inquirers elsewhere. This task may be performed by specific social workers who do not hold

a caseload. Alternatively duty is carried out by all social workers on a duty basis; here it is often seen as intrusive, preventing them from working on their caseload.

8. The recent 1989 Children Act implemented in 1991, has changed the legal duties and responsibilities of Local Authorities and many of the words. The term 'care' technically applies only to those situations where the Local Authority obtains a court order on children who are considered at risk of 'significant harm'. The former 'voluntary care' has been replaced by parents being able to ask for 'accommodation' from the Local Authority, without losing parental responsibility. The generic term for all children in care or accommodated is 'looked after'. However, 'children in care' is still used more frequently by social workers than 'children looked after', and, as most of the data were collected before the Act was implemented, 'care' will appear most often in this thesis.

9. Examples of research on social work which are not dependant on social work accounts include consumer studies (Mayer and Timms 1970), ethnography (Pithouse 1987) and outcome research (Parker et al 1991).

10. 'Accounts' and 'accounting' are used by a number of writers to refer only to those occasions on which interaction is fragmented and an account of such disruption is required. However, following Garfinkel, we use 'accounts' in a wider sense to refer to the describing, explaining and justifying of everyday social work activity. This is discussed in section 2.3.4 of this chapter. The term 'document' is also used in this thesis to denote the collection of the conversations and reports of social workers, but without implying their 'account-able' nature.

11. The studies which made up the DHSS initiative on decision making in social work were Packman et al (1986), Millham et al (1986), Vernon and Fruin (1986) and Fisher et al (1986). Packman et al (1984) is an earlier version of Packman et al (1986), which contains more detail on the research methods deployed.

12. Whilst not all such research explicitly acknowledges rational decision making (RDM) theories, the earlier studies of Parker (1971), Rowe and Lambert (1973) and Drezner (1973) established a concern for planning and decision making. Sinclair (1984), Vernon and Fruin (1986) and Hardiker and Barker (1980:198) discuss the work of Simon, the latter recommending a five stage RDM model.

13. In its most extreme form, the Beckford Report (1985) was persuaded by Greenland's model to identify 'lethal family situations'. Beckford (1985:289) considered that:

Society should sanction, in 'high risk' cases, the removal of such children for an appreciable time. Such a policy, we calculate, might save many of the forty or fifty children who die at the hands of their parents every year...

14. The 'science' of rational decision making developed in the 1960s had a strong belief in the determining capacity of the social sciences. I could not find the quote in

Simon (1965) that Sinclair uses, but a similar one is on page 54. On page 51, is the following:

We can predict that in the world of 1985, we shall have psychological theories that are as successful as the theories we have in chemistry or biology today.

Such an approach sounds like the Captain Kirk model of scientifically determined action. Kirk sits in the midst of a plethora of information gathering and analysing agents, machines and humans. Opinion is sought from Spock or Scotty, which Kirk weighs up before deciding on and setting in motion the rational course of action. Whilst for Kirk, action and decisions might appear to be immediately linked to one another, for the social worker everyday activity - making phone calls, writing letters, visiting families - is the major part of their work activity. The earlier (but abandoned) approach to social work decisions in this study suggested that longer term plans for children were easily subverted by everyday contingencies.

15. Vernon and Fruin (1986:119) delineate three groups where plans did not exist on the basis of comments in interviews 'I would hope that..', 'I imagine that...' or assessments that social workers had not 'read the situation sufficiently to allow them to predict the likely outcome'. As already noted, in this approach the use of language is seen as unproblematic and transparent. An 'I would hope' utterance is considered to signify more intentional planning than an 'I imagine that' utterance.

16. For instance Blau and Scott (1962:36-7) consider:

...administrative decisions are highly complex and rationality is limited for various reasons; all the consequences that follow from a given course of action cannot be anticipated; the consequence of action lies in the future and thus are difficult to evaluate realistically, and rationality requires a choice among all possible alternatives, but many of these will never even come to mind and so will not be considered. In short individuals are not capable of making decisions rationally.

17. I went through various unfruitful exercises of breaking up social workers' descriptions of their work in the interviews into 'planning episodes'. This was an attempt to locate periods during which particular aims or strategies were being worked to' - for example in case 3.1 the first aim was to decide if the girl should stop living with her sister, then to find her a children's home, later to find an hostel and then her own flat. Such changes sometimes grew out of the previous plan or were as a result of its failure. However such stages were difficult to separate. They often appeared to run into one another or were even promoted at the same time. In case 1.6, long term ambitions to find a family placement were claimed, whilst at the same time the young person became established in a children's home. The children's home then became the plan.

18. In some cases the change of formulation between one interview and the next was so large that the interviewer wondered if it was the same case. In interview 4.1, the

first social worker felt the child was so disturbed as to need a residential placement away from his home area. The second social worker immediately started to look for a foster home in the child's home area.

19. Uncertainty about the status of the interview data can be illustrated by a 'failed' interview. One day my tape recorder went wrong and I lost about three quarters of an interview. I sat in the car and wondered what to do. It seemed I had three options:

1. Phone the social worker for another interview.
2. Write up the gist of what I produced and show it to the social worker to see if it is an accurate record of what was said.
3. Write up as much as I could remember and accept that I had about as much information as was necessary.

All three seemed inappropriate: 1. any attempt to repeat the interview would probably produce different features, it would be a different encounter, 2. because the social worker would probably agree with me anyway. 3 seemed a loss but the only option. I was able to remember a considerable amount since this was only a few minutes afterwards. However what was the status of this version? It was my recollection of what had been said. Even if generally 'accurate', it was not the words of the social worker and missed her phrases, expressions and formulations. It merged together utterances and smoothed out the joins, producing an abstracted version, the researcher's interpretation outside the encounter. It had become clear that the research interview was a one-off, an encounter which could not be repeated.

20. The term 'configuring' reading relations follows Woolgar's (1991:59) appropriation from computer terminology, and is used to identify a process of setting up an arrangement of definitions and relations between entities, in order to constrain future use. White (1987:173) discusses Ricoeur's approach to 'emplotment' and quotes 'configured' to describe how a plot 'grasps together' events in such a way as to represent what would otherwise be unutterable.

21. For example, Voysey (1975), Atkinson (1978), Baruch (1981), Watson and Weinberg (1982), and Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), Mishler (1985).

22. Potter and Mulkay (1985:269) appear less sceptical of interviews:

Although we have abandoned the traditional assumption that we can infer from interview talk what actually happens in the social realm under investigation, we are nevertheless continuing to assume that we can, in a more restricted sense, generalise from the interviews to naturally occurring situations. For we are assuming that the interactional and interpretative work occurring in interviews resembles to some degree that which takes place outside interviews.

23. The reading of ratified and addressed readers will be discussed in chapter 3 and will be a tension throughout this thesis. As this thesis is distanced from the social work encounters, then the thesis writer and reader are non ratified and illegitimate readers. The challenge for this thesis therefore is to reconstruct and yet stand outside ratified reading encounters.

24. This investigation has available a large number of texts, as outlined in Appendix 1.1. The analysis is concerned with a variety of textual approaches to social work accounts. Whilst similar elements are compared across texts, there will not be an analysis which locates storyable readings across a large number of texts. This is because the detailed analysis is concerned with local and interactional readings of texts. If there were an analysis which located storyable features across a large number of texts, my intuition is that all these texts would contain many storyable features. Silverman (1985:148) does suggest 'simple counting' of conversational features in order to further substantiate claims. The delineation of storyable features in this thesis is not able to make such quantitative claims, yet.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 2.

1. White (1980:5) notes:

The words 'narrative', 'narration' and so on derive via the Latin 'quarus' ('knowing', 'acquainted with', 'expert', 'skilful' and so forth) and 'narro' ('relate,' 'tell') from the Sanskrit root 'gua' ('know').

In this thesis, narrative and story are defined as textual constructions of events, entities and characters; narration and storytelling as the act or performance of such a text; narrativity and storyable describe attributes of a text, which enable it to be read and heard as a story or narrative.

2. A number of writers criticise Foucault's claim for discourse. For example, Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982:65) note:

...it should be clear that in the Archaeology the assertion that discourse is autonomous covers more than the claim that discourse can be made intelligible on its own terms. It is rather the extreme and interesting (if implausible) claim that discourse unifies the whole system of practices and that it is only in terms of this discursive unity that the various social, political, economic, technological and pedagogical factors come together and function in a coherent way.

3. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982:88) for example highlight the problem of distinguishing between everyday utterances and their relationship to serious speech acts.

4. Fairclough (1988:34-5) takes the example of counselling:

Counselling is indeed used to bring the insides of people's heads into the domain of power/knowledge, but it is also a technique for asserting the value and individuality of people in a society which increasingly treats them (as Foucault has shown us) as ciphers. Counselling is highly ambivalent and the manifest complexity of its relationship to power must rule out any claim that its liberating dimensions are just illusory. A more fruitful way forward is the investigation of how counselling works as a discourse technique in practice, including a study of struggles in discourse over its contradictory orientations to domination and emancipation.

Had the texts available to this project been made up of social workers' encounters with clients, it might have been appropriate to take up Fairclough's suggestion to identify practices of domination or emancipation in social work activity.

5. There is some concern that Bakhtin moves too far away from a recognition of institutional power and imposed meaning, what he calls 'monoglossia', in emphasising the disruptive potential of subversion. As Pechey (1989:52) notes:

Bakhtin might be said to undertheorise the ways in which a monoglot hegemony is historically organised and to overestimate the political effectivity of the disunifying and carnivalising forces to which it is opposed. The contending forces seem to be starkly polarised and to operate in abstraction from the institutional sites in which complex relations of discourse and power are actually negotiated: Bakhtin stands (so to speak) in the opposite corner to Foucault.

6. Rosenau (1992:40-1) notes the post-modern critique of sociology:

Sociology is no longer an attempt to understand and bring objectivity to a topic; rather, it is vivid narration of a novel variety, if anything at all... Post modern views of the text shift social analysis away from conventional sociological variables such as age, sex and race, away from historical determinism and Marxist economics. Rather than imposing order and understanding the text, rather than seeking to choose between different analyses, we are simply asked to admire and appreciate it as an 'infinite play of intertextual relationships with other texts'.

To take on the post-modern critique is to relinquish all claims to objective knowledge. Any claim therefore for a version of social work as narrative accepts that other stories are always available and ready to undermine.

7. Pratt (1986:32) proposes to go "amongst the people and let them speak for themselves", whilst Huyssen (1986:157) aims "to interpret daily life but also to transform it". As Rosenau (1992:85) points out:

Replacing theory with everyday life and mini narratives is not without contradictions. Substituting local memories, community truths, raising up what was previously 'disqualified modes of knowledge' may well amount to substituting one version of truth for that which is no longer acceptable (universal truth) and this makes for inconsistency if one is complaining about truth claims in general.

Such a concern with truth claims seems at odds with Rosenau's comment above on the proliferation of stories and the relativity of truth. Celebration of alternative versions surely underplays a concern with truth claims, except as a play of the legitimation of stories.

8. Linguistics has been mainly concerned with the sentence (eg. Brown and Yule 1983), pragmatics with conversation structure and speech acts (Levinson 1983) and conversation analysis with turn taking and sequences (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974).

9. It is rather surprising that Lyotard (1984:9) should refer to pragmatics, Austin and Wittgenstein, when developing his method since much has developed in micro analysis since then. It was perhaps a concern to emphasise the performative nature of language and in particular the tricks in communication. He is more interested in the

conflictual nature of (mis)communication and his concept of 'performativity' is less concerned with the nature of performance as its "efficiency measured in relation to input/output ratios" (1984:88).

10. Labov (1972:361) gives the following example of a minimal narrative:

- a I know a boy called Henry
- b Another boy threw a bottle at him right in the head
- c and he had to get seven stitches

Clauses b and c are narrative clauses being temporarily related to each other but a is a free clause and could be placed anywhere without disturbing the temporal order. This story is however only referential and hence 'empty or pointless' without an evaluative clause.

11. A number of writers have made use of Labov and Waletzky's formulation. for example van Dijk (1987), Polanyi (1985). Stewart (1991:126) links these elements to Aristotle's beginning (abstract, orientation), middle (complication, evaluation and resolution) and end (coda) and considers that:

The lifelong experience of stories that comes from participating in the traditions of his or her culture leads a reader to expect these elements and to perceive as incomplete any story that lacks them.

12. Prince (1973) and Todorov (1977) identify story structure in the change from one state of affairs to another. Propp (1928) and Rumelhart (1980) treat stories as purely structural objects, with a grammar similar to a sentence. Wilensky (1982) develops a schema based on the organisation of the 'point' of a story. For many of these writers, the narrative is a psychological notion, a way of organising memory and thought processes (Bruner 1991:4).

13. Stewart (1991) finds that in case study methods used in management training, the material presented to students has a truncated narrative structure, leaving the student to solve the problem. The reader answers the 'so what' question.

14. Culler (1980:36) questions how far the reader is interested in story structure or the circumstance of the telling, but suggests this is ultimately a reader's task:

The question of whether any given story is being told primarily in order to report a sequence of events or in order to tell a tellable story is of course difficult to decide, but the ethical and referential lure of stories makes listeners want to decide (is that the way it really happened or is he just trying to impress me?) Labov avoids this question...

15. Research interviews are more appropriately seen as examples of 'invited stories' (Watson and Weinberg 1982:62), where the interviewee is given the floor through methods of questioning and encouragement, but the interviewer sets the agenda for the relevance of the story.

16. Conversation analysts normally only study 'naturally occurring conversation.' Mulkay (1985) uses conversation analysis (c.a.) to investigate turn taking in letters and Wooffitt (1992) studies interviews.

17. Performance as an approach to texts is not restricted to the 'performativity' of speech act theory nor a simplistic concern with the context of reading occasions. The illocutionary force of storytelling is only one aspect of the hearing of narrative instructions and persuasive features, for example the use of 'poetic patterning, genre, frames, participatory structures... draw attention to the status of speech as social action' (Bauman and Briggs 1990:65).

18. Bird and Dardenne (1988:67) consider that news stories are a "triumph of formulaic narrative construction" in that they reproduce the structures of the "larger symbolic system of news" (1988:69).

19. There is some dispute as to whether Bakhtin wrote the works attributed to Voloshinov and Medvedev. It is not proposed to comment on this debate but the writers will be acknowledged separately. The prime interest in such uncertainty is that contested and unstable versions of text and narrative apply to Bakhtin's identity as well as his theory.

20. Numerous typologies of plots are available from Frye's (1957) four 'mythoi'-comedy, romance, tragedy and irony-satire based on the substance of the story to Propp's (1968) morphology of folk tales based on the form.

21. A structuralist approach to autonomous stories investigates the relationship between 'discourse time' and 'story time', the chronological sequence of events and the sequence of their appearance in the story (Genette 1980).

22. There is in history a major debate about the authority of the historical narrative in achieving the status of a historical text (White 1987, Carr 1986).

23. Aristotle considers that there may be actions without characters but not characters without action. Chatman (1978:111) notes:

(in formalist theories) characters are products of plots, that their status is 'functional' that they are, in short, participants or actants rather than 'personnages', that it is erroneous to consider them as real beings... They wish to analyse only what characters do in a story, not what they are - that is, 'are' by some outside psychological or moral measure.

Also for Propp (1968) characters simply act as they do in order to further the action of the plot, as Barthes (1982:277) notes in structural analysis, character is defined 'not as a 'being' but as a participant'.

24. Bakhtin (1984:18) stresses the active reader:

(this approach) provides no support for the viewer who would objectify

an entire event according to some monologic category (thematically, lyrically or cognitively) - and this makes the viewer also a participant... everything in the novel is structured so as to make dialogic opposition inescapable. Not a single element of the work is structured from the point of view of a non participating third 'person'.

25. For example Cicourel (1973:44) considers:

The sociologist however, must be interested in competence and performance or situated usage, for it is the interaction of competence and performance that is essential for understanding everyday activities. Imputations of competence by members to each other and the recognition of this competence are integral elements of projected and 'successful' social action.

26. For example, Agar and Hobbs (1985) attempt to uncover the 'informant's plan' in a life story interview, where a global coherence ('high level goals') is attributed to a story through the way the parts are pieced together. Such global intentionality ignores the situated and reflexive nature of storytelling as suggested by Gumperz and identifies schema as a storyteller's rather than equally a reader/hearer's concern.

27. For example White (1987:44) studies historical texts in terms of the use of canonic literary forms - tragedy, comedy, farce etc. Other historians consider that the real world is already structured in terms of narratives, waiting for the historian to discover them. Carr (1986:126) suggests that the lived world of the actor is already organised around structures, and narrative is one such act and experience.

This is to say that narration in our sense is constitutive not only of action and experience but also of the self which acts and experiences... I am the subject of a life story which is constantly being told and retold in the process of being lived. (1986:126)

MacIntyre (1984:212) draws a similar conclusion:

It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told.

28. Woolgar (1983) does not explicitly endorse the constitutive version but implies support by use of his citations.

29. Whilst constructing a chronology of this thesis would locate the data gathering before the discovery of narrative theory, the data changed when the theoretical approach was adopted. Previously discarded material from the case files was revived and the interviews were no longer approached as complete entities but as strings of potential stories. The theory too was manipulated to suit the material. Data and theory are thus intertwined (see Appendix 1.1).

30. In fact if this chapter has not worked then perhaps the reader should not carry on. Hopefully you have been persuaded by the mass of learned writers cited, pacified and hence enrolled, 88 references from many backgrounds. I assume that such people as Foucault, Lyotard, Barthes, Ricoeur, Bakhtin all stuffed into one chapter impresses you. So many illustrious names consider narrative important, surely you must agree. Perhaps the only citation missing is yours, well here's your chance... And as Reader (1993) says 'I agree that narrative is important'.

31. A number of social work writers are interested in social work as a product of emergent, historical discursive formations (Philp 1979, Rodger 1988, Gould 1990, Webb and McBeath 1990). They discuss the merits of applying a Foucauldian model and hence locate their investigation in general statements about political nature and position of social work, not local occasions of performing social work accounting. The problem surrounds their interpretation of 'discourse', is it meta-discourse or the everyday speech? For example, Rojek et al (1988:134) suggest:

The discourse of social work acquiesces unreflectively in the conventional systems of western rationality which impose order on the world through the order of words... Social work discourse conforms to a particular regime of discipline and punishment regarding the offender and the pathological personality.

Formulations of discipline and punishment in social work texts may be features to which the storyteller and listener may attend, but they are interactional accomplishments, not a priori structures.

32. As Barthes (1982:252) says:

Is (narrative) so general that we can have nothing to say about it except for the modest description of a few highly individualised varieties... how are we to justify our right to differentiate and identify them.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 3.

1. This interview took place between the thesis writer and the social worker as a part of a departmental review (see Appendix 1.1). I knew the social worker well, as she had previously lived in my street. Thus, as well as being set up as a formal research interview, it was also an informal conversation between friends.
2. In another interview, the social worker interrupted the interviewer's question to demand the floor with the instruction 'I'll talk...' It is as if the respondent is saying 'all the questions you are asking will be answered by my story, be patient'. This interview is discussed in chapter 4.
3. Along with other affidavits already available to the court at previous hearings, it is the only evidence presented; there is no police evidence as in a criminal case. This particular affidavit contains details about school and day care of the children, not mentioned in the other texts. Perhaps such information was considered necessary for the court, if not contributing to the story.
4. As the children are 'wards of court', any changes in their status must be sanctioned by the High Court. They are effectively the children of the court.
5. It is surprising, compared with other affidavits and court documents that there is no information about the history of contact between the Social Services and the family. Perhaps, this was already available to the court in previous affidavits.
6. Apart from the different structure, there are important differences in content from the other accounts. The case notes display a more uncertain picture of the identification of abuse, with social services appearing to play an active role in definition. The information did not come unambiguously from the hospital as the 13/11 entry displays; the social worker has to seek it out. In a later entry of 19/11, uncertainty re-emerges as the Doctor 'is not prepared to give an opinion as to how the break on (child's) arm occurred' to the police.
7. For example, Bauman (1986) studies the performance of storytellers, whilst MacLean (1988) investigates novels as performance.
8. In a number of meetings I have observed, participants are given the opportunity to read the report at the beginning of the meeting and criticism or comment is invited from the clients.
9. Goffman (1981:129) considers that the use of the terms 'speaker' and 'listener' have been treated uncritically. Such roles are examined here as being attended to, negotiated and unfinalised. It is not proposed to dispense with them, rather to investigate their construction. Speaker/writer and listener/reader are treated as similar formulations, depending on whether it is the spoken or written account.

10. I recently observed a discussion amongst social workers, where there was great amusement in the way that a 15 year old boy used terms from social work and legislative talk eg. 'You have not considered my best interests'.

11. Other interviews did not start with the admission to care, but for instance, described the family set up or the circumstances when this social worker became involved. It might be hypothesised that for those texts, the circumstances of admission to care is heard as a less central feature of the worker's construction of the case. It is one event amongst many.

12. This might be heard as also questioning the right of the speaker to tell the tale (Shuman 1986). This is discussed further in chapter 5.

13. Smith (1978:39) discusses the use of contrast structures to set up a depiction of K as mentally ill:

Contrast structures are those where a description of K's behaviour is preceded by a statement which supplies the instructions for how to see that behaviour (as) anomalous.

The first part of the contrast defines the rule, the second part describes the deviant action. Smith (1978:43) offers the following example:

- i) we would go to the beach or pool on a hot day
- ii) I would sort of dip in and just lie in the sun
- iii) while K insisted that she had to swim 30 lengths.

14. Dingwall et al (1983:92-6) also note the importance of 'parental incorrigibility' in child abuse cases, but they relate this to decision making. Here it is suggested that such formulations of characters are less a factor in making decisions as rhetorical devices for bringing off adequate stories. Decisions are not separated from the use of language.

15. The initial legal action may have been carried out by the previous worker, although the speaker had stated earlier that she had become involved in the case in February, which is when the children were made wards of court.

16. Jonsson and Linell (1991:430) describe police reports for court as:

...a hybrid mode of expression, mixing bureaucratic forms (that would never appear in spoken dialogue) with colloquialisms (which are most often drawn from the actual interviews (when the suspect is interviewed by the police)).

17. In other, possibly less serious cases, case files entries are frequently completed in only a cursory fashion, with particular visits or telephone calls not noted but summaries of contact completed.

18. It is a frequent complaint by social workers that, in child abuse cases, the police are unable to gather adequate evidence to proceed with prosecution.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 4.

1. Ken Livingstone on a BBC TV 'Question Time' debate, discussing a prominent official accused of having collaborated with the Nazis said, "that next to child abuse", this was the most serious accusation that could be aimed at anyone. Dingwall et al (1983:87) consider that:

If it is assumed that all parents love their children as a fact of nature, then it becomes difficult to read evidence in a way which is inconsistent with this assumption. The challenge amounts to an allegation that deviant parents do not share a common humanity with the rest of us.

2. Poggi (1990:17) notes for Durkheim mortality:

... means three things at different times ; moral = human (as against natural, animal) mental, minded; moral = involving institutionally sanctioned obligation; moral = involving a subject's conscious acceptance of and willingness to surrender to the intrinsic superiority of claims higher than his /her own.

3. This approach also problematizes the investigator as being in a more privileged position to judge the adequacy of the moral choice. As Heritage (1984:36) notes:

...the task of theory will not be to determine what some set of social circumstances and events consist of in advance of actors' actions and then to evaluate and explain the latter in terms of their rational and/or normatively determined characteristics. Rather, it will be to directly analyse the construction and recognition of these circumstances and events as they are played out 'frame by frame' through the actors' actions.

4. These were a range studies where Garfinkel's students were given various tasks to break normal conventions of everyday interaction - to barter in shops, to ask continually for clarification, to break the rules of simple games. As Heritage notes (1984:83):

In each case, the subject treated the intelligible character of his own talk as something to which he was morally entitled and, correspondingly, treated the breaching move as illegitimate, deserving sanction and requiring explanation... such compliance already appears to be the object of spectacular moral constraints.

5. Lees (1978) considers the search for moral character in social work encounters involves both client and social worker negotiating the presentation and reception of deserving/non deserving identities. Such negotiations are manifest in 'auditions' (initial contacts), shared information, (how the request for help is supported) and interdependence and alliance (how the request for help promotes a shared solution to

the problem). Although this thesis is not concerned with client-social worker encounters, the pervading requirement to justify claims through moral assessment is similar in reporting initial encounters and long term cases.

6. I am not aware of recent sociological investigations of social work with child abuse as to whether the 'dangerous families' approach is a more pervasive reaction than the 'rule of optimism'. I have recently spent several months in social work offices, and my impression is that the former reaction is widespread with a 'proactive' response the norm.

7. It was noted in chapter 1 that two formulations of social workers were available in press reporting and public inquiries, the inept/passive and the overzealous (Dingwall et al 1983:2, Franklin and Parton 1990). A further twist can be noted in the most recent report, the Clyde report (1992) on the Orkney case, which criticise a social work maxim to 'listen to the child' as a basis for child sex abuse investigations (p.311-2). It concludes that children should be listened to but not necessarily always believed.

8. Bird and Dardenne (1988:70) approaching news as myth consider:

Myth reassures by telling tales that explain baffling and frightening phenomena and provide acceptable answers; myth does not necessarily reflect an objective reality, but builds a world of its own.

9. The journal from which they are taken, 'Community Care', is widely available in social services departments. Whilst a professional journal does not speak for social workers, given its readership it might be expected to attempt to represent their world. As its editor notes (Philpot 1991:59):

The primary aim of a professional magazine (indeed of the media as a whole) is to reflect the facts and changes of the world which its readers inhabit, to try to be, as the playwright Arthur Miller said of a good newspaper, 'a nation talking to itself'... it must angle its news to suit its readers' interests...

10. Before Cleveland this was 'social workers as fools or wimps' as exemplified by the Daily Mail's claim of 20 December 1987 that social workers were 'butterflies in a situation that demanded hawks'. After Cleveland it was 'social workers as villains and bullies' which dominated the reports, constructing the professionals concerned as 'guided by prejudice and motivated by zealotry rather than facts' (Daily Mail 6 July 1987). Franklin and Parton (1991:15) consider that both images are linked as

...an underlying consistency can be discerned if it is acknowledged that social workers have become a flagship or symbol for the entire public sector.

11. Going for the lesser charge is a recognised procedure in plea bargaining in court (Sudnow 1965) as a way of streamlining procedures and neutralising deviance.

12. Hartley (1985) and Franklin and Parton (1991) see such de-criminalisation as a historical development, another underlying pattern of the press criticising social workers and through them public services, but it seems rather to be sequential reporting since the due process of the law has already blackboxed the criminal act. A more detailed analysis of the sequence would be necessary before drawing any conclusions about underlying intentions of press reporting.

13. This suggests that formulations of child abusers can be heard as more complex than an attribution of blame through 'theoreticity' - the capacity for rational thought (McHugh 1970) or autonomy/ responsibility (Silverman 1987). For some cases, child abuse can be mitigated, whilst others are portrayed as monsters, with little middle ground.

14. Social workers use the term 'network' to refer to the key professionals concerned with child abuse - police, health, education and social services representatives. They use the term 'key worker' to denote the worker at the centre of the network, usually the social worker.

15. Some medical writers dissociate 'failure to thrive' from child abuse. Skuse (1988 in Batchelor and Kerlake 1991) notes that "failure to thrive is not usually associated with child abuse or neglect". Several studies have concluded that there is no link between the condition and 'the psychopathology of mothers' (Pollitt et al 1975, Kotelchuck 1980, Iwaniec et al 1983 - all discussed in Batchelor and Kerlake 1991). As Batchelor and Kerlake (1991:17) summarise:

Some failure to thrive children are neglected or abused; some neglected or abused children fail to thrive. The failure to thrive, when it occurs, may be a cause or consequence.

It should be noted that some children in the highly publicised cases were considered to be underweight. The Beckford Report (1985:72) noted:

Once the child has reached the age of 4 months and has established a pattern of growth, he is likely to remain on the centile. If the chart then shows that the child's weight or height is falling away from the centile formerly followed, alarm bells should start ringing.

It might be expected then that a social worker, after such warnings, would begin to see a pattern of 'failure to thrive' as pointing to an underlying pattern of child abuse. Indeed, definitions in social work texts skate over any such uncertainties and link 'failure to thrive' directly to child abuse. Maher (1987:25) defines it as:

children under 17 who have been medically diagnosed as suffering from a severe non organic failure to thrive or whose behavioural and emotional development have been severely affected, where medical and social assessments find evidence of either persistent or severe neglect or rejection.

And Gilmore (1988:52) makes a stronger link:

There can of course be an almost endless range of mixed causes whereby a medical condition may indeed be responsible for a child's failure to thrive, but that such a condition occurred or was not dealt with sooner, or did not have a persistence in treatment, may be partly or wholly due to the neglect on the part of the parents.

Failure to thrive would appear to be available to be deployed as a category of child abuse amongst social workers, if not all doctors.

16. The initial idea for this 'three stage feature' was suggested to me by Srikant Sarangi and was presented with Srikant and Stefaan Slembrouck as a paper 'Moral Construction in Social Work Discourse' at the 'Discourse and the Profession' conference, Uppsala 1992. The version is somewhat changed from that initial paper.

17. Tone and emphasis are not analysed here and could only be demonstrated by recording and plotting the vocal pitches (see Labov and Fanshel 1978).

18. An example of a 'last resort' is available in a newspaper article with the figurative title "I've crossed the Rubicon on conflict Bush reveals" (Daily Telegraph December 21. 1990:10) where in the Gulf War, the President had prepared himself to send in the troops:

A senior White house Official said Mr. Bush had been under a lot of pressure wondering if all alternatives that might provide a solution to the crisis had been examined. That is why he had decided to offer direct talks between Saddam and James Baker US Secretary of State, to exhaust all possible options. Saddam has not offered a date acceptable to the US. "That makes it a lot easier," the official said. "When you're satisfied that everything has been done, it removes a lot of the pressure".

This suggests relief in achieving the 'last resort', is it really dispreferred? The social worker's use of 'last resorts', on the other hand, is not heard as relief at reaching the end of the line, rather options are running out.

19. Potter and Wetherell (1987:91) analyse data from Atkinson and Drew (1979:164) and show the futility of the 'last resort' situation - 'I was powerless', 'it was like bashing my head against a brick wall', 'we were completely ineffective'.

20. There are of course always alternative readings available by non ratified readers. Here, one might ask how parents act in protecting their children against what they see as the unwarranted intrusion of professionals. This is discussed further in chapter 7 and 8.

21. Whilst Pfohl (1985:230) claims impartiality, not attempting "to uncover the true story of child abuse", he described the aim of his 'deconstruction' as:

... displace the truth of a dominant story about the humanitarian march of therapeutic interventionism. It was to open a space for wondering why child beating is today most commonly read as a story of determinate pathology rather than for instance as the indeterminate effect of a bloody domestic drama - a powerful play of violence behind the closed doors of privatized power - performed by people denied access to a script of public power and embedded in the text of corporate capitalism (or some other hierarchical formation of socially productive practices).

Does this sound like impartiality?

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 5.

1. An entry in the Chambers Dictionary for 'moral' is 'support by evidence of reason or probability'.

2. This is not to suggest that the child's abused body is a foundational entity, a 'bottom line, a bedrock of reality' (Edwards, Ashmore and Potter 1992:1), but to acknowledge that for the social worker such entities are already blackboxed by others. Social workers are not allowed to scrutinise the medical examination nor the police report. Their job and our investigation comes later in the child abuse process. As Grint and Woolgar (1992:376) discuss, all bottom line statements can be made available for deconstruction, since all depend on a series of (re)constructions.

3. As Shuman (1986:144) says referring to adolescent fight stories:

A central warranty for retellings is interpretation. In the case of the stabbing story, the outcome was known by most listeners... Listeners wanted to hear interpretations that would account for how such a thing could happen.

4. See Latour (1987), Callon et al (1986), Latour and Woolgar (1986) Law (1986), Law (1991).

5. This is not to underplay the narrativity of scientific accounts. We have been concerned to demonstrate the possibility of reading narrative in all accounts. Myers (1990), Latour (1987:53) and Latour and Bastide (1986) have investigated the narrativity of scientific texts. However, character development has become a central feature of this thesis and reading narrativity is seen as an appropriate way to explore such depictions.

6. The tension between constructing 'facts' and explaining the 'facts' of others is exemplified by the position of social workers in the justice system. Social workers and probation officers provide 'Social enquiry reports' to courts to help sentencers consider the circumstances of individual offenders. Hardiker (1979:117) notes:

...traditionally justice has been based on classical utilitarian principles which considered offences rather than offenders when fixing a punishment for a crime. Classical principles were difficult to implement in practice, however, because frequently the circumstances of the individual offender seemed relevant.

Such explanations do not construct the 'facts' of the crime, but set them in a context. In contrast, a new role performed by some social workers is the 'joint investigation' of child abuse. In this task, specially trained social workers interview children in collaboration with police officers to establish whether (usually sexual) abuse has occurred or not. Perhaps in this role, fact construction is the preserve of the social worker, albeit with the sanction of the police. (see the case of Mr. King in chapter 8).

7. Atkinson (1990:26) quotes a number of studies of authority being displayed in anthropological texts through a mixture of 'personal narrative' and 'objectified description'.

8. There are a large number of methods of attending to context. In conversational texts, this is likely to be agreements at the beginning as to what the ground rules are for the encounter. In these data, the research interviews negotiate the contract of expectations and confidentiality. Formal social work meetings include instructions as to expectations.

This is a child abuse case conference to discuss the case of Jane Harris can I welcome you all here this morning can I remind you that under the child abuse guidelines matters discussed here are confidential no matters may be relayed outside of this meeting without the permission of the originating informant. (BBC Radio Programme, Face the Facts)

In written texts, various headings and introductions lay out rules for reading and make claims for entitlement, as noted in the journal reports in chapter 3 and in introductions to court reports in section 1.4 of this chapter.

9. There remains in 'academic' discussions about social work uncertainty about the status of 'facts' as independent of the social work 'hunch', particularly in terms of their 'scientific' status (as noted in chapter 1). Unlike the scientist, the social worker does not have available a range of machines, laboratories and their consequent inscriptions (Latour and Woolgar 1986). However a 'technology' of social work may be seen in a range of guides and procedures, promoting 'rational' methods for organising information and making decisions. For instance, 'orange book assessments' (Protecting Children: A guide for Social workers Undertaking a Comprehensive Assessment, DOH 1988) are used for child abuse investigations. This guide does not suggest that its use will print out uncontested 'facts', as might a computer or laboratory instrument, and it confirms the eclectic nature of social work assessment (1988:5). It is also not clear whether such an assessment has any impact on the response of the court. Has this changed the nature of social work activity in justifying and displaying 'facts'?

You can't do orange book assessment all the time, they take too long. (comment at social work workshop, Dartington June 1992)

10. Some years ago, I wrote a court report as a social worker suggesting that a young man would not benefit from youth custody, invoking the 'more harm than good' view of incarceration in this instance. The judge spent several minutes admonishing me, not that I had misunderstood my client, but that I had misunderstood youth custody. "There are as many different borstals as there are hotels. One is appropriate for your client". In order to subvert my report, the judge had to subvert my authority to draw conclusions. He chose to challenge my knowledge of youth custody, not my client. This was authority I could not easily demonstrate in my report.

11. Such a formulation trades on Schutz's conception of the 'reciprocity of

perspectives' (1962:11-12), that my view of the world is the same as yours would be if you were in my position. The storyteller and the audience share the same intersubjective world.

12. Social workers perhaps claim something of the professional relationship and obligation to 'their client', as with the lawyer, doctor or teacher, allowing a privileged hearing to be made and displayed. Indeed, there might be an expectation that such a role demands a professional report.

13. Such an accusation was at the centre of the criticism of the social worker in the Beckford inquiry:

(the social worker) was fobbed off with implausible excuses on almost every occasion of her visiting the house about the whereabouts of Jasmine (1985:85)

14. The long-standing link between social work and psycho-analytic theory could be located as a source of the predominance of past/present formulations in social work discourse. However, the appropriation of a theory of early childhood determining personality and behaviour can also be heard in everyday 'lay' explanations.

15. Most of the 'data' available to this study concerns social work cases where the child(ren) had been or were still in the care of the local authority (since the Children Act 1989 termed 'looked after'). Some of these stays were very short, only a night or two, hence subsequent social worker contact and sense of concern can be heard as 'low risk'.

16. This interview was part of a review of the possibility of avoiding reception into care by having alternative services. As this reception was impossible to prevent as the mother's whereabouts were unknown, this interview was seen as inappropriate for that research question.

17. The comment 'she's saying she doesn't need help' might not have been a 'heard remark' since later the social worker reports the mother contacting the office to say she wanted her to remain her social worker. The comment can perhaps be heard as the social worker's interpretation of 'what she is really saying' given her behaviour of missed appointments. At least that is my interpretation!

18. Local knowledge of such men on the common would associate them with being often drinkers and itinerants.

19. The resource that the interviewer suggested did not involve placement away from home but was a community-base respite care scheme (now increasingly common). However, the social worker can be heard to interpret any high level intervention in terms of challenging the mother's care or at least social work non-involvement.

20. The interviews from the departmental review invited an account more concerned with events since the questions centred on the circumstances of reception into care.

The other interviews were more character-oriented since questions were more generally concerned with planning for young people. However, features of interview invitation were not the determinate factor in the subsequent balance between event- or character-oriented accounts, some departmental review interviews were character oriented and vice versa.

21. It is probably recognised that by competent social work readers that such assessment processes do not merely aim to 'assess' but rather to produce an institutionally ratified assessment which is then the legitimation for the allocation of a particular resource. The complaint has been that such processes only tell us what we already know, that the resources we need are not available. Many of these assessment centres have been closed down.

22. To keep the young person away from home for the six weeks of the assessment would be seen by both social work research (Millham et al 1986) and practice wisdom as likely to signal a long stay in care.

23. This is an illegitimate answer to the question since the list (lines 10 -12) is hearable as educational categorisations, only made by an educational psychologist. However, it is used here to do the work of offering an aspect of Donna's character.

24. After all, how much has been invested in the existence of God or defence against the 'Soviet threat'.

25. Perhaps talking to Angela earlier about K may have resulted in an account orientated to the category 'odd behaviour' rather than 'mental illness'.

26. This opening is rather uncertain in its positioning at the top of page 2 and may not be part of the narrative, but an answer to the request for information of previous periods in care (line 34-5). Its position slightly apart from the main paragraph supports this. It still has the effect of setting up the problem for the writer and reader.

27. This 'narrative puzzle' is not the same as Smith's concept of 'a proper puzzle' (1978:37) where she suggests a collection of items, which provides 'a proper puzzle to the solution 'becoming mentally ill'. Here there is no solution, yet.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 6.

1. Pithouse and Atkinson (1988:187) consider that:

Occupational failure is rarely looked for in the worker's own abilities or in the occupational mission itself. Demoralising failure is attributed to others. Frequently it is the clients themselves who are seen as the main cause of an intervention with little prospect of success.

Blaming was discussed in chapter 4, and was seen as a feature of moral storytelling and accountable rhetoric, not attributable to social work in particular. As with many occupations concerned with unpredictable entities like people, using such formulations to justify and recommend action, making definitive claims, attributing cause and effect and predicting the future involves accounting practices littered with provisos and uncertainties. Other examples might be school reports, doctors' prognoses, weather forecasts, builders surveys, sports journalists forecasting the League Champions ("I don't think Manchester United will win anything this year," Andy Gray, Radio Times August 1992). All failed predictions warrant an account of what went wrong, which does not challenge the occupational enterprise. (I haven't heard from Andy).

2. Attributions of 'sameness' and 'difference' are, of course, complex notions in deconstruction, but are glossed over in this analysis. We rely on conceptions of competent reading and deferring to common sense knowledge, what anybody might read. However, it is acknowledged that all readings which seek to stabilise meaning and suggest sameness and difference, involve a commitment to notions of authorising versions of versions. As with our social work storytellers, we seek to persuade our readers of the plausibility of our account. Is sharing the same speech community enough? Frank (1985:109) notes the problems ethnomethodology faces:

The ethnomethodologist as a member of society is competent to know some things (eg. to make decisions about 'sameness'), but his member's competence is somehow incomplete, because other issues require analysis.

I believe ethnomethodology has accepted the sceptic and provisional nature of making relations between entities. Openness to alternative interpretation is encouraged and preferred strategies are offered for scrutiny. The reflexive approach to discourse analysis celebrates the uncertainty of configuration. However, it is also eager to learn from the epistemological moves of its subjects, and mimic performances and strategies. Everyone is invited to be a lay sociologist, in contrast to Frank's assertion (1985:114) that ethnomethodologists do not pay attention to the production of their texts. Finally, Frank's (1985:114) suggests that:

the problems of reading and writing texts, problems of working through layers of interpretive possibilities and never being able to justify on principle the choice of one interpretation (reading) over another, are the problems of everyday life.

Well yes, but people do make choices between texts everyday and so should we, albeit provisionally, modestly and as a member-analyst of society.

3. Science is discoverable in a wide range of such activities, as scientists struggle to enrol powerful entities. Callon (1986:19) summarises:

...interests, strategies and power relationships which do not stop at the laboratory door must be brought within the scope of analysis. In sum, though science and technology develop in some measure apart from the rest of the world, they are neither detached nor fundamentally different in nature from other activities.

4. It was noted in chapter 1 section 3.2 that a change of social worker was often accompanied by major changes in the formulation of the social work case.

5. There are a range of meetings in social services at different stages of a case, and with different agendas, although they frequently overlap. At the beginning of a case (especially in child protection), a case conference includes all relevant professionals, where the justification and direction of intervention is considered. Later meetings tend to be smaller and oriented to carrying out 'the plan' of the first case conference. These are called 'planning meetings' or 'case reviews' They are concerned with implementation, rather than re-investigating the nature of the problem. The case conference is likely to consist of 'first-time readers' and planning meetings of 'informed readers'.

6. Minutes of meetings record only certain aspects, and it can be assumed that those aspects included in some way reflect the purpose of the meeting. Different participants may have different interests, so the aspects reported will probably reflect the interests of whoever presented their views most powerfully or coherently presented, usually the Chairperson. Oh! the number of times I was in a case conference and thought I made an incisive contribution, only for it to be ignored by the minute taker!

7. Isn't it surprising that in the six weeks since the admission to care, social workers, who have had little regular contact with Donna, have observed the quintessential events of this case!

8. A section 3 resolution was the method of dispensing with a parents' 'rights and duties' to their child, by applying to the Social Services Committee. This would provide the social services with similar power to a full care order, but without going to court. It was seen as controversial, and used only if parents were considered to be sabotaging plans, considered in the child's best interests. It is no longer available under the 1989 Children Act.

9. Since the late 1970s, social workers have considered that residential care could only damage children. Wherever possible, children should be placed with foster parents, and adopted if they cannot return home within a specified time. This has been called the 'permanency planning' movement (Maluccio et al 1986). For older

adolescents, it has been uncertain as to whether such a policy applies, since fostering had conventionally been used for younger children (Hazel 1981). This convention was resisted by residential social workers and the 'deception' here can be heard as a strong bid for the efficacy of residential care which would be supported by the audience... or is it heard as ingratiating?

10. The interview is not presented in full as it amounts to some 14 pages of transcript, of which only a small amount is analysed.

11. Note the new information that the sister came into care earlier than Donna, only for a weekend and returned home quickly - odd that hasn't appeared before, aren't you surprised? Is it perhaps because there will probably be another file for the sister somewhere and any mention of her should only appear there? Either way a strange example of 'non-intertextuality'.

12. It can be noted the latter comment "the way she talked they were both virgin birth" is similarly heard in Document 2 as "she does not see the birth of her two illegitimate daughters in the same light as Donna's behaviour", written by the minute taker. Such a rhetorical feature nicely sums and constitutes an ironic comment on mother and bears repeating, like a good joke.

13. The social worker does not lay out the details of such an alternative intervention, but a competent social work listener would hear such a chain as being suggested. The phrases 'long term case work' and 'building up a relationship' can be heard to hint at psycho-therapy casework. This way of working rests on seeing relationship problems as located in individual pathology. By working on such personal problems, the 'blockage' can possibly be removed and a healthy relationship reinstated.

14. In other stories, the twist at the end does produce a complete reformulation of the prior conception of events (see Woolgar and Russell 1990 on urban myths).

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 7.

1. For example, otherness is discussed in post modernism (Lyotard), existentialism (Sartre), phenomenology (Husserl and Merleau-Ponty) and symbolic interaction (Mead).

2. An alternative approach to otherness is found in phenomenology and existentialism concerns with the 'self-other' relation; how the individual consciousness conceives of him/herself through the reaction of 'the other', another consciousness. This is also a feature of the social psychology of Mead. In his early work, Bakhtin considers a social psychological approach, but takes the concept much further. He develops the self-other in terms of hero-author relations. Holquist (1990:28) summarises:

...the Bakhtinian just-so story of subjectivity is the tale of how I get myself from 'the other': it is only the other's categories that will let me be an object for my own perception. I see my self as I conceive others might see it. In order to forge a self, I must do so from the outside. In other words, I author myself.

The self as the hero, is authored by 'the other'/author and produces a representation. It is however the later, more generic Bakhtinian approach to otherness which is explored here.

3. This 'same' passage is translated rather differently in Todorov (1984:107). Without attempting to suggest the significance of using 'ultimately' for 'at its extreme' or 'objectivizes all reality' compared with 'materialises all reality', it is interesting that there is not a definitive version of Bakhtin discussing definitive versions.

4. Bakhtin implies that some texts are more monologic than others, in the way that they close down meanings and restrict readings. Woolgar (1992:65) notes that few social texts, as opposed to machine texts, are robust enough to restrict interpretation. As will become clear in the analysis, monologic texts are seen as always open to dialogic review. The reader is able to seek out alternative and contradictory versions within the monologic word. The interesting question for investigation is how the author acknowledges and attends to such contradictions, and how the reader remains unconvinced.

5. Reported speech is used as the general term to denote the insertion into an utterance of the words of another. This is commonly split into direct speech, which uses the personal pronoun, and could be marked by quotation marks. Indirect speech refers to description of what another said without the personal pronoun. For example, direct speech would be:

He said " I am unhappy about the meeting".

Indirect speech would be:

He said he was unhappy about the meeting.

Shuman (1986:160) refers to reported and described speech as respectively direct and indirect speech. There are occasions where the two can be heard to merge, and it is not clear who is talking. For example:

He said he would "pull out all the stops this time".

Without the personal pronoun, it is not clear whether 'the other' is considered to have said the words in quotation marks. Volosinov (1973) refers to this as quasi-direct speech, however, this will not be discussed here.

6. Whilst this project had made use of conversation analysis and other micro studies of sequencing and form, it has attempted to locate the reader in the reception of the broader utterance, the story. This is partly as the documents are not everyday conversation based on turn taking, but monologic attempts to tell a large story, paint a big canvas. In chapter 7 and 8 in particular, representation is considered across larger utterances, as stories are told and the ambitions of the storyteller are followed across the whole encounter.

7. In this thesis, the large number of quotes from other writers may add support to my argument, but can equally be used against me to suggest that I have taken them out of context, misunderstood or misrepresented the source, and on occasion, I probably have. Such a formulation is itself worthy of study: when is a quote representative of a position?

8. This discussion is guided by Morson and Emerson (1990:146-171).

9. Consumer research of social work encounters has not so far offered a serious or undermining critique of social work. It has tended to create the client in the image of social work formulations (Mayer and Timms 1970, Fisher et al 1986). Whilst it may be critical of social work practice, it is unlikely to question or redefine social work maxims. Rather, such an enterprise is grounded in such principles and more likely to re-enforce them. Here, following Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), it is planned to be 'symmetrical in our approach to formulations, not using social work maxims or 'consumer feedback' to contrast or ironise a social worker's claim, but to follow their use. This is similar to Wieder's (1974) study of the rules of a bail hostel, where 'the Code' was approached not as guiding behaviour, but studied as to how it was attended to; a topic not a resource.

10. We will put to one side whether any report "actually" "in fact" reports exact words.

11. Given the nature of Wooffitt's (1992) data as interviews to investigate the paranormal, how far did the occasion of the encounter encourage reported speech as supportive and corroborative, and hence, unlikely to be available for subversion. Wooffitt does not contest his respondents nor suggest that their formulations are anything other than consistent. However, a less sympathetic listener/reader, perhaps

a sceptic about the paranormal, may take the use of reporting speech which might not/could not have taken place, as an opportunity for criticism.

12. The Policy Statement of this Social Services Department included the following :

A local authority cannot perform all the functions of a parent. Therefore care in a local authority establishment should be viewed wherever possible as a channel towards the provision of a permanent family home - either the child's natural home or a substitute home.

Also the teenager fostering project saw its aim as:

To take teenagers through their adolescence with a family experience and task centred work in order to prepare them for independence by 18 years.

13. A Place of Safety order was an eight day emergency order, now replaced by an Emergency Protection Order. After such an order expires, the children must return home, or application made to the court for an Interim Care Order.

14. The social worker in this interview is the team leader, the allocated social worker having left. Whilst informed and probably regularly consulted about assessment and action, she is less intimately aware of the details as the allocated social worker would be, and she frequently consults the file (see chapter 5 section 1.4). The other complication in this case is that some of the children are already in care to another social services department (Melchester SSD) This department's action is constrained by Melchester's assessment and recommendations. At one point before this extract, Melchester SSD have held a meeting without this department and suggested that the other children in the family should be admitted to care of this department - the cheek of it! This double-voiced formulation of Melchester SSD's position as a legitimate or illegitimate recommendation might be heard to linger at the end of the first exchange of this extract.

15. This supports the suggestion in chapter 2 (section 2.2) that Labov and Waletzky's (1967) narrative elements are better seen as interactionally accomplished.

16. The direction of social work is frequently located in a 'contract' or agreement, whereby the social worker and client draw up and sign a document listing expectations for working together. (Corden and Preston-Shoot 1987)

17. Fox (1982) discussed two 'value positions' in child care. The 'kinship defender' sees "the natural biological family (as) being of unique value to the child... state intervention should therefore be directed to preserving, supporting and strengthening the family unit" (1982:266). In contrast, the 'society-as-parent protagonist' places "greater faith in the possibility of beneficent State intervention... the responsibility and necessity to defend children against parental mistreatment is strongly emphasised". (1982:272)

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 8.

1. For example, Pip in Peter Ackroyd's 'English Music' (1992:87) says to the stranger "Why should I be trapped in the vision you have of me? There are other visions after all".
2. As discussed in chapter 3, Iser (1974:276) sees the competent reader being able to uncover 'the actual content of the text'.
3. In both the 'broken arm' case of chapter 3 and the 'failure to thrive' case of chapter 4, the judge's decisions unsettled the depictions of the client. As discussed in those chapters, this was attended to by both the storyteller and listener.
4. It is not a straightforward task to display and analyse 'character' in a sociological text concerned to present 'data' and offer 'proof', unconvinced by aesthetic skills. The analyst's task is similar to that of the social work storyteller, displaying enough and appropriate information to persuade the reader of the adequacy and propriety of the formulation, but acknowledging the reader's choice to ignore or overturn it. Here the problem is increased as the 'reading out' (Chatman 1978:42) of character representation involves suggesting overall interpretations of depictions in stories, rather than merely displaying local rhetorical features. As mentioned above, our analysis should be careful.
5. In chapter 1, the discussion of decision-making theory noted the way in which action precedes a decision (Garfinkel 1967:114). A study of selecting adoptive parents found that the decision for suitability was made early on the interview, with later work aiming to justify the decision (Brieland 1959).
6. It is not suggested that character depiction in social work texts is identical with that in novels. As discussed in chapter 1, the importance for this project is to investigate what can be gained from literary approaches to storytelling and so far it has been fruitful to read narrative in a generic sense in social work texts. Bakhtin, in particular, uses literary texts as a way of approaching all forms of representations, seeing the novel as one particularly important genre. As Holquist (1990:72) comments:

Bakhtin is particularly drawn to the novel, the genre least secure (and most self conscious) about its own status as a genre. The kind of text we have come to call the novel has been most at pains to establish its generic identity not only relative to other literary genres, but as it relates to the norms of everyday speech... the novel's peculiar ability to open a window in discourse from which the extraordinary variety of social languages can be perceived.

Characters in a social work text have, as in Dostoevsky, the opportunity to confront and undermine the author and this aspect of Bakhtin's work appears especially helpful.

7. Potter and Wetherell (1987:126) consider that:

The ethnomethodological concern with the active accomplishment of social phenomena and interaction sensitised (such researchers) to the possibility that categories might be more than simplifying perceptual sunglasses but deliberate constructions fitted for many tasks.

The final comment displays the intentionality of some approaches to ethnomethodology. It is not suggested here that the use of categories is an 'artful', intended performance, but rather that the interactional manipulation of categories sets up complex, unintended and unexpected reading relations.

8. Sacks (1974), Silverman (1987), Watson (1978) and Cuff (1980) discuss 'membership categorisation devices', the complex interactional work involved in manipulated categories and their associated attributes. Briefly, they show how categories are linked in collections, so that the use of a depiction in one collection can be subverted by attributes from other related collections. In this way, apparent agreement about character depictions can still engender disputes about appropriate attributes.

9. Billig (1985) discusses the rigid and flexible manipulation of prejudice stereotyping.

10. Smith (1978:51) concludes her article:

The construction of an alternative account in which K is not mentally ill is not possible on the basis of what is available. But I can briefly show for some parts how it might be done. It would involve finding rules or contexts for K's behaviour which would properly provide for the behaviour to the same effect. If the enterprise were successful it would result in a description which would lack any systematic procedure for bringing these items together. The pieces of behaviour would simply be fitted back into various contexts. The present account would disintegrate. The reader/hearer would be unable to recover from them a rule under which he could see what the account "was all about".

11. The radio programme 'Face the Facts' describes the case conference as taking place, but with "the names of participants and some circumstances altered for reasons of confidentiality".

12. As the conference hears that the police cannot prosecute, the Doctor summarises that problem:

There are two issues what to do with the child and what to do with Mr King and if there are no grounds for prosecuting Mr King erm if that's what we are being told then what can we do legally to stop him living in the household.

13. Health Visitor: *since Raymond came on the scene, things did seem to pick up a lot in her development erm her speech was improving erm she was lively and loving with Raymond and until (this suspicion) I had in fact ceased to worry about Jane's development as she was coming on in leaps and bounds it seemed to me*
14. Playgroup Leader: *we've noticed that Jane runs to erm Mr King easier than what she runs to her Mum at home time always seems very happy when he picks her up*
- Chair: *I mean essentially we haven't got a lot of background information have we.*
15. Family Social worker: *(mother) has obviously found in Mr King a strong personality erm a lot of control and order erm that if we're going to consider Jane continuing to live with her that we've got to in some way provide because clearly erm I think although we haven't got on to that decision Mr King won't be on the scene erm well will not be allowed by the department to live with her (-) so I think we got to...*
- Chair: *there's John leading us in that direction, alright let's move back from that...*
- Another social worker: *I mean yes Mr King is quite a support to Mrs. Harris and we hear he collects the child from the playgroup he sits in two nights a week while she has a a little job and indeed that's quite likely when the abuse has taken place there is no indication that he has a job but if he is drawing benefit I mean there is additional money going into the household there is a financial reason for her wanting him back it would seem.*
16. Another social worker: *I wondered if (family social worker) has put it to (mother) erm that there may be a choice between having Jane living with her or having Raymond*
- Family social worker: *yes I mean it certainly has been put to her that's one of the issues*
- Chair: *and her response to that*
- Family social worker: *really rather non committal.*
17. The rest of the interview does indeed chart a series of difficult episodes of parental rejection, disruption, but eventually a successful family placement. The story can be heard to trade on the hero-social worker overcoming the odds.
18. At the time, this budget was overspent and all payments scrutinised by the Director. Use of B&B was seen as an unnecessary expense and as bad professional practice. That this request is for a 'last resort' placement (see chapter 4), B&B payments over several months and not a planned programme, is further grounds for an embarrassing request.

19. A complex series of events are described in the case file, including the foster mother being seriously ill, and accusations about sexual relations between Sarah and a former residential worker. It seems rather unfair to blame the breakdown all on Sarah.
20. The staffing problems are important to the formulation. Social workers are expected to handle a difficult young person, which Sarah now is, but staffing problems mitigate against normal service delivery. Staffing problems might also be attended to as the responsibility of the Director.
21. Having access to the earlier dialogic, unfinalised depiction, we, as privileged readers, may wonder what has happened to the maturing, discussive Sarah. Even if it departed with the social worker, it should be on file somewhere. It would be sad if such an optimistic version of her exists only in the transcript of a research interview.
22. Various psychological theories of attachment and loss are widely deployed by social worker; for example, Bowlby (1973).
23. When I last had access to the file six months later, it was not clear where she was living. The case was still unallocated, and the team leader would not let me interview him, as this case was 'blacked' because of industrial action over staff shortages. However, there is a mention of her being missing from the B&B, and in September spending time with her mother.
24. The 'X but not X' formulation was first suggested to me by Steve Woolgar.
25. The meta-utterance "that sounds social worky I don't mean it that way" further responses to and comments on the relativising work which is taking place: I am a social worker but I am not talking as a social worker.
26. This formulation of the opinion of a character in a case conference is both contested and accepted by the social worker in the preceding utterance:
- (Youth Custody centre) were basically bloody stupid they were saying things like we were telling them that we were hoping to get a YTC and this man said well (-) his point was quite fair actually... (4.28-30)*
- They were stupid but made a fair point. Another X well not X.
27. The case was not allocated to a specific social worker for this period, but was being handled by a variety of social workers on 'duty' (handling emergency or new work for that day). Whilst it is not suggested that the duty social workers had access to descriptions similar to those offered in the interview transcript, the social worker of the interview (a team leader) was seen as 'holding' the case, and was available for consultation during the period.
28. The other entries describe action taken, without commenting directly on Stuart's character or behaviour. For example:

2/6. *Tried (Residential Admissions section) and (Remand Centre). Neither can offer anything. No call from (Hostel).*

Such an entry 'merely' describes action, but when read as a part of the on-going sequence of activities, it also contributes to the work of depicting Stuart as difficult to place. However, the entries in Appendix 8.2 are more explicit in their character depiction.

29. It is a vacancy yet not really a vacancy.

30. Spencer (1988:65) considers that information included in a court report is selected to make the recommendation appear appropriate:

These two elements (summary and recommendation) are not merely disparate parts of the text: the summary represents those factors which the officers deem relevant to the question of sentence... Officers construct and interpret the summary as a warrant for the recommendation which follows.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 9.

1. Following work on Political Speeches (Heritage and Greatbach 1986, Atkinson 1984), Max Atkinson, on a Granada TV 'World in Action' programme, 'taught' a novice speaker at an SDP conference how to 'generate applause' through rhetorical techniques: for example, three line lists, contrasts.

2. As mentioned in chapter 4 footnote 7, the Clyde Report into the Orkney case (Orkney 1992:311-2) was concerned about the way that uncorroborated children's evidence was the basis for the action.

3. As mentioned in chapter 7 footnote 17.

4. A number of social workers have read and commented on parts of this thesis. Comments include:

We come over as so defensive, don't we. But that is how I feel about social work at the moment.

I don't know what to write in any reports any more.

I really liked your 'Robust Stories' paper.

That 'Failure to Thrive' case. I have come across cases like that.

Yes, plans do get changed as soon as the case conference is over.

5. The social work research projects referred to in chapter 1 footnote 11 had samples of between 55 cases (330 interviews) in Fisher et al (1986) to 450 cases in Millham et al (1986).

6. The obvious change in that period has been the legal changes of the 1989 Children Act implemented in October 1991. This has been associated with an apparent decrease in the number of care orders, given tighter legal requirements. Even so, my impression is that the same dilemmas exist under the new Act, and child abuse, in particular, remains high profile. Other changes are probably equally important, especially the move to the 'privatisation'/ service agreements of local authority services and purchaser-provider splits. This is likely to have affected social workers' views of the use of resources, especially expensive facilities.

7. Recent research, which has approached social work from a textual or discursive point of view is as follows: Stenson (1987), Pithouse (1987) Pithouse and Atkinson (1988), Stanley (1990), Hyden (1992), Rostila (1992), Margolin (1992).

8. Stanley (1991:124) considers that the study of social work which concentrates on accounts is somehow less what social work is about:

A consequence of this is that the object of study, social work intervention, seems to disappear, being either fragmented or rarefied into general statements about the nature of social control. The question that has to be faced, therefore, is whether these accounts constitute an adequate description of social work.

This study has hopefully demonstrated that social work accounts are as important a feature of social work as the 'actual' intervention.

9. The reports and case files entries were collected some 2 years after the interviews, when the research perspective had changed. Although they had been read around the time of the interview, they had not been envisaged as appropriate for analysis. Access was then more restricted as I no longer worked for that Social Services Department. I obtained permission to the return to the files, however the main problem was finding them. Cases had been transferred to other Areas and Departments, and children had left care. Some files were missing, or only sparse amounts of information remained. This thesis contains more information on some cases than the social services department!

10. A cursory glance at abstracts of papers at the 'Discourse and the Profession' conference (1992) suggests that in studies of professionals with clients (teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers and lawyers), papers looking at professional-client interaction outnumber other textual research by almost 3 to 1.

11. I have two other motives for this 'update' - one narrative, one rhetorical. First, I want to give the reader a sense of an ending, a sense of closure, which is necessarily manufactured. Second, I want to make yet another ironic contrast between texts - the drama of the social work story told while the case was open, and the coolness of closing the case.

12. See chapter 1, footnote 18.

APPENDIX 1.1. 'DATA' ACCUMULATION.

It is discussed throughout chapter 1 that this thesis has undergone a number of changes of direction. These changes have been associated with both responses to methodological problems and theoretical positions. Many of these problems have centred on the status of the 'data' collected in the initial period of the study. These 'data' have, in effect, changed their status during this investigation, as different readings are deployed. 'Data', in general, are now treated as problematic, since, with the rejection of the realist/factual approach, social work accounts are investigated for their reading relations, not their accuracy.

'Data' has accumulated rather than been collected. Whilst the initial 'realist' stage of this project collected data in line with specific approaches of sampling and reliability, the change to a relativist approach recognised that 'data' are easily available within social work settings. It is not necessary to capture social work by careful, 'scientific' methods, which prescribe some information as relevant and other information as irrelevant. This is not to suggest that the 'data' gathering has been arbitrary, but that no description of a social work case should be seen as privileged. Even so, having access to reports and interviews of social workers talking and accounting for their work, has been possible from my position in a social services department and later as a researcher. I have worked for one SSD and carried out research in four others, and these 'data' are offered as typical of the cases, conversations and reports of social services departments in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

I have collected 'data' through selection procedures (specific interviews), as a part of other tasks (interviews for other research projects), and other 'data' as I came across them (reports within and around social work encounters). There are four types of 'data', most of which are social workers' accounts of their work with particular cases of children and their families. Most cases involve children who have spent some time in the care of the local authority. First, the initial interviews were randomly selected from all the older children in the care of a Social Services Department (SSD). At the time, I was a social worker in the SSD, and most of the social workers were well known to me as colleagues. I selected 10 cases, and planned to have three interviews during one year. In all I completed 25 such interviews, lasting between half an hour and two and a half hours. Second, as a researcher I have carried out a number of interviews for policy-related research both working within a SSD and for a research unit. Some interviews were concerned with social workers' talking about their cases, especially from a project exploring decisions to admit younger children into care. These interviews have been added to the 'data' accumulated, although they were not carried out specifically for this project. There are 28 such interviews. I still knew a number of these staff well, but others I did not. These lasted between 20 minutes and one hour. All the interviews were 'semi-structured', as Burgess (1982) terms 'conversation with a purpose'. Questions were not in the form of a schedule, but the interview was guided by 'chronological agreements' (explicit and implicit) between interviewer and respondent on how telling the case should be achieved. For example, "I first took the case on when.." or "What were the circumstances before the admission to care.." All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The third type of 'data' are reports, memos and case file entries from the files of some of the cases described in the interviews. It was not originally planned to

analyse such material. With the change in theoretical perspective, however, such written texts are seen as an important contrast with the conversational material, since strategic and institutional features of telling the story of the case can be further explored. There is also an opportunity to compare textual accomplishment across occasions and settings. Fourth, the accumulation of other material continued with texts from many sources - newspapers, journals, television and radio programmes. All such material is concerned with talk about social workers' cases, and all equally occasions of accounting for social work.

Some of the 'data' are court reports and are confidential. In fact, their legal status as documents of the court or the Social Services Department are not clear, and are included as this thesis is not a published document. It has been necessary to include confidential information in this analysis because of the importance of the court in these cases. Similarly, the fine-grained analysis requires close scrutiny of documents; the words and phrases used and their relationship to one another. Other researchers have quoted from court reports (for example, Hardiker 1979, Jonsson and Linell 1991, Spencer 1988,). For this reason, readers are requested to respect the confidential nature of this material, and not to use the 'data' for secondary analysis (see appendix 3.2).

Data Analysis and Presentation

The 'data' are analysed through a variety of methods associated with discourse analysis, conversation analysis, literary theory and sociolinguistics. There is controversy over the relative merits of approaches to textual analysis, which will not be discussed here (See, for example, Levinson 1983, Gilbert and Mulkay 1983, Wooffitt 1992). Instead, themes and concepts are deployed, as the transcripts are investigated for their narrative and rhetorical accomplishment. The theoretical basis of the data analysis is discussed in chapter 2.

The 'data' are presented either as fragments of texts or as entire documents. The interviews are approached both through selecting specific exchanges or utterances, and larger segments of talk. This is discussed throughout the thesis as the relative importance of hearing whole stories and rhetorical formulations is considered. There is not a detailed transcription of 'data' similar to the methods of conversation analysis. Rather, the words of speakers are presented, without punctuation, but with repetition, pauses denoted by (-) and continuers by 'erm'. There is limited use of boldening of emphasised speech. Given the length of the interviews, none are presented in full, since the transcriptions are on average fifteen pages long. Where an extract from an interview is presented, the numbers in brackets at the end of the extract refer to the page and line number in the full transcript.

APPENDIX 3.1 RESEARCH INTERVIEW : THE BROKEN ARM CASE

Introduction by Interviewer and explanation of interest in circumstances of admission to care of children under five as a part of an institutional review. Then follows the first turn of the social worker.

Social worker : On the nineteenth of November M,J and A came into care and it was in a private home called M__ right and they stayed there until the twenty seventh of November and the one that's under five is M and erm how old is he (-) have you got his date of birth

Interviewer : no but roughly ...

Social worker : he's two and a half, oh there's another one J and J is just four ok that is roughly erm (-)..

Interviewer : and sorry and how many came into care at that time

Social worker : three

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Interviewer: three so how old was the other one

Social worker: seven

Interviewer : right ok right

Social worker : Now the children..

Interviewer : sorry sorry race

Social worker : race (-) wh.. (-) black (-) mixed race

Interviewer : right (-) and gender

Social worker : boys

Interviewer : all boys three boys right sorry

Social worker : go on

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Interviewer : no I'd rather you talk... its just

Social worker : ok erm (-) th these children were made wards of court in february erm (-) in february 19__ and erm and with interim care and control to (local authority) (-) and erm the decision at that time was to leave the children with the mother although we had interim care and control erm they were to be placed at home with mum erm (-)

Interviewer : can I just interrupt how long had you been involved with the case before

Social worker : I got involved in february

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Interviewer: in february right

Social worker : cos it was it was known to this area (another social worker) was involved with the family before right erm (-) I suppose I'll have to give you a bit of background actually to explain this

Interviewer:

Yes

Social worker: the family erm J(mother) is a young mum who has lived with the father of these children for about eight years there is an older child but he's actually at (children's home) so these three are with mum and (-) for instance A who's seven has moved in his lifetime about 30 times (-) the reason that that's happened is that mum erm has kept returning to to the father of these children who who at times can be very violent towards her and when that happens and he suddenly turns she's off with the children she's always protected them she takes them away (-) now (-) in february she did this again having with social services having worked quite hard at having contracts with both her and the father of these children the thing blew up again social services decided that they had to put some sort of stop to this some sort of legal framework around it for the children you know in the best interests of the children so that's why they went back they went to court which meant then erm you know it gave us some legal framework to work with J to say look you can't keep moving around these children are you know their behaviour is showing us this that and the other showing signs of disturbance

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Interviewer : where did she go when she leaves

Social worker: well what she did was to go to bed and breakfast in erm (area) and then another bed and breakfast in (area)

Interviewer : she just booked herself in

Social worker : well no (local authority) put her in homeless families she went down to homeless families violence they put her into b and b and then erm finally we got hold of a property in (area) so she's in a 5 bedroom house in (area) the whole family moved over to there without the father the courts put an injunction against him to stay away from the family and under no conditions could he see either J or the children (-) and then what happened was J knew quite clearly he had to stay away and that she had to stop moving around and to work work with us and we were trying to work sort of promote some sort of community package with the idea of a family centre which is fixed up with (name of centre) day nurseries getting the two eldest children into special schools because they were no longer going to be able to from the assessments be able to sort of stay in mainstream school try and get her settled because I mean moving about was one of the biggest things and the children were all over the place quite insecure (-) then so J was supposedly keeping to that contract and having no contact with the father and then in erm november the beginning of november the eldest child who was there at weekends broke his arm he went to (hospital)

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and he told the hospital that his father had done it this meant alarm bells you know father's on the scene da da da da so because of that erm and because we talked to J and she seemed to think well it's ok for for dad to see the children I'm not really bothered erm and because of that attitude the fact that she hadn't been honest with us 80 we felt that the children's sort of long term future was at risk and erm that and that they were at risk because he was around and he could turn up at any moment so we went to court and got an injunction to actually go and collect those children from the home because we expected mum to not let us have them erm and that's why that's why they came into care erm and then we went back to court for a fuller hearing because you would have got it in half an hour this injunction to go and collect the children and so J was able to put her side of the story and we put our side of the story and the judge decided that 90 the children should go back home

Interviewer : oh (-) cause you'd not wanted that

Social worker : no

Interviewer : what would have been your sort of preference that court that you'd been asking for

Social worker : well we were we were sort of seriously saying that erm we hadn't I mean basically we were saying look we haven't had a chance to really think about erm the future for these children it's all happened so quickly but what we do recognise at the moment the children are not safe at home because of the father being on the scene and because of what has happened to the eldest child and that we 100 needed time to think about it and in the meanwhile we wanted the children to stay in care and then come back to court the court wouldn't grant us that so the children went home (-) erm (-) and that's it in a nutshell really

Interviewer : ok

APPENDIX 3.2 COURT REPORT

It had originally been intended to include an anonymised version of the affidavit in this appendix. However, on consulting legal opinion, I have decided that the uncertain legal nature of the document requires sensitivity in its display (see Appendix 1.1). I have therefore followed other social science writers and only quoted from the document. I do, however, wish to provide the reader with an overall sense of the document, and here indicate the general outline of the affidavit to show where the quoted passages fit in.

The affidavit is seven pages long and typed in double space. Each paragraph is numbered from 1 to 12, but two paragraphs take up more than a page, being a detailed description of the two encounters between the social worker and the mother.

Page 1: lines 1-23. This page is mainly laid out in terms of the legal introductions and phrases, describing the court and the appropriate jurisdiction in bold headings. The parties are introduced as the plaintiff: the Local Authority, and the defendants: the parents. In the first paragraph, the social worker is introduced and her authority to represent the Social Services Department described.

Page 2: lines 24-50. Paragraphs 2 and 3 outlines why and how the affidavit will proceed. Paragraph 4 describes recent educational developments.

Page 3: lines 51-79. Paragraph 5 starts at line 44 and continues to line 82. This is a description of a visit by the social worker to the mother, when the incident of the broken arm had been reported but before abuse was confirmed. It also outlines mother's complaints about the day nursery, and the social worker's offers of help.

Page 4: lines 80-106. Paragraph 6 describes the reception of information from the hospital that indicated that the boy had been injured by his father and that the injury was "unusual". It also describes the police visiting the home and arresting the father. Paragraph 7 comments that "in the light of the above information" the removal of the children was decided and refers the reader to a previous affidavit from the first approach to the High Court.

Page 5: lines 106-135. Paragraph 8 from lines 103 to 135 describes the removal of the children and the hysterical behaviour of the mother. The first thirteen lines describe the mode of entry and the twenty two lines describe the mother's words and actions. There are three examples of the reported speech of the mother.

Page 6: lines 136-163. Paragraph 9 from lines 136 to 160 begins with the Area Officer's instruction to remove the children and the rest of the paragraph reports their behaviour, including five examples of their speech.

Page 7: lines 164-203. Paragraph 10 from line 161 to 177 sums up the social worker's view of the mother's attitude to Social Services. Paragraph 11 mentions mother's legal representation and paragraph 12 lists the social worker's recommendations.

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Judgements flawed says child death review

1. 21/28 Dec 1989
Community Care.

BY DAVID MITCHELL

Child protection workers made "flawed judgements" and "faulty decisions" in their handling of the Sukina Hammond case, a report from Avon's Joint Child Abuse Committee has concluded.

The report claims that despite the best of intentions, the standards of practice expected and required of all agencies in child protection work were not fulfilled.

In particular, there was a lack of objective assessment and evaluation of the information available.

"The indicators of predisposition to abuse and neglect in this family were not recog-

nised and there was an unwarranted optimism . . . which led to a serious underestimation of the potential risks to the children," says the report.

But despite the criticisms, the committee concurs with the SSD's own internal review that Sukina's death could not reasonably have been anticipated and therefore prevented.

"What we know is that no evidence of the children being beaten was ever observed — although more frequent and more thorough medical examinations would have been advisable in checking on

their welfare," says the report.

Five-year-old Sukina of St Paul's, Bristol, was beaten to death by her father after she was unable to spell her name. David Hammond was jailed for life at Bristol Crown Court last month.

Avon director Wally Harbert welcomed the report as "fairly balanced" in its criticisms.

"You can't do our job without taking a risk, but in this case the risks were unacceptable and the staff involved should have realised that," he said.

But he added: "It is unfortunate that the press has tend-

ed to pick this up as a criticism of social workers, whereas mistakes were made by pretty well every organisation which had any involvement in the case."

Harbert said the Social Services Inspectorate had been invited to review the department's child protection procedures and could well begin work early next year.

As for a possible public inquiry, he said: "That is a matter of judgement for the minister but I do not think it will come to that. She may well weigh it against the possibility of the SSI doing some work with us."

Legal expert to head child death review

2. 14 Dec 1989
Community Care.

BY DAVID MICHELL

Child care law expert Richard White has been called in to head an independent review of the death of Christopher Palmer, who died three weeks after being placed on Ealing's at risk register.

White, who earlier this year produced the Doreen Aston report for Southwark, has already begun work and hopes to produce his findings early in the New Year.

Assistant director Stephen Barber said the review would be carried out along similar lines to those recommended in the Doreen Aston report.

But he added it seemed unlikely that an inquiry of that scale would be needed.

Seventeen-year-old Danny Palmer was convicted of murdering the seven-month-old baby at the Old Bailey last week.

Palmer, who was also found guilty of causing grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm and cruelty, was jailed

for an indefinite period.

After the child's death in December last year, Ealing ordered an internal inquiry to be carried out by Terry Cooper, a senior manager in the SSD, and Abigail Sargent, a GP and a member of the area child protection committee.

The investigation concluded that social workers were not to blame for the child's death.

"Within the limitations set by the law we felt all the workers carried out their duties conscientiously and satisfactorily and that no blame can be attributed to those in-

involved," they said.

"We are satisfied that at no time was there evidence which would have allowed the department to have instituted legal proceedings."

The court heard that Palmer was 16 and in council care when he was initially allowed to set up home as father to his girlfriend's baby.

Palmer, who had been in children's homes since he was three, was subject to a court order which gave the London Borough of Hounslow full parental rights.

But a spokesman for Hounslow said: "Danny made his intention to move very clear. Even though this was against our advice, we could have done little to prevent him going."

"In this situation, it is preferable for a local authority to try to work with the adolescent, rather than risk losing contact with him altogether," he added.

3. Community Care 24/28 December 1984

SSD was mistaken

South Glamorgan SSD last week accepted it had made a mistake in allowing a two-year-old girl to return to her home where she was physically and sexually abused.

The department was strongly criticised in a damning report into the child abuse case — the first to be called into a case which did not result in a child death.

NEGLECT

The inquiry, which was undertaken by barrister Mark Evans and a panel of three child care and health experts, was established after the child's mother and her boyfriend were jailed in December last year after admitting charges of neglect, assault and indecent assault.

The report finds that a decision made at a case conference to return the child to its

home was based on "inadequate information and a superficial assessment of the case".

"The fateful decision to return the child was ultimately a collective decision, reached in a properly constituted case conference. Our view is that such a decision was the wrong one," it concludes.

The report does not criticise any of the individuals involved, but states it was the system which broke down, "letting down those who worked within it".

"While the most perfect and best resourced system will never prevent individual misjudgment, inadequate procedures and overstretched resources will guarantee the occurrence of frequent mistakes and misjudgements," it warns.

"In this case the resources

of that part of the department charged with the conduct of this case were overstretched and patently inadequate to the task."

South Glamorgan director Chris Perry told *Community Care* procedures in the department had changed considerably since the child's case.

REORGANISATION

In addition to new national guidance, as a result of the Cleveland report, the SSD had reorganised into eight child care teams and had appointed eight senior social work practitioners.

"Everyone recognises that the decision to return the child to its home was wrong, but it should be remembered that at the time it was made with the best interests of the child in mind," he said.

5. Community Care.

Deaths could not have been prevented

21/28 Dec 1984

Central SWD could not have predicted nor prevented the tragedy when a Clackmannan mother killed her children in April this year. The woman was receiving considerable social work support at the time.

These are understood to be the main conclusions of the independent and departmental inquiries into the children's deaths in a house fire, which director Ian Ross will report to his social work committee today. Linda Thomas, who was acutely depressed and also trying to kill herself, was subsequently jailed for ten years.

The report will also make recommendations in the light of lessons learned from the case, and details will be passed to the Secretary of State. Thomas's appeal against sentence is expected early in the New Year.

4. Community Care 30 November 1984

Mellor's attack on staff ill-judged says inquiry

BY LINDA CHAMBERLAIN

Former Health Minister David Mellor has been strongly criticised by a child abuse inquiry for his hasty condemnation of professionals following the death of three-year-old Liam Johnson.

Liam died from 16 spinal fractures at the hands of his father. He had never been in care, was not on an at risk register and was not regarded by welfare agencies as neglected or ill cared for.

Following Robert Johnson's conviction in June for manslaughter Mellor called for an inquiry demanding to know what went wrong. He said Liam had been entitled to "more protection from the authorities than he received".

Yet the inquiry commissioned by Islington area child protection committee found

that the professionals, particularly social workers, had not failed and had not made any serious errors of judgement.

The team, led by lawyer Elizabeth Lawson, challenged Mellor's "dangerous assumption" that all violence to children was predictable and preventable.

The report concluded: "Children do die, sometimes tragically, and sometimes at the hands of those who should care for them.

"Responsibility for these deaths lies overwhelmingly with those who kill them, not with those whose role has been to try to help the family."

The team, which included former Wandsworth director, Leo Goodman, questioned the seemingly inevitable need

for an inquiry following the death of a child particularly when there was only limited contact with social services.

This one was held in private and therefore considerably cheaper than most at £100,000. But the report notes that it still diverted scarce resources away from the solution of problems "which are already known and identified".

There had been contact between Liam's family and social services in both Sheffield and Islington. Prior to Liam's birth his mother alleged that Johnson had assaulted her and injured Liam's brother.

The boys were in voluntary care for a while but later lived with their father in London and appeared to be well.

Liam had been taken to

hospital a month before his death with a badly swollen thigh but the injury was considered to be accidental.

The inquiry makes a number of recommendations including the provision of specialist child abuse practitioners.

It raises concerns about Islington's decentralised neighbourhoods which mean the only centralised social services record is the child protection register. Had doctors wanted to check whether Liam's family was known to social services they would have needed to contact 24 neighbourhood offices.

Islington social services director John Rea Price said staff were distressed that a child had died but pleased that the quality of their work had been upheld.

Boy's death no fault of social workers

6.
Community
Care
24 May 1990

Social workers in Bury, Greater Manchester, have been cleared of responsibility for the death of a three-year-old boy in 1988. The area's child protection committee has concluded that no blame should be attached to staff.

The boy was suffocated with a pillow by his mother following a row between the woman and her ex-boyfriend. The woman then tried to commit suicide by setting fire to the hotel which she had booked into.

NO INVOLVEMENT

The committee's report on the case said there had been no SSD involvement with the mother.

There was no evidence that her care of the child had been anything other than satisfactory and no sign that she rep-



Hewitt: Unforeseeable death

resented a physical threat to her child.

Bury director Peter Hewitt, who chairs the area child protection committee, said: "This tragic death was unforesee-

able. Nothing we could have done would have saved the child."

● Manchester director Mike Bishop reacted angrily this week to newspaper reports of a "sex scandal" in one of the SSD's children's homes.

HORRIFIED

He said staff at the Westdene children's home in Cheetham Hill were horrified at the sensational reports concerning a 12-year-old girl. She allegedly became a prostitute while living at the home.

"The scandal is not that a very disturbed young girl became a prostitute, but that there are men on the streets who will abuse children in this way and who are prepared to pay for it," he said.

The girl has now been placed in a more secure, specialist setting elsewhere.

Social workers failed to spot and stop abuse

7. Community
Care
23 November 1989

BY IAN McMILLAN

Basic and "potentially dangerous" flaws in the way the Cumbria-based social workers respond to cases of suspected child abuse have been uncovered by SSI inspectors.

The inspectors, who investigated a number of SSD cases during last autumn and this spring, found that management roles are inadequately defined and social workers are failing to make accurate assessments.

The three-member SSI team conducted its investigation in the wake of widespread public concern over the death in 1986 of two-year-old Karl McGoldrick.

The results of the SSI investigation were released last

week to coincide with the publication of a hard-hitting health authority report, which criticises senior social work and medical figures for failing to protect the boy.

Karl suffered a series of injuries which culminated in his death at the hands of Mark Knowles, his mother's boyfriend. Medical and SSD staff saw his earlier injuries as the result of "poor parenting" and no one was willing to confirm abuse, the health authority report claims.

"The SSD, like some others concerned, seemed to fail to appreciate the gravity of a situation that progressively and insidiously unfolded," it notes.

Following Karl's death, the

SSD made a "serious effort" to respond to a number of recommendations from the area review committee and a team of independent consultants, the SSI report comments.

The inspectors found evidence that some social workers were acting professionally, though much of their contribution went "unrecognised and unacknowledged" by colleagues and managers alike.

There were "potentially dangerous practices" in the identification of abuse, with "shortcomings in both individual practice and management control".

Staff should plan casework carefully, look at all sources of

potential harm to children and have easier access to SSI records, the SSI report adds.

Cumbria's assistant director Deryk Mead stressed that the SSI inspection, carried out jointly with three SSD representatives, took place before vital parts of a five-year overhaul were implemented.

Earlier this year, completely revised procedures on child protection were introduced and staff offered specialised training.

A child protection consultant, David Pithers, was appointed to support a new monitoring unit, which now oversees child abuse work across the county, scrutinise case conference minutes and gives independent advice.

8. *Community Care* 30 November 1989

Avon director admits mistakes were made

Avon's social services director Wally Harbert has admitted that mistakes were made by social workers and other professionals working with five-year-old Sukina Hammond who was battered to death by her father.

But he has denied they could have foreseen the tragedy or prevented it and warned that this would not be the last child death.

David Hammond, 26, was given a life sentence last week for Sukina's murder. He had subjected her to a 20 minute beating using a ruler, plastic piping, fists and a kettle flex because she had failed to spell her name. She died from pain, shock and exhaustion.

Sukina and her family had been known to social services for three years but four

months before she died her name was removed from the at-risk register.

Harbert said this week that the decision — taken by a multidisciplinary team of the department's staff, health professionals, the police and NSPCC — was a mistake.

He told *Community Care* that it was normal procedure for such decisions by a case conference to be ratified by another panel.

Sukina had suffered a broken limb after the case conference but the incident was never reported to the panel prior to its meeting.

"Had they known, it is pretty unlikely she would have come off the register," he said.

Harbert doubted social workers could have foreseen what was going to happen

and therefore, could not have prevented it.

"Staff rely heavily on medical opinion to identify whether physical injury is non-accidental. In this family, medical opinion was that abuse had not occurred," he said.

Three weeks before her death social workers had received an anonymous allegation that she had been beaten.

Staff could see no injuries to her but arranged for her to be examined by a doctor who advised there were no marks. Contingency plans to remove her from the home were not implemented as a result.

Harbert said there had been evidence over a long period of poor parenting, domestic violence and in-

volvement with drugs. This was not sufficient to take Sukina into care.

He said staff had faced angry and aggressive outbursts, personal abuse and complaints of harassment in working with the family.

"It is becoming increasingly difficult to tread the careful balance that is required between over-reacting and under-reacting to events.

"As the death of Sukina shows, we are not always able to avert a tragedy but there are good reasons for staff to be vigilant," he added.

The department's review of the case is due to be considered by the social services committee in December and may be made public. Harbert hoped an independent inquiry would not be needed.

Inquiry after foster mother jailed for manslaughter

An independent inquiry has been launched by Derbyshire County Council after a registered foster mother admitted killing a nine-month-old baby in her care.

Former Wandsworth director Leo Goodman is to head the inquiry, which is expected to open in January and last for several months.

Forty-seven-year-old Janet Jones was jailed for life admitting the manslaughter and several other charges con-

cerning the child at Nottingham Crown Court last week.

The court heard that no criticism could be levelled at Derbyshire social workers, who had kept in regular touch with Jones while she fostered ten other children.

Derbyshire said the inquiry would be held in private but its findings would be made public.

Goodman is to announce the terms of reference at a later date.

Central inquiry into child killings

10. *Community Care*

7 September 1989

Central SWD has launched an independent inquiry after a single mother was jailed for 10 years last week for killing her two children while they were under social work supervision.

Linda Thomas, 35, also tried to kill herself when she set fire to her home in May. She was severely depressed and wrongly believed social workers were about to remove her two sons, aged 10 and three.

At the High Court in Edinburgh the judge, Lord Milligan, blamed Thomas' heavy drinking for her "horrendous" crime, and said her problems were "substantially of her own making".

Central SWD hopes to complete its inquiry by the end of this month. It is to be led by Dick Poor, retired deputy director of social work in Strathclyde.

For legal reasons, Central's deputy director Iain Craw-

ford, was unable to comment on the Judge's remarks or the length of the sentence, nor to confirm reports that social workers involved in the case have been shocked and upset by the outcome.

But he confirmed Thomas had no history of violence or abuse towards the children: "It was felt the family needed help and support. Neither prosecution nor defence had criticised the SWD," he said.

Thomas's children had been returned to her care, under supervision, in November 1988 by a children's home. They had earlier been placed with relatives when she attempted suicide after her relationship with the children's father broke up.

The three-strong inquiry team will examine the effectiveness of support and supervision, evaluate Central's guidance on children at risk; and study the case conference involved.

Death of child in care sparks inquiry call

11. Guardian
19 August 1989

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

12. Community Care
10 August 1989

Inquiry follows death

Wandsworth social services has launched an inquiry following the death this week of a three-year-old girl who was in its care but living with her mother.

Stephanie Fox died in the early hours of Sunday morning and her twin sisters are recovering in hospital suffering from bruising.

Her father, 23-year-old Stephen Fox, has appeared in court charged with murder and was remanded in custody.

Sheila Poupard, acting director of Wandsworth social services, has launched an "urgent and thorough" review of the case.

A spokesman said the aim

was to establish the facts, check whether proper procedures were followed and recommend appropriate action.

The inquiry is being conducted according to DoH guidelines and will work to a tight three to four week time scale. Its findings will be considered by a special meeting of the social services committee in September.

That meeting will decide whether further action or inquiries are necessary.

The spokesman said: "We are greatly concerned at the tragedy and deeply sympathise with the grief the child's mother is experiencing."

A MAGISTRATE called yesterday for a full inquiry into how a child in the protection of social services was allegedly battered to death by her father after she and her two sisters had suffered a series of suspicious injuries.

The 22-year-old father, who has been charged with murder but cannot be named for legal reasons, was also involved in the accidental death of his first child.

Mr Rex Cowan, chairing the bench at Inner London Juvenile Court, said: "This is a disturbing, horrifying case involving the death of a child in care and I assume that at the end of it there is going to be a very penetrating inquiry into how it all came about."

The court rejected an application by the man's partner that their two younger daughters be returned to her or her parents rather than kept in the care of Wandsworth social services, south London, where they have been since the death of their sister two weeks ago.

Mrs Janet Digby-Baker, acting as the children's guardian at litem, opposed the application on grounds including the chance that the father, who is remanded in custody, might get bail.

The court heard that police were called to the family's council flat in the early hours of August 6 and found the elder child, aged almost three, with serious head injuries.

Police Inspector Peter Stening said the father was threatening. Blood stains and human tissue were found in the toilet.

"The whole flat absolutely stank with excrement and urine," said the inspector. The younger children's nappies did not appear to have been changed for 24 hours, he said.

They had been found in a small and dirty bedroom which they were apparently sharing with their sister.

"The children were lifeless,

there was nothing in them. They didn't respond to kindness, to cuddles or laughing. Obviously they were in a state of shock."

The 20-year-old mother said that the flat had been clean and the children freshly changed when she had left the previous afternoon for an anniversary party at her parents' house. She returned at 5 am.

The court was told that the father's first child, a boy, had been the subject of a supervision order. He had choked on his vomit when apparently being fed and then thrown in the air by the father. A verdict of accidental death had been recorded. There had been no known police inquiry.

Injuries to the second child had been first reported in 1986, when she was two months old. She had been made subject of a care order as well as being placed, with the other children, on the at-risk register.

Mr Michael Watson, the family's social worker since May, said he had recorded four incidents of bruising to the elder girl and one to each of the others. The mother said they were due to accidents, he said, and a doctor on one occasion had substantiated this.

Mr Watson said he had not had much experience of such cases but that he had said this to his superiors.

In this section

Arts, Reviews	18, 19
Crosswords	22
Financial News	8-10
Guardian Money	11, 12
Home News	2-4
International News	5, 6
Listings	17
Sports News	13-16
Weather	22

Weekend tabloid

Cartoons	18, 19
Crossword	48
TV and Radio	44-47

APPENDIX 4.2

THE FAILURE TO THRIVE CASE

RI = research interviewer
SW = social worker

RI: start when you took it on and I gather from what I could see you took it on in about erm september eighty six

SW: that's right

RI: and the kids were already in care is that right

SW: well look I'll speak to because I can I can

RI: I'll leave it to you [laughs]

SW: [unclear] I was allocated in to this case in september nineteen eighty six the case erm 10 had originally been allocated in area five erm for a period of about six weeks prior to me taking it on the circumstances were (...) that erm a child by the name of Catherine erm (...) had been taken to Saint Hugo College Hospital by the child's mother in july nineteen eighty six the circumstances were that Catherine had been born in december nineteen eighty five she had lived with her mother who was then aged seventeen just turning eighteen erm at the grandmother's maternal grandmother's home of and then the mother has 20 subsequently moved to her own Littleton provided accommodation in area five and had moved in with erm a cohab so there was a young cohab about aged eighteen there was the mother who was eighteen and the baby (...)

now the baby was at some stage I think when she was about five months old erm taken to the GP who was very concerned about the child feeling that the child was under weight erm was not developing as it should and the referral was made to Saint Hugo College Hospital it would appear retrospectively that there was a 30 breakdown in communication between the GP and the hospital the hospital perhaps not quite realising the erm the priority that this er situation should have so it turned out that was a further four weeks before the child was taken to the hospital for an appointment on being taken there erm the hospital felt that this was a clear picture of a failure to thrive the child was as I recall off the top of my head I think it was two and a half kilos under weight was very dehydrated and in fact had the situation been left further longer the child would 40 have died the child was admitted

and what then happened was that the mother erm the the staff found the mother very very difficult very *hostile* uncooperative erm and the the situation er caused so

much anxiety that a place of safety was taken and the child was kept in the hospital

there followed a number of case conferences the number of which I *cannot* recall that something in a region of three or four and one of those conferences the mother actually physically assaulted the chair (...) erm now a ⁵⁰ social worker from a hospital was appointed at that time the family is a er black family and the social worker at the hospital was a er black worker the that didn't seem to help at all in that the parents found it very difficult to cooperate with this man (...) the case was allocated in area five and I think it was in august nineteen eighty six because of course the family actually lived and again erm black social worker was allocated (...) there was an incident however involving this worker when he was assaulted he was kicked and punched and it was really a ⁶⁰ very serious matter on the basis that this worker would find it extremely difficult to proceed I was allocated which was in september now at that point various interim care orders had been granted but when I took on the case I took it on with a clear objective in mind and that was one of assessment (...)

now unfortunately the child had been placed with a foster parent and again because the mother was so *hostile* the foster parent found it impossible to work with her and this was actually *in fear* of having this mother ⁷⁰ come to her home and she in fact was so frightened that she asked for the child to be transferred (...)

when the child was transferred *again* we were in some difficulty because we felt that we couldn't arrange access in in the foster home as we normally would so what happened was that access had to be arranged in area office which was a horrendous task (...) to overcome this and to enable me to *assess* this family's ability to care for this child we involved the family welfare association in Bollington and we involved them with two erm ⁸⁰ objectives *one* was that they would assist in the assessment of the the parenting skills of these parents and secondly that they would they would provide a venue where access to the child could could happen (...)

erm cutting a long story short the assessment went very well and I managed to develop a relationship with the mother in particular the father unfortunately was in detention centre at that time and this caused some difficulties (...) but the the assessment did go well and by the november when the full care proceeding date was ⁹⁰ set I had called a further case conference and the case conference *accepted* my recommendation that we should go forward with care proceedings that that we should seek a supervision order rather than a full care order (...) we took it to court in november and this recommendation was accepted by the court all be it that we had reservations and the reservations were put very clear to the magistrates we were recommending the

supervision that we wanted the court to know as indeed did the guardian ad litem our (...) erm that the supervision order gave us no erm statutory powers to remove the child or to do anything should the situation break down and that is the significant point for the future (...) anyway erm we came to a voluntary agreement which was agreed in court although again it couldn't be part of the order that mother was to continue erm her work with the family welfare association and that there was agreements made about her visits there and about my work with the family 100

what then happened was that as soon as the baby went home (...) very sadly the parents *refused* to cooperate and things became extremely difficult the situation was exacerbated by the birth of a second baby in the december of eighty six (...) we then had a double problem that (...) workwise we were putting in the family welfare association who were meant to be there to *counsel* the family and to offer them erm primary care which would involve them developing the parenting skills so they were heavily involved secondly there was myself who was the key worker thirdly there was a family aid from area five who was visiting twice a week 110

and it got to the point that by sort of january february nineteen eighty seven that *none* of us were actually able to work with the family at all and because they weren't allowed in us too and as I said they they just stopped cooperating erm (...) our concern was that here we have a statutory supervision order erm and we were not able to work on it at all we were not able to supervise (...) we attempted to hold case conferences where we could review this situation 120

and we did this unfortunately parents failed to attend and there was a rather climax and I can't remember the month but I think it was in march eighty seven erm when I did a home visit to the family a joint visit with the family welfare association and it was found that erm (...) it was [TEMPORARILY INTERRUPTED] we went to to cover three things one was that we wanted to let the family know that there was another case conference coming up and we wanted to tell them how important it was because clearly we were going to have to consider putting the new baby's name on the register (...) secondly we wanted to to see if we could investigate with the family *why* they were unwilling to cooperate erm and thirdly really to let them know that we were viewing the situation very seriously (...) 130

basically I was threatened at that interview it was a very frightening experience and both of us felt very lucky to get out without being physically assaulted erm (...) the situation got to the point where ah *because* no one was seeing the family we were getting second hand information that the new baby was also failing to thrive and we tried very hard to liaise with other agencies like 140 150

the GP and the health visitor and we did this successfully

but the family were not cooperating with them either the baby was actually admitted to hospital in april for a short period and was diagnosed as having reflux which is a condition whereby erm the the the food erm is is is not or that the milk as it was the liquid is not retained it its just goes down so far and a valve then forces it out 160 again and it's vomitted up and so of course the baby doesn't get nourishment *that* was diagnosed and mother was shown how to erm how to act how how to actually deal with that but after I think was a further three weeks erm three or four weeks having failed I may say to keep follow up appointments at the hospital the baby was again seen by the GP who felt further concerned and the baby was taken to Saint Toby where it was admitted and a diagnosis was made of a very erm clear failure to thrive in that from the time that it was admitted to the time ah sorry from the time of discharged 170 yeah

RI:

SW:

to the time of readmitting and had failed to put on much weight at all

and indeed by the time we had the next case conference which was at the end of april erm stroke beginning of may erm nineteen eighty seven the baby while at have been kept in hospital had actually put on weight having been fed under a normal regime indicating so the medics felt that clearly it was a question of the way the baby 180 was being handled and fed (...) what the mother came to that case conference but went off in temper before we could explain the recommendations or the decisions and the decisions were that we should take in places of safety and on both the children one because we *wanted* to ensure that the baby was kept in hospital erm for further treatment and secondly that the second the first child Catherine who we were meant to be supervising because we have not managed to just see her we've been *prevented* in effect from seeing her erm we'd no way we 190 we felt that the child was probably progressing quite well but we couldn't prove it and we felt we needed to see her to prove it (...) this was we tried to discuss this with mother but she wouldn't hear of it and regrettably I was forced into a situation where not only had I to take places of safety that I had to apply for a section forty one allowing me to to go with the police to gain access (...) we further tried to negotiate this with the parents but again getting no cooperation I have no erm alternative but to go with the police (...) both the the 200 baby was already in hospital but the other child we've moved of course not to my surprise when she was removed and examined was found to be developing acceptably which is what we anticipated *but* we had

RI:

SW:

oh
to prove it and what then transpired was that we went of course for interim care proceedings and we got the interim care of the baby but not on Catherine the first

child (...) however the parents took a decision erm to (...)
 erm leave or to place Catherine with the maternal 210
 grandmother and grandfather who had always kept in
 touch with the situation

we now understand from the guardian that the natural 330
 parents or the mother has decided that she does not
 want either of the two children returned to her that she
 is making things difficult because she insists that she
 wants the two children to be together and she full well
 knows that the grandmother is only prepared to keep
 Catherine erm because she feels that it would be too
 much for her to have to cope with two young children so
 that's the position at the moment and that in summary is
 the case

RI: how in terms of the grandparents you found 340
 them much easier to work with

SW: oh they are very
 cooperative and no problem they are disgusted of the
 behaviour of the natural parents and they are very
 resentful because their position is they say why why
 that they bring these children into the world er if they
 cannot care for them and they are not interested in them
 that's their sort of erm sort of blinkered view they are
 not looking the wider perspective that they can hardly
 expect to there is lot of anger 350

RI: and they were much
 easier

SW: oof no problem no problem they're happy
 and they've always been very helpful to us

DIRECTORATE OF SOCIAL SERVICES
CASE-HISTORY (SUMMARY) SHEET

RECEIVED IN CHILDRENS HOME
SECTION
Social Services
(State Borough or Establishment name and address)

FROM [SOCIAL WORKER]
TO.. [PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER]

Child's name ... [DONNA] 5
(Surname in caps)

Date of birth . [D.O.B.] Religion .. *Methodist*
Date

Care order
S.1 without R.& P.
S.1 with R.& P.
Circumstances (brief) in which child came into care, with dates :-
[Donna] received into after police failed to get mother to take her back on the 2nd September.

Maladjusted
~~E.S.N.~~
Other category (please state) 10
*Delete as necessary

Matthew Sawyer [Donna] maladjusted i.e. steal, lies, neglect + abusive. Poor relationship with teacher confirmed by EWO. 15

Name of Social Worker now dealing with child and family [Social Worker]

Names of any previous S.W. or other social workers who may have relevant information :-
..... *None*

Child's present address. [Address]

Child has been there since ... *2nd of September*

School the child attends or place and nature of employment (if any). [School] 20

Any other basic information about child

I have only met [Donna] on two occasions. Both times she has been spelt. However impressions gained were of a very unhappy withdrawn child, who was totally shut off emotionally.

Parent's names and address
Mother. [Mother] 25
Father. [Address]

Name of any other social service dealing with family

Comments on relatives (e.g., stepfather/mother, good or bad, interested or indifferent, domestic troubles, siblings in care or not) *Matthew received into care when she was same age as [Donna] no history available. Matthew never had good relationship with child, he was totally rejected her on basis that she might have had sex.* 30

REPORT and case-history (brief outline)

[Please begin with a chronological outline of placings (particularly moves in pre-school period where known).

35

- (a) before in care
- (b) while in care

[Donna] has never been received into care before.

There have been many problems with [Donna's] behavior according to mother. Mother requested PIC after she discovered that [Donna] had had some sexual contact with a 37yr old. pimp. Mother reluctant to inform police also to accept social work intervention. She agrees to discuss problems but when it did not get results re [Donna]. received into care, and [Donna] run away she refused to have her back. Mother saying [Donna's] completely bad and she never wants her back.

RECOMMENDATIONS (if any) Full Assessment (Continue on separate sheet if necessary)

[Social Worker] (PDM)
 Agreed [Principal Social Worker]
 [Team Leader] J.L.

Report of an Assessment Conference

Re: (Donna)

Present:

- POSW (Chair)
- E.W.O.
- (children's home)
- Deputy, (children's home)
- Placements
- Family Caseworker
- Educational Psychologist 10
- I.T.O.
- O.I.C. (children's home)
-
- Minutes

(Donna's) social worker reported that (Mother), has indicated that she thinks she can manage with one daughter (i.e. (Sister)) at home. She wishes to keep her daughters apart. (Donna) is seen as immoral and badly behaved and if (Sister) misbehaves it is invariably seen as (Donna's) fault. (Social Worker) did not think that (Sister) would be at home for long as (Mother) does not have the emotional capacity to cope with adolescents.

(maternal grandmother) sees the problems as (Mother's) responsibility. She does not wish to interfere or influence any decisions taken concerning (Donna). (Grandmother) has telephoned (Donna) since her admission to (children's home) but has not visited her. (Donna) has not expressed any particular desire to see her grandmother. (Donna's) mother and grandmother fear an inevitable permanent breach in the family so they always 'agree to disagree' rather than cooperating and trying to find a solution to their problems. 20

(Donna's) mother is preoccupied with the idea of (Donna's) sexual promiscuity. (Mother) does not see the birth of her two illegitimate daughters in the same light as Donna's behaviour. At (children's home, Donna) has not shown any signs of the kind of provocative behaviour described by her mother. However, (social worker) talked through with (Donna) one day and it became apparent that Donna is very well known by her peers, and they were subjected to a series of cat calls and obscene suggestions by various groups of boys. 30

(Donna's) mother referred her daughter to Child Guidance Clinic in 1982 but only one interview took place and the conference did not have any information about the outcome of this visit.

(Donna's) father, lives in the area near School. Apparently (father) is a , and on one occasion visited the school in a professional capacity. He met (Donna) and introduced himself as her father.

EDUCATION

Prior to coming to (children's home, Donna's) attendance at school was very poor and she was often late. On several occasions she had been suspected of stealing at school but never challenged to her face. She was described as being 'a law unto herself' and not concerned with the school rules or her performance. Her attitude to school has improved since her admission to (children's home). She attends school regularly and is more receptive to advice and reprimands. 40

(O.I.C) reported that since coming to (children's home) has become more articulate and is more forthcoming with information about himself and her situation. She has begun to realise that such information is not necessarily 50 going to be 'used against her'. Contrary to the information supplied by her mother, (Donna's) attitude to boys is to let them approach her rather than actively seek their attention. It was felt she may be benefitting by being able to stand back at (children's home) and form better relationships with boys rather than granting sexual favours as alleged by her mother.

Since her admission (Donna) has had no contact with her mother. They met in Dr 's office on the 21st of October but (Mother) was late for the appointment and did not acknowledge her daughter. (Donna) was extremely upset by this encounter. She had previously considered writing to her mother 60 to make some kind of contact but neither seems ready to make the first move. Both mother and daughter like to have a sense of control and neither want to back down. (Mother) may feel uncomfortable visiting (children's home) On one occasion she wanted to send (sister) to visit (Donna). It was felt by the conference that contact with (sister) should not be controlled by (Mother). She may be using (sister) as a form of go-between to find out what is going on.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(Social Worker) should attempt to contact (father) to inform him that (Donna) is in care and may possibly go into long-term care.

(Social Worker) should make a request to the school for a formal report as to 70 how (Donna) is functioning at school at the moment.

Contact with (Donna's) grandmother should be encouraged if (Donna) expresses the desire to see her.

(Donna) should be encouraged to write to (sister) and possibly inquire after her mother.

(Mother) should be given positive feedback from the social worker about what is happening to her daughter at (children's home). He should do this in the form of a letter and suggest that the 2 girls would benefit from contact.

(Donna) should be given positive feedback about herself by (children's home) Staff should reinforce the idea that it can be helpful to express one's feelings 80 rather than harmful.

It should be made known to (Donna) that a (children's home) is being sought but not necessarily for the next 3½ years. She could still be prepared for a family as she might benefit from the challenge to form relationships in such an environment. She should understand that she is not being prepared to return home.

(Donna) should be invited to the next review.

If (Donna's) mother interferes and attempts to prevent action by Social Services a section 3 resolution should be implemented.

Review 20/11/

PROFILE ON [DONNA]

[Donna] is a pretty fourteen year old black girl who is somewhat small for her age, being of slight build and height. She maintains a good standard of personal hygiene and takes considerable pride in her appearance and dress. [Donna] had been living at home with her mother and younger sister up until her admission to [Children's Home], on 2nd September. The reason surrounding her admission was because her mother felt [Donna] to be beyond her control and having a bad influence on her sister, subsequently [Donna] had run away from home on two occasions. The first stay being at her grandmothers, the most serious being three days on the run, this leading to her admission to [Children's Home].

10

Since admission [Donna]'s relationship with mother has been non-existent. Neither [Donna] nor mother has made any attempt to bridge the gap between them. According to [Mother], she wants no dealings with [Donna], nor to have her return home. [Donna]'s feelings also coincide with mum in that she has no wish to return home; or resume her relationship with mother. [Donna] retains a normal relationship with her sister although according to [Donna] her social worker has passed on to her that mum does not wish for [Sister] to visit [Donna] here.

20

Mr (Donna's father) has recently made contact with [Donna] at her school and on two occasions has given her a lift home in his car. [Donna] has stated that she is unsure of her feelings towards him owing to the fact that she has had no contact with him for at least 7 - 8 years.

Whilst at [Children's Home, Donna] has continued to attend school where there has been a great improvement in her attendance. She still has some difficulty in being punctual, but with the help from the staff at [Children's Home] and school this has somewhat lessened. Reports from school is that [Donna] is an extremely bright girl, but fails to use her full potential, however with the guidance of staff and liaison with [school Donna] has shown a marked improvement.

30

[Donna's] interests are listening to music, watching television, collecting foreign currency, some reading and will participate in whatever outside activities are on offer, as she enjoys being out and about.

40

Recently [Donna] has formed one close relationship with a 13 year old girl here at [Children's home], who she shares a room with. This relationship is one of confidence. Her relationship with the other girls is of an easy friendship. [Donna] takes an active interest in boys and enjoys their company, and can be found at times holding 'court'.

Staff here at [Children's home] have found [Donna] to be quite forthcoming with information regarding her personal life and feelings. However, this has to be on a one to one basis, as [Donna] tends to find in a group setting, i.e. staff or girls that most things

50

PROFILE ON [DONNA] . CONTD

in general 'are a big joke'. She tends to somewhat kick against authority, but realises that when in need of support and advice that these are the people she needs to seek out.

The conference decision is for social worker to make an attempt to contact [Donna]'s father . . . to inform of [Donna]'s admission into care and the possibility of this being long term, also to encourage contact between grandmother as as expressed a wish for this. Encouragement is also given to her to continue contact with her sister . . . whereby she can possibly gain information on mother. 60

As well as conference recommendation for [Donna] to move in to a children's home, [Donna] as also expressed this wish as she sees [Teenager Fostering] Project as not being sufficient for her needs. She feels that she will benefit far more from an environment where she could have recourse to a much larger number of adults of differing personalities.

[Donna] has mixed feelings about what exactly she wants from life. The staff at [Children's Home], through close working with [Donna] realises she needs stability, affection, coupled with strong authority, also self esteems needs to be built up and for her to realise that love can be gained through caring and not through exploration of herself. 70

PROGRESS REPORT

NAME [DONNA] Date Required _____ Handicap
if any _____

Please make your reports under the following headings, using them in the order in which they are printed; writing each title and underlining it.

FEELINGS CONCERNING PARENTS AND SIBLINGS, ABSCONDING DETAILS, RELATIONSHIP WITH STAFF, RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHILDREN, HEALTH AND MANNERISMS, FURTHER REMARKS OR SUGGESTIONS.

Feelings concerning Parents and Siblings

Since [Donna]'s conference on 23rd October, up until the present, relations between [mother] and [Donna] have been non-existent. [Donna] has made no attempt to enquire about her mother, nor has she shown any desire to do so. In addition, since [Donna] has become aware of her mother's feelings about not wishing ('s sister) to visit her at [children's home] there has been no contact between them; however, through constant encouragement, [Donna] has now telephoned [sister] and sounded quite pleased to hear her voice. At no time during their conversation did [Donna] enquire about her mother, but stated that whenever she telephones again, she hopes her mother will not answer the 'phone because she does not want 'rejection' and the receiver hung up on her. Prior to [Donna] making this call, she had refused outrightly to talk to her mother if she did answer the telephone, and requested staff to remain with her just in case this should occur. 10

On 8th November, [Donna] telephoned her grandmother, She was extremely pleased to hear from her, and was very willing to have [Donna] spend the weekend with her. On return from this visit, [Donna] let it be known that she had an enjoyable time and expressed a keen desire to spend her Christmas with both grandmother and great grandmother, as they live together. Furthermore, [grandmother] has extended the invitation for [Donna] to spend alternate weekends with her if [children's home] is in agreement. 20

[Donna] has passed on to staff that her father 'works at' . . . but has had no further encounters with him since January-February. 30

Absconded Details

On 25th October, [Donna] absconded from [children's home] accompanied by another young girl, who is also a resident here. This came about after [Donna] had received a telephone call from someone claiming to be a friend, which we later found out was [friend]. Later on that evening, [Donna] was spoken to by two members of staff who informed her that they were under a strong impression that she had plans to abscond with [friend], also that we had knowledge that it was [friend] that she had received the telephone call from earlier in the day. [Donna] then confessed her plans for running with . . . and that they had planned to . . . to a party in . . .

PROGRESS REPORT

NAME [DONNA] Date Required _____ Handicap
if any _____

Please make your reports under the following headings, using them in the order in which they are printed; writing each title and underlining it.

FEELINGS CONCERNING PARENTS AND SIBLINGS, ABSCONDING DETAILS, RELATIONSHIP WITH STAFF, RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHILDREN, HEALTH AND MANNERISMS, FURTHER REMARKS OR SUGGESTIONS.

- 2 -

Absconding Details contd

would be alright. She then went on to say that she realised that this was wrong and had already changed her mind about accompanying [friend]. However, at 9.55 p.m. it was realised that [Donna] was missing from her bedroom; a search for [friend] also proved the same. [Donna] had after all done exactly what she said she would not do!

Relationship with staff

[Donna]'s relationship with staff fluctuates from day to day depending on the circumstances she is in. It has been observed that whenever Dawn is confronted and corrected about her general attitude she will agree to conform, but will continue to do exactly as she pleases. One such occasion was 12.11.85 when [Donna] failed to return home from school at the set time. She eventually waltzed in at 6.30 p.m. stating that she had decided to visit her friend's home, having met her in the street, claiming she had not seen her for a month. On account of [Donna]'s failure to return she was notified as an absconder to the police. 50

Relationship with other children

[Donna] maintains a good relationship with most of the girls, and her friendship accepted by them all. Recently [Donna] has formed a close friendship here at [Children's home] with another girl of the same age, but unfortunately their friendship has suffered on account of another girl who has caused much disharmony amongst all the girls, claiming a powerful hold over their lives in [Children's Home]. [Donna] has shown at times that she can hold her own against this girl, nor can be influenced by her actions. 60

Recently [Children's Home] admitted two little emergency girls, and during their stay, [Donna] demonstrated a caring and helpful nature towards them and expressed an interest in caring for children when she is older. 70

[Donna]'s interest in the opposite sex has not lessened, but has taken second place at the moment for some unknown reason.

contd 3/.....

PROGRESS REPORT

NAME [Donna] _____ Date Required _____ Handicap
if any _____

Please make your reports under the following headings, using them in the order in which they are printed; writing each title and underlining it.

FEELINGS CONCERNING PARENTS AND SIBLINGS, ABSCONDING DETAILS, RELATIONSHIP WITH STAFF, RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHILDREN, HEALTH AND MANNERISMS, FURTHER REMARKS OR SUGGESTIONS.

- 3 -

Health and Mannerisms

[Donna] has complained on several occasions of feeling unwell and of a sore throat - a course of anti-biotics were prescribed which she is still taking. In addition [Donna] had contracted chickenpox which is now clear.

Education

Regular contacts are still maintained with _____ school, and the teachers have reported that _____ is an extremely bright girl, but fails to use her full potential. Up until recently there has been a marked improvement in _____'s punctuality, whereby she was taken off report. However, since last week they have reported concern regarding her time keeping, and therefore have put her back on report. 80

Further remarks or suggestions

During the past couple of weeks _____ has made several requests to visit a couple of friends of 'dubious reputation'. _____ stated her reasons for wanting to visit one of them as "she may not see her again." The other lady _____ stated 'used to be a prostitute, but is now going straight', furthermore she had contacted the N.S.P.C.C. when she (_____) was having problems with her mother. _____ went on to say how responsible this lady is and she would encourage her against prostitution rather than into it! 90

1) A profile on _____ has been circulated to a number of the homes, and we are still awaiting their replies.

2) In the meantime _____ continues to need firm and consistent control. In saying this it has been noted that _____ tends to be more accepting of certain points and comments where her attitude is concerned, and it is felt that with this consistency that we might see some positive results. 100

18.11.85

REPORT ON [SARAH]

Principal Officer, []

[Sarah] has been in care since 19[] following the divorce of her parents. After a period in [Children's home] and an attempted reconciliation, [Sarah] stayed in [Children's home 2] until August 19[]. A further reconciliation with mother failed and [Sarah] went to live at [Children's Home 3] in December 19[], where she remained until August 19[]. A family placement was then found with a Mr and Mrs [foster parents]

[Sarah] presented numerous problems during this period - truancy, promiscuity, educational difficulties. [Sarah] has remained an angry child throughout this period and is described as at best a "handfull". Unfortunately the placement with the [foster parents] broke down at Christmas 19[]. Plans had already been laid for [Sarah] to move towards independent living however, she became increasingly difficult to engage. This was exacerbated by her social worker leaving, and our not being able because of the vacancy situation to allocate another worker. This was then further complicated by the Team Leader leaving, and resulted in our having to deal with [Sarah] on a duty basis. We attempted to find alternative residential placements for [Sarah] but with no success; the only [SSD] establishment with vacancies was [Children's home 4] but that attempt floundered because [Children's home 4] was short-staffed.

Eventually [Sarah] moved to [Hostel] in January 19[]. However, 30 minutes after being taken there she absconded. She then spent several uncomfortable weeks with friends, although refused to tell us where. Finally [Sarah] came into the office on and we arranged for her to stay at [B & B] Hotel. This she did from [March] until [July]. We have written to the DHSS asking for them to pay for this accommodation but the situation was complicated by [Sarah] refusing to sign on. In the meantime [B & B hotel] are asking us to meet the cost pounds for 127 nights stay, and thus until the DHSS make a decision I am asking for funding and then to look to the DHSS for reimbursement.

APPENDIX 8.2. STUART: CASE NOTES

The following are those file entries between March and July, which include characterisations and assessments of Stuart (see footnote 28).

In March, Stuart is asked to leave a hostel which considered that 'Stuart's violence is uncontainable'. The duty officer is asked to look for an alternative placement, and on 4 March, there are 14 phone calls made to various institutions and officials seeking a placement in a secure unit, hostel or children's home. None are successful and Stuart 'made his own arrangements'. The search for a placement continued :

6/3. Overnight placement needed for Stuart we are unable to provide anything from our (Admissions section). Emergency overnight hostel needed - difficult as most hostels will not take under 16 years. Rang (Voluntary Organisation) for suggestions. They tried all suitable, possible placements and have come up with nothing - either because of his age or violence.

A B&B hotel was found for Stuart on 7/3 and the duty officer contacted the owner:

I explained to (owner) about Stuart being in care and that he can be touchy and will need to be handled with care at times. Mr. _ said that it was ok. His wife has done fostering and he has been a school keeper.

On 17/3, the team leader asked the duty officer to continue to try to find a placement in a children's home in the area.

17/3 I phoned (manager responsible for residential vacancies) and he had already had some details of Stuart's past. He said that there is only a place at (children's home) but Stuart's character would not be appropriate to be placed there as he might be a risk to other children and indeed staff. He suggested (a different home) which he would contact himself...

17/3 Telephone call from (the second children's home). Mr _ is saying that they were not able to accommodate him on two counts. 1. they are full. 2. that it was doubtful that with Stuart's past history they would be able to accommodate him.

Initially, there are no problems at the B&B hotel. This is when the interview took place. However, the duty officer reports difficulties with Stuart wanting to transfer hotel at the end of May.

28/5 ..I advised Stuart to return to B&B hotel. This he has not accepted but told me to find a B&B somewhere else from (this area). Thinking that it has taken all morning to ring around places for him unsuccessfully I don't think we should give into Stuart's mood.

A burglary spree now begins, and he is remanded in care some 300 miles away. In a conversation with a unit in that area, the duty social worker discusses Stuart:

5/6 (Area Manager) spoke to (headmaster) and explained the difficulties in placing Stuart both in relation to his previous history and to the current Court Case in (that area). After receiving a potted history from me (headteacher) agreed to keep Stuart at (unit) for as long as necessary to complete his court case provided there are no repetitions of his previous behaviour of a violent sort which would warrant his removal..

Stuart returns to the area, but is immediately arrested. The duty social worker visits him at the police station and tries to sort out a placement with him:

11/6 ..I spoke with Stuart about the possibility of a place at (hostel). He said that he is not interested because he is "sick of staff and other boys", and was not even prepared to entertain the idea of a visit and initial interview. We returned to the prospects of B&B, and I said how we had been unable to find anything. We discussed the possibility of Stuart finding something for himself in (another area) where all his friends are. Stuart was keen on this idea...

(Note to Team Leader)

The above is the present situation with Stuart are you able to support this plan? I have organised it on the basis of Stuart sorting out his own problems which is what he wants to do

Comments please - plus signature for money

16/6 Stuart to the office requesting money... he threatened to go thieving. I felt discussing this with Stuart would make him more likely to do this. He left refusing to sign for money.

18/6 Telephone call from Night Duty social worker. She had been called to police station to collect Stuart who had been picked up (burglary ?) but not charged. He was extremely difficult and rude with both police and social worker.. when asked for an address he refused to give it and became abusive. He finally stormed off whereabouts unknown.

APPENDIX 8.3 STUART : COURT REPORT

[Stuart]

[Stuart] presents himself as a sturdy, energetic boy who immediately adopts an offensive nature when he is approached with any new situation he does not feel in control of. This seems to be due to his insecurity. However, as he becomes more comfortable in a situation and ceases to feel threatened, 5
/3.....

he relaxes and becomes more amicable and friendly. He can be a pleasant and lovely boy, however, it takes a great deal of time, work and patience before [Stuart] will trust anyone, and therefore it is only the people who are closest to him that begin to understand this. He is of quite reasonable intelligence.

[Stuart] is a boy whose stature suggests him to be older than he actually is, 10 but his behaviour is capable of degenerating below his age. Stephen has few if any, internalised boundaries and is therefore a boy who needs definite external limits that must be clearly and persistently drawn. He is then capable of acting and reinforcing behaviour of a positive and constructive nature. Unfortunately, as he gets bigger it becomes more difficult for 15 people (Social Workers, care staff etc) to physically set these limits when necessary. On the other hand, he is a boy who thrives on individual attention and appears to be searching for a model to base his behaviour on. He craves affection and is capable of reciprocating it, although on 20 a somewhat superficial basis.

The Offence

The offences were committed whilst [Stuart] was residing at [hostel]. When I approached Stephen on 2nd December and asked his views on the incidents in question, he told me that he did not care and had very little else to say about these offences. 25

Conclusion

[Stuart] has some very serious emotional problems that require expert help in unravelling over a long period of time. To date he has been placed in many establishments and responds only to those with a strict regime where boundaries have to be strictly adhered to. Due to the seriousness of the offences in 30 question, I feel I cannot make a recommendation, but would respectfully ask the Court to make a decision as seen appropriate.

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