

The Impact of Welfare Policy on Social Workers: Everyday Practice in a Fostering and Adoption Unit

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PhD in Social Anthropology

August 2012

Declaration

I, Joy Miles, declare that the content of this thesis is my own work.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joy Miles", written in black ink.

Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the social workers, foster carers, adoptive parents and others whose identities I have protected by pseudonyms. These persons allowed me to observe and participate within their work environment, and shared with me their thoughts and feelings as I sought to uncover the norms and values connected to social work and its place within society. To them I owe my greatest debt of gratitude.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Simon Cohn, for his guidance, his sustained support, and his many insightful suggestions throughout this process, which helped me refine and develop my analysis. Thanks to Dr Sophie Day for her very useful feedback on my thesis, as I approached the final stages toward submission. I would also like to express a special mention for the late Professor Oliver Harris, in acknowledgement of her help as I began shaping the fledging ideas for my research, and to Professor Jean Besson, who supported me in the early stages of this journey. Thanks also to the my fellow student cohort; Helen Cornish, Kochi Okado, Sain Lazar, Laura Camfield, Max Corrachi, John Curran, Elizabeth Cory-Pearce and Saul Goode, with whom I shared ideas during our seminars, and to Dr Yvonne Davis-Palmer, Dr Elaine Bauer, and Dr Audrey Allwood for their friendship and support.

Finally, and very importantly, I thank Freddy and my daughter Rachael, and all my family and friends, including Dawn, Pam, Judith, Patrick, Dudley and Pat, for their support, encouragement and understanding.

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Abstract

This research employs an anthropological perspective in the examination of the impact upon social workers of changing welfare policies within a fostering and adoption unit in a London Borough. It is a study of the ways in which issues of policy, governance and power affect people on the ground. Nonetheless, this study is very much about the relationships between macro as well as micro processes. For that reason, it includes an illustration of the irreversible shift from the old notions of care, via major reforms to public sector management, and the introduction of market principles into welfare during the 1980s and 1990s. This research also highlights the notion of family and kinship as a set of ideas that are reproduced in government rhetoric about what environment is normal (and what is ideal) for children. In this context, fostering and adoption have become sites for significant and sustained policy legislation over a number of decades. Thus, the fostering and adoption unit offered a unique location for the focus on the fit between the formal specificity of top-down policy upon the day-to-day practices that social workers engage in. In so doing, it reveals how the redefinition of the role of social workers in the twenty-first century results in a tension between notions of professionalism and public sector managerialism. It draws attention to social workers as instruments of government control and intervention, and provides the framework through which to demonstrate the continually changing nature of the identity of social workers in negotiations of power. At

the same time, it provides the context for another major strand of government policy legislation for local authorities that are based on the historical discourse of modernisation.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1. My Argument

This research emerged out of my undergraduate dissertation, which focused on the survival of oral traditions within second and third generation British-born descendants of Afro-Caribbean families in Britain. It revealed that such traditions had a pivotal role in the formation and maintenance of identity and a sense of self among the descendants of the first generation of Caribbean migrants. Whilst carrying out my interviews, I spoke with a second-generation British-born male who was a youth worker. He worked with young people who were separated from their families. This encounter fuelled questions about identity formation among such individuals in relation to their lack of, or very limited exposure to, oral traditions in their socialisation, and it gave me food for thought about issues to explore for future study.

At the time, it seemed the most obvious path for me to take was to carry out post-graduate research with children and young people who were in care. However, after considerations about feasibility, issues of confidentiality, and access to children within the care system, some interesting alternatives emerged. One of these was to focus on social workers that worked with children and families, and to look at how issues of identity come to the fore in a system driven by welfare policy agendas. The area of social work practice that seemed most appropriate was fostering and adoption. Here, debates about identity had already begun to challenge practitioners about whether they met the

needs of multi-cultural populations within urban areas like the borough in which I was later to carry out my research. Thus, my research bears the hallmarks of my interest in debates concerning the family and belonging, and how these are being absorbed and legislated within social work. In this manner, as Knowles (2000) argues, my choice of research topic is clearly embedded within my own autobiography.

My thesis examines social workers and the impact of changing welfare policies relating to children and families, with a special focus on fostering and adoption in a unit based in the London Borough of Bowden¹. In doing so, it employs an anthropological perspective to study the ways in which issues of policy, governance and power affect people on the ground. For this reason, it is very much a study about the relationships between macro as well as micro processes. Social work's professional legitimacy was the corollary of the policies following the establishment of the British welfare state at the end the Second World War. These events were responsible for creating a socio-professional identity for social work that heightened the status of social workers within society. My research focuses on the contemporary culture of social workers.

The notion of professionalism came out of a culture of charitable work with the poor, through the philanthropic activities of middle-class women during the late nineteenth century. This development provided the circumstances for campaigns that placed the education of such women on the political agenda, to build the foundations for the establishment of a career path in what became known as social work. By the late twentieth century the culture of social work had changed, and it was no longer perceived

¹This is a pseudonym for the borough in which I carried out my fieldwork.

as a profession dominated by women with middle-class values. The shift in emphasis led to a new focus on the social and cultural diversity among social work clients, particularly with the impact of migration of people from the Caribbean and Indian Sub-continent (also referred to as the New Commonwealth). In order to deal with these new populations (which have now become established in various regions of British society) new legislation was formulated around the concept of ‘race relations’ and equal opportunity policies² toward the recruitment of workers not only from various social, but also racialised, backgrounds. In this context, my research is relevant to major towns and cities, but less so to other areas of England and Wales³.

During the late twentieth century, there was also a significant change in the gender balance, as social work began to offer better career and salary prospects, comparable to other public sector occupations (Jones 1999: 44). Men from various social backgrounds quickly gained promotion into largely elite managerial positions, virtually replacing women in senior management and becoming social services directors. The dominance of men in management remains a noticeable trend in the twenty-first century, even though women outnumber them in the rank and file of the profession. This means the largely female workforce continues to reproduce their gendered role as carers and nurturers, which resonates with their ‘traditional’ role in the domestic sphere of the family.

² “The Race Relations Act 1976 placed new responsibilities upon local authorities. Section 71 of the Act requires them to ensure that the legislative goals of eradicating direct and indirect discrimination, tackling racial disadvantage and promoting good race relations are met in their own operations” (Young 1989: 93).

³ In 2001, minority ethnic groups were more likely to live in England than in the other countries of the UK. In England, they made up 9 per cent of the total population, compared with only 2 per cent in both Scotland and Wales, and less than 1 per cent in Northern Ireland. The English regions which contained the smallest proportion of the minority ethnic population were the North East and the South West, where they made up only 2% of each region's population (Office of National Statistics 2003).

With this historical legacy, social workers continue to be embedded within ideologies of government as well as family and gender, and function too as the instruments of developing welfare policies. There is no doubt that the restructuring of the public sector in the 1970s changed established systems of hierarchy. Nevertheless, it was the 1980s and 1990s that marked the period of most dramatic shifts in organisation and management across the public sector. This was to have lasting consequences for social workers through the emergence of a 'new managerialism' that posed a challenge to professional social workers and their established principles of practice. At the centre were two grand narratives about the ways in which policy from above shaped organisations on the ground, as asserted by Flynn (1999:18). Flynn argues there are various latent structural and attitudinal contradictions between managerialism and professionalism. He argues that professionals defend their autonomy and status in terms of their expert knowledge and skills, geared to effective performance of specialised tasks. Their actions are ideally anchored in a relationship of trust with clients, subject to the approval, inspection and regulation of other professional peers. In contrast, managers claim their privileges on the basis of institutionalised hierarchical power. Their chief objectives are organisational efficiency, typically measured in terms of profit. Ultimately, public sector managers not only operate through relationships of authority, but are also the embodiment of organisational power. Nevertheless, that power is contested between professionals and managers as active agents in a process of negotiating their roles.

The 'marketisation' of welfare was set in motion by successive 'new right' Conservative governments during the 1980s and early 1990s, and continued by the 'new left' Labour governments to the present coalition. Local Authorities have ceased to be the sole providers of welfare services, and now operate in a welfare market, in which they are purchasers as well as providers of services. The aim of successive governments has been to cut public expenditure by encouraging and establishing a business approach.

According to du Gay such policies should be viewed as a crusade to construct Britain as an enterprise culture, (du Gay 1996: 83 in Hall & du Gay 1996). It has meant more emphasis on individualism and markets as the most efficient ways to distribute resources, and at the same time reduce individual citizens' dependence on state welfare provision.

Exworthy & Halford (1999: 9-10) suggest the Welfare State represents a paradox. Their ideas draw on Marxist views about the effect of capitalism upon the social structure of society. They argue that the State is caught between two contradictory imperatives. On the one hand, it promotes capital accumulation, but on the other hand it seeks to redress the adverse effects of capitalism on certain groups within society. Thus, social workers employed within state bureaucracies to legitimate policies that produce economic hardship and social exclusion, become unwitting collaborators in the process of assessing the risks to children of abuse from within families that could be in need of help from social services. They also use bureaucratic measuring instruments that inherently contain sifting devices that automatically situate poor families into categories of deserving and undeserving clients. Social workers execute state policies and become what Foucault

calls instruments of ‘governmentality’⁴. In the end this all works in the long-term interest of a capitalist system. Hence, my research is concerned with examining the ways in which such policies could be said to construct social workers as objects as well as subjects of power, but equally how this shapes their subjectivities within the culture of the work environment. My thesis seeks to discover whether social workers can maintain the professional identity that was built up after the Second World War in the face of continued managerialist threats and major restructuring. These shifts in policy (and the commitment of social workers to implementing them) provide the framework for my research, which adopts the idea that the identity of social workers is not fixed, but is determined by continually changing relationships of power (Lewis 2000:164). In addition, the meanings applied to policy shift over time, which Martin (1997: 247-248) argues, means that individuals have to continuously manage themselves in relation to such shifts.

I chose the fostering and adoption unit as the best working culture to ascertain the ways in which issues of managerialism and marketisation affect workers on the ground precisely because this area of social work has been subject to a great deal of sustained formal policy legislation, discourse and change in very important ways for over three decades. There are five main issues I consider. First, fostering and adoption is part of the wider national child protection strategies. Second, it reinforces the institution of the family as the ideal environment for the socialisation of children through the building of

⁴ We live in an era of governmentality; this governmentality is at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government that make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private. Thus, the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality (Foucault 1991:103 my emphasis).

new legal families. Third, it is at the heart of the continuing discourse surrounding the practice of same-race placements of children, especially those from minority-ethnic backgrounds. Fourth, social workers operate in a market through their recruitment of foster carers. And finally, the unit is located in a borough that represents a beacon for central government reform of local government. In addition, the unit it is also a place where informal policies and practices situated within notions of the ideal family and issues of same- race placement are contested. This makes it the ideal site to look at the macro as well as micro relationship between welfare policy and practice within a local authority setting.

This brings me to the important question of why my research is important and relevant. I have already indicated that social work has undergone various post-war changes followed by even more significant transformations spanning over twenty years at the end of the twentieth century. However, far from these changes signifying security and permanence in the twenty first century, instead, social workers are constantly being put under pressure of restructuring. This means they have to constantly adjust the way they think and practice within changing parameters of legislation and legal imperatives that set and reset targets for transforming their work place. Social workers are supposed to be caring advocates for their clients, but invariably those same clients are then recast as consumers. The result is that employees constantly have to address contradictions within their practice. During my fieldwork the unit was subjected to one such restructuring event. Since leaving the field, those systems have yet again been reshuffled. Thus, my research specifically shows just how little time is given to policies in order for them to become

embodied by people on the ground. My informants provide evidence of how de-sensitised workers have become to this consistent trend. They all told me, in a very matter-of-fact way, that “we are used to it; there is a restructuring about every two or three years”. Furthermore, I hope to show how some of the insights about the socialisation and re-socialisation of workers through their work practices that I present are relevant across other areas of work such as the voluntary sector, the National Health Service and Education.

My thesis is based on fifteen months of fieldwork carried out through various sites within the London Borough of Bowden. I spent periods of time in different locations gathering my data. Due to issues of confidentiality I have chosen not only to change the name of the local authority in which I was based but also all my informants are quoted throughout my thesis under pseudonyms. My thesis is based on detailed analysis of data collected from eighty persons; fifty-six were social workers based within the public sector; three of whom also worked within the private sector. One was a social work student studying at the local university and another was previously in care during the late 1970s to early 1980s. The remaining informants were current or potential foster carers and adoptive parents.⁵ From this sample I was able to observe the macro processes that led social workers to act as instruments for child protection policies and procedures through the recruitment of foster carers and adoptive parents. It also enabled me to understand how

⁵ The social workers comprise 44 females; 22 are White, 2 are Asian and 20 are Black. There are 13 males; 8 are White and 5 are Black. All foster carers and adoptive parents live in households where there are male partners or husbands with previously established families. Six of these carers foster through the private sector. Fourteen households are Black families, one is Asian and four are White families. All the families have short and long-term foster placements. One Black family has also adopted a child.

social workers, clients, foster carers and social work students spoke about how they experienced these procedures on the ground.

This area of social work is enshrined within family law, where there has been a considerable shift of emphasis from adults toward the protection of children within the family⁶. My research is specifically concerned with how the Children Act of 1989, as a major piece of legislation, functions within the duties of social workers. The Act was heralded as the most comprehensive and far-reaching reform of family law to have come before parliament, and presented the welfare of the child as being paramount, giving local authorities the power and general duty⁷ to promote the welfare of children in their area. It has since been extended to reflect reforms within adoption legislation, to form the Children Act 2004.

However, my research represents a shift away from the traditional anthropological focus on family and kinship as an analytical tool to examine social structure, often within non-western societies. While I do not disagree that notions of kinship and family can illuminate many aspects of social structure (see Segal 1983:215-230), my interest is on the family not in terms of its actual arrangements, but the way in which it is also a set of ideas and norms that continue to exist even though the world is radically changing (see Schneider 1984; Carsten 2000). Furthermore, the multi-cultural contexts in which social workers in my research operate give rise to various realities and conceptions of kinship

⁶ “The desire to place children at the centre of legal attention has been a worldwide phenomenon, culminating in the drafting and opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989” (Lowe & Douglas 1998: 4).

⁷ This is given under Section 17(1) of the Children Act 1989.

that potentially compete with each other. Therefore, I want to address the ways in which a culturally constructed ideology of family might be being socially reproduced.

Consequently, my research focuses on the following themes: -

- The ways in which formal policies are held in tension with the varied situations social workers have to deal with in their practice. They become ritualised, which endows policies with sacred qualities. However, in contrast to this, social workers have to cope with the informal messiness of each unique case. As a consequence, formal practice and rituals limit social workers' abilities to deliver specified outcomes. The observation and interpretation of ritual has a long history in anthropology, exploring its function for social cohesion. But, the concept of ritualisation can also illuminate relations of power and hidden forms of social control, as Bell (1992) has argued. I have adopted this notion in relation to the ways in which policy relates to individual behaviour in everyday work through internalised norms and values. In analysing the recruitment and assessment process of foster carers and adoptive parents, for example, I argue the process explicitly relates to notions of transformation (Van Gennep 1960).
- An examination of social work change resulting from the Labour government's reform of the welfare state through its discourse of modernisation, starting at the end of the 1990s to the recent past. Hence, I examine the impact of managerial controls and how this affects social workers on the ground. I argue that the

identity of social workers is actually constructed out of the tension between their former professional identity and the new forces of the market.

The above two themes represent my general focus of enquiry. But more importantly, the following two set out my main focus on the fostering and adoption unit that provides a specific site to reveal the impact of various top-down forces on daily practice. A history of the unit here represents a case of the construction and evolution of the bureaucratisation of social work within a local authority social services department. Set within an established ethnically diverse borough, the fostering and adoption unit uniquely provides a contemporary illustration of the links between policy and practice, and in particular issues of identity. For that reason, I further examine: -

- The ways in which social workers were challenged to embrace different ways of thinking, and not hold views of their clients based on negative social stereotypes. Shifts toward anti-discriminatory practices encouraged social workers to adopt models of intervention that take into account the wider social forces that impact on the lives of all their clients. The classification and reclassifications of race and ethnicity in the placement of children for adoption and fostering affected the values of social workers in their practice. Social work approaches to families from minority ethnic groups were charged with being Eurocentric and middle class.
- The manner and meaning of how social work cases are translated into records and kept through the use of files. Files are, in this way, naturalised objects, containing the social workers' interpretations of observations, interviews and accounts of the

families. Thus, social work files become bureaucratic artefacts that function as an active part of social workers' practice within a system of classification and standardisation. In so doing, they serve to construct and objectify welfare clients. Furthermore, since clients have the right to view their files, social workers have become progressively more aware of the ways in which they record information and are defensive about the messages the files could convey. Because of this, social workers go to great lengths to emphasise that their files represent objective social facts about a case.

My research focus is situated in the midst of a major shift in policy, set within a discourse of modernisation that has affected all local authorities in England and Wales. In fact, the London Borough of Bowden has played a pivotal role as a pilot borough, providing a case study of the modernisation of local government in action. At the start of its first term in office, the Labour Government wanted local councils to be more efficient, and Bowden put itself forward as one of the first authorities to enact that vision. In his paper "Modernising Bowden" the former leader of the Council presented the case to move toward a directly elected Mayor.⁸ With a resident workforce of over 100,000, Bowden is larger than many provincial cities. Councillor Edwards argues:

"Perhaps the biggest challenge to us as a Council, is to secure new pathways for social inclusion for those people, young and old, Black and White, who are

⁸ Bowden Council has been one of the first councils in Britain to swap its old-style committee structure for a cabinet system headed by a Mayor. A recent article in the bi-monthly magazine examined Bowden's introduction of a Cabinet headed by the former leader of the Council and eight deputies. Each deputy has a portfolio. The Cabinet is answerable to the Mayor and cabinet meetings will be held in public. The meetings are monitored by a scrutiny committee; made up of locally elected councillors. This ensures all voices are heard and the deputies are doing a good job. The Cabinet will be collectively held to account by an assembly (Bowden Times 1999).

currently adrift from the mainstream of economic, political and social life in Bowden” (Edwards 1999: 5).

Hence, at the beginning of the financial year, shortly before the start of my fieldwork Bowden’s Council forecast for expenditure was over £600 millions on local services, or approximately £1,200 for each resident. Most of this money comes from Central Government and council tax. Central Government maintains that modern local authorities should provide services that are cost effective and give value for money. This discourse gave rise to a concept of ‘best value’ that is defined in terms of finding the right balance between cost and quality. This ideology of value for money, along with changing practices to gauge Business Excellence across its services, is traced through developments in the unit. As a consequence, my research is perfectly placed to observe the impact on social workers adapting to new norms of practice.

2. Theoretical Perspective and Literature

I am aware that my small ethnography connects with larger debates within anthropology, such as the anthropology of welfare, work, kinship and family, gift exchange and social and political change. My thesis contributes to the anthropology of welfare. It provides an important example of the relevance of anthropology to welfare research. Edgar and Russell (1998) argue that in the broadest sense, the anthropology of welfare can be defined as being focused on the process of normalising or optimising the well-being of dependent individuals, organisations and societies, by examining the people who receive welfare, those who provide the service and the social institutions, organisations and

networks that contribute to the process. Thus, my examination of the role of social workers in fostering and adoption will focus on the process of normalising foster care for vulnerable children through social service organisation and networks.

My thesis builds on the body of work around the anthropology of policy as a domain of anthropological enquiry initiated in the 1980s. Its approach was pivotal for the insights it provided for my research, as the public sector began to experience the introduction of far-reaching restructures to its systems of government, and new forms of power. From this perspective I examine how policy facilitates political agendas to gain authority. Policies also create new categories of people through the process of classification that is embedded within discourse. Hence, policy had become increasingly central as an organising principle in contemporary societies, shaping the way individuals live, act and think (Shore & Wright 1997: 3-34). But policy also has the power to influence the way social workers construct themselves as professional subjects, by acting on and through them as agents. Policy therefore becomes embedded within the bureaucratic environment of public sector mechanisms of service delivery. It directly shapes social workers' sense of self, through their adaptation and internalisation of imposed norms of conduct. These academic discussions provided me with a useful analytical framework. Thus, rather than viewing policy itself as a structure for analysis, I focus instead on the models and language of judgement associated with policy as data to be analysed. My research explicitly reflects this approach in my ethnographic focus on social work professionals.

I will also link arguments within my thesis to anthropological debates about government and politics. The rise of neo-liberal ideologies within Conservative governments, and the subsequent ‘third way’ social democratic approach of the previous Labour government were committed to the continued marketisation of welfare. I examine the ways in which people are classified, shaped and ordered through systems of control and governance. In that context, policy is an instrument that shapes individual responses, reflecting a global phenomenon of changing patterns of governance. Thus, the anthropology of policy will form the basis of my argument of emerging structures and discourses through which new systems of government and forms of power are being adopted, starting with the work of Clarke & Newman (1997).

At the heart of the work of Clarke & Newman (1997) is the focus on change in the British welfare state for over two decades. Their insights into the ways in which changing policy, governance and power affect the public services are relevant to my theoretical arguments. They examine the impact of managerialism as key, changing relationships within the British state from its institutions and practices to its culture and ideology.⁹ As a consequence, for those working in public services, their experiences have been of permanent revolution, to the extent to which a further initiative or a new White Paper has come to mean there is always a subsequent step to be taken. This view accords with my argument in Chapter Three, that the experience of change among social workers has become a tradition, which I equate with Bourdieu’s concept of doxa. Clarke & Newman seek to “understand the conditions and consequences of radical transformations in the

⁹ “These changing relationships are mediated through a range of structural and institutional realignments: the introduction of markets, the rise of contracting, the changing balance of power between central and local and regional agencies of governance and so on” (Clarke & Newman 1997: ix).

form of the state”, (Ibid: xiv). Their analyses, of the proliferation and depth of change described as modernisation and ‘new public management, accord with my general Foucauldian argument about governmentality. For Clarke & Newman the concept of the managerial state suggests that managerialism represents a cultural formation, and a distinct set of ideologies and practices that form one of the foundations of an emergent political model. I will argue that these ideologies and practices have become normalised within the twenty-first century, with particular attention to the important focus of their argument.

The core ideas of Clarke & Newman’s analysis is how change is legitimised through symbolic forms such as a shift in language, ideology and discourse relating to notions of customers and citizens, which they argue suggests various expectations of roles and relationships, and where power is viewed as the ‘absent presence’, thus further implying it has undergone a process of normalisation. The opening up of services to competition by corporate and voluntary providers was a direct result of the marketisation of welfare introduced by the New Right (Hefferman (2000: 29). At the same time, public sector providers were encouraged to engage in contracting; such forms of competitive interactions were about behaving like small- and medium-sized businesses. The privatisation model, which is decisively moored within market forces, broke down the boundaries of the public sector that was traditionally linked to the state (Clarke et al 2000: 3; Clarke & Newman 1997: 28). Hence, there was a further shift to the private sphere of the family as a site of responsibility as ‘citizen-consumers’ (Clarke et al 2007; Read 2007), which I will argue is a shift to self-regulation.

Consequently, the idea that shifting balances of power between the state and citizens, 'old' professionals, administrators and 'new' managerial roles and identities are dispersed and linked across a range of agencies, relates well with my thesis. Furthermore, Clarke & Newman note, the general perception of a managerial state is not universally experienced. Hence, the notion of diverse experiences manifested in tensions and contradictions at organisational levels, whilst being disguised with social differentiations surrounding categories such as race, gender and class, provides powerful insights into my examination of the micro-dynamics of social work practice on the ground by incorporating Foucault and Bourdieu's perspectives of discourse and doxa respectively. In this context, Eagleton's (1991) analysis of ideology is worthy of note. According to Eagleton, ideology is commonly defined in terms of legitimisation of power and dominance, despite being highly contested. Hence, ideology, he argues, relates to "who is saying what to whom for what purposes". Eagleton presents ideology as a function of the relationship of language or gesture to its social contexts. Thus, a statement could not be viewed as ideological in isolation from its discursive context. Eagleton further emphasizes the fact that, although the term ideology is not central to Bourdieu's work, it can be associated with doxa that refer to a stable form of traditional social order, in which power is entirely naturalised and ideology is embedded. Doxa describes a synthesis of objective social structures with strong subjective unwavering beliefs and values (Eagleton 1991:157). In other words, I suggest, doxa represents a relatively closed ideological system in which contingencies are restricted.

In addressing these ideas of discourse and systems of government, Foucault's renowned ideas on governmentality are a central, if largely implicit, theme throughout my thesis. In addition to other areas of bio-power, Foucault argues the family is a fundamental instrument in the government of populations (Foucault, 1991: 99). Foucault's perspective on population can as readily be applied to events occurring in the first half of the nineteenth century in my discussion of the history of social work, as they can to the more contemporary focus of my fieldwork. The nineteenth century was a time when emerging ideas of public and private spheres within society focused on notions of the family as a stable social norm. In following Foucault's approach, Pasquino (1991: 116) argues that population became the new object upon which emerging forms of power were to be constituted and exercised, giving rise to a new cluster of technologies related to the institution of the family among other sites (also see Rose 1999:135-136). Such discourse and institutional practices of this era are what, in the views of Denzot (Denzot 1979, in Lewis 2000: 31-33), not only constituted the notion of the 'social' but also became associated with social work by the beginning of the twentieth century.

Thus, Weber's concept of bureaucracy provides a further analytical framework of how a democratic state exercised its authority, resulting from the processes of industrialisation. Weber argued that the authority of the state was established through systems of rational decision-making, accounting methods and legal norms and values, (Morrison 1995: 377-383). In my thesis, the perspectives of Weberian bureaucracy I will argue can be related to the administration of social work within the democratic state. Furthermore, Weber's and Foucault's perspectives will be useful within my analysis of the link between issues

of marketisation and welfare as I examine the ways in which welfare recipients may be constructed as subjects and objects within social service records that I will argue represent bureaucratic artefacts, as well as technologies of governmentality. Thus, I will equate Weber's notion of rationalisation with Foucault's notions of regulation to demonstrate how systems of administrative control are applied through social workers as instruments of the state.

My research summarises the rise of social work professional status and rights of control of welfare service delivery in the regulation of populations. Thus, I draw on the work of Freidson (1986) for clarification of the development and definition of what constitutes a profession. Freidson's analysis, informs us that the classification of professions, with disciplines which give rise to rights of control over particular areas of social policy, are linked to bodies of knowledge. According to Freidson, in the mid-twentieth century British academics were interested in how specialist knowledge associated with 'professions' could be applied to the control of social problems. Interestingly, Victorian philanthropists Beatrice and Sydney Webb (see Chapter Two), assisted by George Bernard Shaw, produced their own analysis of professional associations. For them, the notion of profession came to be viewed as a sign of hope; hope, that meant the ability to change the system of social and political dominance of industrial capitalism.

However, in the 1960s, theoretical developments relating to notions of ideology and power became an effective discourse for the normalisation of notions of professional status and prestige. Both of those definitions received challenges from functionalists as

well as structuralist scholars, who viewed profession as a generic concept rather than being embedded in historical social changes. By the late twentieth century, the term became connected to notions of old and new class formations. Therefore, the old middle class of the nineteenth century consisted of the old high-status professions of law and medicine, while the rising new middle class consists of salaried administrators or managerial staff, and as my analysis of professionalisation will show, social workers intersect both class formations. But it is not my intension to dwell on class at length.

In his later work, *Professionalism: The Third Logic* (2001:209-210), Freidson provides further important and insightful arguments in relation to practice which are useful for framing my examination of how social workers operate within the tensions between professionals and public sector managers, manifested in the contrasts between formal policy and daily practice. He suggests, and I concur, that professional privilege will continually transform as long as ideologies such as marketisation and managerialism that I will examine in relation to welfare policy shape the dominant discourse of social change. As a consequence, the shifts in practice will intensify links between cost and performance that I will show shapes the notion of 'best value' within the Borough of Bowden.

Freidson's argument explicitly states that there is a relationship between ideology and practice, but also robustly implies a connection with the construction of identity in

relation to professionals as a result of increasing bureaucratization. Such a phenomenon can also be equated with the Foucauldian notion of 'self regulation,' or the ways in which policy constructs the meaning of work and the self (Martin 1997 in Shore & Wright 1997: 239-252; Read 2005: 137-159 Read 2007: 203-222). It also relates to the Weberian concept of rationalisation as society becomes more complex. Such an argument is associated with another important theme of analysis in my research that addresses classification as a ubiquitous phenomenon.

I draw on Bowker and Star's (2000) central argument that systems of classification are often sites of political and social struggles. Charged agendas are often presented in such ways that they rapidly become naturalised into working infrastructures, and so become firmly entrenched. Their analysis of classification and reclassification looks at the ordering and control of people through governmentality, which can apply not only to populations but also to social workers themselves, as instruments in the governance of families. The function of classification in relation to the themes of race, ethnicity and national belonging are also significant to my argument. The notion of Whiteness provides a useful starting point (Dyer 1997; Supriya 1999). In pointing to the fact that British subjects were traditionally governed only in terms of class and gender, Dyer suggests that their 'Whiteness', as a racial category, was taken for granted. However, as I will show, the classification of race and ethnicity in reference to people who are not White became categories upon which British nationality came to be contested (Eriksen 1993:123-125). It is against this background that I will illustrate how culture itself provided an opportunity in social work for Black and Asian women and men in the 1980s to be

employed as cultural interpreters, and the 'Black' family became the object of new forms of social regulation.

Young's (1993) analysis is the first of various additional approaches to practice that contribute to my examination of social workers in the public sector. Young contends that, on the one hand, ideology depends on discourse as a vehicle for the naturalisation of policies that relate to assessment criteria and diagnostic tools utilised by social workers. On the other hand, discourse depends on that ideology, to provide the organisational context in which it is objectified through practice. So, whilst discourse and ideology share the same technical language and common assumptions in their categorization, ideologies in practice produce local autonomous systems of knowledge based on particular organisational hierarchies. Thus, discourse and ideology are separate but intersecting systems of knowledge. In his examination of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in a psychiatric unit, Young employs an anthropological perspective in his illustration of how ideology shapes knowledge of practice. Young argues that the principal output of the treatment programme was more about the production of knowledge than the psychiatric transformation of clients, even though the primary task of the organisation was the provision of specialised medical treatment, rather than providing any concrete and objective truth.

In my analysis of practice within the fostering and adoption unit I will show how social work ideology about the 'right kind of family' is a primary guide to the recruitment of foster care applicants, and also in adoption family finding. In examining the impact of

that process, I will situate my argument in terms of re-education through internalisation of values, which I will show is at the heart of how social workers manage welfare subjects more generally. In Young's analysis, PTSD patients needed to be seen to have changed their behaviour through self-regulation and becoming a responsible citizen. I will argue that foster care applicants, like PTSD patients, act strategically to meet required standards and expectations of social workers, making any notion of psychological transformation far more contested and complex.

Read (2007) employs an anthropological approach that highlights further insights into the link between ideology and practice. Read explores the broadening definition of nursing practice in the health care reforms within the Czech Republic during the 1980s. She argues that the reforms showed how ideologies of care became associated with changing arrangements of public and private, personified in aspects of the modern identity. Hence, the transformation has and continues to have a significant impact on the way in which nurses' have to adapt to different forms of practices. Furthermore, the new initiatives introduced the principles of competition through privatisation, a system in which patients were to be treated as consumers (Clarke et al 2007) endowed with the freedom to choice for their health care. Czech nursing care through the state Read explained, was a model of care that centred on treatment of the physical symptoms of the patients whilst ignoring their emotional needs. Thus, the private sphere of the family and its wider networks were the sites of emotional support. Whilst Read centres her analysis on care, which is relevant to my arguments about gift in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, other themes within my thesis are also emphasized. For example, issues of how changing forms of practice impact

on professional identity, by the way in which nurses in Read's analysis are shown to question their perceived loss of professional autonomy with the emergence of a new order.¹⁰ These narratives relate well to my analysis of changing approaches to welfare care practices imposed from the state on the identity of social workers in fostering and adoption. I will argue that social workers need to draw on a form of 'double consciousness' whereby professionalism and managerialism are continually contested and negotiated through contingencies at the micro levels of practice.

Russ (2000) supports my view in her analysis of the modern hospice movement, with her focus on care practices that integrate money and markets with emotional care that give rise to an ethical subjectivity. Her view also adds to the notion of the 'third space' used within my argument (see Chapter Two and Three), in which she suggests hospice care takes place. The concept of the third space draws on the insights of Bhabha's (1994) notion of the hybrid identity that I identify within social work practice under managerialism. Thus, Bhabha's conception of the third space as a mode of articulation that facilitates the blurring of boundaries at sites of innovation, collaboration and contestation, is valuable for my analysis.

In contrast to Young's, and Read's top-down analysis, Rhodes' (1993) analysis of an Acute Psychiatric Unit provides useful insight, with its emphasis on the pervasiveness of contingencies and contradictions in professional practice on the ground. Rhodes

¹⁰ "In daily practice tensions arose between managers and nurses, who claimed under the new model their nursing skills were being devalued; moreover, formal distancing enabled nurses to make dispassionate judgements in the best interest of the patients' physical welfare, but the new form of practice heralded a significant downgrading of their skills and experience.

describes practice using the metaphor of a 'swamp' because of its "crosscutting and contradictory demands", whereby no one approach satisfactorily addresses clients' unique situations. Contingencies and contradiction relate to themes that I will argue represent the 'mess' of social work practice in my examination of the tension between formal policies versus social workers' everyday experiences. Such contradictions, Rhodes argues and I will demonstrate, reflected the paradoxes of a shift in the meaning of care, with revisions to the welfare agenda and its shift towards cutting costs. This trend highlights another important theme of resource-led services within my thesis that gives rise to frustration among practitioners responding to the needs of care, which are borne out of social deprivation. Consequently, the problematic nature of their encounters often pushed social workers into fostering a blame culture.

Rhodes further suggests it is possible to separate practice into various layers. She draws on Foucault's argument that states that,

"The confinement and exclusion of mad people from society constructed them as objects of knowledge. Thus, the body becomes the primary layer of the bio-medical technology of the medical gaze. The secondary layer is set within the sphere of the 'social' and relates to the Freudian gaze, which focuses on "psychic pathology", (Rhodes 1993: 132-133).

The concept of layered practice is also relevant to my research. Social work practice also constructs clients as objects of knowledge, and I will show examples of what Rhodes describes as primary and secondary layers of practice. Layering of practice can also be linked to changes over time, by the way in which welfare subjects are constructed as

objects of social work approaches, representing a shift in the 1980s from the Freudian perspective. The Freudian perspective emerged after the Second World War, when psycho-analytically informed social work represented a phase of optimistic welfare based on ideas of rehabilitation and social inclusion (Jones 1999:39-45). But, as Jones also points out, the traditional psycho-social casework was increasingly challenged by social work students. Such a method of intervention into families excluded considerations of the impact of socio-structural forces upon people's lives. But Rhodes' analysis highlights that shift in practice towards an ecological approach¹¹, arguing that it has reconfigured, and expanded, the medical gaze. Thus, I will illustrate how social workers in the unit apply ideas within the ecological approach to the assessment of foster carers and adoptive parents (see Chapters Five and Six) and also through the concept of chronology in Chapter Four.

My further analytic framework for research into social work practice returns to Freidson (1986) and explicitly relates to social workers in the front line of welfare service delivery. According to Freidson, there is a critical fault line between the categories of professionals and managers within organisations, and in the allocation of welfare resources. Since management determine caseloads according to policies that frame organisational procedures, guidelines are established about eligibility for service delivery. This imposes a top-down influence on the administration not only of the way various cases are

¹¹ The Ecological Systems Theory is taken from the field of developmental psychology. There are five environmental systems; *Micro system* relates to an individual's life, family, peers and neighbourhood etc. *Mesosystem* refers to the contexts of relations between *Microsystems* such as family experiences. *Exosystem* involves links between a social setting such as the person's work environment. *Macrosystem* describes the culture in which individuals live. *Chronosystem* describes the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the period of a person's life.

processed within the work day, but also of support mechanisms that professionals draw upon to help to them perform those tasks. The focal point of tensions within the work place is managerial power in the control of resources, and the need by professionals to acknowledge and work within such constraints. Echoing Halford & Leonard's (1999) point that managerialist forces do not necessarily have an overriding impact on public sector professionals, Freidson also points out that wherever professionals disagree with managerial decisions, that difference of opinion represents an act of resistance. That kind of reaction among professionals sets in motion a tendency which can lead to burnout, particularly among newly-employed workers, based on ideas of expectations that in the context of demanding work environments can result in unrealistic impressions about what their work should entail. Cliché has it that professionals are good and in contrast managers are bad. There can often be good reasons for constraints and furthermore, all organisations have to deal with competing priorities in the allocation of resources which are not necessarily based on a single perspective.

The other side of the coin within professional practice that is worth noting is the relationship between professionals and their clients, which Freidson argues represents the tension between professionals and society. I show will how that tension equates to the ways in which social workers' identity is shaped as agents of political agendas of the state within the public consciousness. Clients, as outsiders, seek whatever help the organisation can provide. From that viewpoint, all professionals, according to Freidson, use their power to control the relationship in the way they think is the appropriate way to work. It is an inevitable consequence, since management of caseloads relates to the

prioritisation of time, that examples of past practice are drawn upon to assist in the present, and in future decision-making. Strategies that demonstrate typifications, stereotypes or precedents establish frameworks or conventions of practice where cost is tightly controlled. So, professionals inevitably also act as powerful gatekeepers of resources; simultaneously circumventing rigid forms of managerialism by exercising discretion in their work which, in some sense, according to Freidson, represents a technical form of autonomy (see Chapter Three).

Interestingly, Freidson argues that technical autonomy is often based on rules of privacy regarding clients, which inadvertently insulates the work of many professionals from direct observation. I will argue that technical autonomy represents what I refer to as a third space of layered practice that social workers create in working with the most vulnerable members in society. Understanding the case-work file is critical to this space. Using the framework of institutionalisation, I examine how files acquire privilege and status within a bureaucratic environment, and the way in which they assist bureaucratic governmentality of official information, and how it is subsequently being transformed (see Chapter Three and Four). Freidson concludes:

“Teachers, doctors, social workers, nurses lawyers and other have all been accused of asserting their own conceptions of need or problem without respecting the client’s, of being authoritarian, or of categorizing or standardizing individual problems, accused even of rudeness, controlling and intimidation” (Freidson 1986:177).

Those charges, he argues, could not be made unless professionals had considerable freedom to act as they wished. However, that power is a source of ambivalence, for social workers are caught in the middle, between market forces and society's poor. As I will show, social workers embody a double identity.

In my examination of practice, the notion of temporal order is an important aspect to my analysis of bureaucratic administration in Bowden's systems of information recording. Hodges (1999) provides a critical evaluation of the anthropology of time. He argues that when the past is viewed as a dimension of human temporality, it must be understood from both symbolic and materialist perspectives. Functionalist and Structuralist approaches previously seem to have ignored time as a constitutive component of social life. But from the 1970s onwards, theorists such as Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1979) introduced temporality more explicitly to their analysis of social life. Greenhouse (1996) related linear time to Western conceptions of agency, by looking at the socio-cultural contexts through which agency is articulated (1996:7). Her analysis was confined to institutions of the state.

The main thrust of Hodges' argument concerns the subjective experience of time, or the significant combination of symbolic and materialist approaches. According to Hodges, Munn's work, *The Cultural Anthropology of Time: A Critical Essay* (1992), goes furthest in providing a more definitive and comprehensive account of what the anthropology of time should focus upon. Grounded in phenomenological theory, her notion of temporalisation explains time in terms of a continuous symbolic process connecting

people in everyday practices that refer to past, present and future relations in the performance of various tasks with objects and within spaces. Thus, Hodges contends, Munn's conception of temporality as a symbolic process represents 'inter-subjectivity' as an inescapable dimension of everyday practices. Hodges also extends his analysis to include memory, which provides a further useful trajectory of temporality, together with the work of Antze and Lambek (1996). These two approaches can be related to my examination of the function of case-work files and how social workers deliver a fostering and adoption service.

In my analysis of the marketisation of welfare I will introduce notions of how commodification, value for money, gift, care, kinship and consumer choice in relation to foster care within the public sector are being continually articulated, (see Chapter Five). Thus, I endeavour to draw on theories of value through Marx and Weber but also through the scholarly analyses in economic anthropology that according to Narotzky is a widely practiced sub-field of social anthropology. In referring to new directions in economic anthropology I draw on the work of Narotzky (1997). Narotzky contends, in looking at capitalist economic relations and human labour through Marx's theory raise questions of how the social identities of people both shape and are shaped by their social status and the process of producing their livelihood. By analysing the labour struggles during the nineteenth-century industrialisation of the textile trade in France, (Reddy's 1987) to illustrate how workers' resisted commodification by controlling their labour. However, moral notions about economy in relation to production were transformed and linked to commodified meanings of work and thereby led to shaping of the capitalist

transformation reflecting Polanyi's perspective according to Narotzky that certain forms of embeddedness was necessary for the construction of capitalist relations of production. Polanyi argued, the control of the economic system by the market is of significant importance within the organisation of society and so social relations become embedded within the economic system, (Polanyi 1977:57 in Narotzky 1997:49;), since the 'economy' did not exist as an autonomous sphere of behaviour, (Graeber 2001: 10). Narotzky concluded that within capitalism the opposition of market system and market culture can be viewed as a false dilemma; people can become commodities, because they are not separated from the social relations that produce them. Graeber (2001) is also pertinent for my analysis with his exploration of the notion of value within anthropology, (Graeber 2001:23-47), so too the politics of value, (Appadurai 1986: 55) and the sociology of childhood, (Zelizer (1994: x).

My thesis contributes to the anthropology of the gift, a body of literature that draws on the seminal work of Marcel Mauss (1990: 5) and provides an important contribution to my analysis of spheres of exchange in relation to fostering and adoption, where notions of care are key trajectories that connect with notions of the ideology of ideal family. Within this body of literature (which is by no means exhaustive), various works are of particular relevance and provide beneficial insights for my argument and research context (Mauss 1990; Read 2007; Russ 2005; Hall 2005; Carrier 1995; Osteen 2002; Parry 1986; Laidlow 2002; Fennell 2002; Yan 2002; Fothergill 2002). The outline of this group of literature review adds to and is also linked into Osteen's argument from his edited volume *The Question of the Gift* (2002), in which he presents various scholarly perspectives about

gifts (some of which relate to my thesis) which range from anthropology, sociology, literature, philosophy, ethics and economics.

One of the primary challenges for gift theory, according to Osteen, has been to distinguish gift exchanges from market exchanges, and in so doing differentiate between gifts and commodities. The distinction, he says, is usually presented as the result of historical developments linked to the rise of “bourgeois individualism and industrial economies.” As such changes became institutionalised, the realms of gift and commodity were strictly divided into a rigid dichotomy, reflecting Western ideology of the gift as the antithesis of market exchange, which coincides with other dualities in social theory¹² Similarly, Marx portrays commodity as a capitalist demon in opposition to a utopian economy, where barter and gift represents innocence, transparency and are non-exploitative (Parry & Bloch 1989: 9). So making sense of the gift/commodity distinction means questioning the very conceptions of identity and sociality (Appadurai 1986: 13). Yet, Mauss’s analysis refers to a system that blends barter, commerce and gift exchange, highlighting the mixture of altruism and self-interest. In my thesis I will explore spheres of exchange to examine how conceptions of identity and sociality among social workers, potential foster carers and adoptive parents, relate to discourses of gift and commodity in varying levels (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

Osteen challenges negative connotations relating to commodification and commodities with Frow’s (1997) example, of Australian aboriginal art that allows money to stream

¹² “The domestic vs. the public spheres, female vs. male domains, “society” vs. “economy”, (Carrier 1995: 192); Georges Bataille’s (1988) general vs. restricted economies; the *oekas* vs. the *agora* (the home vs. the marketplace); alienable vs. inalienable objects”, (Osteen 2000: 229).

toward impoverished artisans, and at the same time keep some form of their culture alive. Similarly, Parry's analysis of gifts (called *dana*) flowing to Brahmin priests living in Benares in India: the gifts are generally regarded as dirty and laden with the sins of the donors, classified as undesirable and morally disgraceful. But the double-dealings negotiated by merchants and the commodities entangled in those transactions are treated as neutral (Parry 1986: 459). Likewise, the idiosyncratic relationship between aesthetic objects and their market worth provide other examples; for instance, the commodity value of literary manuscripts promotes preservation that strengthens the manuscripts' aesthetic value. Thus, Osteen concludes commodification should not be viewed as inescapably in conflict with culture. Moreover, as Appadurai (1986) and Kopytoff (1986) have argued, commodity status is not permanent for most objects; it is only one phase of an object's career. Hence, a commodity is not a thing but much more related to a structure of relations. I will examine the various forms of relationships that will arise as social workers act a purchaser and providers to achieve fostering and adoption outcomes within organisational objectives (see Chapter Five and Six and Seven). In doing so, I will consider to what extent fostering and adoption represent gift or commodity or both forms of exchange. Moreover, Osteen notes that absolute commodification and total non-commodification are extreme circumstances that seldom exist in actuality, even though social theorists continue to engage these polarisations as explanatory tools.¹³

In his Maussian study of the gift/commodity distinction, Carrier expresses a similar "ideology" of the perfect gift to Kopytoff (1986). For Carrier, in an ideal world the

¹³ "In the perfectly de-commoditized world described by Kopytoff, every single item would be "singular, unique and un-exchangeable" for money (1986: 69). There would be no sale, but only a wide range of gift exchanges, none of which would be competitive or even self-interested", (Ibid: 230).

perfect present is timeless; its material worth is irrelevant since it is the “thought that counts”. Such gifts are “unconstrained” and “unconstraining”; so the participants engaged in the exchanges are also free and “unconstrained”, (Carrier 1995: 149, 157, 158-9). Belk’s (1996) idea of the perfect gift, whilst overlapping in part with Carrier’s, involves sacrifice and altruism in contrast to being unconstrained thereby, entangling the donor in social interactions. In addition, the gift must be of a luxurious nature¹⁴ to surprise and delight the recipient based on its appropriateness, (Belk 1996: 61-68). Thus, Osteen contends that Belk’s idea represents notions of impulsiveness and luxury, as opposed to Carrier’s vision that suggests the independent self.

Laidlow’s ethnography of alms giving to Shvetambar Jain ‘renouncers’ is an example that illustrates the inherently paradoxical nature of the notion of a gift that should not, he argues, be mistaken to be essentially reciprocal and inalienable. His ideas accord with Carrier’s notion of the perfect, un-constraining gift, (which in Osteen’s view portrays more of an abstract ideal); less tangible in social practice within the context of Western societies. Moreover, Belk and Carrier both acknowledge:

“A discrepancy exists between the level of articulated cultural values and the level of everyday behaviour, so that although we imagine that we give freely, in fact we understand that giving and receiving incur obligations, and we may also exaggerate the sacrifice and the pleasure involved”, (Carrier 1995: 157; Belk 1996: 69 in Osteen 2000: 231).

¹⁴ “Food gifts should be fancy fruit or candy, not bags of potatoes”, (Opcit: 231).

Neoclassical economic theorists like, (Cheal 1988; Radin 1996), interpret the gift through the discourse of the market environment. Osteen questions whether the power of market rhetoric could provide an accurate picture of social life, or result in a self-fulfilling prophecy¹⁵, hence economic rationalisation proposes givers give in order to get back. This question led Osteen back to a consideration of whether a free gift can be possible. In reference to Simmel's (1996) argument that only the original gift is truly free, Osteen points out, it is the first gift, prompted by an expectation of reward, that points to Derrida's (1992) line of reasoning, which states that an action becomes imbued with expectation the instant it is conceived as a donation, even if it is only the feeling of heartfelt satisfaction, "when a loved one opens our Christmas package".¹⁶ Hence, Derrida views the gift as paradoxical. Osteen suggests that Derrida's paradox is founded upon a set of misrepresentations.¹⁷ Instead, anthropologists like Weiner (1992) provide a more rigorous resolution in finding a means of keeping while giving.

Weiner argues what motivates reciprocity is a desire to exclude some things from the pressures of give and take. In an enlightening discussion of gift exchange in Melanesia, Weiner adapts Gregory's concept of inalienable possessions, objects that speak to and for

¹⁵ "Formerly sacred or non-fungible things, babies, kidneys, become commodities precisely because they are habitually treated as such by economic ideologies", (Opit: 232).

¹⁶ "Thus, as Rodolphe Gasche (1997) argues there, is no such thing as an ordinary gift; if the principle of reciprocity obtains, every gift is already a response, "a counter-presentation" (1997: 111): every gift always repays or responds to some imagined or remembered emotional or material obligation", (Opit: 232).

¹⁷ "In any case how can one make an involuntary gift? A gift without volition is an accident, not a present. The deeper problem for Derrida is that the same intention that makes the gift possible makes it impossible. If we restrict ourselves to the rational and the material, to presumption of reason and choice, to identification of reason with calculation, there seems to be no way out: like Derrida, we are hemmed in by the very dichotomy between generosity and calculation that we aim to deconstruct. For him, our only hope is to make intention and chance somehow, "miraculously, graciously" agree (1992: 123)", (Opit 233).

an individual's or group's social identity (Weiner 1992: 43).¹⁸ Osteen argues that commodity transactions in this case are shown to be determined not by whether money is involved, but by the relative alienation of the transactors from the objects and each other. From this perspective Gregory claims, objects are personified; in a market economy persons are objectified.¹⁹ Weiner however, maintains possessions demonstrate inalienability. Firstly, a possession may be given from one person to another, but will retain the aura of the original owner, so it is never given away. Osteen notes the idea of inalienability does not accord with the ideal of the perfect gift, which is supposed to be free and un-constraining. In fact, such possessions generate value precisely because they are simultaneously kept when they are given. Secondly, certain objects that are essential to the identity of a family or clan, tribe or community are inalienable. Hence, they are withheld entirely from exchange and so they never pass from the original owners except under extreme duress. As follows, the latter form of alienability moors the floating, fluctuating values of both gift object and commodities, as Osteen underlines using the following quote by Godelier (1999):

“There are opposing forces which must always be combined: exchanging and keeping, exchanging for keeping, keeping for transmitting. In every society, alongside those things which circulate, there must be fixed points which anchor

¹⁸ The notion of inalienability is the key term in Gregory's distinction between the two economies; commodity exchange involves alienable objects between reciprocally independent transactors that establish quantitative relationships. Gift exchanges, in contrast, involve inalienable objects exchanged by reciprocally dependent people that establish qualitative relationships between transactors (Gregory 1982: 104).

¹⁹ “Inalienable possessions are the perfect converse of Marx's fetishized commodities, so that “things and people assume the social form of objects in a commodity economy, while they assume the social form of persons in a gift economy” (Gregory 1982: 41).

the social relations and the collective and individual identities: it is these which allow the practice of exchange and which set its limits”, (Godelier 1999: 161).

As Osteen shows, from Weiner and Godelier’s perspectives of inalienable possessions are shown to act as a stabilising force against change, because inalienability authenticates cosmological origins, kinship and political histories.²⁰ For those reasons, inalienable possessions are proof that reciprocity and the achievement of balance are not the basis of exchange, but the “principle of difference”, power and prestige. So, Osteen contends, the distinction between gifts and commodities may be understood by the acknowledgement that certain objects are “neither” and never pass from their original owners.²¹

Nevertheless, the concept of inalienability cannot fully explain the distinction between gifts and commodities within the sphere of exchange. However, commodities can clearly be converted; Carrier’s concept of appropriation, or singularisation by Kopytoff, into inalienable objects, imbuing them with personhood. As Carrier illustrates, removing the price and wrapping presents are strategies used by people giving gifts to camouflage the

²⁰ “These origins may be either authentic or inauthentic, because such possessions may allow their owners to fabricate histories of association with the object in order to manufacture prestige. In our society heirlooms constitute such inalienable possessions. Thus, the quilts sown by one’s grandmother are never used to warm her descendants’ chilled feet, but hang on the walls as artworks or symbols of memory, kinship and continuity. Although the quilts have commodity value, which probably accrues as they age, to consider them as such would be in poor taste or even a kind of obscenity: to sell one would be to sell grandma herself. But because such objects must outlast their owners, “transferability is essential to their preservation”, (Weiner 1992: 37), they are at once symbols of stability and symbols of change. In so-called “primitive” cultures, such inalienable possessions form the very ground of value, because they remain associated with the ancestors (real or imagined) who founded the society through exchanges with the gods” Op cit: 234).

²¹ “There can be no human society without two domains: the domain of exchanges from gift to potlatch, from sacrifice to sale, purchase or trade; and the domain in which individuals and groups carefully keep for themselves, then transmit to their descendants or fellow-believers, things, narratives, names, forms of thinking” (Godelier 1999: 200 in Osteen 2002: 235).

commodity status of the items that are given.²² But, as Osteen further observes, some gifts seem to cross the line into commodity relations (Yan (1996)) thus personalising further commodity exchanges between parties that give gifts with the intention of “currying favour” with high-ranking officials. Such gifts inhabit a grey area very near to bribes; yet they often established personalised social relations (Yan 1996: 218-219).

Yan argues that many anthropologists employ the notion of inalienability to explain non-utilitarian ties between the giver and the recipient, while other ethnographic studies interpret gift-giving through the principle of reciprocity, to such an extent that reciprocity has become a cliché (MacCormack 1976). Furthermore, the superiority of the giver appears widely as a common feature of gift exchange systems (Gregory 1982:47; Befu 1966:7; Raheja 1988; Sahlins 1972; Strathern 1971; Vatuk & Vatuk 1971). Yan’s ethnographic study in China questions the perception that the superiority of the gift donor is truly universal. The study revealed that there is a type of asymmetrical gift that flows up the ladder of society. The recipient not only ignores the obligation of return but also remain superior to the donor. For each major family ceremony that villagers host there is always a written gift list. Lists offered Yan evidence of the changing nature of interpersonal relations. Drawing on the work of Lebra (1969:130) Yan contends, each culture provides mechanisms that control the tension produced in the reciprocated limitation between symmetry and asymmetry. It is delineated as the way in which status

²² “Indeed, the act of shopping itself may appropriate or singularize objects to the degree that the purchaser labors to buy them. A favorite chair, for example, although ultimately purchased at the department store down the street, may have acquired a good deal of planning, saving and comparison; it becomes further appropriated when it comes to bear both the physical and emotional imprint of its habitual occupants. Conversely, an inalienable possession may become alienable once again: when the springs poke through, the old chair is unceremoniously deposited on the curb for pickup by the Salvation Army”, (Carrier 1995: 121-122).

and prestige is collected through a person's social networks, particularly among people of the upper ranks of society, and reinforces existing structures of inequality and power.²³ There is an emphasis on a token status and role difference that provides unilateral gift-giving with a legitimate foundation, while the notion of social face plays a subtle role in the process of unilateral gift.²⁴

Hall (2005) also points out that gifts to beggars comprise a mixed economy of exchange and is also the source of anxiety about giving. This idea is reflected in Chris Bowlby's article in the BBC News Magazine (2010). Furthermore, Hall suggests Mauss's message is that gift giving enables social relations to be made and maintained. Hall's research informants, he explained, formed networks that were occasional in some places whilst concentrated in others.²⁵ Such webs became involved in exchange practises in the form of loaning money, sharing incomes and swapping possessions. They related to each other through the establishment of debt and responsibility, where a third space between generosity and exploitation became an important arena of negotiation. Hall states:

“On the one hand, in such everyday reciprocity it was the middle ground that was important; those who did not share as they should were not in turn shared with or worth knowing. On the other hand, those who lent freely were exploited by being bullied out of cash as well as belongings. The nature of the middle ground is

²³ “After 1949, although filial piety in domestic life was severely attacked by the Communist Party, its extension in public life was transferred into a new political norm called “absolute compliance to the Party leadership”, (Yan 2002: 79).

²⁴ “A typical example in this regard is the chain of upward gift-giving among local cadres. When a cadre offers a unilateral gift to his superior, he can expect similar gifts from below, either from the lower ranks or from ordinary people, as compensation”, (Yan 2002:79).

²⁵ Hall describes his research informants as consisting of an assortment of DSS tenants, teenagers and trouble-makers, running into difficulties and out of options at the grubby end of their local housing market and falling back on emergency hostel accommodation.

about the people that could be relied upon to pay their debts and seen as deserving of what was owed to them. Hence, Hall argues, friends make gifts and gifts in turn make friends make society (Sahlins 1974 in Hall 2005)”.

Accordingly, Osteen poses the question if money can be singularized or appropriately be given as a gift. Osteen states that Fothergill provides a compelling literary example of how people convert money into gift by strategies of personalisation, whereby exchanges in gift giving are enacted with storytelling that echoes Lee Ann Fennell’s concept of illiquidity, outlined as the following:

“By gift wrapping; using special kinds of cash, crisp new bills, shiny new coins, large denominations, by earmarking (“this is to go toward your new stove”); or by inventing new currencies, not counterfeits, but false bills, such gift certificates devised precisely for this purpose” (Fennell 2002: 107-108).

Fennell argues that however mass-produced and materialistic modern gifts may seem, they remain indispensable to the emotional and social lives of human beings; when such efforts are successful the result is a true gift that can create or solidify a relationship of mutual identification and empathy. The gift’s illiquidity and potential for facilitating empathetic dialogue offer opportunities for meaningful human connection that market exchange cannot provide.

Yet, Osteen argues, the circulation of the gift depends upon the market economy; as Frow notes, the notion of inalienability cuts across the gift/commodity distinction; the two are

mutually dependent; even money, the most commoditised of all objects may at least temporarily become an inalienable possession. So, Osteen cautiously concludes at this point in his discussion, the real distinction is not between different types of objects but between different orders of social relations. Therefore, if objects are inalienable when associated with persons, there was a need to investigate more closely the question of what is a person.

The competing versions of the gift economy in relation to the market economy seem to be founded on varying definitions of personhood, a concept that has not only changed philosophically and legally over time, but also bears different meanings in different societies.²⁶ According to Marilyn Strathern (1988) our society is founded upon “Western proprietism”, in which the unitary self has the power “freely to alienate its possessions or to acquire possessions which become a separable component of its identity” (1988: 159). In contrast, in gift-based societies persons simply do not have alienable items comparable to property at their disposal; they can only dispose of items by enchaining themselves in relations with others (1988: 161). Osteen argues the question of personhood is implicit in nearly all studies of the gift, including Mauss, who believed we should emulate the primitive societies where persons and things were positively identified. In association with market rhetoric, Radin argues, a thick description of the self should recognise that much of the person’s material and social context lies within the self rather than being separable from the person, thus highlighting the fact that individuals both make and are made by their social relations, which echoes

²⁶ “A person is a living is a living exemplar of his or her society: different societies produce different kinds of persons and different conceptions of personhood, and these persons and conceptions in turn produce those different societies (Opcit: 239).

Hall (2005). So an individual's personhood is constantly redefined through shifting social and kinship relations. Osteen further points out gifts are not only made by subjects but also make subjects, so all transactions are imbricated by the complex bundle of made and withheld exchanges through which our fluctuating convertible social identities are fashioned. Osteen's point can be linked to Read (2007) and Russ (2005).

Read carried out fieldwork in a nursing home that came into being in the context of the Czech Republic health care reforms, which impacted on the identity of nursing care that previously focused on treating patients' physical symptoms, to include their emotional care within a mixed economy of services, blurring the boundaries between public and private spheres of the economy and culture. Subsequent nurse/patient interactions made the nurse's work temporarily personal, showing a more relational side of nurses' identity resembling family relations and enduring forms of social obligation and exchange, while formal physical nursing tasks allowed nurses to draw upon a degree of independent sense of self. In contrast, the identity of nuns is based on viewing their work of looking after patients as a labour of love, a vocation corresponding to a deeply felt obligation and commitment. Therefore, nurses were being redefined with a dual identity and patients became identified as consumers.

In the same way, Russ asserts hospice care stands outside Gregory's typology and accords with Osteen, in view of the fact that the principle forms of transactions in the hospice are immaterial and ephemeral, or what Layne (1999 in Russ 2005:134) refers to as "transcendental goods in the hospice settings where private sentiments of care are

transformed daily into acts of economic value for public consumption.” Rather than articulating a distinction between gift and commodity, instead Russ argues the terms should be considered as phenomenological and intentional orders that establish a relation to the act of giving. Russ uses both concepts to convey the extent to which such a relation demonstrates an interweaving of caregivers’ identity with the form and action of exchange. Importantly, gift and commodity transactions encompass different practices and ways of encountering the self. More importantly, Russ suggests that caregivers are moral agents of exchange, able to measure and modify aspects of gift and commodity to express and establish fields of personal experiences and forms of moral order (Foucault 1990 in Russ 2005: 135).

As Godelier pointed out, the definition in gift-based societies, for example in Papua New Guinea, are much broader than Western conception; there are no things, only persons. Gifts represent sacred objects and also human beings. Based on such findings Osteen further develops his argument, stating that inalienability is a function of narrative which endows possessions with temporal continuity and which generates both prestige, through affiliation with gods, and humility, by reminding us of our inferiority to them. For those reasons, inalienable possessions cannot exist as such without the stories that accompany them: in the case of heirlooms the objects embody family or communal continuity. In the case of gifts the story grows longer as the object is passed along, but always retains at least a vestige a memento of its original owner. Thus, Osteen contends, inalienability must not be determined by time or drive for power, but by an immaterial aura of connection to other humans and to something greater than the individual human.

Inalienable things are withheld from exchange in the same way that a secret is withheld; they are given only in privileged circumstances and given only to others who are part of ‘ourselves’; brothers, mothers and gods. In being withheld they are more truly given and more firmly establish the filial, familial and communal connections that engender a fuller sense of personhood. In the arena of fostering and adoption I will show how social workers endeavour to build a fuller sense of personhood for vulnerable children within Bowden’s care system by recruiting to build legal families (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

The work of Franklin & McKinnon (2001) in *Relative Values: Reconfiguring Kinship Studies*, present some innovative anthropological approaches to an important and traditional aspect of anthropological study. My thesis examines kinship most explicitly at its ideological level as a set of ideas about fitting into a conventional model of the “ideal family”, which is embedded in spheres of exchange relating to gift and commodity as they create legal families through fostering and adoption. The issues of race and ethnicity also intersect with the construction of legal families, which relates ‘same-race placement’ to the process of matching children with families where skin colour is one variable. Hence, the theory of making kinship fits very well with my analysis. In her case study of Norwegian transnational adoption, Howell (2001) notes that adoption has received little anthropological attention. She further argues, and I concur, that desire and emotion are connected to adoption, and illustrates how notions of objectification and transformation are significant processes. She reveals the tension between private personal desires within the households of potential adoptive families, and the public norms and values of the

adoption agency and public sector social workers. In unpacking the complex values surrounding the meaning of emotions about belonging in relation to kinship, parenthood and family life, Howell suggests adoption recreates the ideals that are embedded in cultural values about biological relationships, which she calls a process of 'kinning'. I will demonstrate how such processes of kinning are part of the procedures of social work governmentality in adoption where, despite no 'shared substance' between adoptive children and parents, the adoptive child's blood is symbolically transformed (Carsten 2001:29-51 in Frankin & McKinnon 2001).

Carsten argues, our understanding of what makes a person a relative has been transformed by radical changes in marriage arrangement, gender relations and new reproductive technology. Thus kinship in my thesis relates to how the ideology of family is being rethought and reflected in notions of relatedness. In her analysis Carsten contends her use of 'relatedness' is employed specifically to suspend a particular set of assumptions about what is entailed by the terms social and biological. In so doing, convey a move away from the pre-given analytical opposition between the biological and the social on which much anthropological study of kinship has rested. Furthermore, such an approach enables, the analysis of cultural ways of being that does not rely on an arbitrary distinction between biology and culture and what constitutes kinship.

Along the same lines, Gillis (1996) points out, there has always existed a tension between "the families people live with and the families they live by", (1996: xvii). Thus, the latter should never let us down, but be forever nurturing and protective and are constituted in

myth, ritual and imagery. These insights usefully relate to my concern within my thesis with the ideology of family.

3. Methodology: Issues of Access

This section will look at the ways in which my data was collected, starting with how my access into the borough of Bowden was negotiated. The research was agreed with the Fostering and Adoption Service Group Manager prior to commencing fieldwork. He asked me to prepare a proposal for his approval as well as for the head of Children's Services. Once they accepted the proposal I also had to prepare a further larger report for the Service Unit Manager of the fostering and adoption teams, in order to get final access to carry out fieldwork within the unit as my official and primary research site. I prepared the report by drawing on insights from various promotional resources I had gathered as the background for my profile about the borough. I used such initial information, as well as locally published magazines produced by the council setting out its future plans for the shape of governance for all its residents, which was then submitted. My official start date was arranged to coincide with the monthly fostering team meeting. I then had to write a short introduction about myself for the team to be circulated before attending the meeting.

Initially I felt let down by the system within the borough because of the way in which my access was eventually arranged. Despite fulfilling my end of the bargain by producing as comprehensive a report as possible at that stage about my research, it was lost. I then

accidentally discovered that, having commissioned the report, the group manager was leaving the borough. When I hastily got in touch to enquire about the outcome of my submission, after several telephone conversations with his secretary, I was told my request had been passed to another manager. My access arrangement was handed over to someone who did not initiate any formal plans within the staff team for me coming into the unit to carry out research. The lack of forward planning left me feeling very alone and out in the cold. Nevertheless, I was determined to continue with my arrangements to meet the social workers and start my fieldwork. It meant that by the time my presence was finally announced, social workers had no time to discuss how I could be inducted into the working structure of the unit. In the end I was left to the mercy and goodwill of some workers to feel welcomed. This was not before various pieces of gossip circulated suggesting I was only in the unit to interact with the higher members of staff. Therefore, the scope of activities in which I could observe and participate, and the vantage point and premise of my involvement, were always, and remained throughout my fieldwork, contingent upon the nature of the relationships I formed. It became very clear to me that access was going to be a tenuous process. But, as Nader points, out dealing with such problems is part of what signifies “making rapport” (Nader 1972: 465).

My initial aim was to examine how social workers operated in teams within the context of a local authority setting. I hoped to gather data to support a general hypothesis that the ‘social work team’ could be used as a tool of analysis to examine organisational behaviour within the public sector (Wright 1994). Although I started my fieldwork with the view that social workers had a professional group identity, I started to think more about how individual workers constructed themselves in relation to their roles and

responsibilities within the teams once I entered the workplace. The public image of social workers endows them with certain kinds of qualities by virtue of their professional status; these ideas conflicted with the more chaotic work environment I entered when I visited my primary field site.

Data was collected over a period of fifteen months of multi-sited fieldwork. My use of the term multi-sited relates to the fact that my fieldwork involved not only moving to and from various locations; but it also relates to moving between the different levels of the power structure within the Borough. I drew on various literatures, which provided me with useful and insightful arguments about research methodology. In the process of my fieldwork, I was able to observe and/ or participate and become familiar with the research environment I used; a classic anthropological method in my choice of ethnography as the primary focus. Ethnographic research is useful for its flexibility, where data collection and theory can be developed over time. Thus, participant observation as a form of qualitative methodology is vital to gaining an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the meaning behind it whilst maintaining a reflexive point of view at all times (Hammersley & Atkinson 1993: 24; Silverman 1993: 9). The other forms of data collection I utilised were structured and semi-structured interviews based on questions I formulated soon after starting work in the field. It was, as de Vaus (1985) points out, very important to pay attention to the need to formulate clear, unambiguous and useful questions. Furthermore, as Baker (1997) contends, interviews are about making data and the criterion for success is to create a good rapport. Similarly, Holstein & Gubrium (1997) argue interviews should be viewed as active processes based on gaining trust and

a level of understanding sufficient to the formulation of appropriate questions. In my research context, asking pertinent questions was based on my learning from and through my experiences as a participant observer of social work in action. Structured interviews were my best strategy to get information from social workers in the unit; they were only able to give me limited access to their time, and I was not allowed to use a tape recorder. Also, once they were interviewed, there was no guarantee of getting an opportunity to ask more questions under such a controlled situation. Nevertheless, I successfully employed more informal strategies as and when I needed further clarification. Therefore, I reserved the use of semi-structured interviews for social workers outside the unit, who not only gave me more opportunities to use a tape recorder but also allowed more time to uncover the information relating to their worlds outside of the interview (Miller & Glasner 1997). These social workers openly relayed to me the narratives of their experiences. Importantly, the ease in pressure of time related to the fact that these interviews took place on neutral ground, outside the work place and outside normal working hours. This data enabled me to gain further insights into the contrasts between the ideal outcomes set down in policy and the messiness of practice at the micro level of power within the organisational structure. It also provided the wider context of how the fostering and adoption unit functioned within the borough's social services organisation and in particular, the ways that referrals raised outside the unit provided a trajectory into the unit. Distinctive qualitative methods that I also used were key informants and what could be considered as focus groups. Within my fieldwork setting I attended various other events that were designed to support carers and some that were held to publicise and encourage people to apply to become foster carers or adoptive parents. I observed, with

some limited participation, the workings of the Borough's fostering panel. Once the panel was convened, the chair-person repeatedly requested approval for my presence from each of the foster carers before proceeding to interview them. Whilst I was not allowed to ask the interviewees any questions, I was allowed in my role as panel member and observer to take part in the panel's discussions before the interviews and between each of the interviews, when the carers had left the room. Like the other panel members I was given the preparation material to read in advance in order to comment. The fostering panel is the final hurdle all foster care applicants have to face in their bid to become official foster carers and it also carries out annual reviews in order to renew their registration.

In addition, I was a participant observer in a private fostering agency also located within the Borough, where I served as a member of the fostering panel and became the vice-chair. Secondary data was obtained from social work files to which I was given partial access, archival objects, social work texts and various other consultation documents. The Internet provided useful access to central government legislation about past and contemporary social work policies, and national statistics that explicitly identified various boroughs including Bowden.

When it came to participant observation, this method was best suited to the shadowing of social workers in their daily tasks in the adoption and fostering teams. It involved home visits to foster carers, associated training and promotional events held outside the unit, as well as in-house activities such as team meetings, duty backup and general interactions

through talking and socialising at lunch times. Nevertheless, I became concerned about the amount and the quality of the data my participant observations would yield because of the somewhat haphazard nature of the fieldwork experience. I suppose my feelings were driven by my prior expectations of fieldwork, and the sense it would be more or less a tidy, linear activity. There were times when I was able to participate and observe various activities without hesitation, while at other times only observation was possible, and again at times I would be prevented from doing anything at all.

Consequently, based on the contingencies I encountered within the field, I seized all the opportunities that became available, which meant shadowing a large percentage of the work of fostering social workers. I was also able to shadow some of the work of the managers in the unit. I gained limited access to the deeper levels of some workers' activities within the adoption team, but my use of key informants was most beneficial. As is often the case in the anthropology of organisations, carrying out research among individuals whose positions are set within a hierarchal power structure is linked to the concept of 'studying up.' The varying degrees of restrictions I experienced led me to feel frustrated and anxious, which I will outline further below.

The following account presents my feelings of anxiety and its consequences for the research. At a very early stage in my fieldwork it became increasingly apparent I had entered an environment rife with a climate of suspicion, fear and blame, and hostile to outsiders. Over time I came to realise that workers in the unit were suffering from low morale because their old professional approach was under threat. There was a pending

restructure of Bowden's social services that was to affect the nature of every worker's job in the unit. Therefore, after leaving the field, instead of viewing my experience in terms of a deficit in data collection, it became a powerful illustration of the impact of changing welfare policy on social workers on the ground. Thus, this framework determined the way I analysed my data.

Initially, I depended upon the social workers and their managers to negotiate my presence with their clients and entry to other social work forums. At times my observations were very structured and formal, leaving me unsure what to draw from the experience. In hindsight, it is clear that the workers and managers were dismissive of me at the start, and maintained a polite distance. As I have mentioned above, since they had not been consulted about how I might be integrated into the work of the unit, my presence served as another example to them of top managers imposing their will onto the teams. Issues of race, gender and class were clearly significant factors in the ways in which people interacted with me; the power dynamics that I faced as a Black female researcher studying for a PhD clearly caused some to be concerned about a variety of interpersonal issues. In sum, I did not fit with the stereotype of Black people, especially in a profession where Black workers contended there was a concrete ceiling that they would never penetrate to gain promotion. Some workers explicitly shared these thoughts with me and they were worried about whether they would be capable of answering my questions. What is more, my questions also sometimes forced them to look at their practice, making them defensive and insecure. It did not seem to matter to them that they had knowledge, that they embodied the social work knowledge I wished to understand.

For some of the workers, I was the first, and in some cases the only, person they had come into contact with to conduct research. The percentage of workers across both teams that had a degree themselves was very low. As a consequence, the issues of professional jealousy became very evident from my first fieldwork visit. Some workers had clearly decided that they not would give me any information, and would not help me gain a PhD while they continued to be socially vilified social workers. Social workers, as my thesis will show, have a very negative image in society, and many concluded that it had become a blue-collar occupation since their entry into social work. It was in this atmosphere of suspicion and defensiveness that my fieldwork data began to take shape. Eventually I made 'friends' with a sample of social workers, who became my main sources of support and principle informants. Other workers gradually warmed to my presence in the unit. I eventually took a more relaxed approach and engaged in general light-hearted everyday topics of conversation such as the weather in order to establish some level of social interaction with even the most hostile workers. I generally gathered data by offering to help staff with various bits of their work. I also offered moral support by being a sympathetic listener. I helped with ideas for training foster carers and was asked to help out in the sessions. While some social workers did not consciously display open hostility to me, as the outsider, I picked up on the emotionally charged atmosphere through the observation of interactions in the office and outside. It was revealed in their body language, tone of voice and gossip. Frequently a worker would say to me, "It is not you, it's the work".

When I worked in the unit, one of the activities in which I participated was helping social workers on duty as their back-up. I mainly made phone calls to clarify information for referrals and to private agencies to search for foster carers. I also entered small amounts of information into the files. Despite this, I was only allowed limited access within the unit. Whilst I played my role as duty backup, some workers took the time to explain to me how things worked; others were not so inclined to help me navigate my way. Again, from their perspective, the pressure of work prevented them from carrying another worker, which is what I temporarily became in my novice role. This was where the significance of my observations came into play; while my previous familiarity with an office environment meant I was aware of bureaucratic systems of recording and communicating. On one occasion, one of the adoption managers observed me working in the duty room. Her body language instantly revealed her surprise. She realised that I was actually being given something productive to do in fostering. On the strength of that single encounter I was able to negotiate a greater access than previously. It was agreed that I could shadow one of the adoption social workers and accompany her on home visits to foster carers with very young children who were waiting to be adopted.

I often discovered about planned events only through gossip. On one such occasion an Introduction to Adoption Evening, was facilitated by two workers from the adoption team. Armed with the information I approached the workers and offered my help. The first time I did this the lead worker was clearly irritated, but not wishing to be labelled unhelpful she acquiesced to my presence as an observer. However, far from blending in as just another member of the audience, I was singled out to the rest of the group by her

announcement that she hoped the information from the event would be useful to me. In the following section I consider matters of ethics.

3.1 Ethical Concerns

There are ethical considerations that I had to take into account within my research based on the various relationships I entered into with social work professionals. My conduct is guided by the rules of ethics set out by The Association of Social Anthropologists, but there are many relevant debates about ethics that these guidelines do not cover fully. In her exploration of the various debates and dilemmas relating to the ethics of anthropology, Caplan (2003: 4) argues the field of anthropological ethics is a shifting one. Therefore, she asks if ethics should be revised whenever anthropology is confronted with important social changes that affect the conditions under which the discipline is applied. My research reflects the consequences of one of the important changes in the 1990s highlighted by Caplan in relation to higher education. It was the intense impact of the new managerialism and audit culture that emerged across a range of professions including social work and linked to the proliferation of ethical discourse (Mills 2003: 37-39). Thus matters of ethics did not just affect my conduct with social work professionals; it also shaped their professional identity and relationships with their clients and society.

Acquiring the consent from social workers to examine their practice from within their work environment was a significant step at the start of my fieldwork. It meant I had to give them information that would enable them to make an informed decision. Having provided the social workers with written information about the rationale for my research,

I was careful when answering their initial questions to pitch my anthropological perspective at a level that was easily understood by that audience. As Aull Davies (1999: 47) points out, the researcher does not know from the outset what he or she will find at such an early stage in the research process. In other words, it is a classic problem in trying to seek an informed consent from potential research informants when one's theoretical focus may shift over time and different pieces of data gain greater significance over others.

The use of ethnographic methods is based on an open research design; hence, I had to continually renegotiate consent with all my participants as my views developed over the period of field work. I was mindful that my ethical conduct was also about preserving future opportunities for other researchers. In the early stages of data gathering I sought to establish a realistic balance in relation to confidentiality, since I was participating and observing very general office routines. However, the workers and managers were continually divided throughout my fieldwork on what information I should be given access to. Some workers believed I should have access to everything and should also be allowed, with guidance, to carry out the assessment of a foster care applicant and produce the report. The managers disagreed very strongly. In such a climate of ambivalence and suspicion, I remained an outsider. Thus, through my interactions with workers, I had to remind them time and again their identity would continue to be anonymous and the information would remain confidential in my written thesis. I managed to establish a level of trust as it became clear that I did not take sides with either workers or managers and as I demonstrated how willing I was to work as part of the team. I was

acknowledging my responsibility to always respect the trust and professional integrity of social work practitioners and clients within my fieldwork interactions.

To honour my promise of confidentiality and anonymity, I have used pseudonyms for all informants and endeavoured not to excessively use direct quotations from my data or personal descriptions. In addition, the London borough in which my fieldwork is located has also been given a pseudonym. I assured informants that I was in complete control of my fieldwork notes and other forms of written material gathered within the fieldwork context. When it came to carrying out interviews I sought consent to use a tape recorder. If someone consented to more than one interview, I would replay what was previously recorded before starting the second interview. I was asked what would happen to my findings and explained that the thesis would be held within the University of London Library and that I would not be able control who could gain access to draw on and interpret my findings. I have made every effort not to misrepresent my findings, fabricate or plagiarise evidence and hope that the dissemination of my findings will also inform the academic community. I am aware that offering my informants the opportunity to read what I have written is a way of them gaining something from their contribution to the research. Importantly, it was these general insecurities in the work place that became a vital theme for my research once I left the field.

4. The Field

My first site of data collection was in the fostering and adoption unit. The unit became the place where I spent most of my time in the field. The fostering and adoption teams were accommodated in two large converted Victorian houses on a tree-lined residential road. The unit was within a short distance of other council offices, situated within the centre of the borough. The house provided sixteen rooms of office space for the social work teams and their administrative staff. Daily interactions among the workers cultivated what one worker described as a 'house culture'. That worker compared the workplace to living domestically in a house with people with whom one had nothing in common. When I first entered the building it gave me a feeling of space, but as I familiarised myself with the surrounding, I found that the offices were really quite cramped. Some rooms were partitioned down the middle into long narrow spaces, which two workers shared. Other rooms had up to four workers sharing, with two people sitting by the window and two by the wall with their desks positioned back to back. The furniture was old and the interior walls that were once white had faded to grey. The workers tried to liven up their surroundings by putting colourful posters up. The carpets were a dull light green and worn in places, and there was a small kitchen and a single toilet. There was also a meeting room, which the teams competed to use. Thus it was in this 'house culture' that my research began with social workers and the professional models they embodied in their values, emotions and motives as well as through the words that they used.

Like all anthropologists, my ethical and methodological position has implications for the validity and reliability of my project. However, on going reflexive awareness was a crucial dynamic to inform the way I wanted to represent informants and observations in my ethnography. I also had to relate my research to more traditional sites of fieldwork. Firstly, my research was carried out among social workers that were part of a professional group that meet together daily in the workplace and cooperated in shared rituals of practice rather than as a bounded group. Secondly, my focus was on the links between policy and the processes of identification that indicated how systems of governance were actualised. Long-term participant observation enabled me to see people as multifaceted individuals, with involvements, experiences and stories within wider contexts. Observation in particular gave access to work-place experiences that not only incorporated, but also went beyond language.

Despite its significance, the nature of the ethnographic field meant that it yielded some things but it also obscured others; hence my need to use other forms of data collection such as qualitative interviewing. This kind of methodological flexibility became all the more important as it became clear that the contexts in which my research was located represented the changing nature of the field. Hence my research fitted in with the shift in anthropological perspective towards a focus on individual agency that can and could be traced through the flow of inter-subjective personal experiences of my informants.

While, in the end, the unit yielded valuable data, I was never fully integrated or ever became immersed into either of the teams. It has been argued by Amit (2000), who focuses on fieldwork in urban settings, that the notion of immersion implies the

independent existence of the field as a bounded set of relations and activities that are autonomous and waiting to be discovered through fieldwork. Instead, she argues, the field is located in a world of infinite interconnections and overlapping contexts. Thus, the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of these contexts inescapably shapes the resources available to the researcher.

This discussion about the interface between myself, and the field, leads me to another facet of my fieldwork that I have not highlighted so far. I conducted what is called 'anthropology at home', which equally necessitates a reconceptualisation of the 'field'. Fieldwork has traditionally carried the expectation of travel to a distant location and is often the quintessential hallmark of social anthropology (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). A similar argument seems to be implied by Okely (1992), who proposes that fieldwork represents a 'total experience' demanding the anthropologist's intellectual, physical, emotional, political and intuitive resources. However, the analysis by Shore and Wright (1997) proposes yet another view of the field that I believe speaks to my research insofar as it suggests how to view policy in action at macro and micro levels. Both argue, that the anthropology of policy offers the potential for a radical reconceptualisation of the field away from a discrete local community or bounded geographical area. Instead, it becomes a social and political space articulated through relations of power and systems of governance. Clearly my fieldwork within a unit in an urban setting was not of a discrete local community or a bounded geographical area, but it does represent a workspace where systems of governance have, and continue to, affect people on the ground. Nevertheless, it is located within the borough and city in which I have lived for over

thirty years. Thus, Caputo (2000) argues research at home involves adding another dimension to the network of one's established social relationships and commitments once fieldwork begins. In addition, she warns that working close to home with subjects that do not fit the category of the 'exotic' potentially challenges anthropological tradition. This is a result of the narrow definitions of the concepts of the field and fieldwork that have been used to consolidate boundaries around anthropology as a way to distinguish it from other disciplines. She argues:

“Redrawing these sharp lines allows the discipline considerable authority against a landscape of changing political and cultural conditions to reassert what is 'real' anthropology. In turn it reinforces what is considered to be 'real' anthropological knowledge” (Caputo 2000: 28).

However, Strathern (1987) points out that it is never straightforward to decide how or when one is at home. This is because of the heterogeneity of any society, the multiplicity of social boundaries that are created, and the variety of ways individuals feel they belong or do not belong to different social categories and groups. My own belonging within British society or London is based on a racialised identity that is excluded from certain notions of Englishness or Britishness. Knowles (2000) presents an interesting third perspective on the notions of home and belonging. She argues fieldwork and autobiography are closely connected because the researcher's choice of topic is more often than not based on their autobiography. This implies that my political and social consciousness, borne out of living as a racialised ethnic minority in Britain, is linked to my research orientation. According to Knowles there is no neutral position in which I

could stand in the field. Knowles, like Caputo, points to the fact that fieldwork has traditionally carried the expectation of travel to a distant location in relation to the ethnographer's home, but importantly for her, it invariably obscured any links to the researcher's autobiography. Undoubtedly my identity has affected my fieldwork experiences in relation to my outsider and partial status. In the first instance I was judged not on the basis of any professional role, but as belonging to an ethnic minority group and the various meanings this racialised identity had for different social workers. In the end, Aull Davies (1999) argues, ethnographic research must be capable of adding value to such personal experiences and reports. Good ethnographic research encourages a continual interplay and tension between theory and situated method and experiences.

5. Summary

This thesis presents an anthropological study of the impact of changing welfare policies upon social workers in the London Borough of Bowden over a period of fifteen months' multi-sited fieldwork. It is derived from various locations within the borough, with the longest period in the fostering and adoption unit. It asks how policy, governance and power affect people on the ground, highlighting the importance of studying their impact in a specific setting. My research employed an ethnographic method as the primary tool of enquiry and my data was gathered mainly through observation and semi-structured interviews. My general focus is to look at the misfit between formal policies and the diverse situations social workers face in practice.

Within the unit I focused on the impact of managerialism and the marketisation of welfare within discourses around modernising the welfare state and local government, and the ways in which social workers contest these external forces. In addition to general concerns, I explore whether the ideology of the family continues to be reproduced within the welfare market. I look particularly at how race and ethnic classification and reclassification affect social workers' values in building 'ideal' legal families when placing children for fostering or adoption. My research therefore is not about policy per se. Instead, it is specifically about the impact of implementing social welfare policies upon social workers and the ways in which this shapes their subjectivities. I will now provide a brief outline of the chapters in my thesis.

Thesis Outline

The thesis outline is divided into three parts. Each part contains two chapters that are thematically linked.

Part One

This section examines the processes of actualisation and operationalisation in the evolution of British welfare legislation. It explores how the ideology behind Victorian middle class charitable accomplishments created the professionalisation of government of populations through the family. In addition, it also illustrates how current welfare policies in the public sector represent a redefinition in methods of practice within the workplace, transforming professional identity that is shown to exist in a state of flux.

Chapter Two examines various forms of legislation associated with social work. Their evolution highlights periods when the family became the focus of state concern, with the initiation of new social norms and values to understand and control populations. It examines the link between the specific creation of employment opportunities in the professionalisation of social work, and the politics and policies relating to the governance of the British Welfare State.²⁷ It further focuses on how such top-down processes operate by drawing on Foucault's framework of governmentality to contextualise the links through which various welfare needs are constructed in relation to 'the family' as instruments of government.

²⁷ Welfare state is a term that came into general use during the Second World War with the coalition government in Britain, mainly as a result of the influential Beveridge Report of 1942.

Chapter Three focuses on practice, drawing on Bourdieu's concept of doxa in its exploration of the ideology behind the contemporary reorganisation of social services in Bowden, supported by the discourse of the government's rhetoric of 'modernisation' and its impact on social workers. The changing work environment provides the context for an examination of how child protection procedures represent the tensions between professionals and managers in the contemporary face of public sector social work practice.

Part Two

This section examines the creation of knowledge and its link to the intersection of discourse and ideology. It focuses on the objectification of welfare subjects and notions of commodity exchange as a feature of the marketisation of welfare. It concentrates on the case-work file as an object of social work intervention and evaluation in the maintenance of order within practice. It further relates notions of objectification and transformation to foster care as the product of exchange and politics of value. Thus, the discourse of commodification becomes the antithesis of the gift discourse.

Chapter Four examines the case-work file; and the process of creating social work knowledge. It describes how the initiation of child protection procedures provides a principal trajectory for the generation of files in the operation of bureaucratic documentation within social services' information infrastructure. Hence, it reveals how a seemingly mundane task of recording renders case-work files as textual representations

and objectifications of social work ideology, along with temporal dictates that shape their form.

Chapter Five extends the notion of objectification to the concept of commodification in the examination of the process of recruitment and maintenance of foster carers in the Borough of Bowden. The focus of the chapter is to demonstrate that the recruitment process is a ritual of transformation. Through the method of assessment, social workers objectify and convert foster care applicants into commodities. Thus, foster care is not only the product of exchange value within a welfare market, but is also embedded within the ideology of a certain kind of social service family.

Part Three

This section explores spheres of exchange in relation to the creation of legal families. On the one hand, the chapters examine the market discourse which cast service providers of foster care in terms of value and transition based on very practical concerns. On the other hand, they locate adoption within a discourse of permanence and gift exchange. They focus on the emotional bonds of kinship which situate adoption at the apex in forming ideal and stable families, and closest to achieving the perfect social norms. However, this sharp division is contested as the boundaries have begun to blur with changing legislation.

Chapter Six examines foster carers' perspectives of operating in a market. It examines the ways in which people confer meaning upon their experiences of becoming carers through the insights and motives that led them to enter Bowden's foster carers' market. Nonetheless, the 'gift' discourse appears to be an implicit feature in foster carers' narrative and social workers' management. However, I show how carers and social workers experience ambivalence in their attempts to negotiate the tensions that underpin the meanings behind the two spheres of exchange.

Chapter Seven seeks to examine the progression towards the construction of the ideal family by adoption social workers. Adoption places greater emphasis on the gift-exchange discourse, situating it at the centre of emotional bonds of kinship, family and a sense of belonging. The chapter looks at the procedures that trace the assessment pathway to the appointment of families, the complexities of matching children with families, and how they are supported through a system in which the notion of pure gift exchange is increasingly becoming contested.

Conclusion

Chapter Eight shows how my ethnography contributes to general debates about the anthropology of policy, work and social change. It shows how the ideology of family became normalised, as the family became a site of intervention in the governance of population with the establishment of the Welfare State. Its focus on social workers serves to highlight the tensions between professionalism and managerialism as a result of the

impact of changing welfare policy across the public, private and voluntary sectors of British society from the 1980s to the present. It is based on the notion of a free market, the politics of value in relation to service provision, and the rise of the notion of consumer choice and spheres of exchange. Therefore, professionals continue to experience a loss of autonomy vis-à-vis service managers, whose roles are specifically to do with the control of resources and whose actions are legitimated through a discourse of achieving efficiency.

Part One: Enacting Welfare Policy: Operationalising Intervention

In part one I employ the Foucauldian concept of governmentality and Bourdieu's concept of doxa, which are both concerned with ideology as a vehicle of legitimisation. This means the techniques by which values and beliefs constructively achieve goals through naturalisation to form traditions and establishment of doctrine. It provides the framework for my examination of the evolution and legitimisation of social work in the operationalisation of intervention and the rise of the Welfare State. It outlines how the institution of family became the important ideological site for government regulation of populations. Thus, it is about how essentially top-down policies are enacted in time and space. In doing so, it provides the context of how the discourse of welfare needs intersect with a particular ideology of 'the family', which has become stable and natural and therefore self-evident.

My focus of analysis starts with an outline of the association between public welfare and marginal groups within British society during the nineteenth century, a period of significant social change that contributed to establishing the professionalisation of social work. I show how the concept of professionalism is linked to the institutionalisation of formal knowledge, which has shaped the ideology of social work practice. In the Victorian context, social work knowledge evolved in connection to rights of control within particular areas of benevolent social policy, which was revolutionary in addressing social exclusion. I show how those goals were achieved with an ideological shift enshrined in the discourses of middle-class family values, promoting notions of

respectability (and which have continued to inform current practices). Subsequent social changes are illustrated with sketching out the emergence of increased immigration in the mid- to late-twentieth century. It draws attention to how race became another analytical dimension in the intersection between welfare needs and the family. Thus, it was necessary to delineate the discourses of classification that problematised and pathologised racialised subjects to justify the ideology and concept of assimilation within legislation. It became the method through which to regulate Black and Asian families, by constructing Black and Asian social workers as pivotal agents of intervention. The further shift in the ideology of care by the late twentieth century and the twenty-first century turns my focus onto how welfare and practice is constituted and managed through market mechanisms that redefine welfare subjects with the promotion of responsibility. Thus, I examine the tension between the identity of professionals and managers with the intensification of managerialism, showing how various perspectives can create competing as well as collaborating discourses in the naturalisation of policy in the institutional context of the public sector.

Chapter 2

Professional Culture: Race and Welfare Policy in Social Work

Introduction

Before shifting to a discussion of contemporary social work, it is first necessary to provide a general account of its evolution and association with government intervention and the later rise of the Welfare State.²⁸ Its evolution represents a period when the family became the focus of governmentality, with the instigation of new forms of social norms and values through which to understand and control populations. I will focus mainly on how top-down processes operate, through Foucault's framework of governmentality. In doing so, I intend to contextualise the links between how welfare needs are constructed out of a particular idea of 'the family' as an instrument of social control.

The chapter is divided into three parts. Part One outlines the association between public welfare and people that were poor and on the margins of British society in the nineteenth century, and the establishment of social work as a profession. Part Two continues with an examination of British race relations as a framework behind government policy and welfare delivery during the mid- to late-twentieth century, a period in which increased immigration from British and former British colonies resulted in the transformation of Britain as a visible, multi-racial/ethnic society. During this era, the government sought to

²⁸ Welfare state is a term that came into general use during the Second World War with the coalition government in Britain, mainly as a result of the influential Beveridge Report of 1942.

deal with new populations and issues of national belonging. Black and Asian family forms were invariably seen as problematic. As a consequence, the concept of cultural translation is introduced in relation to the promotion of a specific role for Black and Asian social workers. It also explores the various challenges to social work practice by focusing on the radical critiques of trans-racial adoption as an example that led to changes in adoption and fostering practices. Finally, Part Three outlines the key themes of the last Labour Government reform of the Welfare State with the way in which citizenship is redefined through the consolidation of targets and language of risk, leading to less person-centred, resource-led services and diminishing autonomy amongst social workers. It also presents the account of a Black social worker that experienced many of these policy shifts first hand, to provide a personal perspective from someone whose career spanned so many changes.

1. The Professionalisation of Social Work and the rise of the Racialised Subject

“The perspective of population, the reality accorded to specific phenomena of population, render possible the final elimination of the model of the family and the re-centring of the notion of economy” (Foucault 1991:99).

The above quote accords very well with my specific concerns in this chapter relating to the family as an ideology within the practices of governing a population. Thus, Foucault argues that, in the shift to the notion of economy, the family disappears as the model of government. What emerged as prominent is the family viewed as an internal element of population and as a fundamental instrument in its government.

Foucault's perspective on population can readily be applied to events occurring in the first half of the nineteenth century, a time in which there were significant impacts on the populations of England and Wales. The social changes resulting from industrialisation during that period provided the conduit for a wide range of new social problems (Frazer 2003).²⁹ This meant British professional social work, as we have come to know it, was to a very large extent borne out of the increased needs associated with the growth of urban populations from the massive internal migration of people from rural areas into cities (Walton 1975).

My discussion will highlight the emerging ideas of public and private spheres within society that focused on notions of the family as a stable social norm. This is particularly reflected in the impact of urbanisation, resulting in greater poverty and consequently bringing the private sphere of the household into contact with public welfare. As Purvis (1991) points out, within the writings of Samuel Smiles in 1859, the ideal of the good woman as home-keeper was seen as the solution to social problems, particularly of the working classes. Smiles argued for an ideological shift toward the promotion of the 'respectable family' as a wage-earner husband with a full-time wife and mother. His ideas about the public and private spheres were articulated via the metaphorical opposition between the sacred and the profane, through invoking the notion of womanhood. The 'sacred' natures, of womanhood were perceived to be destroyed by the profane acts of women; working in factories. In contrast, the early pioneers of the

²⁹ The population of Great Britain doubled between 1801 and 1851, then doubled again in the following sixty years. In 1801 the population of London was over 800,000, by 1841 it had increased by a further million (Frazer 2003: 61).

Women's Suffrage Movement were far from passive recipients of such ideas.³⁰ More generally, the issues that emerged in the unfolding complexities of urbanisation led to developments in housing, education and medical welfare.

It was through the philanthropy of the upper and middle classes that mainly women offered food, clothes, money and friendly visiting.³¹ In his Foucauldian discussion on the government of poverty, Procacci (1991) argues in the following way:

“An organisation of social assistance articulating public and private spheres made possible the rationalisation of the range of existing benevolent activities far exceeding the old logic of alms. The pivot of this new guise of benevolent activity is the visitor of the poor, the true forerunner of social work, the instrument of distribution of household relief and indispensable for good social administration (Procacci 1991: 165).

While the custom of friendly visiting of the poor had older traditions in England, the mid-nineteenth century proved to be a heyday for establishing ‘visiting societies’.³² It was a time of intense philanthropic activity, urging for a shift towards better living conditions among the poor. It laid the foundations not only in law, but of values that became embedded through normalisation and naturalisation, and therefore became more and more invisible. The liberal position of the newly educated middle classes’ attempts at ‘doing good’ in relation to poverty in London was indeed revolutionary. The fact that

³⁰ They challenged the notion that all women should ideally be in the home, as full-time wives and mothers, (Purvis 1991).

³¹ Elizabeth Cadbury visited prisons, while Louisa Twining visited workhouses (Walton 1989).

³² There were hundreds of visiting societies in metropolitan London. For example, the London City Mission carried out thousands of visits a year on budgets of £20,000 to £40,000 annually. Smaller charities like the Aged Couples’ Charity in the Parish of St Mary, Marylebone could only afford to have two visitors (Prochaska 1980).

they were women was also a way of reinforcing cultural values in which the family began to feature as the vehicle for social change. In doing so, these women inescapably helped to introduce new doctrines of normalisation.

The distinctive feature of their work was the extent to which the middle class domestic ideology of family experience could be applied outside their own home (Prochaska 1980). Visiting prison inmates and dealing with social needs linked their work firmly, then and now, to the roles of women as carers and nurturers of the family.³³ Prochaska (1980) argues that though middle class women articulated greater self-esteem through such initiatives, their attempts to extend their influence in social reform unwittingly reinforced the stereotype of women as more compassionate and self-sacrificing than men. As a consequence, ritualisation of the acts of visiting began to link social functions to the evangelical religious teachings that stressed the virtues of charitable work. Debates arose highlighting the fact that no training was available to equip these women to help the poor in lasting ways³⁴, and proposed that social workers needed intellectual as well as practical knowledge. The suggestion that this could only be accomplished with consent and corporation at a governmental level, created immediate ties with the general campaign for the education of women and provided the impetus towards regarding social work as a career.³⁵ The establishment of women's colleges within universities during the last two decades of the nineteenth century further served to associate social work with the new

³³ Reformers like Hannah More and Millicent Fawcett argued morality, self-denial and compassion, women's domestic virtues, were needed in English public life, (Prochaska 1980).

³⁴ The *English Woman's Journal*, founded by suffragists Barbara Bodichon, Emily Davies and Bessie Sparkes, established an employment bureau in 1859-60 that registered women who were suitable for what was considered benevolent work (Walton 1975; Purvis 1991; Lewis 1987).

³⁵ Josephine Butler's presidency of the North of England Council 1867-70 promoted higher education for women as well as grammar schools for girls in Bradford (Purvis 1991; Walton 1975).

class of educated women³⁶. By the late nineteenth century such changes gave rise to a shift from voluntary work to paid employment opportunities to assist people to use the newly available services as effectively as possible³⁷ (Lewis 1996; Payne 2005). It can also be argued that through the pioneering activities of these women, the gendered element of social work became firmly established and remains an important feature of the profession to the present day. Russ (2005: 130-131)³⁸ makes a similar point about nurses in her analysis of the modern hospice movement. Notwithstanding this, it is not my intention to focus on the feminisation of social work in this chapter, or in my thesis, except when it provides an important context for my argument.

By the first half of the twentieth century social work operated in what could be described as a mixed economy of welfare,³⁹ based on a division of labour between charities and the statutory poor law relief provided by the State.⁴⁰ The influential role of middle class women like Beatrice Webb continued in both sectors. She argued in favour of State intervention to resolve the problems of poverty associated with old age, ill health and unemployment and the breakup of the poor laws. She also highlighted the irony that the ‘deserving poor’ were often the category it was impossible to help effectively through

³⁶ A further link between social work and higher education arose with the opening of Girton College, Cambridge through the work of Emily Davies, (Walton 1975; Purvis 1991; www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk).

³⁷ The London housing movement’s use of friendly visiting, developed under the guidance of Octavia Hill, marked the beginning of assessment as a foundation of social work practice. Settlements fostered working class education under a Christian ethos by figures like Cannon Samuel Barnett in 1884 in poor neighbourhoods such as Toynbee Hall, in the East End of London (Payne 2005:36, 37).

³⁸ “19th century women’s moral reform and mission movements as well as of Victorian cults of sentimentality and mourning, true womanhood, and domesticity, (Russ 2005:131).

³⁹ The reasons for this goes back to The Goschen Minute on the relief to the poor in London issued by the Poor Law Board in 1869, setting out the relationship between the statutory and voluntary sector (Lewis 1996).

⁴⁰ The Poor Law dates back to the Elizabethan era, with a universal approach to welfare (Frazer 2003; Innes 1996). However, 1834 brought a shift to means testing and the creation of the workhouse (Lewis 1996; Payne 2005; Prochaska 1980; Lewis 1987; Walton 1975).

traditional charity activities. Various pieces of legislation were subsequently passed by Parliament as part of the welfare reforms under the Liberal Government of 1906 to 1914 that related to sickness and unemployment,⁴¹ to pensions,⁴² and children (Frazer 2003).

Table 1 provides a list of legislation towards increased state responsibility:

Table 1.	
Dates	Legislation
1908 Old Age Pension Act	Provided non-contributory pension to elderly over 70 years old.
1908 Children Act	Established juvenile courts, registration of foster parents, granted local authorities powers to keep children out of the workhouse.
1911 The National Insurance Act	First contributory system of insurance against illness and unemployment for British working classes
1914-1940	Shift in role of social workers from social provision to state provision, lessened role of charities move toward the development of the Welfare State in the 1940s.

It was not until after the Second World War that British social work became firmly located within the public sector. For that reason, I will go on to show how the formation of the State after the war itself led to the constitution of the ‘social’ as an emerging concept, and how the family as a site for regulation of population became inextricably linked to what became known as ‘social’ work.

⁴¹ All workers between the ages of sixteen to seventy had to join the scheme (www.wikipedia.org).

⁴² To be eligible, claimants had to be earning less than £30 per year and pass a character test. (www.wikipedia.org)

1.1 The Constitution of ‘The Social’ and the Ideology of the Family

In this part I want to provide a context for the emergence of ideas about social norms and values surrounding the family that eventually became classified and professionalised into social work. In other words, I wish to ask what the processes were that put the ‘social’ into social work; to look at the meaning of ‘the social’ as a historically emerging concept in the formation of the modern British state as we know it. I drew on Pasquino’s (1991) analysis of the work of Foucault as my starting point. It is important to be able to uncouple the term ‘social’ from the term ‘work’ in order to investigate the processes surrounding changing ideologies; as the regulation of the population became the focus of governmentality. Following Foucault, Pasquino argues that the population became the new object in which an emerging form of power was constituted and exercised. From this, a whole new cluster of practices arose. For example, practices related to administration, prisons, education, medicine, gender, psychiatry and the family (Rose 1999). Together, they wove an ever-tightening web that constituted ‘the social’ as a domain of knowledge and power relations. These discourses and institutional practices are what Denzot (1979) argues, became associated with ‘social work’. In this new conceptual and institutional space, the family became the centre of intense struggles in political discourses from both the Right and Left.

More generally, the point is that philanthropy created a new field of social relations wherever it interfaced with those practices associated with populations, highlighting the interplay of power and class relations embedded in its concepts and practices.

Philanthropic intervention became a central feature in the reinforcement of new norms around a middle-class ideology of family values through its contact with working-class

households.⁴³ As a member of The 1909 Royal Commission, Webb⁴⁴ criticised the established doctrine of the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ employed by charities such as the London Charity Organisation Society.⁴⁵ It brought with it a particular moral gaze. The deserving poor were seen as redeemable from falling into immoral habits with the help of financial and material assistance, because their plight was usually judged to be beyond their control. The undeserving poor, on the other hand, came under the weight of greater moral judgements because their circumstances were thought to be their own fault, and largely the result of ineptitude.⁴⁶ These kinds of value judgements became normalised,⁴⁷ and rapidly developed into the unquestioned criteria for making classificatory distinctions. This differentiation created a historical legacy within social work, and provided the foundation for the contemporary model of the casework interview. So, who are today's new ‘undeserving poor’? Is this kind of language salient in current welfare debates?⁴⁸

⁴³ The London Charity Organisation Society, (COS) promoted women social workers as key to intervention within the family. They were expected to try to get poor families to see the virtue of middle class values (Payne 2005).

⁴⁴ Beatrice Webb practised social work in London and became a member of the Fabian Society, which introduced a new way at looking at social reform (Frazer 2003).

⁴⁵ The London Charity Organisation Society was established in 1870 for the coordination of charitable organisations, only using the state as a last resort. However, COS workers regarded the Poor Law as more appropriate for the undeserving poor (see Lewis 1996; Payne 2005).

⁴⁶ Friendly visitors were made aware that the needy were so desperate resources should not be wasted on possibly fraudulent cases (Prochaska 1980:117).

⁴⁷ The issues of discrimination and personal scrutiny were at the heart of social casework. The COS became a leader in the field, producing forms instructing visitors as well as applicants about the need for detailed information (Prochaska 1980:113; Payne 2005:35).

⁴⁸ “In 1834 the new poor law was promulgated. At its heart was the notion of less eligibility: reducing the number of people entitled to support, so that only those who could not work (rather than those who would not work) would receive support. It's here that the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor became a legal one. To deter those who would not work from applying for poor law support, workhouses were made deliberately unpleasant, often resembling a prison as much as a refuge. Critics condemned them as "the new Bastilles". As we celebrate the 200th anniversary of Charles Dickens, we are witnessing a return of just the sort of language about the poor that he did so much to expose as cruel and inhuman” (Bowlby 2010 www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine).

Bowlby (2010) argues that history suggests every generation struggles to resolve providing for the poor and unemployed against the tide of opinion among the working population who pay for that help from perceiving it is being given without restrictions. This way of thinking is not just concentrated among wealthy taxpayers, but also among the "working poor", who begrudge the point that some people on welfare enjoy living standards comparable to theirs without working.⁴⁹ Bowlby further argues relieving poverty has mainly been about giving out money, "but in turn morality always tends to lurk in the background, attracting attention in debates about welfare reform, in a re-moralising of the welfare debate around the principle of 'deservingness',⁵⁰ This point, echoes Hall's (2005) analysis of begging and benefit payments in the context of gift giving, which I explore in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. Hall argues that the middle classes in Victorian London insinuated a perceived demoralisation of the urbanite lower orders linked in part to the indiscriminate giving of alms. Hence, gifts to strangers were damaging the social fabric. But he also points to the fact that the same anxieties are still being debated within society today, just like the poor.⁵¹

⁴⁹ In the Victorian and Edwardian periods, it was often the working class that policed its own welfare morality. A man receiving help "would regularly be visited by a brother from the local union committee, who would make sure he wasn't working on the sly". The creation of the welfare state was modeled on an insurance-based system, with a clear relationship between paying one's dues and deserving help. That model was undermined by post-war unemployment, when many workers could not, or did not, pay dues, but relied instead on tax-funded welfare.

⁵⁰ For instance, Cabinet ministers like Jeremy Hunt and Norman Tebbit suggest the state should not support large families that received more in benefits than the average wage, and the unemployed should get on their bikes to look for work. But, the Archbishop of Canterbury warned that people needed welfare because circumstances have worked against them, rather than relating to laziness or stupidity.

⁵¹ "Standing in the city centre cash machine we worry about whether and how best to give the homeless; newspapers carry comment on 'clever paupers' persistent beggars, dole 'cheats' who take gifts for granted

Moreover, the discourse about welfare reform within the Blair and Brown governments discussed further in this chapter regards changes as necessary as the way to refer to support "hard-working families", implying less hard working families may be less deserving. Furthermore, the postcode lottery raises more controversial questions. For instance, are populations in an area of high unemployment more deserving of welfare help than those who in more prosperous areas? All these debates become sharpened by economic recession will deepen even if politicians are cautious in using moral language; popular debate is not so judicious.

During the last recession in the 1990s, public attitudes towards those living on benefits were considerably more sympathetic than they are today. Anxieties involving welfare and work, among others, have all contributed to a stricter approach. As the latest British Social Attitudes survey demonstrates, 55% of the English condone the view that high benefits encourage poor people to remain poor. Therefore, if people in society are now more prepared to talk about the "undeserving poor", then who are the "undeserving rich"?

The statutory duties of social work governmentality increased throughout the twentieth century. Information about the household is still required to be meticulously gleaned and recorded, but crucially to be interpreted, as the basis for procedural decisions (see Chapter Three). This kind of access gained greater authority while increasing

or play the system; and indiscriminate givers are still scolded for the well-intentional damage that they do” (Hall 2005:1).

professionalisation in social work training gave rise to new forms of disciplinary approaches. As a consequence, the household increasingly became a public domain of the state (Denzolot 1979). Through this, deviancy and abnormality were both constituted as the discursive frame for the surveillance and classification of the family. Those households cast as abnormal were reclassified as subjects for social work discipline. Thus, the regulation of populations constitutes the creation of a body of knowledge that is linked to the classification of social work as a profession. This brings me to a discussion of the sociology of Profession with the work of Freidson (1986)

Freidson contends, “Down at the level of everyday human experience in schools, prisons, scientific laboratories, factories government agencies, hospitals, and the like, formal knowledge is transformed and modified by the activities of those participating in its use” (1986:xi). However, he notes the use of the term professional remains contested. But the main focus of his analysis is to ascertain if it is possible to analyse professions as a collective category. He notes that the campaigns by the new English middle class occupations to seek professional titles in line with what was already the traditional learned classification led to further confusion in terminology.⁵² To this end, he draws some further important distinctions from the Marxist perspective of Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich (1977) whose focus is the evolution of a Professional Managerial Class. They contend the formation of the category began in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

⁵² Freidson uses the sixteenth century as the starting point when profession was associated with taking consecrated vows based on the clerical foundations of the medieval university. Then, profession was evaluated on notions of religious and moral motives of an individual’s dedication toward a “good end”. But as Freidson points out, even then there were still contradictions about the term because it referred primarily to occupations associated with the clergy, law, medicine, and to some extent, gentlemen who served in the army but excluded surgery. As such, those occupations were seen as learned in nature, which linked them exclusively to a high upper class status, but not necessarily to the skills of professional practice.

Industrial capitalists supported development in the field of science, engineering, health and importantly welfare services as strategic methods to exercise power and control within workplaces and communities. In so doing, it fostered the growth and eminence of social workers among many others comprising that group. I further suggest these ideas equate prominently with Foucault's theory of the art of government. Therefore, in seeking to define profession, Freidson concludes it should be grounded in an historic rather than an abstract concept of analysis, since it is not only a method of earning a living but also serves as an agent of formal knowledge. Importantly, its dictionary definition is linked to the work of sociologists in the twentieth century.⁵³

The essence of the idea of a profession is autonomy. It is premised on self-government as well as the trust and acceptance of the rest of society. The idea is that professions have a specialised form of knowledge and skill that excludes non-professionals, so they are the only ones that can regulate themselves. Professions are also on the whole not just about making money; there is a sense of civic duty by also helping society and so there is a reciprocal relationship. I have discussed the rise of almost total autonomy for social work in terms of expert body of knowledge and skills that govern their own qualifications, since the only way to become a social worker is one or two routes that they determine. In reality that autonomy was never really achieved.

⁵³ "A calling requiring specialised knowledge and often long and intensive preparation including instruction in skills and methods as well as in the scientific, historical, or scholarly principles underlying such skills and methods, maintaining by force of organisation or concerted opinion high standards of achievement and conduct and committing its members to continued study and to a kind of work which has for its prime purpose the rendering of a public service" (The Webster's 1867, 2:1811 in Freidson 1986:25).

The changes brought about by New Labour in government rapidly undermined any idea that they were heading towards autonomy and professional status. In other words, social work is on the edge and there is a sense in which it is a profession; the training is very specific it is regulated and governed, it has its own mechanisms of control and yet it does not. So, the current status can be described as a mixture of professional and non-professional. Some things make it look like a profession and some things do not: for example, the degree to which social workers are viewed and controlled through policy and other aspects of Bowden's administration. On the one hand, they were brought into the mechanisms of local government operations and on the other hand they have to be registered, as table 2 demonstrates below. The fact that social workers have to be registered to practice suggests that the notion of de-professionalisation, according to Exworthy and Halford (1999: 15) should be viewed with caution since the term infers it is more of a trend.

Table 2.	
Profession	Non-Profession
Expert body of knowledge	Part of Local Government Operations
Govern Qualification	Subject to Policy control
Membership of Governing Body	Do not set their own agendas
Governing Body Facilitate Disciplinary Procedures	Work in Partnership with Voluntary and Private Sectors
	Respect and Trust

In looking at the issues of power and relationships of managerialism, Clarke & Newman (1997) note that the British welfare state was organisationally constructed on the principles of bureaucratic administration and professionalism, which classified workers in the public sector in bureau-professional roles. Their use of the concept of organisational regimes provides valuable resource for my argument that social workers faced a process of de-professionalisation with the intensification of managerialism under the modernisation reforms by New Labour. Clarke & Newman categorise various “dimensions of power associated with organisational regimens by exploring and contrasting their characteristic formations within former bureau-professional administration with those of managerial ones”. The first of these I consider to be in tune with my argument is ‘modes of attachment’. According to Clarke & Newman the bureau-professional identity of social workers relates to a number of intersecting attachments, such as the organisation in which they are employed, the department within the organisation and a professional group that transcend the specific site of their employment. Furthermore, bureau-professional order positions people in relatively well-defined statuses and predictable career paths into senior administrative or professional positions. Hence, because of the multi-dimensional nature of the attachments, at times it gave rise to tensions between professional attachments and administrative or organisational loyalties. By contrast however, the mission for the new managerialism is to create a homogeneous shared culture that bounds all workers in the pursuit of corporate objectives and therefore displaces traditional modes of attachments, which I

argue leads to a loss of autonomy and results in de-professionalisation.⁵⁴ But, as Clarke and Newman observe, in practice this managerialist aim is far more complex in practice, since old attachments do not simply disappear as new systems are introduced, despite very concerted attempts to instil what I argue are corporate modes of regulation. Thus, they state:

“Other loyalties thus form a difficult terrain for managerial regimes. They undercut attempts to build corporate identities and attachments and manifest themselves as a further problem to be managed. But this offers alternative frameworks and rationales for decision making” (Clarke and Newman 1997: 63).

The issues of decision-making in relation to power and relationships of managerialism will be further developed in Chapter Three.

I have shown how, by the twentieth century, philanthropy was progressively transformed into social work, and the rights to gaze, judge and intervene became increasingly transferred to agencies of the state. I will now extend my argument to encompass the order and control of the Black family, by which race became a further axis of social relations in British society. It emerged with the arrival of New Commonwealth migrant populations that became a settled and visible presence after the Second World War.

The Office of National Statistics (2003) showed minority ethnic populations have become concentrated in the large urban centres. Nearly 45% lived in the London region, comprising 29% of all residents. Seventy-eight per cent of Black Africans and 61% of

⁵⁴ “The new vocabulary of team work, quality consciousness, flexibility and quality circles thus reconciles the autonomous aspirations of the employee with the collective entrepreneurialism of the corporate culture” (Rose, 1989 in Clarke & Newman 1997: 62).

Black Caribbean migrants lived in London. More than half of the Bangladeshi group (54%) also lived in London. Other ethnic minority groups were more dispersed; only 19 per cent of Pakistanis resided in London. The second largest proportion lived in the West Midlands (13%), where Pakistanis made up 21% of the total, followed by the South East (8%), the North West (8%), and Yorkshire and the Humber (7%), where Pakistani made up 16% and 20% respectively of those populations.

The Office of National Statistics (2003) also showed, in the 2001 census, minority ethnic groups were more likely to live in England than in the other countries of the UK. In England, they made up 9 per cent of the total population compared with only 2 per cent in both Scotland and Wales and less than 1 per cent in Northern Ireland. The English regions that contained the smallest proportion of the minority ethnic population were the North East and the South West, where they made up only 2% of each region's population.

1.2 Social Classification in the Constitution of Racialised Subjects

The rise of a general, singular concept of the social discussed above presupposed that its subjects were not explicitly racialised. White British subjects were constituted in terms of class and gender, but 'Whiteness', as a racial category in of itself, was taken for granted (Dyer 1997; Supriya 1999). After the Second World War, however, the classification of race and ethnicity in reference to people who were not White became categories upon which British nationality came to be contested (Eriksen 1993). It is against this background that I will argue how these changes in population provided a role in social work for Black and Asian women and men in the 1980s. I argue that the changes

in policy since this time should be viewed in terms of a wider process of the top-down politics. The result was a demarcation specifically of the 'Black' family as a site through which to bring populations on the outside or on the margins of British national identity within the field of social regulation.

Race classification and reclassification provided the bureaucratic underpinning in Bowker and Star's (2000) analysis of apartheid in South Africa. Whilst Britain does not represent such an extreme case, the theme of classification is useful to look at the ordering and control of people through a variety of techniques. Bowker and Star's central argument is that systems of classification are often sites of political and social struggles, in which charged agendas are often presented in terms that rapidly become naturalised. As this happens, they become very difficult to identify, as they become wrapped into working infrastructures and so more firmly entrenched. In a similar way, Douglas (1994) argues in her analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo, that rituals of purity and impurity relate to the creation of social order and the way in which moral values are upheld and social rules are defined. Thus, social order through governmentality works best with stable populations built upon the regulation of social institutions such as the family.

However, when a population starts shifting rapidly, as it did from the late 1940s to the early 1960s with the influx of new immigrants, there is a struggle for governmental systems to be as effective and efficient as before. It is then necessary to order, classify and regulate new subjects to regain efficient systems of control. For that reason, the

combination of race and family values among immigrant populations became the focus for assimilationist discourses within British national policy. Thus, successive immigration and nationality legislation sought to redraw the boundaries that define legitimate citizenship within racialised populations by reclassifying them as specific and new types of subjects⁵⁵ (Mason 2000; Mercer 1994).

In response to the struggle to encompass this new variation, from the late 1960s to the early 1970s the counter-discourse of 'Blackness' to the former racial category of 'coloured' emerged among Black and Asian people as a vehicle to reject ethnic minority status and stereotype (Goulbourne 2001). I would argue it was also heavily influenced by the American race riots and popular entertainers like the soul singer James Brown.⁵⁶ In short, Black became a political colour (Mercer 1994; Sivanandan 1991). Resistance to the dominant notions of what it was to be Black was manifested with the adoption of notions of essential cultural characteristics knowable only to insiders that understood their value (Hall 1996; Gilroy 1987; Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1993). Drawing on DuBois's term, any striving to be both European and Black requires some specific forms of 'double consciousness.'

Importantly, it is from within these groups, whose differences were in this way demarcated around notions of 'otherness', that representatives would emerge to deliver 'ethnically sensitive' welfare services (Liverpool 1982; Rashid 1982). The next section will now look more closely at various government Acts of Parliament from the early

⁵⁵ For example, from, 'immigrant' and 'coloured,' to, 'Black' and 'ethnic minority' (Brah 1996).

⁵⁶ He was called upon to help quell the violence by putting on a concert. He then released a song entitled, "Say it loud I am Black and I am proud." In 1968, it was his direct political response to those events.

1960s that were based on the normalising discourse of ‘good race relations’, which implied a shift toward efficient governmentality. This meant the employment of Black and Asian social workers who, I argue, acting as ‘cultural translators’, also required a form of double consciousness in order to embody the norms and values necessary to regulate Black families under their charge.

2. Good ‘Race Relations’, Social Work and the rise of the Black Social Worker

In June 1966 the Bill that was to become The Local Government Act had its first parliamentary debate, placing Section 11 in the context of the Labour government’s 1962 Immigration Act by equating immigration control with good ‘race relations.’ The key narrative concerned social order,⁵⁷ and the task of trying to understand, define and solve the problem of Britain’s Black and Asian populations. Since this time, the ‘race relations’ paradigm became firmly embedded within the national policy framework.

According to Van Gennep’s writings about rituals as rites of passage (1960), the midpoint between the start and conclusion of the ritual is called the liminal stage. Similarly, the sub-text to the narrative of national belonging reinforces the state of liminality among Black and Asian groups. Their status is frequently about continual transition whilst being located on the boundaries of British nationhood (Miles 1993). The notion of cultural difference was employed to imply deviant values that associated the Black presence with

⁵⁷ The first statute that explicitly restricted immigration of Black and Asian people from British and former British colonies was introduced in 1962. It signalled the start of a growing concern about changes to the social and cultural character of areas that were perceived would result from the presence of relatively large numbers of Black and Asian people.

the cause of social problems (Cheetham 1972: 20-21). This notion of specific populations as a site of particular social problems was further reinforced by the focus on the Black family and the way in which such families were considered to be directly linked to the educability or not of the West Indian child in schools. By presenting the Black Caribbean family as frequently dysfunctional, the discursive scene was set for the imposition of a certain kind of social work regulation.

Within the realm of law and policing, the association was rapidly made between the family of racialised populations and crime (Lewis 2000: 39-42). People of Caribbean origin and descent were constructed by official practices and discourse as more prone to criminality, especially the ‘problem’ of Black youths throughout the 1970s and 1980s. It was said that weak family and community structures made them less susceptible to the control techniques of community policing (Humphrey 1972: 54-67; Cashmore & McLaughlin 1991). In contrast, people of Asian origin or descent were regarded as more culturally susceptible because of the perceived traditions of strong patriarchal control within their family values and community (Parmar 1982). Such notions of essentialised cultural difference were deployed and legitimated within the various practices of the police and the ways in which policing issues were understood and represented (Lawrence 1982b).

Above, I have so far shown three separate but connected perceptual contexts that were considered important to the politics of assimilation of Black and Asian populations into a regime of stable governmentality. Immigration controlled their further entry while trying

to define and classify new racial subjects; education was an early site in which Black and Asian families were perceived as problematic and unable to produce children to fit into British national culture; and finally, the family once again was specifically highlighted through the field of community policing in the struggle for the restoration of hegemonic relations. By centring on the family within these sites for the reinforcement of British cultural norms, I argue that such ideas opened the way for agents of the State, such as social work professionals, to be mobilised to endorse an agenda of assimilation under the race-relations paradigm. How, in combination, this notion of good ‘race relations’ become translated into formal policy relating specifically to social work is the subject of the next section.

2.1 Section 11 and the Employment of Black Social Workers

The discourse of race within government and the emergence of an employment drive for the recruitment of Black and Asian social workers explicitly reflect the government policy of assimilation under Section 11 of the 1966 Act. But, I suggest, this should also be viewed against the backdrop of ‘Whiteness’ as the dominant racial category that is invisible and taken for granted. In other words, race is ‘race’ when it refers to individuals who are not White. Section 11 facilitated increased financial resources, targeting education and social welfare provision⁵⁸ to local authorities with ‘substantial numbers’ of Black and Asian families within their borough,⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Young and Connelly (1981) suggest the allocated funds were in fact a form of compensation from central government to local authorities in recognition of anticipated ‘problems’ associated with the presence of non-White migrants. They qualify if 2% of children in their schools had parents born in the New Commonwealth and arrived in the United Kingdom the previous ten years.

⁵⁹ This refers to former British colonies with majority Black and Asian populations according to British racial categories, most of which had become independent from British rule by 1966 but remain members of

[to]..Employ staff so long as at least fifty per cent of the tasks associated with the post were devoted to work with residents in the borough who are defined as originating from the (New) Commonwealth and whose language and customs differ from those of the community (Local Government Act 1966 s.11).

The Act conveys a general framework for the illustration of social work practice on the ground. The following narrative is provided by a social worker during my fieldwork that was part of this early initiative and represents the human element, which tells a different story to the previous history of the legislation.

Alice is a Black social worker, and also one of my informants. She was the only one who was prepared to admit and discuss the fact that she was recruited under Section 11 and without a degree. This immediately gave the impression that there was a certain level of shame among Black social workers about the policy, since even now it implies a lower standard of qualification, wrapped up in unspoken embarrassment. I was left in no doubt about the sensitivity that it implied not only a lesser status, but also the notion of a ‘back door’, easy access into the profession. My questions to Alice were responsible for bringing those reflections to the surface. By asking questions about Section 11 in the context of a discussion about Black recruitment, most of the other Black informants became defensive, since they did not wish to be compared or judged with the implicit issues. It was not uncommon during my fieldwork whenever I asked about Section 11 that most tended to respond first with silence, then a frown, and finally denial. They

the British Common Wealth with the Queen as their head of state. It should be noted that Pakistan was part of India before India gained independence and was partitioned in 1947. However, the other first generation of migrants during the 1950s were still under British colonial rule and hence British citizens with British passports. But the 1962 Immigration Act was the first step to dismantling those rights.

tended to claim they had very little or no knowledge about that policy, and so weren't able to help me.

Alice said she soon became very aware of how Section 11 conjured up notions among White as well as Black social workers of the lowering of standards. She explained that on that basis, because White workers did not initially welcome her into their team, there was a need, to keep, proving herself. However, whilst she was negotiating her presence within the team, a great deal of her work was to explain the cultural meanings that arose for African-Caribbean families to the others. She said the White social workers she encountered generally used her knowledge of Black culture as a useful resource. She herself was restricted to just dealing with Black clients, and was used as a 'dumping ground' within her team. Furthermore, she became very frustrated since, despite promises, money was not available to provide services that were clearly needed. In terms of her career she felt she was in a dead end job at the bottom of the ladder. Just dealing with Black clients excluded her from developing wider social work skills or pursuing any promotional prospects. Another of my informants, although not employed under Section 11, also expressed to me the perception of a lowering of standards; she said, "social work was seen as a White collar profession, but the more Black social workers were employed it changed into a blue collar profession with a lower status." Thus, it can be argued that where professionalism overlaps with the ideology of race and otherness, the contested nature of professionalism becomes further highlighted, since it is embedded in the taken for granted category of 'Whiteness.'

Alice now admits that the stigma of coming from that kind of work background continues to make her feel she is still proving herself and she has inevitably developed a defensive attitude. Her experiences indicate that Section 11 has left an unpleasant set of consequences right up to the present. This may account for a very overt sense of confidence that Alice articulates in her relationships within her present working environment. It forces a particular kind of professional self-reflection, precisely what the term double consciousness implies. Hence, the systems of classification that categorised Black and Asian populations as synonymous with problems were transferred to the entry of members from those communities into social work, who converted them into specific instruments to intervene, interpret and regulate immigrant families. However, despite the stigma of Section 11 those early recruits became pioneers by opening the door for what has now become a more common occurrence of Black and Asian social workers, many of whom entered social work much later and with degrees. Indeed, one informant pointed to the fact that social work became the chosen career among other members of her family. She said, “Both my aunts went onto train as social workers after they finished their degrees and that’s why I decided to become a social worker.” As the message began to spread among Black workers in semi-professional roles of social care and more generally within the Black communities, social work was seen for better or worse as an opportunity to gain a professional job. As one social worker remarked, *“I saw it as an easy way to get a profession because my colour would not be too much of a problem. They were letting Black people in.”* The ensuing entry of Black and Asians would transform social work from its middle-class legacy.

Ten years after Section 11 another piece of legislation brought Black and Asian populations back to the fore, with a broader emphasis placed on equality of opportunities that would have implications for employment opportunities within social work. I will now explore this in greater detail.

2.2 Outlawing Discrimination: The rise of Equal Opportunity

The Race Relations Act of 1976 produced new strategies of governance within local authorities.⁶⁰ Under Section 71 of the Act, a general statutory duty was placed on them to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations. The need to employ and train Black social workers under the banner of equal opportunities nevertheless could be said to implicitly still inherit Victorian notions of the family as the site where social stability can be created. Black social workers employed as cultural translators were regarded as the only route into the Black family to carry out the key task of policing. The development of the equal opportunity discourse consequently represents a further stage in the employment of Black and Asian social workers after Section 11. The issues of targeted training for Black and Asian social workers rested on the ways in which the politics was negotiated between central and local government. Governing the inner city, spaces racially classified as socially problematic were usually delegated to local authorities. And, despite Section 11 funding, in reality the responses by social services

⁶⁰ It was envisaged that the Act as an instrument of governmentality would be re-education of the wider population through a new discourse about the way in which racialised subjects should be incorporated into British society, thereby eliminating their prejudices based on race and cultural differences. It was assumed that in time discrimination would disappear if Black immigrants were restricted and the settled immigrants and their families would become acculturated into the British way of life (Young 1989).

departments to existing multi-racial communities lacked clear strategies. It was evident, as Lee (1989) argues, that this kind of training had limits in its ability to alter structures of social inequality. In fact, despite the hope of a trickle-down effect, the focus and growth in training was to prove more favourable for White people, leaving Afro-Caribbean people especially underrepresented.⁶¹

The following narrative provides a personal perspective on this general government policy, which attempted to solve the problems of Black and Asian populations by recruiting social workers from those communities to access the Black family. Thus, it brings together some of the various issues I have so far discussed in the previous sections of this chapter and provides another perspective to the accepted official view.

Keith is a tall, well-built African-Caribbean man who, like Alice, became a social worker in the mid 1970s. He told me the campaign for more Black social workers came from within the Black community itself; “The community felt frustrated and undermined by the practices of social workers that received Black children into care at the drop of a hat”. Keith took his first steps into social work when he volunteered to work for a London Borough in 1969, translating the views of a Black family to a White social worker carrying out a home visit. He told me that it all started with a visit to see a relative that worked in the housing department. He got into a conversation with a White social work

⁶¹“Many social services departments in inner-city areas had unqualified ethnic minority staff that could apply for day release to complete the Certificate in Social Services (CSS). Although it provided some basic training it was not a professional qualification in social work and rarely provided the route onto the professional Certificate of Qualification in Social Work. More posts were being established by local authorities; for ethnic advisors or trainers to promote equal opportunities in social services. However, when selection and recruitment takes place for these posts, ethnic minority candidates are often unsuccessful and White candidates with higher formal qualifications are appointed” (Lee 1989:148).

manager who said to him, “You could help us, I have got a social worker going out on a visit to a Black family today and she cannot understand the West Indian dialect. Would you like to go with her and do us a favour”? For Keith, this encapsulated the rationale of why Black social workers like him were needed at the time. It was immediately apparent that social service departments were finding it difficult to manage the problems within Black families and they required “insiders” in order to access and instil British social norms within those families under the banner of assimilation policies. Keith argues that, although the recruitment drive was on, the departments were not getting much interest from Black applicants. He reflected on this, and then gave me his perspective as to why the message was not getting through;

They had very low expectations of the academic capacity or the intellectual capacity of the community. Most of the social services departments saw the Black community not as a service-providing community, but only as a client- providing one. So their attitude and approach was that they would have to take us in, give us an education, and train us up.

That first encounter made an impression on Keith, and he continued in social work on a voluntary basis. He then decided to go to university in 1972 and graduated in 1975 with a degree in economics. Although he did not participate very much in voluntary work while at university, he kept in touch and helped with some cases. One afternoon he went into the office at social services to do a joint assessment and he again met the female social work manager who originally took him on as a volunteer. Since Keith had become a graduate she gave him an application form and told him that they had vacancies. In other words, unlike Alice he did not enter under Section 11. Keith later learned that only one

of the three White males who interviewed him was a qualified social worker. He soon discovered that within the department and the areas in which he worked at the time, out of about 200 staff he was actually one of only three graduate social workers. However, despite being a graduate, he felt he nevertheless was viewed not only as marginal but as less able.

In this chapter so far, I have centred my discussion on the fact that for good or bad reasons the British government saw itself as facing a problem based on the arrival and settlement of non-White immigrants into British society. The task of how to cope with these new populations and the various social problems that arose meant the government set about trying to solve them through assimilationist strategies. Central to these was the initiative to employ social workers through a form of what more recently could be said to be affirmative action. The family remained the central focus of social work intervention as the site where social norms and values are instilled. By using the notion of good race relations, the narratives of Alice and Keith reveal how the various Acts unwittingly reproduced ideas of difference which can be seen to echo the original Victorian notions of deserving and undeserving poor. As a consequence, it can be argued that migrant populations were being recast as the new ‘undeserving’. In the next section, I intend to show how the somewhat crude attempt on the part of the government to see what they considered a social problem, and policies to solve it, has faced criticisms since their inception. This counter discourse has been largely from Black and Asian voices, concerned with how the policies tended to reproduce both the representation and reality of social problems.

2.3. The Critiques of Social Work Practice since the 1980s

At the heart of the challenges in British social work was concern that the source of social problems was directed within the Black family. It highlighted what was considered the result of structural racism, which had an impact on the planning and delivery of services. What became known as the Black perspective; has roots, as I have shown above in the civil rights and Black liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s. It gathered further momentum in the 1980s and 1990s in Britain with the increased radicalisation among Black social work professionals and academics. In 1983 the Association of Black Social Worker and Allied Professionals (ABSAP) was established as a response to what was deemed the failure by the state to provide unbiased and suitable services to meet the needs of the Black population. Other organisations such as the National Institute for Social Work's Race Equality Unit and the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work's (CCETSW) Black Perspective Committee were also highly critical of social work practice. These developments provided a framework for alternative forms of practice and made available the opportunities for Black social workers on the ground to discuss issues of race and racism and challenge Eurocentric interpretations of people's experiences. For example, the ways in which racism, class, gender, sexuality, disability and age affect consciousness, values and the micro-dynamics of everyday professional life (Edgar & Russell 1998: 5). Furthermore, as Keith's narrative has illustrated, Black community groups also organized to make demands for the provision of appropriate welfare services.

The practice of trans-racial adoption remains the best and classic example of the enactment of the ideology of the normal family and the practical problems that can result. When children of African-Caribbean background came into care from the mid-1960s and increased during the early to mid-1970s it was seen as being in their best interest to be placed in White families (Gill & Jackson 1983: 2).⁶² Beyond colour difference, this strategy seemed to endorse the White British nuclear family as desirable and normal (Penny & Best 1988: 3; Ahmad 1989:163). The conflicts and contradictions surrounding the principles of trans-racial placements were challenged within the influential Black radical paradigm through the politics of identity. It was argued that Black children placed within White families experience racial identity confusion (Small; 1986; Ince 1999; Schiele 2000). It can be argued the Black child is forced to negotiate a Black identity in relation to the wider society and the 'colour blind' basis of White family adoption. The placement of Black children in White families was felt not to fully meet their cultural needs, since the colour of their skin is an inescapable defining factor of their identity within British society (Mirza 1997). As a consequence, these authors argue that Black people needed to carve out a social and political path more conducive to the psychological well-being of Black children (Small 1986; Maxime 1986; Milner 1983; Robinson 1995). These arguments tended to be further reinforced with notions of an essential Black culture (Bagley & Young 1982:87-93).

These issues underpinned the eventual inclusion of race and culture for the first time within the Children Act 1989. When it came to matters of race relations the Act was regarded as a big step forward, by Black professionals and activists who campaigned for

⁶² The work of Gill and Jackson portrays trans-racial adoption as a positive thing for Black children.

same-race family placements. The Act was part of the review of public law relating to children in welfare. Section 22 of the Act is concerned with the ways in which local authorities support children and families by including the need to consider categories of race, religious, cultural and linguistic background for the first time. Nevertheless, these practices remain subject to contestation even to the present time, reflected in the way legislations discussed so far in this chapter has tended to make their provisions only under a ‘general duty’ which leaves them open to more than one interpretation (Lewis 2000: 55).

3. Labour’s Approach to Reform of the Welfare State

The search for an alternative welfare agenda (see Chapter Three) emerged in the early 1980s, when the Labour party criticised the welfare cutbacks of the Thatcher government. Labour’s traditional welfare ideology was dominated by the belief that increased welfare spending could achieve social equality (Ludlam 2001). However, under the subsequent leadership of John Smith, the party ordered a Commission on Social Justice in 1992 to carry out a policy review. It introduced new doctrines around a notion of social justice invested with notions of strong families, communities and institutions (Annesley 2001). This was the start of a new political rhetoric. By redefining the notion of welfare it meant the state would no longer serve as the safety net it once was. Emphasis shifted from the old patriarchal approach toward the association of rights and responsibilities of all citizens and in the regulation of families.⁶³ In this final section, I therefore outline the reform of the welfare state based on these new values. The redefinition of the concept of

⁶³ This would draw on Family Law, which included the Children Act 1989.

welfare, and social workers' adaptation of new norms of practice, brings the family into focus as the vehicle of a different set of ideals, and a different relationship between the citizen and the state.

3.1 Redefining Citizenship: Responsibility and Work Ethic

The reform of the welfare state was one of the key pillars in New Labour's project as a way in which 'modern' British people could be constructed. Hence all reforms since the Labour government was elected in 1997 were directed toward the design, structure and culture of the public sector in line with control of expenditure. The earlier conviction of social justice shifted to a notion of social fairness that became the new focus for reducing the gap between those most deprived and mainstream society. The promotion of a work ethic within families can be related to notions of belonging (see Blair 1996),⁶⁴ and Beveridge's earlier conviction that employment represents the best means of reconnecting citizens to the organisations and communities that can provide social inclusion and prevent material poverty.⁶⁵ It created a culture in which targets and means-tested benefits became normalised and new forms of exclusion were created. I wish to refer to this as the 'third space', where socially excluded people exist on the margins. Thus, self-regulation through notions of individuals taking responsibility was fostered through a belief in the existence of 'scarce' welfare resources and a need to be more

⁶⁴ The ideology of dysfunctional families who are classified as socially excluded. Blair defines them as the significant minority of people cut off from the mainstream of society. Their lives are often characterised by long-term unemployment, poverty or lack of educational opportunity and at times family instability, drug abuse and crime (Blair 1996:141).

⁶⁵ Research indicates that workless households are over-represented in the bottom fifth of income distribution and that the best chances of moving to a higher group accompany a shift to employment (DSS 1998).

discerning about who is in real hardship (Chapter Three). This redefined concept of welfare has become embedded by social workers on the ground as they adapt to new norms of practice. Once again it is the family that is being used as the vehicle of governance. As Blair argued in his 1997 conference speech, “we cannot say we want a strong secure society when we ignore its very foundations; family life” (Silva & Smart 1999).

The traditional post-war model of the ideal family consequently remains central to welfare policy.⁶⁶ However, the belief in the nuclear family did not mean the government was unaware of social changes. And any suggestion that other family forms are weak because they do not fit is disguised by the government’s pledge to abolish child poverty and the rhetoric about improving the life chances for children. As Hendrick (2003) points out, the murder of Jamie Bulger by two other children around the same time fed the perceived links between children involved in criminality, changes in family form and parental behaviour.

The concerns with families led the government to set up a committee to produce a Green Paper published in 1998 under the title Supporting Families.⁶⁷ The measures were to

⁶⁶ This is constructed around a married heterosexual couple with children; the husband is the breadwinner and provides the economic support for his dependent wife and children (Segal 1983).

⁶⁷ The Green Paper suggested a range of measures to provide better services and support for parents, such as a National Family and Parenting Institute to coordinate and publicise services available to families. It suggested a greater role for health visitors in helping out families. It also made proposals that would help people to balance the requirements of work and their home life. These included longer maternity leave, and a right to time off from employment for family reasons. The paper, included measures designed to strengthen marriage and to reduce the number of marriage breakdowns. These included giving registrars a greater role in advising married couples and improvements to information couples received before marriage. It also suggested making pre-nuptial agreements about who gets what in the event of divorce legally binding. The paper suggested it was necessary to take measures to cut teenage pregnancies because

enable parents to combine paid work with domestic responsibility,⁶⁸ but endorsed the notion that marriage is the best foundation for raising children. In this way, as Sommerville (2000) states, the family is idealised as a working model for the normalisation of mutual interdependence, care and responsibility. As a result, it increased the expectations of parental responsibility regarding financial support, conduct and educational achievement for children.⁶⁹ In such documentation, it is possible to see how aspects of Labour's philosophy still reflect the social reproduction of the family agenda that was originally at the vanguard of politics in Britain under the New Right (see Mayo 1994 for a broadening of the debates and policy approaches to the redefinition of the notions of welfare in the 1980s). Under the subsequent leadership of Gordon Brown, the term New Labour disappeared, but that shift did not necessarily signal that there would be a radical departure from the committed goals set within the rhetoric of modernisation.

3.2 Measuring and Clarifying in the Modernisation Agenda

The notion of 'modernisation' was not invented in the 1980s. The term has, however, become integral to the construction of a modern conceptual-political

these were associated with wider social problems. With regard to single parents, it heralded the introduction of a New Deal. This involved ensuring that single parents received personal help and advice to assist them in returning to paid employment if they wished to do so. For low-income families a Working Family Tax Credit was to be introduced to allow them to claim some tax relief against a proportion of the childcare costs they incurred by going to work, (Supporting Families 1998).

⁶⁸ Within the Green Paper it states; we acknowledge just how much families have changed. Family structures have become more complicated, with many more children living with stepparents or in single parent households. They may face extra difficulties and we have designed practical support with these parents in mind, (Supporting Families Ibid).

⁶⁹ In 2003 the first Minister of State for Children in the Department for Education and Skills, Margret Hodge, was appointed to take responsibility for children's social services, which was transferred from the Department of Health. Margret Hodge is responsible for children's services, childcare and provision for under-fives, family policy including parenting support and family law and the reform agenda to be set out in the Green paper on children 'at risk'.

terrain upon which questions of principle and policy have been recast and re-considered within the party (Kenny & Smith 2001:241 in Ludlam & Smith 2001). This quote refers to 'New' Labour in Government. The fact is, however, the notion of modernisation has been around as a political rhetoric for a least a century and has a history in social services since the late 1980s with the growth in the production of quality standards, procedural manuals and assessment schedules within local authorities under Conservative governments. It was what became known then as the 'new consumerism',⁷⁰ with the redefinition of welfare subjects as consumers of welfare services (Banks 2001; Murphy 2004; Exworthy & Halford 1999; Clarke & Newman 2007). Thus, the resulting classification of the socio-political category of citizen-consumer became naturalised within the welfare discourse to the present time.

Hence, as Clarke et al (2000) have argued, the continuous reconstruction of the welfare state in the United Kingdom as part of the British political agenda was a 'permanent revolution' that was begun in the 1980s by the Conservative governments of Margret Thatcher (Clarke & Newman 1997). The period was marked by its momentous impact on the scale, purposes, forms and social relationships of welfare. Subsequent reform initiatives founded on the rhetoric of a modernisation programme by the New Labour government that was elected in 1997 continued to be directed by the belief in reinventing welfare as the major political task as it was for the New Right Conservative governments.

⁷⁰ The use of the market to allocate good and services assumes that consumers are placed in the best position to make a decision as to whether a particular good is worth paying a particular price for. This finds expression in the notion that the consumer is sovereign or the customer knows best see Purchaser/Provider split in Chapter 6 of this Thesis (Collins Dictionary of Social Work 1995: 216).

According to Clarke et al, at the heart of Labour's vision for reform were the questions of organisational design, structure, culture and co-ordination for the construction of a distinctly 'modern' Britain. The changes gathered momentum under the New Right political ideologies of anti-welfarism and anti-statism⁷¹ that impact on the relations between managers, staff and customers in the production and delivery of welfare outcomes. It was the belief that there were unsustainable demographic and expenditure trends that helped convince governments of both Right and Left that some measure of privatisation and limitations of welfare state programmes was necessary. Interestingly, as Clarke et al further point out, the profoundest public expenditure percentage cuts occurred in 1977-78 under a Labour government. And so, in the last two decades of the twentieth century the United Kingdom witnessed a shift away from the model of the welfare state that was established after the Second World War. Therefore, I argue the Labour government's modernisation agenda represented in part a continuation of the New Right trend certainly started with the shift to means-tested benefits. The political ideological basis for the shift is provided by Hefferman's powerful argument of how changes by Conservative governments impacted on the Labour party in opposition during the 1980s.

Heffernan (2001) analyses the reinvention of the Labour Party in light of over a decade of Conservative governments, focusing on the premise of Thatcherism as expressive of a

⁷¹ On the one hand, the anti-welfarist approach of the New Right viewed welfare spending as economically unproductive, leading to a dependency culture that is socially damaging. On the other hand, the anti-statist element treated the free market as the normalising principle for allocating resources, goods and services. Thus, the elements of anti-welfarist and anti-statist politics were manifested in the privatising patterns of reforms associated with Conservative governments in the 1980s and 1990s.

new political consensus and politics of ‘catch-up’ that is rooted in Labour and Conservative party rivalry. He argues that the lasting consequences of Thatcherism, demonstrates how party competition can be the crucible of political change both within and between parties. Thus, in critique of Stewart Hall’s work on authoritarian populism, Heffernan states that first and foremost, Thatcherite hegemony was about establishing a sound electoral base among the political elite, rather than the electoral mass as Hall has argued,⁷² thereby demonstrating that formulating strategies for election and re-election are pervasive within competitive behaviour. In this way, political parties come to reflect, strengthen and to a degree determine political-electoral and political-ideological environments.

Hence, the role of ideology in sustaining political or policy change is significant to the changing nature of public discourse. Moreover, ideology provides structure for beliefs that shape political values and opinions, and form public policy through what Heffernan calls micro-ideology based on concepts such as social democracy or neo-liberalism. Thus, political change is exhibited when there is a transition from one dominant micro-ideology to another, influencing the political attitudes of the elite as well as the wider population, (Heffernan 2001: 113). Hence, Thatcherism created a changing micro-ideological space between parties; shifting the British political spectrum to the right

⁷² “In many ways the idea of a public hegemony envisaged by Hall was an illusion; what was sought was a reliable electoral base, and ministers were happy that an electoral poll of 40-44 per cent of those voting was not merely sufficient for their ends but could grant a landslide (or at worst a working) parliamentary majority. Rather than just recast electoral perceptions, Thatcherism was engaged in a battle with political opponents, principal among them existing social democracy and a left-leaning Labour party threatening to undo many of its reforms” (Heffernan 2001: 112).

succeeded in transforming the political middle ground.⁷³ This phenomenon was reinforced by the politics of ‘catch-up’ played by the Labour party as it reshaped the party’s public identity in the political marketplace. Heffernan concludes his argument on party change by stating:

“Party change is therefore a response not only to cumulative electoral defeats, but can also be a reaction to altered political terrain. Hence, the dominant micro-ideology provides a compass by which parties are obliged to navigate their procession through political and economic straits, a response characterised by the dominant political ideas associated with an opponent able successfully to policy and office seek at the same time as the unsuccessful party was unable to do so” (Heffernan 2001: 113).

As Heffernan further contends, the changing nature of New Labour ‘s plan for government under the leadership of Tony Blair moved closer to previous Thatcherite ideals than the Old Labour traditions, demonstrating the constraints established by the previous shift towards a free-market view of economic and political practicalities. This meant that for “Blair’s New Labour government nationalisation, public ownership and state enterprise were abandoned as out-dated beliefs inappropriate to contemporary needs

⁷³ “In altering its political appeal (for whichever reason) and relocating along the competitive spectrum, a right-of-centre party will move to the left and left-of-centre party will move to the right. Henceforth, this forms the political terrain upon which contemporary party competition is acted out and is defined as the middle ground: a political middle ground which, rather than being fixed, shifts (and is shifted) within the ideological continuum stretching from left to right. The political middle ground is fluid, a movable point on the same space between alternate poles. What is commonly referred to as the centre ground is this political middle ground, a constant shifting construct. Here, one should refer to a middle ground rather than the middle ground to distinguish this point. The political middle ground is characterised by socio-economic distinctions of left and right. For example, Arend Lijphart identifies four main dimensions of this particular axis across which the left-right spectrum is spread: 1 state versus private ownership of the means of production; 2 the extent of the government role in economic management; 3 the level of political redistribution of economic resources facilitated by government; 4 the level of development of the welfare state”, (Heffernan 2001: 113-114).

in favour of modernisation” (Heffernan 2001: 160), reflecting Blair’s belief that the politics of 1997 has superseded the traditional ones from the 1940s to the early 1980s.⁷⁴

This new step for the Labour Party shone a light onto Clause Four in the early 1990s. Clause Four, an important feature of the Labour Party’s constitution, was subjected to considerable dispute.⁷⁵ According to Heffernan, Blair’s new Clause committed Labour to “the enterprise of the market and rigour of competition in an economy where there is a thriving private sector and high quality of public services”. Blair’s success, Heffernan points out, in establishing his new Clause rested on the fact that he faced no organised opposition other than an ineffective and fractionalised minority of left-wingers, and weakened

⁷⁴ From the 1950s right through to the 1980s, Labour broadly accepted that a combination of existing public ownership augmented in various ways and extended when necessary could help a progressive Labour government implement substantial social, economic and political reform through democratic socialist policy. New Labour moved dramatically away from that principle. The 1974 manifesto’s stated objective was that through public ownership the government could control prices, stimulate investment, create employment and protect workers and consumers from irresponsible activities of multi-national companies, (Heffernan 2001: 161).

⁷⁵ The original version of Clause IV, drafted by Sidney Webb in November 1917 and adopted by the party in 1918, read, in part 4:

“To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.”

Tony Blair had in 1993, before becoming Leader of the Labour Party, written a pamphlet for the Fabian Society, which criticised the wording of Clause IV for confusing ends with means. Blair put forward a case for defining socialism in terms of a set of values, which were constant, while the policies needed to achieve them would have to change (“modernise”) to account for changing society. After becoming Leader he announced at the conclusion of his 1994 conference speech that the Labour Party needed a new statement of aims and values and that he would draw one up and present it to the party. The new version was adopted at a Special Conference at Easter 1995 after a debate.

The present version reads:

“The Labour Party is a democratic socialist party. It believes that by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone, so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few, where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe, and where we live together, freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect.”

trades unions with little political influence or meaningful veto. Furthermore, successive political and electoral defeats left those members of the party that would support the old Clause demoralised. Hence, Labour's revised position on public ownership reflected the ideological, political and economic as well as electoral environment in which it found itself, and the difference was due to Thatcherism. Thatcherism was proven to be the agency behind a fundamental and far-reaching policy departure that questioned the very principles that supported nationalisation. It is said the changing of Clause Four has to be seen as the moment when Old Labour became New Labour.

Labour's "Clause Four Moment" has subsequently become a metaphor for any need or perceived need for a fundamental recasting of a political party's principles or attitudes. By the 1997 general election the Labour manifesto declared that the Blair government would leave intact the main changes of the 1980s industrial relations and enterprise. Thus, the party had shifted from past commitments to undo privatisation to endorsing it. The decision to embrace privatisation was crucial in Blair and Brown's campaign to modernise Labour, with Brown becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer, and later as leader of the party. Modernisation is therefore a metaphor for the politics of catch-up, a reflection of a new political consensus informed not by post-war democracy, but by Labour's accommodation to, and adaption of, Thatcherism's neo-liberal political agenda. Annesley (2001) echoes Hefferman in part, while further contextualising the economic and social conditions for change in her outline of the improvements Labour's welfare reforms were intended to deliver to public services, and argues Labour's reforms can be clearly distinguished from previous Conservative governments.

Annesley provides a practical dimension to the nuances of the reforms at the micro-politico-economic level. She argued that New Labour's reform of the welfare state was driven by the profound economic, social and political changes of the late twentieth century, with a post-war welfare model that failed to cope with the varied nature of such changes.⁷⁶ Thus, it can be argued the cumulative impact on societies of the internal and external influences reduced the ability of welfare systems to meet the needs of large groups of citizens who fall outside the post-war welfare framework. These citizens become socially excluded by becoming detached from the organisations and communities in society and the rights and obligations that they personify. The inability of existing welfare structures to pledge social inclusion for all citizens is New Labour's validation for prioritising welfare reform in its modernisation agenda. In contrast to the New Right, New Labour identifies with the role of welfare states as a system for tackling social hardship by employing a number of strategies to achieve that aim.

⁷⁶ "The first is the change in the nature of work with the shift from manufacturing to services resulting in flexible employment and greater importance of skills and training. The full time-time lifelong model of employment upon which the welfare state relied for funding of social security both through the insurance principle and tax-based welfare, exists only for a minority. The phenomena of mass long-term unemployment placed a strain on the principle of social insurance and meant a shift towards means-tested, taxed-based benefits. Second, increased involvement of women in the workplace has altered the nature of the labour market and welfare state, undermining the male breadwinner assumptions of the post-war Beveridge welfare state. Third, families have changed in size and form because of among other factors, high divorce rates and growth in the number of lone-parent families over recent years. Finally demographic trends point towards an ageing population which places a burden on the welfare state by no longer being adequately provided for by either state or private pensions schemes. It is estimated that one in three people retiring in 50 years time will be poor enough to be dependent on mean-tested support. The two exogenous processes of globalization and Europeanisation are perceived as creating constraints on the ability and scope of nation-states to determine their level of public expenditure. Whilst such a view has been widely contested it was argued high public expenditure has a negative impact on the ability of nation-states to compete in a global environment. The convergence criteria for qualification of the European Monetary Union (EMU) placed constraints on public borrowing that led to welfare belt-tightening in many European states. Other see the European Union's social agenda as a positive influence on New Labour's welfare policy in its wider context", (Annesley2001: 207)

To a large extent, Annesley states, the social exclusion discourse is an extension of the Commission on Social Justice and Stakeholder debates about how to reconcile social and economic change with social and economic equality. In so doing, social inclusion, it was argued, can be promoted in part with the traditional tax and benefit framework of the post-war welfare state, but also required joined-up strategies. Such strategies involved policies and people in different spheres located within the public, private and voluntary or third sector partnerships at all levels of governance nationally, regionally and locally. New Labour's work-centred policies were about rejuvenating the work ethic; work being the best means to connect citizens with organisations that promote social inclusion through a variety of schemes.⁷⁷ The most noteworthy part of the Department of Social Security paper (1998) according to Annesley is the Working Family Tax Credit that replaced Family Credit in October 1998. The policy provided working families with a guaranteed minimum income remitted through "the wage packet." Furthermore, tackling child poverty was part of the social inclusion agenda, because women comprised approximately half of the work force and were overrepresented in the lower income group, whilst bearing the responsibility of child rearing. Thus, children became overrepresented in low-income families and living in poverty. These issues are addressed in the Home Office publication Supporting Families (1998) (see footnote page 106). Other issues such as health and education were subject to reform, but they are beyond the scope of my thesis.

⁷⁷ "The New Deal welfare to work schemes for 18-24 year-olds and long-term unemployed participated on a compulsory basis, others on a voluntary basis. Alleviating the benefit poverty trap through a national minimum wage, introduction of ten pence in the pound tax band. Employability schemes based on retraining and on the ethos of Lifelong Learning" (Annesley 2001: 209).

Annesley further argues that New Labour's welfare ethos can be clearly distinguished from the market-led neo-liberal policies of preceding Conservative governments that articulated no concerns with social justice or social inclusion. But, there is a coherence and clearly defined aim to New Labour's welfare strategy that endeavour to identify and overcome the complex phenomenon of social exclusion. In doing so through targeted welfare benefits to redistribute resources from higher to lower income groups, especially families with children, with generous means-tested benefits, as the best way to overcome inequality in the short term. Labour's long-term vision of a more universal welfare, is summed up in two ways by Annesley. First, on a pessimistic note the Third Way ethos of permanent revisionism restricts New Labour to short-termist responses to the most pressing welfare issues. Its strategy is motivated by the desire to remain popular with Middle England for electoral reasons; this echoes Hefferman's analysis above. To keep such voters content, welfare expenditure is kept at a level sufficient to alleviate the situation of the most excluded through the flexible mechanism of tax credits to ensure minimum social fairness. Second, on an optimistic note, New Labour's commitment to achieving social justice in the long term remained strong. This view sees a radical approach in New Labour's welfare reform that in the short term seeks to manage in parallel the eradication of social exclusion and the reconstruction of the welfare consensus. In the long term, once social exclusion becomes a subject for historical analysis, it can bear witness to the emergence of a new model of welfare that expands the minimum incomes already guaranteed for certain groups to all citizens who fulfil certain responsibilities, possibly a universalist citizen's income model as proposed in the Commission for Social Justice that is informed by the notion of social justice.

The Labour Government's agenda for local authorities was first set down in a White Paper entitled 'Modernising Social Services' (DOH 1998). Its actual consequence in the late twentieth century to the present time is my concern here, since the justification for the reform of social services was viewed to be about tackling inefficiency. But what does such a vision say about social work practice up until the present time? It seems to suggest a negative view of social work practice as old-fashioned and out of step with social change (Hoggett 1991). It portrayed social workers as unable to assist social cohesion, especially with the focus being directed towards the protection of children and a target for tackling child poverty (see Chapter Three). It was therefore also the way in which the government outlined social workers' responsibilities whilst attempting to save money by redefining organisational structures through new systems of classification and regulation. Consequently, it has meant in practice, many posts have been cut or renamed as a result of changes in policy; and being subjected to having to reapply for one's own job or realise it has been deleted from the latest reorganisation are commonplace (see Chapter Three). Politically inspired change like modernisation with its drive toward standardisation and what is supposed to make social workers more professional can be extremely stressful.⁷⁸ It has led social work professionals to feel overwhelmed by managerial administration, with increasing levels of paperwork. Furthermore, budgetary constraints and cutbacks have increasingly meant the provision of services is primarily about maintaining the core tasks of the organisation, and the overall profession is to all intents and purposes, crisis management.

⁷⁸According to the Audit Commission (2002) stress was one of the key factors that led staff to leave the public sector.

Setting down national objectives and priorities for local government social services has become a way for central government to drive policies from the centre.⁷⁹ By monitoring the outcomes of service delivery against expenditure, systems of means-testing techniques become embedded and normalised. In doing so, the government had directed local authorities toward a business/corporate approach and entrepreneurial values that endowed policies with sacred qualities under the ‘new managerialism’.⁸⁰ Clarke & Newman (1997) employ the concept of the managerial state, suggesting that managerialism represents a cultural formation and distinct set of ideologies and practices that form one of the foundations of an emergent political model that I argue has become normalised within the twenty-first century. Thus, Clarke & Newman argue the impact of managerialism should be viewed as a coherent field that supports and validates ideologies and institutions of state through the shifts in four key sets of relationships: first, between the state and its citizens; second, between the public and private; third, between the providers and recipients and of social welfare; fourth, between management and politics. This becomes a subtle way to exercise greater control over the work of social workers (Exworthy & Halford 1999:2). The result is a de-professionalising trend⁸¹ that

⁷⁹ The proposal will implement new performance management arrangements for the day-to-day delivery of social services setting targets for quality and efficiency improvements and will publish an annual report showing how every council is performing against them. There will be clearer responsibilities for local government in showing how well they are serving local people and clearer role for central government to take action where standards are not being met.

⁸⁰ The Conservative administrations of the 1980s and 1990s and the New Labour administration from the late 1990s were convinced of the benefits of introducing market discipline into the public sector. This is all part of the new managerialism, which is part of the New Public Management movement, which includes compulsory competitive tendering and ‘best value’. However, market discipline coincides with budgetary restraints (Murphy 2004).

⁸¹ Although the current Labour administration claims to want to give more control to frontline staff in most childcare agencies in effect most control, has been claimed by the centre. Murphy cites Pitts (2001) who cites Marquand (2000) who puts forward the notion of a “Prussian discipline” within the Labour Government, brought into being to keep public services and their privatised surrogates firmly “on-

diminishes their autonomy and reconstitutes them as certain kinds of subjects passively carrying out policy, especially at the lower levels of the organisation. As Flynn point out, management is not a neutral technical activity, instead its techniques and styles are essentially political and what Clarke & Newman (1997) call normative power. They argue that normative power in managerial regimes is the foci in designs of efficiency and performance by defining the terms of reference for controlling costs and quality assurance. Therefore, issues such as impalpable benefits and values, not considered part of corporate objectives are quashed. Normative power is drawn upon to set criteria and launch priorities between different services and groups of users instead of one-to-one interactions. All such practices, even if carried out by professionals, come under managerialist rather than professional controls. Thus, professionals experience what I have shown is a de-professionalising trend in operating within a regime of power that is enforced through the twin constraints of budgetary restrictions and devolved managerial accountability (Clarke & Newman 1997: 64).

Thus, where managerial authority and principles are implemented within the organisational setting, the process is about engaging all staff into the habits of thinking and behaving managerially (Flynn 2000 in Clarke et al 2000: 8). Therefore, the notion that the relationship between professionals to professionalism and the new managerialism is a tripartite link of conflict, compromise and collaboration is a persistent theme within academic debate (Exworthy & Halford 1999: 2). Thus, the art of entrepreneurial

message". Furthermore the public sector workforce is slowly being taken over by private sector employers; the proportion of the workforce employed by public sector employers is falling. Between 1981 and 2001 the proportion of the UK workforce employed in the public sector fell from nearly 30 to 20 per cent, (Audit Commission 2002 in Murphy 2004). This process is being encouraged by central government.

governance is to foster competition among service providers to facilitate the shift to care in the community (see Trevillion & Green in Edgar & Russell 1998). Performance is measured according to notions of outcomes summed up in a mission statement. As a consequence, managers have inherited the task of dismantling old structures of practice to facilitate organisational restructuring. In the implementation of such changes “taken for granted practices and privileges” become more highlighted and contested. Moreover, rather than just a drive to strengthen management, there is a shift toward creating managers out of professionals, which relates to Foucault’s notion of self-regulation as a new form of power which is eloquently illustrated by Martin (1997).

Halford and Leonard’s (1999) critique suggest that managerialist discourse has a dominating impact in shaping the identities of public sector professionals. They argue managerialism should be placed in relation to other competing discourses in the construction of the self, and Hall (1996) provides a useful way of thinking about identity relations, stating that they are not unified, but constructed across overlapping and contradictory discourses, practices and positions (Hall 1996:4 in Halford & Leonard 1999:117). Therefore, managerialism is simply an addition to the already present complex multiplicity of discourses and so can only ever be one component in the construction of individual identities.

The highly fluid and changeable nature of identities over time and space challenges managerialism by introducing the notion of agency. Therefore, managers should not be seen as passive, but rather as proactive agents who may embrace managerial ideology to

serve their own self-interest, but do not automatically embody managerial discourse. Instead, “some managers may deliberately portray managerialist identities while maintaining a separate sense of self” (Goffman 1969 in Halford & Leonard 1999:119). That quote sums up Goffman’s concept of impression management. Thus, the relationship between managerialist discourse and individual identity can be seen not only in terms of adaptation but also as ambivalent and oppositional. In this context, Halford & Leonard’s (1999) rationale, I argue, can be equated with the notion of double consciousness. Therefore, despite the other social categories of gender, race, ethnicity and class that unquestionably shape individual identities, I argue that these issues only come to the fore at specific times during a social worker’s working day; on the whole, they are all mediated by an overarching identity of being ‘the social worker’.

I return again to Keith in order to reintroduce a social worker’s narrative about these recent changes within the systems of authority.

Keith argues that the Labour Government’s introduction of measured outcomes in social work since the start of the twenty-first century have led to a working culture defined only by targets, with a resource-led work culture. It is now very common for social workers to look for the reasons for failure beyond themselves, failing to look at how their own attitudes might make it difficult for their clients to communicate, hence the importance of empowerment of clients. Social work is supposed to be delivering a ‘pure service’, by which Keith implies it is objective and value free. I suggest his comment implies the corporate approach. I asked Keith, what in the end is the role of the Black or ethnic minority social worker? He concluded in the following way,

For me, there is no role at the moment. Very few minority ethnic social workers of the late 20th century into 21st century see their role outside the legislative framework. They are no longer pivotal. I think we had a period when we were pivotal and when we influenced policies for example, with the whole debate about trans-racial placements. When you look at modern social work, which is outcome driven, the principle is those who deserve will get. Those who do not deserve because of their inability to recognise compliance and social structure however will not.

Keith's comments in relation to the 'deserving' and undeserving needs some nuancing. He points to the fact there exists in social work eligibility criteria. As I have argued and will show in Chapter Three, welfare services are obviously resource-led. So those who deserve or fit such criteria receive support. However, those who do not fit the criteria because they would not comply with what is expected of them, in other words the work ethic with its notion of responsibility, face becoming socially excluded. As I have shown above, debates about the categories of 'deserving and 'undeserving' are currently visible and contested language surrounding debates on welfare reform.

This case study has demonstrated how Keith embodies the double identity associated with Black and Asian social workers because of the fact that they are cultural interpreters for the majority as well as minority cultures. On the one hand Keith is visibly a Black social worker; a racialised subject, but at the same time he is also very much a social worker who is now imbued with all the insider and historic values of social work as a profession grounded in a body of formal knowledge with systems of classification that

are sites of political and social struggles through which charged agendas become rapidly naturalised (Bowker and Star's (2000). Through his final reflection Keith, like all social workers, continues to see the world through the lens of the nineteenth century legacy of social work based on the dichotomy of deservingness and undeservingness, within the notions of British middle class norms and values. Thus, one of my main questions in my thesis is whether the identity of the 'social worker' ultimately overrides all social workers, whether they are Black or White. In this way, Keith may not realise how much of the traditional culture of social work he has actually absorbed. The irony then is that even Black social workers have inherited nineteenth-century norms, even though they are representatives of people who have arrived relatively recently in large numbers into the United Kingdom. Keith's bleak conclusion implies that social workers that happen to be Black when 'Black' was such an important part of their job description are in some sense feeling ambiguous and confused about what their role is in the present day. In a sense, Keith's ambivalence, like Alice's shame, is a 'double' embarrassment which critiques the earlier 'positive discrimination or affirmation' of Black social workers' role.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how the need for welfare services resulted in the mobilisation of the family as an instrument of government regulation of populations. The social problems ensuing from industrialisation in the nineteenth century produced an ideological shift that subsequently constructed the notion of the ‘respectable nuclear family’. The rise of philanthropy, charity and friendly visiting by middle-class women volunteers during that time became the forerunners of contemporary social work. They created new fields of social relations that became normalised around a middle-class ideology of the family that classified the working-class poor into the deserving and the undeserving. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the issue of social work training and education for women became parallel debates within the state. As a consequence, at the turn of the twentieth century, social work was established as a permanent feature within a mixed economy of welfare. The population had become the object through which new forms of power could be constituted. Those events formed the basis of social work power through surveillance, which emerged out of systems of classification of welfare needs.

I extended my argument with the dimension of race. The immigration of people from the New Commonwealth transformed the British population into a visible multi-racial society. Again, I showed it was the family in particular and new notions of cultural difference that became the focus of social work discipline of new racialised welfare subjects. General resistance to the dominant classifications created a counter discourse of essentialised Black minority culture that would serve as a forerunner for a shift to ethnically sensitive welfare services. It was preceded by various forms of legislation to

control immigration, alongside notions of assimilation and integration of the existing populations to foster good race relations. Significantly, the discourse of social problems presented by the Black and Asian families emerged at the same time as the solutions that were deemed necessary to solve them. There were major criticisms, largely from Black commentators, pointing to the fact that, from the outset, the Black family became synonymous with problems. As a consequence, their critiques of social work were strongest around the issues of trans-racial adoption. However, The Children Act 1989 incorporated a landmark shift toward, among other things, the consideration of race in the adoption of Black children, even though it is only a general duty and still remains contested. Thus, the narratives of Black social workers Keith and Alice not only recalled the original government policy response to Black populations; they also included the backlash to social work power relations.

I showed that by the late twentieth century the redefinition of the notion of welfare by the Labour government meant a shift in emphasis from the old patriarchal approach to welfare. Instead, it was replaced with notions of responsible citizenship that became the new order. Its impact on social workers' practice meant they began to experience a de-professionalising trend through greater managerial ideology. In my case studies the social workers illustrated the embodiment of macro policy in everyday experiences of practice. It also showed how the concept of 'double consciousness' can be intricately linked to the identity of Black and Asian social workers in their role as cultural interpreters. But their socialisation consciously and unconsciously of social work norms and values in the end

brings all social workers, Black and White, full circle to the nineteenth-century legacy, by inevitably viewing the world through the dichotomy of deserving versus undeserving.

In the next chapter I continue the theme of governmentality, but I also introduce Bourdieu's concept of doxa as a context for my emphasis on practice with the reorganisation of Bowden's social services under the latest 'modernisation' agenda. I go on to examine child protection as the first step in a child's progress through care under the new structure, and social workers negotiating subjective decisions within an apparently objective and fixed framework of performance in their stressful and often messy everyday practice of child protection work.

Chapter 3

Social Workers and the Implementation of New Norms of Practice in Child Protection

Introduction

I began the previous chapter with an examination of the historical development of social work and concluded it with New Labour's far-reaching policies of reform, affecting the contemporary role of social workers as instruments of welfare regulation. In doing so, I showed how the redefinition of the current notion of welfare was borne out of the political rhetoric of 'modernisation', in which the family has become a key site for the normalisation of notions of responsibility and citizenship. I continue the theme of governmentality here, with the addition of Bourdieu's concept of doxa for a focus in this chapter on everyday practice. In so doing, I explore the ideology behind the reorganisation of social services in Bowden and its impact on social workers as an exemplar of New Labour's reforming approach and its managerialist paradigm. In the new working structure, I examine child protection as the first step in a child's progress through care, in which practices and procedures have become highly ritualised. Social workers negotiate subjective decisions within an apparently objective and fixed framework of behaviour. However, ethnographic examples illustrate a range of contradictions, which stem from the government's rhetoric about protecting the family on the one hand and the need for social work intervention into families on the other, in view of the fact that protecting the family also means social workers have to intervene into

certain types of families. Accordingly, this chapter describes the wider context for the protection of children by which initial referrals are generated outside of the fostering and adoption unit, and where case files are first created.

1. Modernisation and the Restructuring of Bowden's Social Services

Before I started my fieldwork the wheels of change were put in motion for yet another restructure of Bowden's Children & Young People's Services in the late 1990s. The London Borough of Bowden put itself forward as one of the first authorities to enact the government's vision within its modernisation agenda. The reorganisation of Bowden social work teams coincided with the coming into post of a new director of social services. Social workers in the fostering and adoption unit told me they were used to their services being restructured every three to four years and they had become resigned to those ways of working, it is what Clarke & Newman (1997) have described as a permanent revolution. I argue this phenomenon explicitly demonstrates the process of normalisation of change in the twenty-first century because it represents the establishment of the ideology of change that is embedded in Bourdieu's notion of doxa. In this way change has become taken for granted or self-evident as a tradition of social work practice within the public sector. Thus, I further argue that in the twenty-first century 'change' can be viewed as representing a new conception of doxa. But, needless to say it always caused great anxiety. Some workers decided to protest through organised strike action; others argued striking would achieve nothing and they simply used the strike to take respite in a day off work. Although industrial action did not have any significant impact on the reorganisation process in the end, for social workers the

principle of demonstrating gave them a sense of unity and agency rather than being just passive subjects of welfare strategies. This sense of unity, according to Clarke & Newman, is embedded in professional attachments that induce a sense of belonging outside the bound of the social service organisation. I argue that such connections have provided a space for critique about the politics of welfare changes among social workers that dates back to the 1970s (see Chapter Two). However, while such attachments remained relatively unwavering under previous Conservative government reforms during the 1980s and 1990s, further reforms under New Labour in the late 1990s meant social workers were about to experience a more intense form of managerial governance, which would further test their professional identifications and loyalties.

While the social workers went on strike, the managers stood in to cover the duty desk and the out-of-hours emergency duty service for the unit. Typically, all the social work teams were reconfigured. As a result, the fostering and adoption teams were separated and relocated to other offices, adoption to the north and fostering to the west of the borough. Despite a consultation paper for reorganisation that was circulated to all staff being couched in a language of enhanced service delivery, it was widely recognised as the reinforcement of continued resource-led welfare. It deployed managerial allocating criteria to launch new priorities for fostering and adoption services and their different user groups. In order to further tighten the controls of resource management, the spotlight was turned onto personnel, including social workers, within the agenda for managerial ‘belt tightening.’ In doing so, the implication for costs and its connection to organisational performance are pivotal and commodification of staff labour automatically

becomes an element of the cost of resources within Labour's managerial paradigm. The plans for the implementation of the programme were outlined in a report that was agreed by a Social Services Committee and it was anticipated that the new structure would be in place within a year. A written proposal to restructure was then issued to all staff. It was followed by a three-month period of informal consultation between the staff in the various service units and executive officers. After several meetings the social workers concluded that the decisions to reorganise had already been made, and that the consultation process was just a paper exercise with no real attempt to get to know how they really did their work.

The decision to restructure represented the managerial ideology, which places emphasis on the transference of managerial responsibilities down to local authorities and the departments within them, like the fostering and adoption unit. Thus, managers are accountable for what they deliver in terms of the outcomes of restructures, not how they deliver it. Hence, managers in this case at the upper levels of social service have maximum space to exercise their power in the consultation process to achieve reorganisation goals. Such powers of decision-making are the perquisite of managers who embody the right to manage at various levels.

In actual fact, both managers and workers were being subjected to the hegemony of quasi-market forces that was about the fragmentation of services across boundaries between the public and private spheres of the economy and society. Thus, there are tensions between the ideology of managerial freedom and enabling managers to make

local decisions within the constraints set by legislation and performance targets. For all social workers, the new structure meant changes to the title of various posts. It facilitated the deletion of existing jobs with the introduction of new posts, and some existing staff had to reapply for⁸² the newly created Social Work Assistant Post, to be supervised by Senior Practitioners. Social workers on the higher pay scales who wanted to remain working within the borough had no choice but to accept the new conditions. Under the proposal, they were asked to sign a form within a given time scale which included a statement that said, “I understand that progression to a further two spinal points on the pay scale requires me to accept the senior practitioner duties detailed in the new job description”(Response To Consultation on Fresh Start 2001: 35).

Significantly, the existing management structure was also reconfigured. The title of Service Unit Manager remained, but Practice Manager was deleted, affecting all the middle managers in the fostering and adoption unit. The changes added an extra layer of management in the form of operational managers, who were steered away from casework responsibilities to concentrate solely on corporate strategic tasks. Senior practitioners were expected to manage their casework and carry out some managerial role. Here is an example of managerial tasks being dispersed downwards, where social workers are being converted into managerial subjects by the legitimating discourse of modernisation.

Whether restructuring really leads to greater efficiency is uncertain, but it allows the

⁸² The new posts were Operational Manager and Team Manager. The Service Unit Manager has an overarching strategic and operational management. This will be supported by Operational Managers who will have audit and development responsibilities for aspects of the service relevant to their work. Team Managers will supervise social workers and also manage duty on a day-to-day basis, with two managers covering the work each day. Team managers are not expected to hold casework responsibilities in order to provide good support and supervision to social workers.

government to use 'efficiency' to continually redefine the parameters of care away from Old Labour's post-war ideology of welfare universalism. Overall, these social service reorganisations resulted in feelings of individual and organisational chaos; the relocation of staff, IT systems, the physical space and the different journeys to work that workers had to get reoriented. In time, however, the rational managerial approach within the rhetoric of modernisation would bring order to chaos as it becomes naturalised and invisible within the new organisational culture. Nevertheless, far from representing such ideal outcomes, it is a working environment that produces frustration and major stress about job security as I will now go on to illustrate. Moreover, the world of work and home merge as the corporate self in New Labour's modern Britain construct new identities.

1.1 Finding themselves in a middle space

At the very start of my fieldwork in the fostering and adoption unit, I encountered a persistent tension among workers expressed by the notion of 'us workers', and 'them managers'. I will focus on the feelings of social workers by drawing on views about their status as professionals to examine the ways in which managerial approaches might actually be producing a deprofessionalising trend and the perception of widening divisions between social workers and managers.

Pauline's schism

“In my supervision the discussion got so heated my manager started banging on the table and we ended up in a verbal slanging match and the shouting got so loud the rest of the workers heard everything. We looked at each other with rage in our eyes. I walked out of the meeting and my manager came bursting into my office still huffing and puffing with anger, I pointed at her with my right hand and told her I had nothing more to say. After that meeting I was so angry I had to build myself up to come to work. I also felt like shit, I was experiencing bullying and harassment I took three weeks off work and I wanted to get out of the team (Pauline Adoption social worker).

The above account was how Pauline, a feisty confident Black social worker in the adoption team, summed up an encounter with her manager. It was completely contrary to her past experience of working in the team where her professional judgement had always been respected. When I met her she told me she had been head-hunted serving to confirm her high level of professional skill and competence in her approach. However, this conflict with her manager arose from Pauline's assessment of a couple that wanted to adopt. During the assessment, the couple revealed their religious faith as Jehovah's Witnesses. The difficult issue relating to blood transfusion became a focus for Pauline in relation to future care of the child who decided to proceed with the couple. Pauline told me that during one of her supervision sessions with her manager that their discussion about the case ended in an unresolved difference of opinion between them. Pauline said she immediately felt de-skilled because; she was accused of making a personal rather than a professional judgement by her manager. Pauline felt the assessment was in its

early stage and she wanted to give the couple a chance. In discussions, Pauline said they came to realise that if they wanted to have a family badly enough they would have to compromise. However, for Pauline, instead of trying to resolve the issues the session with her manager ended with 'a very menacing display of power'. The zealous nature of the action taken on the part of the manager brought home to Pauline the feelings of a real loss of autonomy and a sense that she was no longer trusted to make responsible decisions that led her to take a few days off work. Shortly after, Pauline returned to work and the manager went on long-term sick leave. This needless to say helped Pauline feel less stressed at work as she tried to regain some sense of confidence in her professionalism.

The tension between professionalism and managerialism social workers encounter at work has become an institutionalised norm since the 1980s but intensified under New Labour's reforms. There is no sense of stability; social workers are always in transition. Pauline's narrative showed she was exercising her professional discretion through her specialised knowledge in assessing the case of potential foster carers. It further, highlighted managerial consciousness in action by her manager in relation the suitability of the applicants which is a form of quality control, which is another way for disciplining professional autonomy linked to the new ideology of practice founded in modernisation. I chose Pauline's story because the excessive nature of the event brings immediately into sharp focus the tensions and stress that are manifested within the framework of managerial consciousness that subordinate professional judgement.

At the less extreme end of that scale the managerial process is more subtle and gradually becomes embedded within the practice of the unit. Yet, despite the notion of continued change that social workers are shown to negotiate through social services restructures, the more things remain the same; restructure then are here to stay as a stable and constant feature of the thoroughly 'modern' ways of working and so are taken for granted. Thus, it can be argued the notion of traditionalisation of change explicitly equates with Bourdieu's notion of doxa and so in the twenty first century change is the new doxa. The loss of the Service Unit Manager as the most senior level of management within the fostering and adoption unit seemed to produce a very deep psychological effect on some workers. The sense of disorientation that began to creep into the organisation, together with a fear of not meeting the demands on the services may mean privatisation. That sense of impending doom transformed into hostility among social workers, and was projected onto the senior staff. The experience was especially so for the person who was directed to take on the coordinating role of the unit leading up to the eventual relocation of both teams after the reorganisation was completed.

As the researcher, I became the medium for workers to vent their concerns about not only the service and performance levels but also for them to blame their managers. Some described their manager by pointing out various personal qualities; such as strength, pride, but also vulnerability. Many have argued that in practice, the boundaries of management have sometimes been blurred between the professional and personal. They told me a team manager has to learn how to use and live with authority. Good management, it was felt, was about authority combined with effective communication.

Thus, under New Labour's reforms, the managerial subject will be expected to be enterprising, self-regulating and embody a personal style and power to win the commitment of the staff in order to manage the dissensions between professional roles and managerial governmentality.

While comments from social workers consisted of a general critique of their superiors it was particularly focused on the methods of management that was reflective of the new order. One fostering worker said they were treated like 'children.' This comment suggests the anxiety was experienced as losing their autonomy that had previously been based on specialist knowledge and skills, and the development of trust with the client. Social work professionalism is embedded in the assessment of needs that were classified, defined and then treated. But, managerialism under modernisation agenda is about setting priorities for groups of users based on budgetary restrictions and devolved managerial self-regulation. Others workers said they received what they considered to be 'token' appreciation of their work from managers. These examples clearly suggest the impact of intense managerial approaches that are not related to individual creativity were beginning to destabilise traditional attachments in relation to the identity of social work professionals and cause of their anxieties. Social workers felt they increasingly had to implement managerial duties and reduce their time with clients. For instance, while social workers in the unit often manage a caseload of up to fifteen foster families, they now have carry out administrative tasks that they were previously given assistance to satisfy, alongside the accomplishment of assessments and recruitment targets. However, none of these duties carry explicit managerial status, but reflect the shift to more flexible

ways of working. One duty social worker's comments put these matters into her perspective.

“The recruitment social workers and manager met today for our weekly meeting. In the office tension is high we are all snapping at each other. It is usually a fairly supportive group we are all just at the end of our tether. Together we discuss case allocations but everyone is already at their maximum. Luckily, there are no late afternoon emergencies and we can go home on time,” (Valarie Recruitment Social Worker).

Performance measured against budget control was at the heart of the tensions I encountered in the unit about the delivery of good fostering and adoption service. It was also cause for concern among social workers like Carol outside the unit who make referrals to arrange foster care for children within families they assess. Carol was very interested in working with children and families when she qualified. Her anecdote demonstrates the tensions social workers experience with resource-led service delivery embedded in the modernisation discourse about ‘best value’, she says:

I visited a Polish family with a hyperactive teenager it's affected the family very badly. The family has not been in the UK very long and they don't know where to go for services. I explore their many needs with an interpreter and we both agree the family will need a lot of input. I write notes for an initial assessment and the first of many tasks is to find the family a GP so the child can be referred to a paediatrician. When I present a request for some respite foster care to my manager it was turned down because the condition fell outside the criteria for financial support. Having observed the behaviour of the child it showed me the

gap between policy and the daily realities of the clients' lives. By the end of the week I am catching up on my paper I get feedback that the family is registered with the GP and the child is referred to a paediatrician (Carol Children & Families Social Worker).

It led workers to question whether they were valued any longer for the professional ethic they were trying to uphold because it appeared to them senior colleagues were no longer committed to the same ideology. This hidden professionalism it can be argued mirrors the concept of a third space in which social workers operate in the contested field of professionalism versus managerialism within social work, and it is reproduced at different levels within the hierarchy. It is what Freidson (1986) refers to as technical autonomy. The same point is made with Goffman's concept of impression management. Among some managers the deliberate portrayal of managerialist identities is only one facet of maintaining a sense of self (Halford & Leonard 1999:119). It demonstrates how the connections between professionalism and the new managerialism in the twenty first century is the result of diversity, negotiation and teamwork that is legitimated through the discourse of change. As Clarke & Newman (1997) notes:

“There are dangers in assuming that the disciplinary and surveillance which subject individuals to new forms of power and control are effective. We want to emphasise the subjects are caught up in the play of different, sometimes conflicting discourses”. (Clarke & Newman 1997: 94-96).

Such conflicting discourses give rise to contradictions. Paradoxically, while social workers blame their managers for their feelings of powerlessness they are also being constructed as managers themselves. Thus, managerialist policies of New Labour reforms in Bowden's restructure constructed the identities of social workers and managers, not only in terms of adaptation but also as ambivalent and oppositional. Managers in Bowden become the instruments of power in the ritualisation of changes within the nature of modernisation classifying and standardising discourses of efficiency. As the new order is implemented it gives rise to more critical evaluation of 'taken for granted' managerial working structures. As one social worker said, "I feel we are instruments that can very easily be used to implement social engineering rather than actually help people." In the modernising approach under New Labour, the social worker-client relationship is redefined and converted into an expert technical approach, a universalist rationality that is less person-centred in which foster carers become active providers of care in New Labour's consumer-led ideology. But as a response, far from being resigned to the new order; some social workers said that although it can become emotionally draining, they work extra hard to support their clients by working over and above the call of duty. The following narrative highlights another example of how the impact of change is subtly reflected within practice and at the same time provides a contrast with Pauline's story and those of others earlier in the chapter.

Annette is a social worker with over ten years of experience. She works within the fostering team and deals with the permanent placement of children within their extended family. Annette has a quiet and friendly personality but is very self-assured as she

articulates her strong convictions about how her role to help people is being subjected to on going restrictions. Annette argues, “I have never felt powerful. As a social worker I feel oppressed from within the organisation but I am expected to go out and empower service users”. She says the oppression that leads to disempowerment of social workers is subtle because they receive mixed messages from managers about their work. Annette explains what she means in the following way:

Where a case was very complex and the family starts to do well, it has been my experience of my manager telling me I am spending too much time with the family. This for me is disrupting the progress in the family. The question I ask is why was I given the case if I was not expected to prevent the case from going into crisis.

Annette went on to accuse Bowden of being big on crisis but low on preventative work. Annette’s post was deleted and changed to a senior practitioner post under the ‘Fresh Start’ restructure. Not only did she have to reapply for the new post but she also explained that she was given the extra task to manage a student without any training. As I have outlined above these duties were written into the new order of Bowden’s practice in its reorganisation. Annette experienced this as the continuing trend of managerial control, in which members of staff are increasingly being given duties without explicitly gaining status. Furthermore, the notions of greater efficiency which is a prominent part of the rhetoric of modernisation within Bowden meant she experienced the weight of budgetary constraints within the politics of ‘best value’ in terms of cutting costs and saving money by reducing her time spent on clients.

Annette's narrative brings us back to the issues concerning whether social workers feel valued for their achievements. Under the competing priorities of managerial imperatives and the market, the contingent actions and decisions social workers take, as Annette's experience illustrates, remain hidden because they are frequently not officially recognised. Once again it reinforces the point that the managerial approach is more about organisational objectives.

As a consequence of redefining the role of social workers, Bowden's modernisation initiatives unsurprisingly raise questions for existing staff. It presents social work professionals like Annette, Pauline and others with new contradictions and competing values about their role. So, Bowden's flagship status has resulted in the paradox with social workers experiencing a kind of no-man's land, in which the traditional caring role, concern for social inclusion and serving as advocates for the deserving now are challenged by an ethos of efficiency through means testing and a shift to risk management (see Caplan 2000; Cohn 2000), market entrepreneurialism.

1.2 Working on the Frontline: Social Workers Facing Blame and Danger

In the context of resource-led services in Bowden social workers increasingly have to classify welfare subjects into deserving and less deserving cases by assessing the probabilities of risk. This approach fits very well with New Labour's cost and efficiency ethos I have discussed earlier in the chapter. In working with such varied cases many social workers in my research argued it should be politicians who should take some responsibility when things go wrong if they really cared about vulnerable people in

society. Instead, it is social workers that take the blame even though the public have little idea how they work. Social workers deal with problems on a case-by-case basis and so are unable to enter the political arena through any kind of collective action, and are consequently powerless in the face of political decisions that affect their practice. Being on the receiving end of blame, and yet themselves potentially being in danger, are two elements that determine the high levels of stress child protection regulations place on social workers, that are linked into fostering and adoption services, as the following narrative illustrates.

While visiting the home of someone that was known for aggressive behaviour, a female worker was hit and punched to the ground by a client. The catalyst for the attack was the decision by social services to place the client's children's names on the child protection register. Child protection social workers made it quite clear that normally wherever the file reveals particular characteristics, they never visit alone. Nevertheless, despite making arrangements to have another social worker present, there is no guarantee against being attacked. Kelly was a slim and petite woman and no match against the aggression of the client.

When we spoke, Kelly's caseload consisted of the children from approximately twelve families. She is usually very cheerful and had always wanted to be a social worker to help people. Kelly says she brought her personality to work, often making jokes with her clients and feeling it is important to facilitate trust and openness as much as possible. But, she was also concerned to stress clients always had to remember she is their social

worker, and that there is a professional boundary between them. In the light of this, as she recounted her ordeal to me, tears welled up in her eyes, and she expressed how she was not sure how much longer she would be able to continue in social work.

In this case, Kelly was attacked because the client became angry. Although the client has been described as aggressive the decision to place the children's names on the child protection register may have exacerbated the issues within the family that led to their contact with social services in the first place.

The general notion of risk is a means by which Conservative and Labour governments have implemented a mechanical and highly routinised approach into social work assessments of families in need through the provision of a nationally regulated child protection system. It is acknowledged within the social work literature that no other aspect of social work is more challenging or has aroused more concern than the protection of children (Colton et al 2001; Davies 1998; Banks 2001; Kemshall 2002; Madge & Howell 2001; Fawcett et al 2004). The task of intervening and policing families that deviate from norms of parenting is the job of social workers in the field of child protection. A nationally regulated child protection system first evolved following the recommendations of the enquiry into the death of Maria Colwell in 1973. The Colwell inquiry recommended that the child welfare system needed child protection agencies to be more effectively synchronised through increased communication and cooperation between professionals from other agencies.⁸³

⁸³ Apart from social workers, the professionals involved in gathering information and working with children and their families include health visitors, general practitioners, paediatricians, police officers and

Today, all child protection interventions are regulated by the principles laid down in the Children Act 1989 (see Chapter Two). When applied officially, the surveillance and policing of families is couched in a discourse of ‘working in partnership’ between families, and emphasis is given to local authorities being sensitive to issues of gender, race, culture and disability. Social workers are also expected to take the child’s views into account, depending on their age and understanding.⁸⁴ In addition, all professionals are supposed to share an understanding of the goals and what constitutes good practice in the work of child protection. Again, as Chapter Two demonstrated, the judgement and evaluation of the ‘normal family’ and good child rearing practice are inevitably based on culturally specific British middle-class family values. So, it was in the spirit of such ideal notions of welfare requirements that new guidelines were developed, which in the twenty-first century is considered to be a more unified ‘Framework of Assessment of Children in Need and their Families,’ (DOH 2000). As a consequence of these revisions all referrals relating to the welfare of the child were regulated with the same procedures, despite the fact that the outcome of each case would continue to depend on how the information and assessment unfolded. The universalisation of procedures very much reflects the managerial paradigm and complements the notion of the homogenous team

representatives of the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children). Probation officers, teachers and psychiatrists may also have some important contributions. Under certain circumstances expert advice may also be needed in matters such as race, culture and disability. In addition members from ethnic communities are used as translators for languages and cultural value systems. If it is needed, advice is also requested from professionals such as medical specialists, psychologists and lawyers.

⁸⁴ What has become commonly known as; Gillick competence. One of the important influences on the Children Act 1989 was the House of Lord decision in *Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech Area Health Authority*, which was concerned with an older child’s capacity to consent to medical treatment in cases where he or she has sufficient understanding to make up his or her own mind. The Act recognises in several places the importance of ascertaining and taking into account the child’s own wishes to an extent commensurate with his or her age and understanding (Lowe & Douglas 1998).

carrying out organisational objectives. Those differential outcomes meant that each case would have various points of exit from the child protection process. In the next section, the new working structure provides the context for my examination of child protection procedures and the role of social workers in their implementation.

2. Policy and Procedures: Where Social Work Takes Place

I will now illustrate the child protection procedures that guide everyday practice that become normalised and routine in the fieldwork setting and as an example of Bourdieu's notion of doxa. I provide examples of the first step of a child's progress through care, and in this way, show how welfare subjects are classified, and the negotiated decisions of social workers. I also illustrate how the social work gaze extends from the hospital and public institutions to households and private lives of people. All referrals to social services are surrounded by feelings of anxiety around the probability that a child or children might be at risk of harm within their family. These concerns tend to emanate from a number of sources.⁸⁵ In dealing with any suspicions, procedures dictate that referrals to social services should normally establish a decision within 24 hours. The procedures can be summarised in the table 3 below: -

⁸⁵ For example, schools, hospitals, voluntary organisations or a member or members of the general public.

Table 3. The Referral Procedures: -

Referral (To be decided within 24 hours)	Initial Assessment (Not later than 7 working days)	Core Assessment (Not later than 35 working days)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves seeing and speaking to the child and family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If child is in need, core assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of resources or help (from own or other agencies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining information from sources and other professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If significant harm, make inquiries under Section 47
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An initial assessment is required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this child in need? (Section 17) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there reasonable cause to suspect that this child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm? (Section 47) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision should be endorsed at managerial level and recorded 	

When a referral is accepted by a duty social worker, the decision to intervene employs a traditional casework approach of visiting the household to gather information with questions laid down in the ‘Assessment Framework’. In this way, the Framework regulates the actions of social workers not only with who and what they look for, but also what they need, understand and what they can recommend and change. It is organised around three core beliefs that relate to the ideology of the ideal family, which are each supported by technologies of evaluation for the evaluation and interpretation of family life. This can be outlined in the following way in table 4.

Table 4. The Assessment Framework: -

Core Beliefs	Child's Developmental Needs	Parenting Capacity	Family and Environmental Factors
Technologies of Evaluation and Interpretation	Health Education Emotional and behavioural development Identity Family and social relations Social Presentation Self-care skills	Basic care Ensuring safety Emotional warmth Stimulation Guidance and boundaries Stability	Family history and functioning Wider family Housing Employment Income Family's social integration Community resources

I have already alluded to the fact that assessments are rarely smooth and linear, and policy makers simply cannot account for the messy and haphazard realities of the casework approach and the variation that underlies the culturally specific context in which social workers operate. The ultimate goal of an initial assessment is an assessment of risk for a child within its family. Only if a risk is established will any further action become necessary, such as the convening of a case conference. The following narrative illustrates the implementation of the Assessment Framework on the ground. It commences in the public institution of the hospital, a primary site of social work

technologies of intervention, and then moves into the private sphere of the household under the gaze of other social workers. In this way, the boundaries between public welfare and household become blurred as social workers seek access to all domains of family life. The hospital casualty department is one of the primary sites where child protection investigations are initiated through social work procedures, when children brought in with injuries may raise suspicions among medical staff, who then inform social services. The hospital is a completely different kind of work place to the fostering and adoption unit. It is a hive of activity, as the sick and injured are carried in and out on stretchers, or come on foot to join the waiting queue to see a doctor. As they arrive they are immediately constructed into medical subjects and objectified within various types of file systems. The waiting room seats are basic and hard, the walls are cold and neutral, and the floors are marked with colour-coded lines to lead everyone through a labyrinth of corridors. The atmosphere is one of tension and anxiety, because everyone is hoping the waiting will end sooner rather than later. Therefore, the last thing any family needs after the relief of thinking their waiting is over is for the doctor to introduce a social worker. However, as a primary site of child protection inquiry, medical professionals always communicate directly with hospital social workers. The body becomes the subject of investigation first through the medical gaze of the doctor, and then, if further judgement is required, the focus shifts to the social work gaze or what Rhodes (1993) describes as a form of 'gesture' embedded in systems of practice.

2.1 Between Social Workers and the Client

Alison is a tall medium-built African-Caribbean woman and exudes an air of confidence. She is a single mother with an adult son, a young daughter and a grandson, Jamie, who is of mixed racial heritage. She has been a resident in Bowden all her adult life and has a network of close family and friends. Her story brings together the passion, frustrations and resolutions that for her came with being on the receiving end of the gap between the ideal model of social work procedures and the reality on the ground. Her example shows how social workers' increased workloads and pressure in Bowden is revealed in the way clients experience the mess of how the ideal is not met but has failed more than once. I have so far illustrated how procedures are supposed to provide a framework of dos and don'ts, but I also show the contradictory nature of social work practice and how social workers are burdened with excess work.

Alison told me of her journey through the child protection system in Bowden. It all started when she received a phone call from a social worker in the team at her local hospital. Her eighteen month-old grandson Jamie had suffered a fractured skull and his mother had given conflicting accounts about how he was injured, so the doctor and social worker were reluctant to release Jamie back into his mother's care, since they concluded Jamie would be in continued danger of significant harm by returning home.⁸⁶

After taking Jamie into care, the next day Alison received a brief visit from a social worker from the family support and intervention team. In this way, the surveillance moved from the public institution into the household. The visit occurred within the

⁸⁶ This resulted in a referral to social services from the hospital team in order for a casework investigation to be carried out under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

twenty-four hours rule for all referrals in ascertaining for the record that the child was safe. Alison was told to expect a further visit by another social worker in the near future. In this subsequent visit, the social worker interviewed Alison about her personal circumstances around coping with Jamie, but according to Alison, she did not carry out an assessment of her needs. The lack of any definitive action resulted in a raised level of anxiety and frustration for Alison, who had already formed a negative impression of the social workers she had encountered. She described them as ‘rude’, which accords with the notion of ‘nosy parker’ image of social worker in their policing of families. In Alison’s case they had broken one of her important ‘house rules’, she says;

The social workers walked into my home and they did not wipe their feet, they simply found a seat and pretended not to hear what I said about removing their shoes.

Jamie was to remain in Alison’s home until the first case conference was convened.⁸⁷

At Alison’s case conference, it was decided Jamie’s name should be placed on the child protection register. Members of the panel voted to seek a nursery place for him, though he was to remain in Alison’s care. But despite that ruling, a nursery place was not forthcoming and Alison was left feeling in limbo. It meant she was stuck between the initial and the core assessment stages as described above. After making several phone

⁸⁷ Present at the case conference was the paediatric doctor who saw Jamie when he was admitted to hospital, the police, the chair, Alison, Jamie’s parents, the minute taker, social service team manager and hospital social worker.

calls to chase up and clarify the progress of Jamie's case,⁸⁸ Alison's frustrations reached breaking point. She then, unusually, took Jamie into the office at social services, She said;

I was told 'he is your grandchild, he is your responsibility; you look after him'. So I put the phone down and packed a little suitcase and I took him to social services. I explained my situation and they said they have let me down. I said you failed me. They then told me they would take Jamie for the weekend to give me a break. They took my grandson for a weekend, which turned into thirteen weeks in foster care.

Alison's frustration reflects a lack of support for her family in the weeks following the case conference and the initial referral at the hospital. I was keen to hear what kinds of explanations were given to Alison by social workers. She said what she was repeatedly told every time she spoke with social services by social workers they were very short staffed, and as a consequence, Jamie's case remained as an unallocated case. She took a deep breath and exhaled slowly as she recounted to me how she felt completely powerless and resigned to her situation. She had lost faith in the agreement of support and the case conference seemed to be just a paper exercise.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ The act of registration itself does not necessarily confer protection on the child. The emphasis is more about the decision to place children's names on or remove them from the child protection register, but not enough on supporting the child and family in the months following the case conference (Colton et al 2001).

⁸⁹ A second case conference was convened six months after the first conference instead of three months according to formal policy guidelines. Jamie's name was removed from the child protection register and on closer scrutiny of the paper work that had been drawn up by social services the assessing social worker realised that social services should have assessed Alison as emergency kinship carer at the very beginning when she started caring for Jamie.

One social worker told me that according to policy regarding kinship carers, people who are called upon by local authorities to care for a child who is a blood relative are assessed in much the same way as foster carers (see Chapter Six). But the financial assistance differs significantly between boroughs.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, social workers have informed me that some local authorities do not readily give kinship allowances unless they are challenged to do so. Bowden, on the other hand, is more open to giving financial help once social workers have identified the need, but it depends very much on available resources. So, social workers often find themselves caught between the genuine need of the client and their ability to supply any solution. Therefore, whilst Alison was caring for Jamie she should have been given some financial support that could have been backdated. However, further changes in policy now mean that grandmothers like Alison can gain responsibility and decision-making powers whilst the child's parents still retain their rights. It is an example of the notion of family responsibility within New Labour's reforms.

Referrals can originate from different sources. The next case differs from the hospital because, social service, was contacted by an anonymous caller. The case captures the concerns not merely of the procedures of assessment and action, but the ways in which the taken for granted ideal of the family fundamentally legitimates interventions.

⁹⁰ Kinship allowance has become statutory and is given under section 23 or 24 of the Children Act, (see The Manchester Case: L & R Vs Manchester City Council).

2.2 Referral from a Public Informer

Francesca is of medium height with a quietly confident persona. She came to the ‘bright lights’ of London from Birmingham seven years ago and remains very committed to her social work career. She became the named social worker for a family that was reported to social services from an anonymous phone call made by a member of the public. The family was reported to be living in squalid conditions with a young child. An immediate inquiry was undertaken which resulted in the breakup of the family, the parents moving into temporary accommodation and as an additional measure, Francesca arranging an emergency placement for the child with a relative.

Francesca said it was important that this kind of neglect is brought to the attention of social services. But more importantly, it was also vital to collect evidence to be kept on the file so that in the future social services could monitor to see if things started to slip back. In the meantime, her investigations revealed a health visitor⁹¹ had seen the family five years earlier but that no further visits were carried out. No concerns were raised, either, by housing officers who also make interim visits to carry out tenancy checks. As Francesca described the appalling state of the home, she said it was enough to make her physically sick. There was the accumulative build up of human and animal waste, rotting food, dust, dirt and clutter in every room. She said that to see it and know that a child lived like that was very upsetting for both her and her colleagues. The case left the social workers in the team all trying hard to try to be fair and treat the parents with a level of

⁹¹ Community nursing service that works with the family with particular concern with the health of under-five year olds. Health visitors can often be the starting point for child protection referrals. Working with and supporting families put them in an ideal position.

respect, but Francesca admitted she was struggling with the conditions she had encountered in their household.

Francesca met the parents and informed them that she was asking them for their agreement to put their child into care until a full assessment could be carried out. Both parents immediately became very angry and called her a 'middle-class bitch'. Francesca was unmoved by their hostility; if they did not agree, she knew she had the power and enough evidence to take up proceedings through the courts. The parents would be allowed to have contact with their child, but only under Francesca's surveillance. She stressed the fact to them that their lack of parenting skills had placed their child at risk. Francesca told me her work has often exposed her to the distress of a mother losing her child, and although there are moments when she has felt like saying she did not mean to break up the family, in the end she always has to remember to act in the best interest of the child.

A case conference was convened to share information with other agencies and, among other things, to consider whether to remove the parent's responsibility for this particular child. Francesca said that when all the facts were considered the conference acknowledged the child was finding it difficult to cope with all the changes. The child was said to enjoy the company of other children and has made friends in school, but there was a problem with the child's hygiene. When arriving at school in the morning the teachers could smell urine and had assumed this was to do with bed-wetting. The parents were told if they wanted to be reunited as a family they would have to work cooperatively

with social workers over a long period of time. Francesca says she can't imagine what it must be like to know you are losing the right to care for your child. She believes social services should learn from the case how easy it is for things to spiral out of control. The revelations at the conference left her feeling a little pessimistic, and she found it very worrying that a home was able to get so bad for five years with no one from social services or education knowing, even if it was not reported by housing officers.

Francesca was later threatened by the parents and was taken off the case. She concluded, "The case simply became too complex for me in the end." Nevertheless, she was not going to let it get the better of her. She said she worked for years to get her qualifications and gain experience of her chosen profession so she was definitely "here to stay."

Francesca's views represent the typical response of most of the social workers, who tend to refuse to be consumed by the social deprivations they encounter with people on the margins of society.

This case appeared to centre simply on a family living in very squalid conditions. However, one could argue that if this was their norm it's possible both parents and child were happy living that way. And as a nuclear family it was precisely the kind of family the state wants to protect. Yet, the need for social workers to intervene into the family was judged on the basis of other dimensions of 'normal' behaviour. Therefore, the contradictions that social workers navigate lie in the promotion of the nuclear family, accompanied by other values and expectations. On that basis alone social workers mobilise notions about the best interest of a child as the primary mechanism for

intervention and possible removal. Apart from issues with hygiene, in this instance there was no obvious cause for concern about the child.

I now return to Alison's story to highlight a further example of the contradictions social workers navigate. It focuses on emergencies and how social workers' struggle with meeting ideal procedures can change placement priorities in relation to foster care.

2.5 Emergency Foster Placement: When Emergencies Change Placement Priorities

My previous discussion of Alison's story showed how social workers' staff shortages meant they failed to deliver the outcomes of the case conference that led Jamie to be placed into the care of social services. It resulted in him being placed into foster care with White foster carers, that is a clear example of the gap between ideal procedures and the continued mess of practice on the ground. This action incensed Alison, together with the fact the foster placement lasted for thirteen weeks. I asked Alison why she thought social services placed her grandson with White foster carers. Alison said the social worker told her that Jamie's placement was an emergency placement and there was nowhere else he could go. It was immediately striking to me that an emergency placement seems to break all the rules in relation to the duty of social workers to look fully into the needs of a child.

As social workers have shown me, among the many things that are usually taken into account is race, or to be more precise, skin colour, in the placement of any child into substitute families (see Chapter Six and Seven). It also shows that in fostering

‘Whiteness’ is no longer taken for granted but has become very visible. Jamie was taken from South London and placed in Surrey. From Alison’s point of view her mixed race grandson, as she put it, should not have been placed in an environment where he does not see people of colour within the community. When she visited Jamie, she said the visit made her feel very self-conscious, as though she was the abuser of her own grandchild rather than the victim of the set of circumstances that were out of her control from the start. Until that point, Alison seemed to know exactly who was under surveillance. In actual fact however, she had been drawn into the net of surveillance by her offer of care. Furthermore, she also felt the social worker was doing very little to reunite the family. The nature of foster care is based explicitly on a discourse of transition, and so the ideology of reunification is very much part of its ethos. Alison told me what was most unforgivable about the whole situation was that it was a Black social worker who seemed to want Jamie to remain in foster care. Alison’s statement immediately draws parallels with my previous argument, which is the notion that Black social workers are conceptualised in a double bind of regulation of Black families and the negotiation of wider British cultural values (see Chapter Two).

In the first part of this chapter, I pointed out that the redefined role of social workers was steeped in contradictions. They are viewed as indecisive yet authoritarian. They are also conceived as carers of the deserving, but increasingly defined by targets and the market. In addition, when it comes to Black social workers they are also expected to practice greater cultural sensitivity (see Chapter Two). I asked Alison if she thought the social worker may have nevertheless felt she was acting in the best interest of Jamie. Alison

said, she believes the social worker, took it upon herself to cast her in the role as the unapproachable grandmother because she was not passive. Yet again it can be argued that judgements are being made on values other than that of the 'ideal family environment' where unification should be promoted; the social worker, I suggest, made judgements based on the mobilisation of notions of best interest, as in my previous example above, to prolong foster care. In her effort to find an explanation for her experiences, Alison suggested it was not only race but also issues of nationality and culture that were significant. In contrast to several others she had encountered, this particular social worker seemed to have created the greatest level of anxiety within her. Alison said;

The social worker came from Canada. So it is totally different to the British environment in which she was now working. Probably where she is coming from Black women don't have to stand up and fight to be heard.

Although I would contend Alison presented herself as an assertive person, there is still a clear power imbalance between her and the decision-making processes of the social worker's view that led to Jamie being taken into care. In practice, the placement highlights the persistent anxieties within issues of racial politics that are only temporarily masked, but they serve as a metaphor for modernisation and the messiness of child protection social work practice that has to respond rapidly, on a case-by-case basis.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the impact on social workers of implementing new norms of practice. Their actions and experiences are located within the context of the Labour government's political rhetoric of 'modernisation' and its redefinition of welfare in the governance of families. Such policies lead to repeated social service reorganisations, resulting in individual and organisational turmoil and great stress among social workers. I argued that this phenomenon explicitly demonstrated the normalisation of change in the twenty-first century, and argued it represented a new concept of doxa. Hence, the tension between professionalism and managerialism positions social workers in a third space or no-man's land in which I argued they practice a hidden form of professionalism as the various narratives of the social workers demonstrated. Continuous change challenged their professional status, leading to job insecurities and an increasing trend of imposing new managerial duties. Paradoxically, both managers and workers were being subjected to the hegemony of quasi-market forces. Furthermore, by redefining the roles of social workers and welfare subjects through means-tested benefits, the government has reproduced an historical tradition in social work. It is based around an old classification of welfare subjects into categories of deserving and undeserving through risk management. Thus, social workers encounter real contradictions in negotiating the new notions of care to increase social inclusion. This leaves them having to cope with the pressures, dangers and blame in dealing with their day-to-day caseload responsibilities in the surveillance of families.

As a site of primary child protection intervention and classification of welfare subjects, the hospital provided a classic example of the link between social services procedures and public institutions. Alison, a grandmother of a child taken into care, illustrates how social workers, together with medical professionals, objectify people under a joint medical and social work gaze. It showed how the ‘Assessment Framework’ stipulations for social workers’ actions form the basis for extending surveillance outside public institutions into households. It also demonstrates how social work rules do not always follow a linear, predictable path in practice. Therefore, chronic staff shortages contradicted the ethos of care and support from social workers for Alison as the citizen-consumer, which can lead to social workers suffering burn-out. The frustration experienced by Alison resulted in the projection of blame towards social workers, viewing them all as intrusive and ineffective.

This chapter also highlighted the fact that intervention and surveillance of a family can take place from other types of referrals. One such referral came through an anonymous phone call from a member of the general public. The example, demonstrated that while the government’s ideology, about protecting the family relates to the nuclear ideal at times, that fact in itself does not provide the ideal criteria for non-intervention.

Therefore, the contradictions that social workers navigate lie in the promotion of the nuclear family, accompanied by other values and expectations. It was also a similar outcome for my example of foster care. The nature of foster care is based explicitly on a discourse of transition and the ideology of reunification. However, as I showed in Alison’s case, at times social workers make judgements to extend foster care. Yet again, I

argued judgements were made on values other than that of the 'ideal family environment.'

Thus, my ethnographic examples provided a metaphor for modernisation as well as the messiness of child protection social work practice, as workers respond on a case-by-case basis.

In the next chapter I examine the social service case-work file more closely. I will examine its role and function within social services information infrastructure. More importantly, I will examine its meaning within social workers' sphere of practice in classifying and objectifying welfare subjects while creating social work knowledge. I will be concerned with how the mess of practice is made suitable to fit into systems of managerial accountability through a single ordered chronology.

Part Two: Creating Professional Knowledge: Assessing and Reproducing Value

Part two examines the significance of the concept of objectification in my focus on case-work files as objects for the formalisation of knowledge. It also demonstrates how policy constructs the function of case-work files, not only as instruments of objectification of welfare subjects, but also how they also constitute a legal benchmark within public sector managerial social work practice. Thus, it also about how case-work files and recruitment targets are both associated with notions of temporalisation. Therefore, time is a continual symbolic and material process surrounding the notion of chronology and medium of control within an organisational hierarchy of power and governance. It also demonstrates how the notion of objectification relates to processes of assessment that are embedded in an ideology of commodity exchange, the politics of value and notions of transformation.

I examine files within the wider context of government, showing their evolution as bureaucratic artefacts out of the progressive bureaucratisation within a Western democratic state resulting from significant and continued social changes. In social work, I argue, the file represents tradition and conventionalisation of practice. They are active objects in the construction of autonomous systems of communication within the context of public sector organisational rationality. Thus, they epitomise the naturalisation of assessment criteria as diagnostic tools of objectification and knowledge production. Therefore, interpretation and narratives are at the heart of their function of preserving

selective events about welfare subjects, contradictions within social work judgements that relate to defensive practice and organisational governance. As such, they share temporal directives about the past and future within the present.

I locate my argument about the recruitment and maintenance of foster families within the discourse that redefined welfare in the late twentieth century, and the changing role of social workers. As a consequence, recruitment became a target of welfare production. It meant the concept of care became associated with systems of exchange and politics of value, where people as well as things can be converted to commodities. So the concept of commodification is used as a framework for the process of objectification through a ritual of assessment and conversion. It is also part of the discourse of best interest considerations, which are situated within the ideology of family. Therefore, I argue, the commodification and notions of kinship is the result of two sets of separate but intersecting relationships.

I highlight the tension that arises between commodity and gift exchanges as they both operate within the recruitment discourse. But, the resulting paradox within the theory of recruitment is that the gift discourse is more emphasised, since it draws attention towards the notion of allowance and away from the notion of income, and clearly further exemplifies the contradictions in social workers' practice. It also extends established anthropological debates about gift exchange in relation to other forms of exchange.

Chapter 4

The Case-Work File: The Creation of Order within Social Work Practice.

Introduction

In this chapter I examine the case-work file in its role within policy and systems of social work methods in the creation of knowledge. In the previous chapter, my examination of child protection practices revealed the first steps of a child's progress into the system of the fostering and adoption unit. Extending this, I want to describe how those steps also provide a principal trajectory for the generation of files within social services' information infrastructure. Thus, in this chapter I will argue that the case-work files are textual representations of social workers' assessments of families that have been constructed as welfare subjects in the past, present and future. As a result, they symbolise the objectification of those subjects and the conversion of the mess of practice that social workers experience into manageable forms of information that can be formally integrated into systems of classification and administration. I will extend the wider application of the notion of governmentality to the regulation of social workers themselves within their organisation through what I wish to argue is a form of governmentality which is internally organised. I will start by briefly situating the file within the Weberian notion of bureaucratisation, as a process of development within the Western democratic state and embedded at all levels of contemporary government, which includes local authority social services infrastructures like Bowden. This will be followed by illustrations of how social workers use files within child protection and fostering based on systems of

managerial hierarchy and supervision. Juxtaposing this, my own exploration of a file during my fieldwork in Bowden's fostering and adoption unit charts a child's progress through foster care. It shows how the concept of a single chronology in relation to case-work files represents a technical model of temporalising practice; a process in which time is grounded in the material nature of files as active objects. The creation of a single chronology of a case is also used as a managerial method for the socialisation of new social workers. Finally, I present a case study about Maureen, who was in and out of local authority care approximately twenty years ago and recently applied to gain access to her own case-work file. In doing so, I extend my argument by drawing on Ricoeur's (1991) theory of interpretation to consider the narrative that is constructed from and through the act of reading the file, which is always partial and selective.

1. The Classification and Normalisation of Case-work files

As chapter two has shown, the case-work file has a long tradition in the systems of social work and the family which dates back to the latter half of the nineteenth century, and is embedded within the bureaucratic administration of welfare policy. However, instead of illustrating a Foucauldian version of the file, I have chosen to draw on the Weberian notion of bureaucracy as a development within modern society and a classic theory within sociology at the beginning of the twentieth century (Morrison 1995: 375). Weber believed bureaucracy it is at the heart of the Western democratic state's exercise of authority and the establishment of legal standards, which, he argues, were based on two distinct categories of historical change. First, changes to the conditions and organisation

of society resulting from the process of industrialisation.⁹² And second, changes in the systems of rationality and decision-making that led to a greater need for accounting methods to promote markets governed by universal norms and values. Therefore, rationalisation of commercial and business techniques imposed a larger reliance upon written records for accounting systems, administration and file keeping. Thus, bureaucracy relates to systems of administrative control of all elements of society and social life (Weber 1961).

Although Weber and Foucault come from different traditions there are some similarities. Foucault, like Weber, is interested in the process of rationalisation that, he argues, is exercised through techniques of power to shape and control the behaviour of individuals. So, for Foucault the articulation of rationality is inextricably bound to the art of government or governmentality (Foucault 1991); rather than defined abstractly, it is a technology based on the utility of knowledge for those in power. Moreover, in contrast to the economic determinism of Marx, both Foucault and Weber are interested in social change through the development of systems of power and governance. Together they show how the progression of rationalisation through new mechanisms of bio-power sanctions methods of classification through surveillance and written records in the production and formalisation of knowledge of welfare subjects, supported by ideologies of normalisation.

⁹² “Machines were able to perform work previously done by humans. This reduced repetitive labour and increased control over the environment by creating a free time in order to plan activities. These changes motivate social innovation and rational planning of activities, making know-how and ingenuity prominent”, (Morrison 1995: 296).

In order to extend my argument here I have isolated the case 'file' as a single classification sub-system that is ubiquitous within social work practice. As one social worker told me, "I refer to the file by the name of the child." Files are both tangible as well as symbolic representations of the family. Social workers also say, "When we have a telephone conversation we just think 'file'; it's second nature"; it is also another example Bourdieu's notion of doxa. On the whole, case-work files in and of themselves are not isolated. Instead, they are part of a complex web that serves as the information infrastructure of local authorities. The files are layered and textured, and interact to form an ecological relationship. Even though they are objects they can also act as vehicles for social relationships. Thus the file is a way in which social workers relate to each other over space and time (Appadurai 1986; Holbraad 2007; Wastell 2007).

And so, I argue, the files are the representations of the intervention within families and encapsulation of social work custom. They are generated within the first stages of the child protection process (see Chapter Three) and then are continually augmented. Under ideal working conditions, the files ought to inform social workers of past events within the family at the start of a case, based on the initial casework interview, because that knowledge is always being revised in light of new developments in the present. The interpretation of that knowledge leads to procedural decisions and further plans for action that can reshape the way in which the file data is conceived. Nevertheless, a linear flow of information is always maintained. When cases remain unallocated for a period of time (see Alison's story, Chapter Three) files can also present procedural gaps and lack of decisions, since the various duty social workers record only isolated pieces of

information, giving rise to several possible kinds of interpretations according to how the narrative structure is assembled. Each file is divided into a standard layout of five sections that contains various forms that are placed in sequential order. The layout enables the files to be a resource of basic comparable and standardised information despite the fact that the outcome of each case depends on how other pieces of information contribute to an overall assessment. Those items of heterogeneous data are generated from other areas of professional practice as well as social work.⁹³

Case-work files are colour coded to classify them, firstly between those that are allocated to children and families (which are orange) and secondly to adults such as foster carers (which are pink). The files are further divided into categories denoting the services that are provided relating to child protection and fostering and adoption. In general, practice files are held within the organisational space of the offices of social work teams, in a designated room, and arranged in alphabetic order according to family surnames. They officially remain active unless a child dies, moves away from the area, or reaches the age at which he or she legally leaves care. As a consequence, they are eventually transformed onto microfiche and archived to a central registry. The 'file', has also gone through a process of further transformation into an electronic document. In whatever form, however as naturalised objects, case-work files are technical devices within systems of social work that convert families into knowable and administrable subjects of assessment. Following this, I now explore how social workers' use of the file is negotiated under managerial hierarchy and supervision that, I argue, is a form of internal governmentality.

⁹³ Assessing social workers solicit information from other practitioners such as doctors, psychologists etc (see Chapter 3 on Child Protection).

1.1 Bureaucratic Artefacts: How Social Workers Use Files

My exploration of how social workers use case-work files is based on interviews with social workers operating in child protection and fostering. Out of them, I have chosen representatives to demonstrate various levels of social work practice and to provide a framework for my argument. Joan is a child protection team manager who has been a social worker for fourteen years, is petite, with jet-black, shoulder-length hair and small eyes that look like slits on her long shaped face. Jackie, who has been a social worker for fourteen years, works within the fostering team recruiting and supporting foster carers. She is tall and slim, with very large eyes set in a shaped oval face framed by her short grey hair. She, in contrast to team managers, is in the front line of the daily social work routines that are inextricably linked to using files, demonstrating what Weber calls administrative rationality. The files that are generated in Joan's system of social work operations start with the intervention and construction of welfare subjects through the social work gaze and surveillance of families. In contrast, the files that are created in Jackie's practice deal with referrals from Joan's sphere of authority in order to provide substitute families for children who are taken into care⁹⁴ through the assessment and recruitment of foster carers and adoptive parents (see Chapters 5, 6, 7). In her role Jackie has a more superficial contact with the family files; by the same token, Joan has little or no contact with the foster carer's files. However, all social workers will and do communicate to act in the best interest of the child. I will now start with the processes of

⁹⁴ Similarly the adoption team social workers would provide adoptive families.

how information is gathered and recorded under Joan's supervision of the social workers she manages in her team.

1.2 Joan's Sphere of Authority

Joan's story is about her role in advocating notions of objectivity over subjectivity in relation to the file. As such she maintains internal governmentality, in acting as a form of surveillance over the social workers. So as manager within the present system of administration she sees her job as being there to ensure that what is reported is objective; it is formalised once it is written down, and structured, since there are criteria for what is included and what is excluded. During my fieldwork I had a conversation with a legal executive working within Bowden's legal services. She told me all files are confidential and therefore the information in them is "strictly on a need to know basis". For that reason, I wanted to know what this idea of 'need' meant for the issues of access generally amongst social workers and for clients in particular. I put this question directly to Joan. She said that in the past social workers carried out assessments on families who were unaware of what was written about them (As Maureen's case study will later demonstrate). According to Joan, there has been a policy of open access to files since the late 1980s, in a shift towards greater transparency. This was first implemented with the standardisation of the initial and core assessments.⁹⁵ Families are now given copies of the documents that appear on their file, and are also given copies of managerial decisions about what should happen in relation to their case. However, social services were obliged to make sure third-party information was taken out of the file before presenting it to a

⁹⁵ This was implemented within the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families to facilitate the uniform approach by all social workers to assessments (see Chapter 3).

client. This policy of transparency was meant to create more open and honest ways of working. Instead, it has tended to make social workers become guarded in the ways in which they record information, by choosing their words more carefully. Thus, social workers continue to extend their gaze into people's private lives, but in the end create documents that do not fully reflect their practices.

As Joan says, when she writes in a file she thinks about the fact that it is going to be seen by the client, and whether they will understand what she is saying, especially as sometimes English is their second language.⁹⁶ She says,

I remember doing some work with a child with a chronic illness and the child's mother was allowed to read the child's medical notes. The mother was shocked and very disturbed by what was previously written in the file about her as a mother. Someone in the past made a decision using a certain kind of language and tone and it was quite a shock for her to see that comment on paper. But as a social worker I empowered that mother to confront the doctors. As a result she gained an opportunity to write a retraction that challenged the previous view of her on file and that was then placed on the file.

Joan's example shows how the history and knowledge in the file is created, but can also be revised. It also suggests the file is written for the social worker and not the client. Her other comments reflect the fact that a new way of thinking about writing in the file become standardised via the Assessment Framework (see Chapter Three). Whatever

⁹⁶ Clients are sent questionnaires from her team to complete as to how they feel about the assessment. In most cases the clients get copies of the sensitive documents such as conference reports. For care proceedings the clients gets documents, which are relevant for them to be represented in court. Other sensitive documents would be officer's report sheets; they may see social worker's supervision sheets.

social workers observe, and the questions they ask through the case-work interview, have become compatible and comparable across different social work teams dealing with children and families. Thus, the file allows the interaction and synchronization of different spheres of practice. It is also embedded in the ideology which governs procedures, and the notion of good judgment, to satisfy various levels of needs by mediating relations that construct welfare subjects. What is more, other managers revealed to me that for some social workers that are less confident than others about their writing skills, it is a source of heightened anxiety and as a consequence, those people tend to record less information in files. For that reason, the file can lack the vital and necessary proof that there is need for continued surveillance. It may also be the case that the file contains one isolated aspect of the overall problems or issues faced by a family. Hence, the file can also reveal breakdowns in the systems of social work exercises, represented by gaps in the flow of recorded information. This becomes another facet of the mess within practice on the ground within families under social work regulation. In the politics of reproduction of welfare subjects, the file becomes a site of selectively constructed memories.

Once Joan allocates cases within her team, her most important role as line manager is to audit the files regularly, to make sure that assessments are being appropriately recorded. Joan told me that social workers invariably document information retrospectively, so unless they have their notebooks or they have really good memories they could “mess up.” She told me;

As a manager, I see most of the files for short-term cases in the hospital team. But with my workload I don't get to see the files for the longer-term cases as often as I would like. Therefore, what I have started to do is to carry out spot checks of files, and that really catches social workers off guard. They immediately feel they have done something wrong and get defensive. I asked them to bring their files into our supervision session. Some workers will comply and others won't and that's a sign for me of what has been done or not.

Joan's comments suggest social workers are resisting managerial control while trying to dictate their own pace in recording information in files. Her action as a manager provides an example of a form of internal organisational governance. In her surveillance of social workers as well as of the clients, she attempts to maintain a core role of administrative order and structure over the files. Her comments also reveal how the file often becomes a focus for administrative anxiety. As Joan explains, they may not have noted down a key piece of information sufficiently or recalled bits of information. Because of this the consistency and authority of the files often depends on how quickly the information is shared and/or teased out in supervision. Generating the file content jointly serves to establish a negotiated order. Joan goes on;

I like workers to tell me what's happening to the children. I like them to give me dates of when they did the last visits. I have a system in place that says within forty-eight hours of doing a home visit, a) they need to write and confirm that that visit had taken place; b) they need to confirm in the letter any action that they said they were going to take; and c) if there was anything the family are expected to do by the social worker. Since we have had complaints, workers will avoid

writing anything that they think will be used against them later. Furthermore, there are workers with certain values that believe that children should always remain in the family home.

This commitment, however, potentially contradicts any notion that a child should sometimes be removed from their family.

That personal belief means they can't be objective enough about their assessment. Many still see the adults rather than the children. They will not give the children voices even though their safety is the reason why they as workers from the Children and Families team are knocking on that door.

The above comments imply that for Joan it is possible to distinguish objective from subjective information. For her, social workers' emotions can impede them in making accurate judgements. It is the structure of the working system that provides objectivity. Joan says she personally tries to achieve a form of objectivism by approaching social workers with specific questions intended to uncover "pure facts or small kernels of truth about a case".⁹⁷ The resulting discussion is recorded on her supervision sheets and in the family file. If anyone subsequently reads the documentation, the shared decision-making process will demonstrate how a particular issue was picked up, negotiated, and confirmed, during supervision.⁹⁸

However, in parallel to these formal bureaucratic processes, both managers and workers sometimes establish ways of deferring responsibility through the negotiation of

⁹⁷ She has a number of standard questions she asks, including: What is the presentation of the child? Did you speak to the child? What was the child doing? What did the teacher say at school?

⁹⁸ "If I am going to make a comment on a file about an issue that I am unhappy with I must talk it through with the worker first so they don't just pick up a file and find that comment without a discussion" (Joan).

procedural decisions; and to avoid any possibility of blame through how it is recorded in the file. It is a classic example of how bureaucratic rationalisation is demonstrated. I will now go on to draw on another illustration, in which the same principle of shared decision-making serves to defer and obscure personal and professional responsibility when social workers always negotiate what is included and what is excluded in files.

1.3 Jackie's Sphere of Practice

In Jackie's sphere of practice I highlight how in order to maintain an objective record social workers have to continually negotiate what is included and what is excluded. Therefore, the idea of an objective file becomes a sort of illusion, since in order to achieve it they have to exclude material and so it can no longer claim real objectivity. Jackie, in contrast to Joan, is not a manager; she focuses on supporting foster carers and so she does not deal directly with the children's files. Because her focus is on the progression from child protection to fostering, her views are that files generally contain superficial information that might be useful for more long-term reviews. Wherever children's files can be found in the fostering and adoption unit, they contain very superficial information referring to the child in care reviews.⁹⁹ The procedures Jackie outlined followed the same shared, decision-making process and managerial surveillance I have so far illustrated. In addition, it clearly highlights the audit culture in which social workers operate, and the general protective actions that are taken by social workers. When it came to writing in the file, Jackie immediately spoke in terms of the possible consequences of her actions arising from future inspection of the files.

⁹⁹ (LAC reviews). Every looked-after child had a review every six months while they are in care. Namely foster care in this case. So all the review information goes on the file.

For example, Jackie told me about a particular situation that arose in the home of one of the foster carers in her caseload. She informed her manager that a nine year-old girl placed with one of her foster families was not used to sleeping in a room alone. Because of this, the foster carer allowed the child to share the room with her five-year old son until the child fell asleep. Although this worked for a couple of days until the child felt comfortable to sleep alone, after having contact with her birth family the child once again reverted to having difficulties going to sleep. Jackie told me that she informed the foster carer it was not acceptable for the child to share a room with a child of a different gender. Instead, Jackie said it would be more acceptable if the child shared a room with the foster carers' eighteen year-old daughter, on the basis of gender.

Jackie gave permission for this to happen on a very short-term basis. But having done so, she then had to carry out an assessment. The written assessment protocols take account of the risk to both the eighteen year-old and the nine year-old. When the files are later inspected the inspectors should be able to see the sorts of criteria that were taken into consideration before Jackie decided it was safe for a room to be shared. The main risk that Jackie says first came to mind was sexual abuse and if one or both children might have had such experiences. Additionally, issues of bullying could arise and should be borne in mind. As the supporting social worker, Jackie was responsible for tactfully speaking to the young adult and the younger child about the rules of the house and about inappropriate language and touching. It might be suggested that the room door is left open at night. They would be reminded that it was safe to talk to the foster carer or social

worker if the need arises. Overall, while Jackie described risk in terms of the foster child and 18 year-old, it was clear that recording events appropriately in the file was also a risk to her. In this way the file is not merely a record, but a significant representation of professional standards at the micro layer of practice that might have consequences in the future. That act carried out by Jackie extends what Munn (1992: 9) refers to as intersubjective space-time, which is about self-other relationships and an on going kind of reciprocal connection based on specific types of practice. I draw on Munn's notion as a metaphor for what I argue is the way in which social workers can be said to relate to case files, which are active objects. They negotiate the value of what they record into files; in meetings, information in files is given and received between social workers that further communicate through the act of reading files. Thus, she argues, it is a multidimensional symbolic process.

For example, if a child is in a placement and makes an allegation against a foster carer the investigation has to go back into the files. First, to highlight whether there was anything within the carer's assessment that raised any hint of concern for the social worker, which might indicate there was potential that the carer might behave in ways that are unacceptable to social services. Second, to ascertain whether the child has made that sort of allegation before and under what circumstances. What is important is to look for any history, to see what has gone on before and how it was dealt with. Jackie argues children are not always listened to in the way that they feel they should be. There are inherent contradictions within social work practice linked to how social workers relate to the files. Firstly, the files do not represent an objective truth. Secondly, everything is not recorded,

so it only ever a partial record. For these reasons, the file is a good example of the defensive nature of social work in response to feelings of blame and continued changes of policy. When it comes to recording in files, Jackie says while both are included, data has to be divided into what is factual and not. Social workers have to state “it is my opinion that”, but the facts also have to be made explicit so they can be differentiated from opinions that are social workers’ interpretations of the issues surrounding a case. Like Joan, she invests in the distinction between objective and subjective recording. But, as Jackie had demonstrated, a lot of work has to be done about the way things are recorded, the way in which things are and filtered and the way in which it becomes only a partial record.

Up to this point I have discussed the fact that files are embedded and naturalised within the structures and spheres of practice in which social workers act as agents of welfare policy. I have also shown that files exist in time as well as space. In the following section, I will show how chronology as a concept is used as a vehicle for managerial socialisation of new workers. By looking at a single child’s case, I will also show how it serves to structure and construct a single narrative out of many diverse issues social workers have to address.

2. Chronology as the basis of social work knowledge

In order to give the file a rational coherence, a key aspect of administrative rationality is chronology, which is to arrange things along a single temporal order. Similarly to what Jackie has already implied, chronology is somewhat artificial since it also involves

including and excluding information, by focusing on what are considered significant events. But sometimes more than one event can happen in parallel. So, where the emphasis is to objectify, the key device is chronology (as my case study of Verna's File will point out). The notion of chronology is also used by staff as a key method for reviewing files in the ways in which it classifies and objectifies families that have become welfare subjects. It is particularly focused on the isolation of dates and what are considered to be key events that have unfolded within a case. The use of a single chronology constructs order out of the data within the file. As such, Sara, another social work manager, argues it is an excellent way to train new social workers. She says:

When I ask a new member of staff to compile a chronology of dates and key events they have to go to the file and read it and pick out key information. By the time they have finished the exercise they will have a picture of the family and what is happening by seeing the key events for themselves. They will have a picture from entries of a number of social workers that will have provided various perspectives. Some social workers may go into a family and get on so well with them it was possible to misinterpret the risks; that should set alarm bells ringing. Another worker might have a poorer relationship with the family but is more realistic at looking at what is real and not let the family pull the wool over their eyes.

But, whilst neither of the relationships described by Sara is value free, the socialisation process is an indicator for a manager of how a new worker is able to separate their personal values from their professional ethics in order to make a judgement about the assessment within the file. As such, establishing a clear chronology is assumed to be

sorting out the objective facts, a notion I have argued is contestable. And, as I have also shown in Chapter Three, all assessments operate within culturally specific contexts of norms and assumptions about the family.

As a fostering support social worker, Judith also explains the importance of chronology in fostering. She says if something happens within a placement she may be called upon to produce a time-line for the foster child, so she has to go back into as many files as she can and start from the very first incident that was ever recorded. For instance, she says;

Let's say it is a child who is an abuser and I had a report that said when the child was two years old that child was very curious when a small baby's nappy was being changed and the child touched the baby? That is the first incident. Then I have to go right back from that incident to record every incident after that that actually indicates anything of a sexual nature regarding that child. With a chronology we can only record facts. And sometimes if we want to draw any conclusions we will have to go to therapist or a councillor to get their opinion as to what is happening or what has happened with the young person. Social workers don't always make the final decision about what such behaviour could mean.

Sara and Jackie's comments make two important points. Firstly, how decisions become increasingly shared and gradually removed from real people to organisational systems (as Verna's file will further illustrate and which will also reveal the consequences when social workers break the rules). Secondly, how chronology is viewed through a discourse

of time in a linear calendar, thereby reinforcing the idea that objective facts can naturally be gleaned from files.

2.1 Verna's File

This case study reveals the tension of trying to establish a single chronology when in fact; sometimes real life does not reflect that. During my fieldwork in the fostering and adoption unit, my attention was drawn to the case of a young girl called Verna by one of the managers who consented to me shadowing some of his work. I was able to look at the file because I was going to be taken to a meeting concerning her case. On reflection, it was an example of inducting me into the systems of the unit.

Malcolm is a fostering manager who has been a social worker for eighteen years. He was the coordinator for what is called permanent long-term foster placements, or otherwise simply referred to as 'Permanence'. I accompanied him to a meeting with a child protection social worker. We met with Lena, who was newly appointed and allocated to the case of fifteen-year old Verna. Malcolm informed me that Verna had drifted through various foster placements, and there was a need to make concrete plans for her long-term future. Having been in several foster placements, Verna was currently in a residential care facility. However, she had run away from the home that morning, but made contact with Lena by the time we arrived for the meeting.

Verna and her younger brother were both housed by Bowden social services under section 31 of the Children Act 1989¹⁰⁰. She wanted to be reunited with her family, but Malcolm and the residential social workers had reservations. They had previously observed that whenever Verna had contact with her mother it usually led her to being aggressive and confrontational. Furthermore, Verna's mother had been diagnosed with mental health problems, meaning the family remained under continual social work surveillance.

Lena told Malcolm and me that she wanted to challenge the ruling about contact by arranging phased meetings between Verna and her mother, after carrying out an up-to-date assessment of Mrs Campbell's mental state. She told Malcolm that she was in favour of giving Mrs Campbell, Verna's mother, a second chance to cope with caring for her children. Moreover, Lena pointed out that Mrs Campbell was allowed to keep her eldest daughter living at home, despite her daughter's special learning needs. Verna attended school in South London, although Lena did not have a school report available for our meeting. However, her telephone communication with the school suggested Verna was well behaved. There was also a similar verbal report from Verna's residential home. Because of Verna's mother's condition, Malcolm nevertheless felt his task was to try to find a placement for her nearer to her school, but was prepared to consider a kinship placement.¹⁰¹ He asked me to become involved by helping him make phone calls

¹⁰⁰ The Children Act 1989 is the single comprehensive code governing both private and public law. Section 31 of the act makes provision for compulsory measures through a care or supervision order to safeguard and promote children's welfare. Only a local authority may apply for a care or supervision order, (Bromley's Family Law Ninth edition by Lowe & Douglas 1998).

¹⁰¹ Where a local authority consider it is not in the best interest of the child to return to their birth family. The local authority has a responsibility to take steps to place children where possible within their birth family. The Children Act 1989 makes no specific reference to regulating a position on what is commonly

to various local authorities and speaking to the duty social workers in the fostering teams in order to search for a placement. Consequently, I had to read the file.

Verna's file was about five inches thick and was a faded green colour. It revealed not only her progress but also her siblings' progress through care, including details about her eldest sister Alison and her younger brother David over a period of two years up to the present. As Jackie had described above, the contents of files like Verna's only contained key information about her foster placements and 'child in care' reviews. Thus, there are other files about the family in another team outside the unit. So the file I am about to read is only one version. The first entry referred to a case conference that took place that resulted in Verna's eldest sister, Alison, being placed on the child protection register. The reasons were not immediately explicit. However, later entries indicated Verna's mother's mental health problems were of increasing concern to social workers for two months prior to the case conference, when her two year-old son David was placed into foster care and the family's living conditions were described as 'squalid'. This period constituted an initial stage, when the family first became welfare subjects under social work governmentality. During that period, according to the file, Verna seemed to be coping fairly well and had taken on a parental role, although her teachers had become concerned. At the same time it was expected Mrs Campbell would have been sectioned within the community mental health centre. But it seemed from the file that the necessary assessment and paper work had not been completed to enable her sectioning to take place. It indicated that although Mrs Campbell wanted her eldest daughter, who had

known in social work as trans-racial placements. On the other hand local authorities are required to have regard to the different racial groups when encouraging persons to act as local authority foster parents.

special learning needs, to be taken into care, care proceedings were put in action for all three children, which resulted in the separation of the children; Verna and Alison would remain together, and David placed elsewhere. But, because Mrs Campbell was adamant all her three children should be placed in a foster family together the care plan was rejected by the court. So right from the very first entry there is a clear example of information being filtered out of this file.

Five months later, the next entry in the file was also not very clear, so I am forced try to interpret what the message is. I thought it was indicating something about David's foster placement coming to an end. Verna had been placed in foster care with a view to finding her a long-term placement. Until that entry there was no sense in the file that Verna and her sister Alison were placed anywhere. I was still unclear as to the location of Verna's eldest sister Alison, and so I then presumed she was still living at home with her mother. However, six months after the last entry an entry gave me a clue; it recorded that one of the fostering support social worker, also named Alison, had spoken to Sandra, the support worker for Verna's foster carer. It said the foster carer reports that both siblings are very well settled. The rest of the statement does not make sense except that I have read between the lines that a move was coming up and the fostering team coordinator needed an update on the case.

The next six entries were a list of names representing brief explorations of possible foster carers who could take Verna, but there was no mention of the other two siblings. Five months later, Verna has had a change of social worker. At that point the file stated Verna

wanted to change school, which meant she would ideally need to be placed outside of the Borough. The social worker suggested Verna be placed with a foster family living in South West London. The entry also noted that the referral documentation prepared six months earlier remains valid except for the purposes of contact. Lucy Marshall, a carer last cited in the file four months earlier, was mentioned as the only Black carer taking females, but it was not clear in which borough she was resident. The suggestion was questioned within the fostering team because the carer's name had first appeared in the file a year earlier, and was rejected by the court because the carer was unable to take all three siblings. Nevertheless, Verna was placed in Lucy Marshall's family two months later at 8am in the morning. The file clearly revealed Verna was very distressed, since she did not know about the move. One of the fostering practice managers was to arrange a meeting with Verna's social worker. It was noted that a telephone call was also made to someone who I presumed to be the manager for Verna social worker. The issue of concern was that the social worker did not appear to follow procedures regarding Verna's placement move. The entry hinted that the decision to place Verna had been based on the social worker's opinion alone, in judging the foster carer was appropriate to care for Verna. In other words, it appears that the social worker made an autonomous, non-procedural, decision that was neither shared nor endorsed by a manager. The fact that I was able draw some kind of conclusion from what I felt the file was suggesting denies the argument that objective facts can be separated from subjective, since I was being completely subjective for the most part in trying to produce a singular chronology.

The next entry revealed the consequences of the social worker's actions, which broke the rules. It resulted in the breakdown of the placement, citing Verna's challenging behaviour; the foster carer called the police to an incident in which Verna was accused of upsetting the younger children within the foster family. Verna made counter accusations against the foster carer. The debate went on, but no other placements were forthcoming. It was suggested to draw up a behaviour contract with Verna, outlining the consequences of any further unacceptable behaviour in any further placement. One month later, Verna's social workers demanded an update in finding a foster placement, stating she needed to be out of residential care within one month. Verna's social worker leaves and so enters a new social worker, Lena. Her entry indicated that Verna is in a Residential Home. She stressed that it was intended to be a short-term accommodation and a foster placement was still needed.

As an example of Weberian bureaucracy, Verna's file revealed explicitly the inherent tensions in the use of chronology to present a coherent, rational order within files. So, all records must be viewed in terms of what gets recorded, how it is structured, and what gets left out, which challenges the notion that they are objective. As I have shown in chapter three, social work practice does not unfold in a tidy rational order, but the file to some extent doesn't reflect that process. Therefore, Verna's file is also a good example of the fact that a file contains lots of entries from a diverse set of people all encapsulated into one object, but yet it gives the illusion that it is communicating to the reader in a single voice. That kind of coherence is based on the Weberian notion of rational procedure, which is embedded within bureaucracy and means that all social workers,

because they have been socialised, record and interpret the file in the same way. Verna's file is also an example of the normal and natural application of chronology in social work practice, and so is also reflective of Bourdieu's concept of doxa. As a consequence, past social workers and the discussions in the present are somehow presented within the object that is the file through an abstract social worker voice. Because of this it is tempting to read 'between the lines' to try and construct a broader context for social workers' actions. However, in the telling any narrative is actually a subjective interpretation of the limited and fragmentary entries. It is actually impossible to know what the client may have felt or experienced. And so, for Verna, I can only suggest her only wish was to be reunited with her family and so she had become increasingly disruptive within her foster placements.

But actually, whilst I did not have access to them, I am aware that there are other files relating to the family and these are likely to have different chronologies. Each one will then claim to be the single version. Social workers like Joan and Jackie are maintaining the argument that the file is a record of life. But, in truth, the file is an object that does work; it is not just a neutral thing, it is there to serve a purpose. The file is not intended to be a comprehensive record, but only includes what social workers need in order to act at a given point in time. Therefore, the version of the file referring to Verna that I have read serves a purpose for the social workers in the context of the fostering and adoption unit. Thus, it functions for those social workers and is not really a record of Verna, which causes a slippage with the social workers' use of a discourse of objectivism. It could be

further argued that in feeling under pressure at work, social workers try to distance themselves from the contents of the file by arguing that it is objective.

In the next section I will go on to explore further the importance of interpretation of what is written in case-work files by drawing on an individual seeking to ‘fill in the gaps’ of her own personal biography by hoping to use the social services case-work file that had once been compiled about her.

3. The Art of Interpretation

I have demonstrated how case-work files function within the social services bureaucratic rationality as textual representations of social work techniques. At this point, I would like to take my argument further with the introduction of the work of Ricoeur (1991) in order to explore the art of interpretation within files by drawing on his theory of hermeneutics.¹⁰² Ricoeur contends that a text is any discourse fixed by writing. The discourse in the files is written in the context of, and conforms to, the formal organisational setting of the local authority social services child protection procedural practice. The specific processes of fixing discourse in writing replaces conversations and observations which emerged through social workers in face-to-face contact with clients, in case conferences with other agencies and through other forms of communication technologies.¹⁰³

¹⁰² “Hermeneutics is the art, skill or theory of interpretation, of understanding the significance of human actions, utterances, products and institutions”. In this sense, the term was brought into philosophy, from theology by Dilthey in the late 19th century.

¹⁰³ The telephone and email are very common as well as letters and mobile telephone texts.

Ricoeur suggests that a text is not simply the transcription of verbal communications, but is produced through its own rules and procedures and so it is open to many forms of interpretation. Therefore, the nature of a text is that there is no wrong or right interpretation, since it cannot be reconciled with what the original author intended and even if he or she were asked, the answer would be just another interpretation. So, in line with Foucault, there is no truth in relation to texts; they are always partial, and consequently require work in order to appear complete and coherent.

However, what my case study does reveal, is that social workers, do more or less make the same kind of interpretation of the file this is in contrast to Maureen, who is not a social worker, nor is she socialised into reading or writing in the file. In looking for truth and objectivity, she is making a different kind of interpretation of the text; she wants the file to do different things in contrast to the social workers. Within social work, although the file as an object in its own right is open to lots of interpretations and although it is written by lots of different people, unlike a novel, case files as forms of text are all making the same kind of interpretations. And as I have pointed out earlier, social workers are socialised into using the file in a particular way. It could be argued there was a level of reticence where the system does not encourage people to look at their own file, because the interpretation of the file is controlled within social work. Thus Joan, who believes it is possible to separate data into 'objective' and 'subjective', is explicitly challenged by Ricoeur's argument that text is not simply a transcript of verbal communication, and so there are no such things as objective and subjective text.

The following section explores this through a case study of Maureen; as a child, she had been looked after in care. Her story concerns how she was driven to access her own file in order to fill in certain gaps in her life history.

3.1 Maureen's Story: Filling in the gaps

Maureen gained access to her own social services case-work file.¹⁰⁴ She hoped it would reveal an objective kind of overview of what had happened in her past. In other words, she expected the social service file to be more 'real' or 'truthful' than her own memories and experiences. Maureen had been seeing a psychotherapist for about a year, and one of the major issues that arose out of it was around sexual abuse. Her memory of the actual act was really patchy and triggered feelings "time and time again" that there were substantial gaps in her life history. Maureen's therapist suggested that she retell her story to herself, and it was from this idea that she sought to access her social services case file. In this way, Maureen's case file represented how she had been constructed by social workers as a welfare subject. Maureen wanted to use her file to enable her to re-tell her own narrative with the same clear linear chronology social workers claim.

As I have argued, Ricoeur (1991) claims writing preserves discourse, turning it into an archive that is available as a text which can be read and re-read in different ways. But the text in the file is nevertheless an objectification of the welfare subject preserved through the written word. By putting her request in writing to the chief executive of Social

¹⁰⁴ Maureen was in and out of care between the ages of nine and fifteen.

Services within the borough under which she was taken into care,¹⁰⁵ the file was traced so that all she needed to do was make the appointment to read it under the supervision of a social worker. Maureen's expectations would prove to be quite different from what actually transpired. Firstly, she was told by a very apologetic social worker that the department could not find very much information in her file and that it was relatively thin. Maureen's remarks revealed her first impressions;

“The notes were really subjective. They wrote more or less a kind of diary. On such and such a date I went to see Mavis and they were in the living room blah blah blah and Maureen looked a bit scrawny blah blah blah and that's basically how it was. So they talked about my personality and I was really shocked when I saw that they said that Maureen always had a very worried face and she was the one that was holding her little sister together.”

For Maureen these were nothing more than personal anecdotes, which failed to offer any definitive account of what had happened to her. She told me the breakdown of her parents' marriage led to them ending up living in abject poverty in the late 1960s, when they moved to West London into a small bed-sit.¹⁰⁶ It was there that her family became subjects of social work intervention. Because of the severely impoverished conditions her mother later suffered a nervous breakdown. However, the file now provided no clue about whom or what brought the family to the attention of social services and so it was left to Maureen's own speculations. She says;

I know that when we were at school, there were certain things happening to us with our health that suggested we came from quite a poor background. So we

¹⁰⁵ Current address, date of birth and as far as possible the actual dates of social services care.

¹⁰⁶ By then her brother no longer lived with them; he was in a children's home and attended what was known then as a SEN school for children classified as Educationally Sub-normal.

used get things like ring worm, those kinds of things, so the social workers come in at that point when we were living on our own with mom in a bed-sit with no heating, and hardly any food. So I don't know if at that point if my mom referred herself to social services, or maybe her General Practitioner.

Maureen told me the notes were nevertheless really interesting. They were written on a typewriter so there were odd spelling mistakes. And, on a piece of A4 paper you would have about five entries talking about each of the meetings that had taken place. The notes also recorded social worker concerns and worries about the psychological effects on Maureen and her sister of living with a mother who was frequently hospitalised.

Maureen said there was one page in her notes on which one of the social workers strongly advised that she and her sister should be placed for adoption. The worker concluded that her mother's "bouts of manic depression was just too much for both of them."

Between 1971 and early 1980 Maureen tells of her family having a steady turnover of social workers. However, Mrs B was the longest serving one. Maureen described her to me as a really lovely person who became quite close to the family. That memory triggered in Maureen another narrative that was not in the file. She describes how she remembers that the most consistent social worker made it clear what her feelings were about the professional climate within social work at that time. It reflected the feelings of ambivalence and the de-professionalising trend experienced among social workers in Bowden, and the hidden professionalism which I argue became a third space in which social workers operated (see Chapter Three). Maureen said, "Mrs B became very

disillusioned with social services and her capacity to effect change, which she felt was to make sure families were able to recover from whatever situation we were in.” The reorganisation of children departments into social services departments redefined the role of social workers, presenting them with genuine contradictions about caring effectively and meeting the needs of their clients. However, Mrs B eventually managed to move Maureen’s family out of their squalid accommodation. Maureen’s file revealed she had become a ‘very worried child’, ‘very nervous’, ‘very agitated’, scrawny; “that’s how Mrs B described me, very much the parent trying to keep things together, trying to keep my mom together and trying to keep my little sister together.” Maureen says Mrs B managed to get them into a “brand new block of flats right in the heart of the West End.” She thinks that Mrs B felt it was a real success; “her own sort of personal achievement for the family” reflecting, perhaps, the traditional social work classification of deciding who were the deserving poor.

At the heart of the reasons for Maureen accessing the file is an enormous unspoken gap which she is associating with her memory of being abused. And she wants not just an objective record; she wants evidence that substantiates her position, which makes it real and un-contestable. However, as it turned out, it was never mentioned. In the absence of any evidence, Maureen constructed two explanations. First, it was something to do with the way in which information was recorded; “If those notes were done subjectively then obviously social workers, including Mrs B, must have made a decision in advance about what they were going to put under the dates in their diaries.” She regarded the short minimal paragraphs as probably being typed up quickly at the end of the day. Her second

theory was based on the circumstances of her abuse. Maureen revealed to me she was sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend; his name was listed in the file. Maureen says she just intuitively felt her mother knew, "I think my mom perhaps walked in and found him doing something and decided to get rid of him and hoped we would not remember." According to Maureen that is the reason why it was never reported to the social workers and so wasn't ever mentioned in the documentation. Thus, rather than perhaps accepting that it may not have happened, Maureen engages in what Evans Pritchard calls secondary elaboration: if evidence is present that is contrary to what Maureen believes then, rather than change her mind, she simply makes the evidence fit, because the belief is much more important.

Initially the content of Maureen's file stood in terms of its internal coherence and self-referencing as a stand-alone text. In light of Ricoeur's argument, by reading her file she provided it with another interpretation to its otherwise single abstract social worker voice. But, as I have shown, the file is not meant to contain an objective truth, since it is active rather than passive. It means that any motive to read the file will determine how it is read and what is noted and what is established, just as Maureen did.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the role of case-work files and argued they are inextricably linked to daily social work routines and embedded in the bureaucratic rationality within systems of social work organisational functions. As a product of social work intervention into families, case-work files are situated within the context of the bureaucratic administration of welfare. The process of bureaucratisation was borne out of particular historical developments within the Western democratic state, and the way in which it exercises authority in the regulation of populations. Systems of normalisation imposed greater need for administration and files as methods of keeping records.

Therefore, as naturalised objects case-work files are technical devices used by social workers that convert families into knowable and administrable welfare subjects.

However, I show how the reality is that at times this is contested; files do not always represent an objective truth, since their consistency and authority are undermined by the flow of information, and contradictions embedded within them. Nevertheless, they represent a tradition within social work practice.

In my exploration of how social workers used the files I highlighted how such contradictions were linked to the very defensive ways in which social workers related to recording information. I demonstrated how the files become a source of anxiety and negotiation between social workers, and mirrored systems of management hierarchy and surveillance. The management of the file is a continual process of constructing an internal organisational order out of the mess of daily social work practice. Therefore, as a tool for keeping records the case-work file is a creator of social work knowledge through

written assessments of various professionals, including social workers, but gives the illusion of a single voice. Hence, the file represented an active object through which social workers related to each other over time and space about families under social work surveillance and regulation. It is reflected in the notion of chronology, which is used as a method for integration and socialisation of new social workers into the unit's systems and expectations of work.

Finally, I extended my argument to look at the art of interpretation within case-work files with the case study of Maureen, who accessed her social services case-work file several years after leaving local authority care. Once again I explored the power of the file and the notion of objective truth in relation to Maureen's search for an objective overview of what had happened to her in the past. I argued that Maureen initially approached the contents of her file as if it was more real than her own memories and experiences in her past. However, Maureen's story revealed three points about interpretation. First, her file not only lacked an objective truth, it also offered her minimal subjective descriptions of past events. Second, by reading the file Maureen created her own further elaborations to bridge the gaps she sought to fill in her biography as the basis of her emotional issues. And finally, it is Maureen's own memories that in the end triumphed, even if they contradicted what was recorded. Overall, I argued, the file could not be said to represent a complete record of a case but rather simply a more specialised technology that served to map out key moments and decisions that defined social work practice. In this way, it masked or obscured other aspects such as personal accounts, emotions, and experiences, and thereby enabled the bureaucratic logic of social work to progress.

In Chapter Five I will examine how the assessment and recruitment of foster carers represents the introduction of rational welfare markets within the systems of classification of welfare needs. I argue such a development created a market for foster carers and hence the commodification of kinship.

Chapter 5

The Commodification of Kinship

Introduction

In the previous chapter I argued that the case-work file symbolised the objectification of welfare subjects and converted the mess of practice into manageable pieces of information that fitted into social workers' systems of administration. The focus of this chapter is to extend the notion by looking at the recruitment and maintenance of foster carers in the Borough of Bowden. Not only are individuals objectified, but, they also increasingly enter specific spheres of exchange. I will argue that the recruitment process is not only a rite of passage for all applicants, but like the generation of case-work files, is another example of its traditional role in practice. Also, through the process of assessment, social workers convert foster care applicants into a certain kind of commodity.

As a rule, commodities are defined as goods and services, which have a use value as well as an exchange value within the economy (Graeber 2001; Zelizer 1994). However, the notion of the commodification of kinship that I propose in relation to foster care is set within the context of the political concepts of value that resulted from successive government welfare policies that have been introduced since the 1980s. Those policies

created what became legitimised in a 'mixed economy' of welfare services within local government boroughs like Bowden (see Chapter Three). In this context, the commodification of welfare utilises social workers as the purchasers as well as the providers of welfare services, in conjunction with private sector agencies. Systems of exchange are by their very nature embedded within the social norms and values of social relationships, whereby not just things but people can become commodified. Thus, within the welfare market, foster care, as an activity became part of the same discourse. My examination of the recruitment of foster carers will extend the longstanding anthropological focus on how commodity exchange and gift exchange are negotiated within society, (Mauss 1990). It will show how welfare governmentality has created the social conditions under which both forms of economic exchange and regulation take place, and the resulting tension for social workers as they try to calculate across the meanings within two spheres of exchange and their further links to ideologies of kinship and family. Finally, it will also highlight the anxiety social workers face in meeting recruitment targets that are measured through outcome-driven practice within systems of managerial control.

The chapter begins with a brief exploration of the notions of value embedded within the commodification of welfare and social work practice, and continues to draw on and reflect both Foucault's and Bourdieu's ideological perspectives of discourse and doxa respectively, which is about the conventionalisation of ideology. In addition, I refer briefly to Marx's theory of labour, which defines the nature of commodities and commodity exchange. At the same time, the gift exchange discourse is also an explicit

doctrine within the recruitment process, whereby the monetary reward given to foster carers is disguised within social workers' recruitment language. This is followed by illustrations of the actual recruitment procedures within Bowden's fostering and adoption unit. By showing how the first face-to-face contact between foster care applicants and social workers with the initial home visit is the primary site of objectification within the formal social service infrastructure as part of the applicant's progression toward being approved as a carer, it describes very particular notions of kinship and of the ideology of the family. Management of carers, on the one hand, is illustrated through various forms of reviews, which are based on the systems of internal order of the fostering service within the fostering and adoption unit. But, on the other hand it also highlights the fact that the system reproduces self-regulation among social workers and managers at each level of the organisational hierarchy.

1. The Commodification of Welfare and the Politics of Value

Before outlining the assessment process within the wider context of public sector social work practice it is necessary to locate the politics of value within the context of Marx theory of labour value. In doing so, I draw on economic anthropologist Narotzky (1997) who argues, the concept of value is based on a specific Western intellectual tradition that requires that all aspects of production should be classified as commodities. In her analysis of Marx's theory of value, Narotzky elucidates the fact that the key notion is that labour power is also referred to as a commodity.¹⁰⁷ From this perspective, I argue foster carers enter into a relationship of commodity exchange with local authorities, since their labour

¹⁰⁷ In Marx's labour theory of value he distinguishes between labour and labour power, whereby labour power is a commodity exchange to the owner of the means of production.

in the form of care is part of a wider sphere of production and reproduction of welfare. As a consequence, the marketisation of welfare explicitly results in the construction of foster care as a product of welfare governmentality for the maintenance of the social institution of the family, for children that enter the local authority care system.

The politics of value is also pertinent in Zelizer (1994) for her insights into the shifting value of children and notions of childhood embedded in cultural outcomes of specific social relations. She argues, that the shifting value of childhood represents ‘sacralization’, which related to changes in occupational and family structures during the industrial revolution. Thus, Zelizer contends the removal of children from the labour market removed them from the cash nexus at the turn of the twentieth century, converted them into subjects invested with sentimental and religious meaning.¹⁰⁸ I argue the shifting value of children in the context of Zelizer’s argument and fostering suggests a de-commodification trend. I further contend, the notion of a de-commodification trend relates to the fact that the money for the care of the children is being converted into the idiom of gift.

Fostering and adoption can be measured in a more nuanced form within new approaches in the anthropology of kinship, in which biology is no longer taken for granted, (Carsten 2000: 4). In her work based on the notion of relatedness, Carsten’s main line of reasoning explores the question ‘whatever happened to kinship’. It is an approach in

¹⁰⁸ “Nineteenth-century foster families took in useful children expecting them to help out with farm chores and household tasks”. “In this context, babies were “unmarketable,” and hard to place except in foundling asylums or commercial baby farms.” “But the redefinition of children’s value at the turn of the century challenged the established instrumental assumptions.” “If child labour was no longer legitimate, a working home was anachronism,” (Zelizer (1994: 170).

which she argues Schneider (1984), had a pivotal role since his analysis was and still is at the heart of understanding of kinship and wider knowledge practices in Euro-American cultures. According to Carsten, by focusing on the meaning of kinship Schneider provided a foundation for later scholars such as Strathern (1992a). Strathern's central argument highlights the fact that nature can no longer be taken for granted in the late twentieth century English culture, noting that in Thatcherite Britain the effect of technological developments and particularly the new reproductive technology represents the extension of consumer choice into domains in which such choice have not previously applied, resulting in the destabilisation of nature. Furthermore, as Carsten points out, what Strathern calls the 'modern cycle' involved a new conceptualisation of knowledge. However, in this changed conceptual field nature does not disappear but becomes more visible and therefore I argue nature is no longer naturalised. Interestingly, Strathern argues the significance in the shift in what was taken to be natural has become a matter of choice and so nature has been 'enterprised- up,' Thus, I argue the commodification of kinship and the legalization of the social service family are both related processes which operate in a consumer society that is grounded in the ideology of what du Gay calls an enterprise culture that involve social workers creating cultures of relatedness in ethnically diverse foster families. Thus, Strathern further argues it follows knowledge itself which was previously seen as directly reflected in nature is being destabilised, and less 'reliable' category of family relatedness in a world where change is doxa, can be reflected in what Gillis (1996) calls the "imagined families we live by". As opposed to the "families' we live with", which as Gillis argues has never before occupied a greater cultural significance in negotiating the tensions and contradictions of what my analysis shows are

intense social changes built into political and economic systems embedded in the values of competition. He explains in the following way:

“ Finding no other location for such values as cooperation, enduring loyalty and moral consideration, modern Western culture has mapped these exclusively onto families we live with, a cultural burden that members of these domestic groups find difficult, if not impossible to sustain on an everyday basis”, (Gillis 1996: xvi-xvii).

This line of argument reflects (Osteen 2002; Russ 2002) discussion of gift where the family is the site of moral stability and sense of personhood through inalienability.

1.1 Understanding Practice

Clarke et al (2000: 3) highlights the fact that the unending reconstruction of the welfare state that began in the 1980s was driven by the New Right political ideologies of anti-welfarism and anti-statism expressed within the privatising patterns of reforms associated with Conservative governments in the 1980s and 1990s. The anti-welfarist model viewed welfare spending as economically unproductive, leading to the development of a socially destructive dependency culture. The anti-statist approach treated the free market as the normalising principle for allocating resources, goods and services, influencing the relations between managers, staff and customers in the production and delivery of welfare outcomes. Thus, the commodification of welfare is embedded in the politics of value, which has created the culture that established internal social service markets within local authorities alongside the private sector (Kemshall 2002; Thomas & Pierson

1995:217). Those markets were founded on the key philosophy of 'value for money' and 'efficiency,' which firmly endorse the use of market principles within social services.

Value for money, (VFM) was defined by the audit commission as the relationship between economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Individually, these are defined as Economy: the relationship between planned and actual inputs, representing the price paid or the cost. Efficiency: the relationship between inputs and outputs, which is the measure of productivity. Effectiveness: the relationship between planned and actual outputs, referring to the impact that is achieved. These principles are still valid in the present time

The term 'Value For Money' is about the setting of goals that social workers and their managers are constantly expected to endeavour to reach and improve upon. Once the targets in the form of 'best value' key performance indicators (KPIs) are achieved, as part of the wider social service targets, the fostering and adoption unit needs to continue to work and manage fostering and adoption services to maintain that position. The audit commission highlighted the fact that VFM is at its highest when there is optimum balance between the three important elements of comparatively low cost, high productivity and positive outcomes for the user. Therefore, in fostering and adoption, social workers assess VFM on the cost of care expenses to the foster carer; productivity is the link between quality of care, which is physically and mentally manifested within the child, leading to reunification of the family or successful transfer to an adoptive family.

Hence, exercises in cutting costs transformed welfare into a set of products rather than simply a service that was provided exclusively by local authorities. In so doing, the social service 'client' was redefined as the 'citizen-consumer' through the concept of the

purchaser/provider split by enlarging the reach of the market (Clarke et al 2007: 29)¹⁰⁹. Marketisation became a pivotal moment in time for fostering and adoption, resulting in the commodification of kinship; potential foster carers were able to choose between local authorities and the private sector to sell their labour. For those reasons, I argue, they represent the active ‘citizen-providers’ of care (see Chapter Three). As I have argued in previous chapters, the identity of social work professionals changed as they embraced different forms of practices through self-regulation. Therefore, I argue the commodification of welfare represents a process of normalisation reflecting both Foucault’s and Bourdieu’s ideas. Foucault expresses normalisation as the ways in which policies are implemented, with the creation of evermore complex, systems that classify through discourse to regulate but also reproduce self-regulation. Bourdieu’s concept of doxa is relevant to commodification because it is based on the ways in which ideology shapes the basis for the formation of routine, which becomes embedded in patterns of practice that over time come to represent a tradition (see Chapter Three). Social workers found themselves to have become purchasers and providers of foster care services through their engagement with private sector agencies, in addition to carrying out the established practice for recruiting foster carers under the local authority’s internal assessment procedures.

The extended reach of the market is represented in the private sector by Independent Fostering Agencies. Local authorities work in partnership with private agencies through commissioning, whereby agencies engage in a tendering process to become listed among

¹⁰⁹ Social workers as purchasers assess needs and buy foster care services to meet the needs of the social service customers into an internal quasi-market. Independent Foster Agencies as providers organise and sell the services required from within the external market through competitive tenders to local authorities.

the authority's preferred contracted suppliers of foster carers. This clearly shows that the concept of a foster care market has been established.¹¹⁰ Independent Fostering Agencies have their own foster carers, who are assessed by independent social workers using the Framework of Assessment tool in line with local authorities, which I describe in the following sections of this chapter. In an article in the Guardian July 2000 Stuart Miller highlights the growth of the privatising patterns in relation to foster care. He argues that Britain has developed a protracted shortage of foster places that has generated a multi-million pound boom industry in which a rapidly increasing group of private companies are making large profits by "renting foster families" to local authorities that are desperate to find sufficient places.¹¹¹ Thus, I am suggesting that the introduction of the private sector into welfare provision in the 1980s brought commodity exchange, embedded in competition and profit, to create a mixed economy of welfare, which I argue is at the heart of the commodification of kinship. Indeed, agencies that advertise their services through the Internet state their recognition that value for money is an important aspect of placement procurement, and that local authorities expect to be clear about exactly what is being purchased.

¹¹⁰ "The National Fostering Contract for Placement of Children with Independent Fostering Agencies was launched at the National Commissioning Conference on 3rd October 2009. The contract was initiated by the Department of Children's Schools and Families (DSCF), focusing on outcomes for foster children; a key element of the contract is a tracker tool which enables children's progress to be monitored and collated, thus giving commissioners valuable information about which placements are meeting needs and improving outcomes. The contract will ensure a consistent framework to use all fostering providers and is based around the Every Child Matters agenda. It will be used by local authority commissioners and all providers in the foster care market" (www.fosteringpeople.co.uk)

¹¹¹ "Demand for foster places is at an all-time high and growing, with just 28,000 families caring for about 95,000 children a year. Meanwhile, the agencies are enjoying a golden period, charging councils up to £1,500 a week for each child placed with families on their books. Of that money, the agencies will pass about £350 per child to the carers, almost double what they would get if working directly for the council - and the rest goes to the company" (Miller S. 2000, www.guardian.co.uk).

However, despite practicing within a welfare market, the social workers I encountered in my research tended not to talk explicitly about the money paid in exchange for foster care. Instead, such monetary incentives and assistance appeared to be a secret or were disguised, in favour of the idea that carers tend to be motivated by a general wish to help and give; hence the introduction of the notion of gift exchange into my argument. The covert approach among social workers was accompanied by the explanation that the allowances foster carers received simply covered the cost of caring for a child and was not a 'payment'. This is despite the fact that the very definition of foster care goes hand in hand with money to facilitate that care. Furthermore, money is a commodity par excellence. Hence, all applicants to become carers seem aware that they are entering a market and do so with the knowledge that the service they provide carries a monetary exchange value which is more than just child care costs.¹¹² Furthermore, approved foster carers who embark on and complete National Vocational Qualification training are bestowed with a professional status.¹¹³ However, despite these factors, the continued classification of the exchange value of foster care in terms of an allowance rather than a wage means the gift discourse remains widely distributed throughout the recruitment process, while aspects of commodification which are normalised remain unspoken and invisible. Therefore, if the allowance could be viewed in terms of gift, it represents Fennell's (2000) notion of illiquidity, whereby money is converted to gift by stipulating that it should be used for a particular purpose; in this case the care of the child. However, there is a reward element that carers also receive which is not related to the cost of caring

¹¹² Where local authorities and independent agencies show their rates on websites, the rates are split into various bands, showing how payments are made up, including the reward elements. For example, 0-4, 5-11, 11-16 and 16+. Thus, each child carries a monetary value.

¹¹³ One local authority stated on their website that they would pay a bonus of up to £500 when a carer attained a certain level of NVQ award.

for the child. I argue the reward can only be related to the labour of care or the production of care, and as Narotzky's (1997) Marxist analysis highlighted earlier in this chapter, all aspects of production are classified as a commodity within Western culture. Indeed, local authorities and independent agencies provide additional incentives to attract applicants. Amelia Gentleman's article in the Guardian about Britain's foster care crisis reinforces my argument about the way in which altruistic values are highlighted in opposition to other values. She argues:

“In the wake of Baby P ¹¹⁴ more children are being put into care and yet there is a desperate shortage of foster parents. Fostering is in an unusual position of being semi-voluntary, not professionalised, and although most do receive a fee, there is still a culture that expects them to be altruistic martyrs rather than well-paid professionals; the subject of the fee is a taboo”, (Gentleman 2010).

Taking the link between traditional gift discourse within anthropology and the notion of commodification which I have introduced as a starting point in the following section, I examine the recruitment process in Bowden's fostering and adoption unit, which is based on the 'Assessment Framework.' It starts with the very first stage in the process of recruitment, which is the face-to-face contact between an applicant and a social worker, and goes on to explore the levels of communication between social worker and applicant, and the core values within the judgements that lead to the conversion into a foster care resource for Bowden's service delivery.

¹¹⁴ The shocking case of 17 month-old baby Peter Connolly who died in August 2007 from abuse inflicted by his parents over an 8-month period, even though he had repeatedly come into contact with NHS and Social Service professionals.

2. Assessing and Recruiting

Evidently, the first home visit represents the beginning of a social relationship that is increasingly shaped by the norms and values of recruitment ideology. There are two sides to that relationship. Firstly, it is explicitly centred on notions of goodwill and of giving, which is about creating a sense of belonging for a child within a family considered as the best environment for socialisation and care as I have shown, various anthropologists explore the themes of care around the question of the gift. Secondly, it also establishes a sense of commodity exchange, which is defined purely within a fixed criterion of expectations. Those expectations are the ways in which notions of value intersect with welfare as a feature of production. Once the social worker enters the household, an initial questionnaire is used as a tool to initiate a more detailed and formal fact-finding conversation which represents the objective, 'public' element of the assessment that is ultimately embedded within the questions that are asked. The answers to those questions provide the social worker with a skeletal framework of the applicant's background. The answers facilitate the first stage in the process by which the applicants are objectified and transformed into commodities by the social workers. I argue applicants will be transformed into commodities because once approved they will be the embodiment of Bowden's in-house foster care resource. They will become the method through which social workers fulfil their fostering care and recruitment performance targets as purchasers and providers of foster care as a welfare product.

Other components within the interaction between the two parties are linked to personal perceptions and judgements that are largely based on physical appearances and body language. Inferences are always being made by social workers as part of their task to assess a range of different values and concerns. For these reasons, the social worker's identity is dynamically shaped through a power relation with the applicants, who in turn strive to fulfil what they perceive to be the desired criteria. Thus, it could be argued that applicants are always frequently aware of the need to comply with a fixed and limited set of expectations, and therefore actively engage in their own objectification at the very early stage in order to strategically appear as 'appropriate and suitable'.

2.1 The Initial Home Visit

The visit happens after telephone contact made by a duty social worker in the fostering and adoption unit. It permits social workers access for the first time into the private sphere of the household to scrutinise and make further judgements. I accompanied one of the social workers from the recruitment team in carrying out one such visit. We visited a young couple living in a two-bedroom flat within the Borough. The flat was stylishly decorated, reflecting the age of the couple that presented themselves in a warm and friendly manner. In our first exchange of greetings they exhibited openness and confidence. But it soon became very apparent that they were both somewhat nervous. They told us they had no children together, but one partner had a seven year-old son by a previous relationship. The reasons they gave for wanting to foster were the desire to share in the full-time parenting of a child. The male partner worked as a youth and community worker, and so he talked a lot about how he felt he could draw on his

experience of working with young boys who were disaffected from education and who came from dysfunctional families. His wife was less talkative, but she told us she was trained as a nursery nurse, but was unemployed at the time of our visit.

They clearly tried to present themselves in such a way as to show they had not only learnt from their experiences, but also believed in the 'right kind' of family values and would continue to learn through the recruitment process. From the outset, their aim was to demonstrate to us that they were in tune with, and informed about, many of the social issues children and young people faced. Thus, they tended to express their ideas within notions of the responsible citizen, giving to the community and trying to make a difference, which all fit very neatly within the gift exchange ideology that social workers espouse, and which overlays the alternative discourse of commodity exchange. This ideology creates a binary opposition between the sacred gift and profane commodity.

However, despite their apparent anxieties, the couple overtly expressed their commitment to the necessary criteria of becoming approved foster parents. The meeting ended after about an hour and the social worker's first impressions were positive. Moreover, the intention of social workers at this stage is not to put up barriers early on in the process unless there is irrefutable evidence from the start to suggest otherwise. In the light of this, the couple was eligible to be invited to the 'prep day' (see below).

However, in potential opposition to this decision regarding suitability, the more immediate practical question that remained in the mind of the social worker was whether

the accommodation they offered was suitable. The issue was whether the foster child would have to share a room, since one of the partners already had a seven year-old son who would sometimes stay overnight. Hence, back at the office, debates among social workers dealing with recruitment continually revolved around having to struggle with balancing such mixed criteria; in this instance, how a child in care should be integrated into a foster family in terms of room-sharing. One social worker remarked she was not sure a couple she had recently visited could be approved because they already had a baby but only two bedrooms. Another worker also argued that potential carers should be discounted until their own child started talking and therefore they should be cautious about allowing the possibility of a seven year-old foster child sharing a room with an eighteen month-old baby. Such debates highlight the fact that social workers were trying to balance different notions of value and criteria assessment. On the one hand, there are criteria that relate to the ideological notions of “good parenting” demonstrated by the applicants, yet on the other hand there is a need to assess very practical issues of resource and circumstances, such as space and existing children within the household, and personal non-procedural judgements.

I will now move onto the second stage of assessment, in which applicants face further objectification through a series of discussions and information gathering. Things are never what they seem. The event is presented by social workers to all applicants as simply about the formal sharing of general information about fostering. In fact, it turns out to be a highly significant and subtle form of informal scrutiny of each of the applicants by social workers that carries more weight than they were led to believe.

2.2 The Preparation Day: Assessing Best Value

Let me take one particular day as a typical example. The day was presented simply as a training day, with certain elements of the programme designed specifically to facilitate active group participation. Cindy, one of the organisers, is about thirty years old, slim and petite. She has an oval-shaped face and shoulder-length dark brown hair, which was worn in a ponytail. She has a warm smile and a great sense of humour, which masks the more serious side of her nature. Beverley the other social worker, in contrast, tends to present a more reserved persona. She is about thirty-five years old, with a medium build and medium-length black hair, which complements her round face and pleasing smile. She also wears glasses, and with her hair pulled tightly back into a bun she fits the stereotypical image of a schoolmistress. I also helped facilitate. During the day we each took turns in presenting different segments of information and supervising the various small group work and discussion elements of the programme.

The content of the information they used was very standard; it rarely varied in any significant way. From the social workers' perspective the day was simply meant to convey important pieces of information without overloading the applicants so early in a process in which some people may drop out. Bowden's fostering service, look for particular skills and abilities in applicants, through their social workers' assessment, that are supposed to reflect key skills that are classified as competencies. Each competence describes an important aspect of fostering against which each applicant's skills are measured. It is based on the evidence applicants need to provide in order to tick the

various boxes. So the 'prep day' that I describe below is the primary stage of engaging with social workers and other applicants to gain further understanding of how to fit into the recruitment criteria. It is argued by social workers that the competence approach helps prospective foster carers to gain a better understanding of how they should practice, and it also helps social workers to produce a more objective assessment. This kind of discourse reinforces the notion within social work that objective information can be separated from subjective information (see Chapter Four). Nevertheless, in line with my argument in this chapter, ideas of value within the ideology of the market are based on the discourses of objectiveness and measurable evidence. Moreover, the marketisation of welfare has meant the inevitable shift towards greater emphasis on the ideology of professionalization (see Chapter Six) that strengthens notions of commodification of foster care applicants by social workers.

The prep day began at 9am and finished at 4pm and there were nine applicants in attendance. The events started with the welcome. The social workers introduced themselves to the group and I was introduced as a researcher who was assisting them, then each member of the group also introduced themselves to us and to each other. The applicants were not given an agenda, but the social workers and I used a detailed programme guide. Beverley outlined the various aims of the day, which emphasised the assessment element as a two-way process and that the day's event would enable applicants to enter discussions based on the information and ask questions to aid their final decisions to foster. Once ground rules were agreed, the group was given the first hand out to help them explore, for approximately twenty minutes, the process of applying

to foster. It included a brief overview of Form F, which contains very probing assessment questions about the private sphere of the household and wider family tree and networks. By focusing on life history, Form F encapsulates information about applicants' family background and relations across space and time. Therefore, it consolidates the classification and objectification of applicants in their conversion into commodities, initially with the creation of the file (see Chapter Four) and later when they are finally approved by the Fostering Panel.

The next exercise presented by Cindy was called the 'Merry-Go-Round'. She posed three questions and each person had to write their answers. First, what would you do if you won the lottery jackpot? Second, if you want people to know one thing about you what would it be? Third, what appeals to you about fostering? These questions were evidently formulated to elicit ideas from the group about motive and also personal value. However, in doing so, the link between commodity exchange and fostering remained cleverly disguised. The next segment of the presentation, with the aid of the hand out, highlighted the reasons why children come into the care system. It was my turn to lead the brainstorming exercise and record the ideas onto flipchart paper. I explained that its purpose was to build on the common-sense knowledge (or otherwise) that people may already know about why children are fostered such as the media, friends, family, and perhaps direct personal experiences. Once the ideas have been given from the audience, with the help of Cindy and Beverley, we clarified and classified the list through discussion. We also discussed the definitions of the more serious reasons (such as various forms of abuse) that children who come into care experience; sexual abuse is

particularly very sensitive for carers to deal with. Therefore, the first key message that was highlighted is that ‘fostering is complex and should not be seen as just a swap of one bad family for a good one.’ From this point onward I became more of an observer rather than active facilitator. So I assisted in writing on flipchart paper when needed, providing other general help when called upon to do so, but at all times keenly listening to the discussions.

The different types of fostering which applicants could consider, and the tasks involved, were the next topic of exploration by Beverley. It covered mainstream fostering for all ages of children. With the younger age range, the task of foster care is to help the child move back to its own family or on to another permanent family, be it a foster or adoptive family (see Chapter Seven). However, mainstream placements can last from one day to three years or more. Permanency is about giving a child a permanent home between the ages of seven to twelve years, specifically matched to the family until the age of eighteen years. Remand means working with young people who have been remanded into care of the local authority by a court. It can last for up to three months and an adult must be available during the day to escort the young person to court or solicitors meetings. Some carers can also specialise in working with children who have disabilities. Carers are also needed to take children for holiday or short-break placements, where another foster family needs a short break without the foster child. In addition, applicants have to consider whether they would be able to care for children in ways that would respect the issues of race, religion and culture. About thirty minutes before the first coffee break, the group was divided in smaller groups and given a practical example to explore for further

discussion. I handed out paper and pencils and sat with one of the group. After the break, each group selected one person to feed back their ideas to start the more general discussion of how they thought foster care could help children in the case study. The case study was as follows:

Monica and Lloyd are children of mixed heritage; they are children with one Black and one White parent. Their mother is Irish and White. Their father is Black, African-Caribbean. They have been living with their mother, who has to go into hospital suddenly because of mental illness. Their other relatives are not in a position to look after them. Monica's teacher says she has been doing really well at the nursery and is a very bright little girl who enjoys drawing and books. Her social worker has only met her a couple of times and found her quiet and very grown-up. Lloyd is very energetic and wants to walk everywhere. He is learning new words all the time. He has been with a child-minder for about six months since his mum returned to work. She describes him as a beautiful child with a great sense of humour and into everything. Monica and Lloyd get on well together and Monica is very protective of her brother.

The applicants are given four questions to consider. First, what might Monica and Lloyd be feeling? Second, what could a foster home offer Monica and Lloyd? Who else would be involved? What other information and skills would a carer need? The subsequent discussion highlighted the need to promote emotional and physical well-being of children who have been separated from their families; how foster families need to adapt to the development of home rules, and greater consideration of health and safety issues embedded in notions of assessing risk. They would have to work with not only children,

but also their families and with social workers. Applicants were encouraged to think in terms of having transferable skills and to view fostering as a job, which means becoming familiar with guidelines laid down in child care law (which was introduced to them in a hand-out). They were also presented with some statistical information that briefly outlined the population of “looked after Children” in Bowden. It stated the total number as at 1/4/1997 was 469, in 1/4/1998 it rose to 496 with 204 (41%) from Black and ethnic minority communities. By 1/4/1999 it fell to 467. In addition, children aged 10 years and under form just over half the existing looked after population. It also highlighted that there is a dearth of placements for young people aged 11-15 years, particularly boys. They are more likely to have behaviours that appear difficult to manage in a family setting and are more likely to be placed in residential facilities. Young people aged 15 years and over were shown to make up a quarter of all new admissions, which was often due to family crises, problems of not attending school and or offending behaviour. Accordingly, carers are expected to work in partnership with social workers, who are the agents in Bowden’s welfare market to fulfil its targets for looked after children in the borough. In this way, carers are classified as part of a team working with social workers in the commodification of kinship. It highlights the public context of fostering as a resource that is embedded into the departmental structure of the Fostering and Adoption Unit.

The atmosphere became much more informal during coffee breaks and more so over lunch because it was a longer break. By then people felt more relaxed; they had got to know each other a little better in the various discussions and chit-chats with the person

immediately sitting next to them. Furthermore, they came to realise that they were not alone in feeling apprehensive. But the surveillance by social workers was persistent. In fact, throughout those informal periods the intuitive senses become even more heightened through regular eye contact, one-to-one exchanges, and continual observation. Unlike the previous face-to-face interaction between social workers and prospective carers, the group setting was seen as allowing social workers to make judgements about each applicant's social skills through their interactions with others. Furthermore, the applicants were expected to demonstrate that they could, and would, co-operate and ultimately adopt social service notions of good family values. Lunch was Caribbean food; for some people it was the first time they had ever tried Caribbean cuisine. So it became a way of breaking the ice between individuals who had not had a chance to speak with each other previously. I was speaking to a couple and the husband said to me, very quietly, do you think they will cover how much we will get paid; his wife immediately nudged him. It became immediately apparent to me that he was one of only two males in the group and they were expected to accompany their wives to the 'prep' day. However, the finer details of money may not have been discussed with his wife, since she would be the main carer. Strikingly, such an important part of providing their services was not mentioned by anyone else in the group, which was comprised of main carers. Similarly, when I ask social workers how much foster carers receive, they hesitate, and if they give me a figure they emphasise that it varies and they are not sure what the exact figure really is. However, some local authorities openly publish the rates they pay for foster carers on their website, while others do not. It is a testament to the fact that local authorities are operating in a competitive welfare market which further reinforces the commodification

of kinship, since each child, according to age and needs, is classified as a unit of monetary value within a temporal framework based on weekly or monthly calculations.

After lunch, two foster carers with over ten years experience between them conveyed the benefits of their experiences in a presentation to the group, with a question and answer session at the end. They tended to emphasise the more challenging aspects of their role, and I could see the looks of surprise on some people's faces. They felt a little overwhelmed and unsure whether they possessed the necessary mental coping strategies. But in a market where carers are essential commodities, applicants are reassured that they can develop their skills with further training, help and support of social workers. It should have been followed by a video focused on young people, but the video was mislaid. At this stage it is one hour to go to the end of the day. The last two exercises explored first, the importance of keeping memories safe, whereby each person had to close their eyes and think back to their childhood with family or friends and write onto a piece of paper shaped like a petal. The petals were collected by us and arranged into a flower on flipchart paper. Children may come into care with nothing more than a few possessions in a bag. Separated from family belongings and surroundings, it can be difficult to hang on to a sense of self. Through the exercise, applicants are shown how carers can help preserve the memories and knowledge that family members pass on. Here we see the first hint of eliciting emotions, which is typical in a rite of passage that pervades the structure of recruitment, despite claims of objectivity by social workers. The final exercise looked at the impact of fostering on the family of the carer, their wider family and friendship networks, but at the same time it was cast as a positive contribution

to the community in facilitating social inclusion. These were followed by a further question and answer session between the group and the social workers before each applicant was given the chance to evaluate the day's event. Each applicant, were required to complete and sign a form designed to elicit their impressions of the day's programme. They were expected to have demonstrated their commitment to becoming foster carers, and to evaluate the issues that were most informative and insightful in helping them decide whether to continue to undergo more intense scrutiny, or conclude their involvement at that point.

I have chosen four questions out of eight that I consider reflect the important aspects of applicants' responses. The first question is how useful did they find the 'prep' course and how could it have been better. Five people (56%) found it useful, three people found (33%) very useful and one person (11%) did not. One person stated it could have been better if the group was given an agenda for the day to see what areas would be covered. Also the introduction of each group member should say more about themselves, such as whether they had children and their job or profession. Another person said the organisational structure of Bowden was not useful; it was too detailed at such an early stage. However, the overall diagram that showed the relationship to fostering was good. The second question is how they would rate the tutors' approach. Four people (44%) felt they were excellent and 5 people (56%) felt they were good. Nevertheless, one person was critical of the overheads being projected onto a White cupboard door; but also expressed far more appreciation for the hand out. The third question asks which exercise they found useful and why. One person (11%) had no comments. Six people (67%)

simply stated all the exercises were useful and gave no further insights. Two people (22%) commented on two of the exercises; one said, “Preparing your family, the details and contexts was very useful. The petal put us directly in touch with our feelings, memories as precious.” The other said, “Writing about your memories, the importance of not destroying children’s special belonging.” The final question that I focus on is, has the course helped them feel better prepared to foster. It was an overwhelming yes by 8 people (89%) with just one dissenter (11%). There are a variety of reasons from various respondents:

“It gives me an insight of the impact of foster children on a family unit in a practical and emotional way. It has good preparation points, ideas of what type of things that is expected of us caring for a child or children who we know nothing about to be supportive and understanding. Yes, by listening to the other foster carers. It gave more insight and awareness of child centeredness.”

They all acknowledged that they would need further training once they were approved. But there was no discussion about how money would facilitate those outcomes.

After the applicants left, both social workers and I got together ostensibly to carry out our own evaluation of the day. There were no formal mechanisms to guide or enable the social workers to reflect on their own input into the day, or think about adjusting the contents or methods of subsequent presentations. This doesn’t mean all went smoothly. For example, the social workers did not seem to know beforehand that the projector screen did not work and that the important video they needed for the session was missing. But, despite the fact that they experienced such teething problems, which potentially

undermined their professionalism, both workers seemed to be resigned to the fact that that kind of attention to detail just did not receive much priority when other workers use the space. This general attitude also led to fragmentation within the recruitment team. For example, both social workers argued that the recruitment process as a whole lacked structure, because there was a general lack of consensus about the suitability of potential foster carers and how this related to other aspects of assessment. This resulted in a shift towards individual social workers deciding on issues of suitability, based as much on personal views of each worker as any general procedural set of guidelines. This represents yet again the mess of practice versus the limits of formal policy. The point is, in order to meet recruitment targets while trying to adhere to core values in fostering, social workers have to adjust the way they make decisions to determine the inclusion or exclusion of the various applicants within each step of the assessment process. So, their informal personal judgements form an integral part of the selection process that is never recorded or evaluated. The meeting we three had after the prep day, for example, was not only about how things went but I discovered our main and only focus was actually about making judgements based on our impressions of the participants' input into the proceedings. According to social workers the task of recruitment is output driven and more managerially controlled than some of their other duties. It demonstrates once again that it is managers who are on the receiving end of the blame culture in which social workers continue to operate, and it cascades down and puts pressure on everyone. Recruitment social workers argue that that their practice manager is more interested in numbers, prioritising quantity over quality that ends up wasting social workers' time and needless paperwork. One of the social worker told me an applicant who had taken part in

the prep day actually broke down in tears in a subsequent group session that was a more intense form of assessment. That applicant had suffered a recent bereavement and so, according to my social worker informant, was still too vulnerable and should not have been invited in the first place. They argued that the social worker who carried out the initial home visit should have advised the applicant to take more time to think about the demands of fostering an equally vulnerable child.

After the prep day, applicants go on to the final stages of assessment. In striving to fit into the very restricted criteria some applicants fall by the wayside. In the following section, two examples relate to home assessments. The first is based on a family that was turned down for fostering; not because of their family values but how those values translated into the physical environment of their household. The second is about the relationship between space, notions of belonging and notions of exclusion. Together they represent two facets of the middle-class values within recruitment governmentality which reveal the informal ways in which social workers make decisions, despite employing, and only recording, formal explanations.

2.3 Home Assessments

The home assessment is the final phase of recruitment process and moves closer to the commodification of kinship with the creation the foster family as a care resource within the managerial objective of Bowden's social service. It was a Friday afternoon in the fostering and adoption unit when I walked into one of the offices. I said hello to Cindy, who is one of the social workers I assisted with during the prep day. "Do you have

anything you want me to help you with?" I asked. At first she said, "*Not really*". But then, her face lit up with a smile as she added, "*unless, you want to come with me on a home visit. I need to go and tell a couple their place is not suitable to foster and I am not looking forward to it*".

Cindy told me that she had carried out a previous visit to the couple's home and was worried about the physical environment. She also sought second opinions from two of the other social workers in the unit. In their feedback, they both felt the home was suitable to place a child even though it was very messy. Nonetheless, Cindy decided to stick with her original conclusions. She believed the accommodation on offer was not suitable because of the hygiene standards within the home, and furthermore, she told me the couple's attitude was not very cooperative. She said they were very casual about her misgivings and as far as they were concerned she was making a fuss about nothing and they were being judged unfairly. Cindy hoped to draw on my support to reinforce her own beliefs. She said she wanted me to go along and see for myself her concerns and give my opinion. In fact, what was really going on was that my opinion was being sought not only to provide corroboration for Cindy's objective criteria, but also the more informal judgements that are not recorded or evaluated.

There was a White British couple living in a small two-bedroom terraced house. They had a ten month-old baby and two dogs. We were greeted with pleasant smiles when we arrived and shown to the living room. The room was fairly tidy, but some dust was visible on the furniture and their baby was crawling around on the floor. The couple

explained that they treated their dogs as if they were also babies and the baby played with them as if they were his toys. On her previous visit, Cindy told me that when she asked for the dogs to be left outside because they tended to jump up the couple reluctantly complied, but clearly resented the request. On our visit, we were both relieved to find the dogs had been put in the garden before we arrived. However, within a few minutes of being in the house my nostrils began to sting, and I immediately knew from experience it was caused by a combination of dust and dog hair that was floating in the atmosphere of the living room. Luckily I had some chewing gum in my handbag and it helped the tickle in my throat; nevertheless I had to blow my nose several times.

Cindy asked for us to be shown around the house. We were taken upstairs, which consisted of two small bedrooms, although the master bedroom was a fraction larger, and a tiny bathroom. The lady of the house apologised for the untidiness of the master bedroom and the messy bathroom. The other room was less messy, but it was used to accommodate two students who had left that morning and smelt very stuffy even though they had known Cindy was coming to inspect the house that afternoon. The room had an old thread-worn carpet on the floor, which needed a serious clean. Downstairs there was a through-lounge and a small kitchen that was very untidy with everything caked in a layer of grease. They were also in the process of building an extension to the rear of the kitchen. Cindy took one look and judged it to be too unhygienic for the preparation of food. I was just simply desperate to leave, but we went back into the living room to complete the visit. Finally, Cindy tactfully told the couple that the fostering standards required meant that their accommodation needed some adjustments. She told them when

they finished the extension and carried out some redecoration they could be re-considered.

Needless to say the couple again felt they were being judged unfairly, since they really wanted to be approved. They became visibly angry and resentful, not merely because their home was being judged, but also their lifestyle and by implication themselves as persons. The husband said, “Our house is lived in”, while his wife said, “Yeah, it’s a bit untidy but it’s not really dirty and that’s the difference. I passed the Hoover round before you came”. At that point her gestures indicated she had vacuumed the sitting room, although it was obvious that nothing had been done upstairs or in the kitchen. We both sat in silence, listening to the couple’s efforts to defend their position, but for Cindy the decision had been made. She repeated her explanation about ‘the standards’ to placate the situation and ensure it appeared to be a neutral ‘objective’ decision, and the conversation drifted into relatively friendly small talk. The couple started to mask whatever feelings of disappointment they had through smiles of resignation as we prepared to leave their home.

The meeting ended and I breathed a sigh of relief. When we got outside into the fresh air Cindy said to me, “I know they resent me as a social worker”. It was clear that the power relationships which exists between social workers and foster care applicants mean social workers can draw on the notions of ‘the agency’s standards’ to support their decisions. I asked Cindy whether it was true that some children who come into the care system are actually used to living in what can be described as very messy homes in which

standards of hygiene would be of concern. She agreed. “But”, she said, “Just because a foster child came from that environment doesn’t mean they shouldn’t have a chance of experiencing a different kind of home”. During that conversation, we were both also aware that we were both also using informal interpretations and personal standards about what was acceptable and what was not.

The couple lived in a small house with a baby and two dogs. They had only one income, so carrying out home improvements was a slow process. It could be argued that they may have considered that fostering would help them bring in some extra income to help them with the work on the house. In the meantime, however, their lifestyle did not give a favourable first impression. Nevertheless that lifestyle was their norm. The couple clearly felt that fostering standards were too clinical and it did not represent ‘real life’. To fulfil this area of competence, applicants have to demonstrate they provide a home environment that is not only safe but also healthy for a child to grow and develop in. It could also be argued that the couple resisted simply fitting in to what they clearly believed were very limiting criteria by not engaging in the norms of objectification embedded in the politics of values and were in the end rejected.

Back in the office on the week following our visit, Cindy reported the visit to her manager, telling her of my role. The manager told me she was pleased that I was available to give that kind of support and so I was asked to enter my comments in the file. By writing in the file, I was taking a further part in the objectification of the applicants. I recorded what I considered to be the facts as I observed them, but also what in my

opinion were the goodhearted as well as financial motives behind the couple's wish to enter the welfare market. So in the end the case was concluded and the file was closed, at least for the time being. The social worker also exercised a level of technical autonomy (Freidson 1986), in providing her manager with an explanation about why she judged the family's accommodation not suitable to foster child.

The next example also relates to how family values are translated within the household. The approval process came to a halt based on how the division of space led to issues of belonging on the one hand and on the other hand, a form of exclusion under recruitment governmentality.

Beverley was my main informant within the recruitment team. After helping Cindy at the prep day, Beverley was allocated to do a home assessment with one of the couples that could not attend subsequent group sessions. I was keen on the prospect of being able to take part in a home study, but it all came to an end very shortly after the process had started. The Beckfords were an African-Caribbean family who lived in a neighbouring borough. They had three children, two boys and one girl, and lived in a four-bedroom house. Mrs Beckford was about thirty years old, medium build with dark smooth complexion, shoulder-length black hair and brown eyes. She had a warm personality and appeared to be quite confident. Mr. Beckford was tall, with broad shoulders, black hair and dark brown eyes. He was friendly but he tended to allow his wife to do most of the talking, as it seemed she was going to do most of the practical aspects of caring for a foster child.

The first visit took place during the evening with the whole family. Beverley reintroduced me to the couple and they remembered me helping on the prep day and had no objections to me being part of their assessment. The boys flitted in and out of the lounge during our meeting and their daughter showed off by trying to gain her mother's attention. Beverley asked the couple to think about finding a balance between bringing up their own children and catering for a foster child. With mainstream fostering in mind, the Beckfords needed to think about getting the child to school, the age range, and the sex, of the child they would foster. The race of the child seemed to have been assumed at that stage because it was not mentioned. The kids said they were looking forward to having a foster child in their home. The boys, twelve year-old Darren and nine year-old Robert, wanted a boy so they could play football, but their nine year-old sister Shamira wanted a girl to 'even up the scores' between her and her brothers. On that visit, Beverley and I did not look around the house, but I must say our first impressions were good¹¹⁵. The first meeting ended and a date was set for a daytime visit with Mrs Beckford.

On the next visit Beverley and I looked around the whole of the house. The house had a warm family atmosphere. Beverley complemented Mrs Beckford and commented on the spacious bedrooms. We then went downstairs into the kitchen, which looked onto the garden. We both further complemented her on the tastefully laid out kitchen and her garden. In order to accommodate the foster child, the Beckfords intended to let their boys

¹¹⁵ The physical environment of the home is linked to health and safety. But in this case there were also four bedrooms, good decorative maintenance and standard of hygiene.

share a room, thus freeing one for the foster child. Beverley immediately warned Mrs Beckford to think it through very carefully. She said although the boys did not mind sharing a room, what would happen if either of them changed their mind. The foster child could then become a source of resentment. Mrs Beckford's offer of a home for a child was consequently called into question by the social worker based on concerns over the inclusion of one child over the possible exclusion of another. Such logic implied a value judgement about the parental skills of the Beckfords and what might happen hypothetically. That judgement became even more explicit when Beverley related her own personal narrative to Mrs Beckford and I. She told us that her two daughters have their own room but there are times when they share, but she could never use the free room for another purpose because both her daughters needed their own personal space and "they wouldn't feel good if they lost their own room".

It is certainly true that the fostering pack states a foster child should have a room of their own, and Mr and Mrs Beckford did indeed provide a room. But the personal opinion of the social worker, drawn only on her personal experience in this case, proved to be more powerful and the final basis for making a judgement. Thus, the Beckfords were made to feel they had failed to find the 'right balance'. In the end they lost interest in pursuing that goal any further. And so it was that the final part of the assessment ended before it had hardly begun, highlighting how space is a vital part of the commodification of kinship.

So far I have shown how the commodification of kinship is defined within the target-driven recruitment governmentality and the politics of care exchange value placed on the foster child. I also have shown how social workers employ both formal and informal means throughout the assessment process to objectify and convert foster care applicants into commodities through their own collusion. Placed in the context of the discourse of transformation and the ideology of social service family, the result is a commodification of the notion of kinship. How that new status of foster family is supervised and maintained by social work governmentality is my focus in the next section.

3. Welfare as a Product: The Management and Supervision of Carers

As I have illustrated above, social workers often relate to their managers through a blame culture (also see Chapter Three). But, despite that fact, social workers also are being classified in the role of managers themselves. The management of foster carers is labelled maintenance and represents a new set of rituals within systems of social work governmentality. All fostering social workers are allocated an average caseload consisting of sixteen foster carers (see Chapter Three). Each epitomises the objectified welfare product, and symbolises in the commodified foster family that may or may not have a child in placement. Maintenance is essentially about the access and regulation of the foster family to conform to culturally specific ideals of the family through regular supervision by an allocated social worker. Although these values were originally embedded in the notions of gift exchange, they also now reflect an extension of the measurement of value for money. The service is conceived of as a welfare product that is

being provided and so, the notion of commodity exchange is an ever-present feature, in a relationship that is also reciprocal.

In the context of maintenance, value for money in relation to fostering and adoption is the commitment on the part of social workers to continually develop and deliver a range of high-quality services through “in-house resources with Bowden’s local authority foster carers. Local authority carers represent a comparatively cost-effective solution in contrast to carers from independent agencies, as I have illustrated earlier in this chapter. I have also previously shown recruitment social workers are fulfilling key performance targets to recruit, train, assess and approve sufficient foster carers to meet the needs of those children requiring foster placements. Their actions are also embedded in managerial organizational objectives of governance. Thus, the maintenance of foster carers is a two-way process, dealing with the quality control of the service. Social workers judge carers, as they did during the assessment process, for their continued commitment to the integration of foster children into their families by building their self-esteem in a caring environment. Carers are required to fulfil the various contact arrangements with birth families, engage as part of a team with social workers and other specific professionals related with the child/children’s care plans. Social workers in turn provide advice and guidance to support foster carers and their families, in updating their skills and competencies to cope with the diverse needs of the child/children that come into their care. In this way, children and carers achieve positive outcomes in terms of the five

foundations of the ‘*Every Child Matters*’ agenda’; Staying safe, Being healthy, Enjoying and Achieving, Economic well-being, Making a positive contribution.¹¹⁶

One of the formal means by which the management of foster carers takes place is through reviews. Review meetings are held within the home of the foster family and are taken very seriously, even if they may not take place exactly within the stated time frame according to policy. As I have argued in Chapter Three, the slippage of deadlines is one of the factors that relate increasingly to the disorder relating to social work practice. Like case conferences, they are ritualised, and so they too provide the gateway for shared decisions that shift responsibility from actual people to abstract systems of social work governmentality. It also means the reviews give social workers access into the family, not only to assess, but also as a way to regulate and maintain order. However, the notion of surveillance, drawn from Foucault, also suggests self-regulation, which means foster carers inevitably discipline themselves through the internalisation of a specific ideology of family and the managerial procedures of Bowden social service.

One type of review meeting takes place one month after a child joins a foster family. Before the actual meeting is convened the child-care coordinator interviews the child in the placement privately. The opinion of the child is sought based on its age and whether he or she is considered competent to make an informed judgement about their foster placement. However, observational techniques through play are also employed by social

¹¹⁶ A government, initiative launched in 2002, in England and Wales. It is the very important legislation in relation the children and families leading into the Children Act 2004. Every Child Matters related to children and young adults up to age 19 years and 24 years for those with a disability. Those principles cover all areas of services and institutions that touch the lives of children.

workers, especially with younger children. The formal meeting consists of the same coordinator, the social worker representing the child, the fostering social worker, the child and the foster carers. Four weeks after welcoming a child into the family is often a very tense time for newly approved foster carers. It is a probationary period, in which the commodification of kinship is scrutinised through an explicit form of monitoring and exercise in quality control. Thus, what officially appears to be about checking on the child is very much also about surveillance of the foster carers. The following example charts the journey of Sandra, who was classified as an unaccompanied minor and entered into the jurisdiction of Bowden's social services.

At her placement review meeting there were five people (including me) representing Bowden's social services. I was there in my capacity of shadowing the fostering social worker. Sandra's foster mother was open and welcoming, but she was very nervous about the meeting as we all arrived almost simultaneously. For the first time since her approval by social services she was about to face another kind of formal assessment. She was in her thirties, with a young daughter who was also at school, and she worked part-time and kept a well maintained home. Sandra's story, was outlined at the start of the meeting, by the Childcare Coordinator and Sandra responded to and confirmed that the information was correct. Sandra's journey brought her from Rwanda to London's Heathrow airport and she was subsequently briefly looked after by the social services in another borough before later being transferred to the care of Bowden and placed in foster care. At the meeting Sandra was said to be 15 years old. She was tall and very slim and she seemed quite shy, but she was however articulate and spoke with a very good

command of English. The agenda for the review was to discuss and record a general progress report for Sandra and her foster mother.

The main issues were around Sandra's health; she had a vitamin deficiency, but her foster mother had already taken her to the doctor. Sandra was said to be adjusting well to a change of diet and she also showed her foster mother some Rwandan recipes. When it came to education, both Sandra's foster mother and social worker were asked to monitor Sandra so she chose the right subjects for GCSEs. Sandra also talked generally about her hopes for the future. When extra-curricular activities were raised, I was able to offer a suggestion about a local youth group that was close by. Sandra said she wanted to visit some friends from her home country that lived in Dartford and her social worker was asked to arrange and supervise at least the initial meetings. Thus, the meeting updated the care plan by reviewing what was already actively in place, and what further plans of actions were needed, whilst taking the views of Sandra and her foster mother into account.

However, the review meeting could also be said to represent the continuation of the objectification of the foster carers in the commodification of kinship. It also reflects the contractual relationship of the foster family to systems of governmentality embedded in the marketisation of welfare. Under such arrangements ritual surveillance serves to ensure an on-going reproduction of care as a welfare product, so that value is seen to be achieved according to increasing awareness of a market exchange system. In the final

sub-section, I will focus on spot checks as additional ways for the fostering team to implement their systems of internal quality control and regulation.

3.1 Spot Checks

Spot checks characterise one feature of the face-to-face contact between foster carers and social workers. It is one of the systems of social work governmentality that I observed in the very early stages of my fieldwork when I shadowed a fostering manager on a number of home visits. The visits took me out of the office and revealed another aspect of fostering social work practice within the unit. I was given the task of making phone calls on the previous day to confirm appointments with the carers. We carried out three announced visits (and one unannounced) during the course of one working day. It was explained to me that the purpose of these types of home visits was to form a system of evaluating the fostering service by gathering information from carers about how they felt about the support they received from the fostering team. This is another example of quality control of social workers performance management. In other words, it was said to be about evaluating support, rather than the carers themselves. The sample of carers was chosen because each of them had previously lived through various forms of problems with their present and former foster placements.

During our visits, each of the carers spoke frankly and openly to us. I introduced myself as the person that spoke with them on the phone the day before to break down any barriers that my presence might have caused. One carer broke down in tears during our visit, as she reflected upon and discussed with us the issues which had caused her a great

deal of anxiety. Two of the carers felt particularly hurt about the termination of their previous placements; the manager was already acquainted with the important facts of each case, but had not shared them with me before our visits. One carer was indignant about the breakdown of a six-year-old placement. Because unproven issues involving the sexual abuse of the child in her care could have escalated into a very serious charge, the placement was terminated to protect both carer and agency. In such circumstances foster carers' are offered counselling if it is judged that it could be beneficial.

The day went by very quickly as we prepared to carry out the last, unannounced, visit after lunch. All carers get one unannounced visit once per year. The couple we visited were approved for the placement of babies. However, after inspecting the home, the room that they were decorating for a baby was not finished and they could not provide a clear time frame of how quickly the work was going to be completed. In addition, we also observed a very active toddler at play in the household. It prompted the social worker to enquire how the mother, as the main carer, would cope with looking after a baby while caring for her very active child. The mother told us he would be going to nursery for half a day during the week and she felt he was actually just showing off because we were there. She clearly just wanted to get started with a placement. But recognising they were the cause of the delays in getting a placement because of the decoration, they wanted to reassure us that they were still committed. This visit provided another example of space is important not only in the commodification of kinship but also within the quality control exercise.

The spot checks were therefore also a way of checking the social workers in terms of the relationship and support they provided for the foster carers. Thus, as a form of surveillance it demonstrates internal governmentality of social workers (see Chapter Four). Furthermore, foster carers experience social work governmentality by being continually viewed and judged in terms of exchange value criteria as a particular kind of social service family. Therefore, there are varying sets of discourses always at play about parenting and the practicalities of space and how it is constructed in the family home to accommodate a foster child.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on the recruitment and management of foster carers in Bowden through an examination of the marketisation of welfare. I argued that such an approach leads to the commodification of kinship and rendered foster care as a welfare product. I showed how the rise of quasi-internal social service markets within local authorities embodied the politics of value that is embedded within welfare governmentality. It endorsed the normalisation of the key discourses of ‘value for money’, ‘efficiency’ and market principles within social work in which clients are redefined as consumers. Thus, the identity of social workers also changed, as they became purchasers as well as providers of welfare services and with it changes to the nature of how they practiced. Thus, social workers became agents within the welfare market in which they recruited and managed foster carers in order to deliver a particular style of fostering service. The market had become a stable norm in which social workers regulated foster carers as commodities, but at the same time the gift exchange discourse became an overt feature in the recruitment process, masking the fact that foster carers receive a reward or payment for their services.

I showed how recruitment is a general method of objectification, in which the applicants also became complicit, even at a very early stage, in the process. Foster care applicants not only have to fulfil the criteria relating to ideological notions of “good parenting.” I also show the marketisation of welfare has shifted to a greater emphasis on professionalization, which has strengthened notions of commodification of foster care applicants. By the time of approval all applicants enter into a contractual relationship

with the local authority based on the notion of commodity exchange; while still present, the values around gift giving are less obvious and largely seen as secondary. Thus, the notion of commodification offers a critique of the gift discourse among social workers who nevertheless try and disguise the managerial process that objectified and assessed applicants. But, as I have argued, both forms of exchange are present. The family is regarded as the best place for the socialisation of children. It is about practical values such as available rooms and space within the household, as well as social considerations of care and love. Thus, it is a focus for both ways of thinking about the two forms of exchange. Because of this, sometimes very personal, non-procedural judgements are drawn on in the assessment of applicants. In my overall focus on recruitment and management of foster carers, I also highlighted the continuation of various themes running through the thesis. The managerial control of decisions within the fostering team has produced feelings of loss of professional autonomy among recruitment social workers, while the blame culture across different levels of the hierarchy, was becoming embodied in the way social workers approached and evaluated potential future carers.

In chapter six, I will go on to examine the other side of commodification, from the foster carers' perspectives. I will focus on motivations and the ways in which applicants experience their assessment to become carers. In doing so, I illustrate the link between emotion and compliance in the conversion of people into commodities, through various examples, to reveal the logic of commodity exchange which is located in ideas of value which are paramount and depart from the notions of gift exchange. Therefore, the

meanings behind the two spheres of exchange give rise to contradictions and tensions that have to be negotiated by social workers and carers.

Part Three: Exploring Spheres of Exchange: Creating

Identity and Belonging

Part three examines spheres of exchange in the construction of legal families. It firstly examines fostering from the perspective of foster care applicants, and how meaning is conferred upon various personal experiences through an exploration of motive behind the facilitation of care, which is cast in terms of value for money. It also examines adoption, which as a contrast to fostering and a symbol of the ultimate legal family. Together, they illustrate the shifting articulated meaning within the discourses of gift exchange and commodity exchange that intersect within the ideology of family. Therefore, it shows how carers and social workers become trapped in attempts at negotiating the pressures that arise in practice within the two spheres of exchange.

I argue that the carer's perspective symbolises the process of commodification as the classic anthropological rite of passage whereby old values are exchanged for new ones in a three-stage ritual based on emotion, notions of honesty and personal narratives.

Therefore, it is perceived as a pathway to the truth through sharing the past, which facilitates self-transformation and deeper self-knowledge in a process of re-education. This, I argue, is linked to a policy that is embedded within a particular model of social service family. I show how the incorporation of applicants into the sphere of exchange continues with further social work surveillance and regulation, highlighting the stresses between the construction of foster care professionalism and social work managerialism.

Therefore, I demonstrate how carers' emphasis on altruism heightens the notion of pollution; money in the form of financial reward presents the gift discourse as the respectable expression of fostering, combined with the more emotional side to their experiences.

I also examine adoption as desirable and as the ultimate legal family. Thus, I illustrate the ways in which adoption places greater emphasis on the gift exchange discourse, and so the issue of money tends to disappear, situating it at the centre of building emotional bonds of non-biological kinship and sense of belonging. I highlight the tension between the personal desires of adopters to create a family embedded in emotions and notions of kinship, parenthood and family life, with the norms and values of the adoption agency. My analysis focuses on notions of permanence, security and achieving resilience as well as notions of relatedness as significant for the fulfilment of legal parenthood. This is based on the theory of child development. As a consequence, I demonstrate how potential adopters experience greater emotional transformation and rapid objectification, which also takes place through the ritual of family finding. However, I demonstrate that although adoption is about fitting into the conventional model of the normal family, in the background the biological concepts of procreation and birth are normalised within policy and legislation about adoption allowance. Thus, I argue the result is a paradox whereby adoption allowance introduces the notion of commodity exchange, reinforcing the fact that gift and commodity are always linked within the public sector administration of adoption.

CHAPTER 6

Negotiating the Foster Carer's Market: The Motives of Carers

Introduction

In the last chapter I examined marketisation of welfare through the recruitment and maintenance of foster carers by social workers in the borough of Bowden and argued the process represents a commodification of kinship. This chapter examines the other side of the coin, from the foster carers' perspective. However it is still located within a financial dimension that is inescapable. I will examine the ways in which people confer meaning upon their experiences of becoming carers through their insights and the various motives that led them to enter what I have presented as Bowden's foster care market. Foster care is divided into two types of service; short-term and long-term care. Short-term care is a transitory arrangement that epitomises the period of liminality of a child's progression through social services. Because foster care is generally associated with notions of instability, it is long-term care that is drawn upon to fulfil the care gap that cannot be achieved by short-term fostering or by adoption. So, it is used to provide permanence for a child who is unable to remain within his or her own family, and for whom adoption has been judged by social workers as inappropriate or an unrealistic alternative. I go on to argue, however, that whether long or short-term, both forms remain examples of how the recruitment process effectively transforms applicants through assessment and surveillance into certain kind of welfare providers that are exchangeable. In this way,

foster carers are constructed in terms of their labour value within Bowden's welfare market, even though explicit reference to the financial dimension is relatively rare. In the same way, the child that is fostered also constitutes an exchange value to foster carers since they are given financial support according to the type of placements they are approved to receive. Nevertheless, the notions of belonging and a stable family life are very important features in the job of fostering based on the ideology of nurturing which galvanises the notion of gift exchange that overlays commodity exchange. As a result, carers and social workers are regularly caught in their attempts to negotiate the tensions that underpin the meanings behind the two spheres of exchange.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first starts with a brief exploration of the various catalysts that act as motivators for entry into the foster care market. It is followed by a closer look at the reflections of foster carers themselves focusing on the impact of the recruitment process, providing a clear contrast to the social workers' perspective in the previous chapter. I explore the financial rewards carers receive and the various ways these are negotiated. The second section illustrates how commodity exchange operates in practice alongside gift exchange. In doing so, I will examine various types of placements and how foster carers endeavour to meet the needs of the children in their care. Finally, the third section looks at how various values are consolidated through social work surveillance and regulation of foster carers. My overall argument is that, unlike social workers who operate from within a formal managerial system, carers engage in the fact that there is a financial advantage to their role from the outset, which creates a tension with the compassionate motives that they are expected to highlight. I demonstrate how

carers as a consequence continually try to mask their financial interests by expressing a more emotional side to their experiences.

1. Carers' Motivations to foster

In focusing on fostering, as a service with financial consequences as well as having non-financial aspects within my research, the idea that monetary gain or reward is a part of the motivation of foster carers was usually not mentioned even though financial support very much enables them to support the child. Moreover, carers seem to prefer to explain their actions in terms of what I have previously illustrated as the gift exchange discourse (see Chapter Five). Therefore, they emphasise the need to have empathy in caring for children who would come through their homes from a difficult backgrounds with emotional baggage, throughout their fostering career. Therefore, it immediately exposes a tension at the centre of their accounts. But, while that appeared to be the case, the fact that they would be paid an allowance actually posed no inherent problems among the carers. In spite of everything, all families needed money to help rear children. Carers were helping to care for vulnerable children and the state was paying them to do so. Instead, it became apparent the contradiction was being imposed upon them by social workers. So, initially, carers entered the market with a mixture of feelings and views, without perceiving the notions of altruism or giving a gift of a home and monetary reward as two discrete systems. The paradox subsequently arose from having colluded within the recruitment process with their own objectification to be acceptable by social workers as agents for Bowden's children and family services. At that point, things became more complicated; the carers were forced to try to seek and maintain perhaps a

balance between the two sides of their identity. Such a paradox gets introduced probably for the first time for some carers. It represents the notion of double consciousness as they endeavour to second-guess what is appropriate. This is based entirely on the fact that they have no choice but to operate within a welfare market in which they are regularly viewed in terms of value for money, (see Chapter Three), but rarely encouraged to acknowledge their own financial motivations. Therefore, by transforming themselves by falling under the regime of assessment and surveillance to fit into a system that involves ideas of value and utility they are agreeing to become certain kinds of carers that can be moved and be interchangeable. I argue, in other words, that they become engaged in contracting as active citizen-providers.

Before I look at motives of individual carers in more detail, I think it is important to clarify the distinction between notions of altruism and gift exchange in terms of what carers are actually engaged in. Are they genuinely involved in an altruistic act or is it more a sense of giving and receiving. The dictionary definition of altruism states it is an unselfish concern for other people that means doing something for someone else without expecting to receive anything in return. In other words, there are no strings attached it is a sincere act. Gift exchange however, is first and foremost a form of exchange. Unlike an act of altruism, in the action of giving there is an expectation to receive something back which may not be reciprocated immediately but at some time in the future and is not necessarily selfless. I would argue carers are engaged in shared relationships since it is almost impossible to say an act is truly altruistic, there will always be a sense of getting something back. In their reticence to openly discuss their views on foster care fees, the

social workers in my research seem to be reflecting a perceived firm distinction within what are scholarly debates about economic exchange and gift exchange within a Western cultural context. Thus, the story about the link between recruitment and notion of transformation is in part a story about social workers imposing the idea that there is a contradiction with having money alongside other values. At this point, I will introduce insights from literature on gift theory through Osteen (2000) to develop my argument.

Osteen argues that the institutionalisation of bourgeois individualism and industrial economies resulted in the formation of a rigid dichotomy between the spheres of gift and commodities. Those developments constructed the gift in Western ideology as the antithesis of market exchange. But, commodification and commodities should not be viewed as profanely at odds with culture, since gifts in the form of cultural objects can be positively commodified (Frow 1997), while others can be tainted (Parry 1989).

Moreover, commodity status may represent one phase in the process of becoming, (Appadurai 1986). Thus, the notion of transition can serve as a metaphor for the foster child's journey within the care system. Hence, commodity is a structure of relationships in which absolute commodification and the perfect gift (Kopytoff 1986; Carrier 1995; Belk 1996) are extremes that rarely exist in reality. However, Osteen's wider theoretical analyses have limited application to fostering and adoption because they are grounded in the world of objects of exchange. Thus, within the traditional literature fostering and adoption represent the anomaly. I will draw on other insightful ethnographic materials to illustrate my argument.

For example, in the context of the hospice Russ employs the terms gift and commodity to indicate how its transactions significantly comprehend the creations of self and moral experience. Thus, rather than expressing a distinction between gift and commodity instead Russ argues the terms should be considered as phenomenological and calculated instructions that establishes a relation to the act of giving. Russ uses both concepts to convey the extent to which such a relation demonstrates an interweaving of caregivers with the form and action of exchange. Importantly, then gift and commodity transactions encompass different practices and ways of encountering the self. More importantly, Russ suggests that caregivers are moral agents of exchange able to measure and modify aspects of gift and commodity to express and establish fields of personal experiences and forms of moral order, (Foucault 1990 in Russ 2005: 135). I concur with Russ and argue that foster carers as active citizen-providers are also moral agents of exchange.

I have shown in chapter three how social workers struggle with budgetary constraints based on the principle of value for money. In a similar way Russ provides a useful analogy for my analysis of foster carers. She highlights how the discourse about limits sharply focused the notions of gift versus issues of discipline and economy in caregiving challenging and extending the theoretical perspective by Gregory (1982) in the following quote:

“Commodity exchange is an exchange of alienable objects between people [in] a state of reciprocal independence that establishes a quantitative relationship between the objects exchanged. Gift exchange is the exchange of inalienable objects between people [in] a state of reciprocal dependence that establishes a

qualitative relationship between the transactors, (Gregory 1982: 41-43 in Russ 2005: 134).

Thus, Russ asserts and I concur that such ideal opposites have limited application in domains like the hospice and foster care, where private sentiments of care are transformed daily into acts of economic value. Furthermore, hospice care falls outside Gregory's typology since the standard forms of transactions in hospice equate to "transcendental goods" (Layne 1999 in Russ 2005:134). Moreover, within those condensed cycles of transactions both caregiver and patients are simultaneously the subjects and objects of exchange. In the same context, it can be argued that the foster child and the foster carer are the subject and object of exchange respectively. Hence, Russ concludes there is no precondition that caregivers should negotiate between competing claims to gift or commodity in the provision of care, instead, they are themselves gifts and commodities.

Read's (2007) analysis of the broadening conceptions of nursing practice within the state health care reforms in the Czech Republic relate in part to Russ's study and my argument. Nursing practice within the former regime with the elderly and long-term ill and disabled groups focused on the biological and physical symptoms in a rational approach located within state institutions that disregarded the social and environmental contexts in which such needs arose. The challenges faced by that authoritative medical discourse altered the form and content of caring services. Therefore, caring tasks previously located within personal networks and the private spheres of the household gained formal recognition, splitting the cultural boundaries between state and non-state forms of care. Read notes

the reforms led to a rapid growth of home care agencies employing qualified and experienced nurses as well as social workers and physiotherapists and care assistants to care for people in their own homes or hospices. However, her fieldwork in a nursing home focused on nurses coming to terms with new ways of caring, which in Russ's words meant different ways of encountering the self. So like Russ's example nurses too in their interactions with patients reflect subjective and objective positions of exchange at once embodying gift and commodity. Thus, I argue the analysis presented by Read and Russ demonstrates my contentions that foster carers came to embody double consciousness. Interestingly, Read notes, nuns who cared for patients on a voluntary basis viewed their care as a 'labour of love'. I argue that their narrative further illustrates another way of encountering the self, encountering what I suggest is the altruistic self located in a third space between gift and commodity. Thus, the interactions between patients and nuns also make them subjects and objects of exchange, but as such their encounter with patients resembles exchange relating to the notion of "transcendental goods", (Russ 2005:134), that is also part of the nature of responsibility to care within fostering. The various ideas I have so far outlined are embedded in the everyday themes within carers' perspectives that I will now present.

From their perspectives, most foster carers tell me they get personal satisfaction from the bonds they form with children that can be as strong as if they were their own biological children. Seeing a change in the children, the way the children feel about their future lives. Also changes in behaviour and although children move on, some grow up and

remain in contact. However, the ideal notion of bonding does not necessarily happen and it could be argued it is a kind of fantasy that foster carers aspire to fulfil.

Nevertheless, carers express satisfaction about planting a seed of change that may not be apparent until the child is no longer in the placement, or they may see small changes before the child moves on. Some carers feel strongly that by fostering they are giving not just to the child but also the community. One carer said, *“I bought a big house, I did not intend to, so I have the space, I think of it as a way of giving something back to the community.”* Therefore, in looking at the notion of gift exchange I have demonstrated it is the intangible things that carers receive in return such as gratitude and personal satisfaction.

The foster carers who took part in my research between them have over twenty-five years of fostering experience. Among the group, various reasons drew them into the field of foster care. These relate to personal as well as political beliefs, family background (which in some cases were linked to childhood experiences of caring for younger siblings) and contact with role models who were experienced carers within their family and friendship networks. Of the various accounts, I commence with three that are similar because they all became approved carers, but they differed from each other in their progress toward approval. I start first with Zeta who spoke about an observation in the street which led her foster even though she is single. Second, with Sonia who is married and took a closer look at fostering through her work with young mothers whilst Dawn, also married, was encouraged to foster after expressing her admiration for her friend’s foster children.

Zeta is in her fifties about five feet eight inches tall, slim and wears glasses. She has a long face with high cheekbones and large eyes. She started fostering teenage boys and girls in 1980 and can sometimes have more than one child on placement in her home at the same time. Zeta told me she was motivated to foster when she observed a White woman in the street accompanied by three Black children. She felt that the woman was dressed so scruffily she looked as though she needed care more than the children. She said she could not stop talking about her observation and when she spoke about it at work one of her colleague directly asked her “why don’t you foster?” But, as a single woman she was uncertain if she would be allowed. Nonetheless, she got in touch with the manager in the fostering team at that time and a social worker was sent to meet with her and that was how it all started.

Sonia has been in foster care for ten years. Unlike Zeta, who was motivated by observations of a member of the general public, Sonia’s narrative is linked to her place of work. Her motivation for fostering stemmed from her job in a nursery where she was the manager. She told me she was struck by the stories of young mothers that came, and when she listened to them talk about the care system she was moved by the ways in which she felt it had failed some of them. At that time, she said her son was on his way to university so she decided that she would like to foster which also meant she could earn money through it and sought advice by talking it over with two role models in her family, her grandmother and her cousin. She told me her grandmother was very much the matriarch and was once a child minder while her cousin was already a foster carer. Both of them encouraged Sonia to apply. Like Zeta, she was also approved to foster teenage

boys as well as girls from thirteen up to fifteen years of age, preparing them for independent living at eighteen years of age.

In contrast, Dawn has fostered for less than ten years. She initially got the inspiration to foster because one of her friends was a carer and, in Dawn's opinion, was fostering 'a couple of lovely kids'. A broad smile came across her face as she was reflecting on this. She said her friend had these beautiful children and she fell in love with them. So, it was her friend who became her role model and suggested to Dawn that she had so much to offer she should consider fostering herself. She got the initial information from a booklet given to her by her friend, and then approached the Council with an enquiry and got started after receiving more information through the post.

For all three of them becoming foster carers for a local authority is initiated by very personal experiences that then are transformed into a formal process underpinned by welfare policy. The aim of such policy is the construction of legal families who are prepared and supervised by fostering support social workers. As the above testimonies reveal, the initial contact with the local authority is a first step on the ladder of an extensive process that includes a complex assessment component.

In the next section, I will explore the impact upon foster carers who acquiesce to being assessed and to being transformed to fit into a system driven by the significant processes that are governed within the marketization of welfare services in Bowden.

1.1 Recruitment and Transformation

The story of recruitment and transformation is about social workers imposing the notion of gift, even though money is involved. Therefore carers are trying to fit into a very thin dividing line because that paradox gets introduced for the first time for some carers when the assessment process is some way along because it is not explicitly included in the agenda for discussion at any stage within the group. Thus, it encourages them to be silent and so it is a secret the carers and social workers share. In this manner, carers are never allowed to acknowledge they are doing it because they have a spare room and need some extra income. Once they take their first step into the market of foster care, some applicants are unprepared for the extent to which they are going to be required to strip away their own values in order to respond to social service's notions of 'good parenting'.

Stacey is one of my foster care informants she is petite with an open and friendly personality. She was asked to do a presentation for a 'prep' information sharing session (see Chapter Five) with another carer who took her two foster children ages two years and ten years respectively to the session. After the presentations and during the usual question and answer period Stacey said, *"There was a couple, and the husband asked me, how deep will the social workers go into our backgrounds?"* She told me she explained that they go back to childhood to prepare a very detailed report. He immediately wanted to know if they really had to reveal everything about themselves. At that point she said the expression on his face revealed he was disturbingly surprised. A woman then asked, "When will the assessment start?" Stacey said she told her it started the moment she made contact with social services and received a visit from a social worker. At that moment Stacey laughed and told me *"I noticed there was a glance with raised eyebrows*

from the social work manager who was attending the session, the group was not supposed to know they were being assessed.” Stacey told me it became very apparent to her, from the moment that fact was revealed the wife of the man she spoke about previously immediately started to play with the two year old foster child quite intensely so much so she took over the child for the rest of the session. According to Stacey, it was obvious to her and she was not sure if anyone else observed it, that individual wanted to show off her ‘caring skills’ to the social workers. *“It was like look at me I am so good at looking after small children,”* (Stacey). As an established carer Stacey’s power of observation had become heightened through being socialised into the social services system with an awareness of the implicit forms of judgements social workers make during recruitment. It was also another perfect example of the way in which applicants collude in their own objectification, whilst trying to guess what qualities social workers are looking for, (see Chapter Five).

Applicants are encouraged to cast a reflective but critical focus onto their own existing family values and the traditions of kinship that they hold. This is part of the pre-approval conversion that forms the gradual progress of re-education through the various technologies employed by social workers to build new legal families. By focusing on the impact of the process from the foster care applicant’s perspective one can see the extent to which this is based heavily on their emotional reactions, even though it always differs according to individual circumstances, life experiences and expectations. Thus, I argue, the process, which facilitates a system of commodity exchange appears to rely on or is supported, by the emotions that come to the fore in the assessment process. However,

rather than creating a tension between these two dimensions they appear to complement each other, as Sonia's example reveals below. Sonia comments in the following way:

When I had the initial visit from the social worker I remember making sure the house was extra tidy. I remember the questions I was asked were quite intrusive even on the first visit. I thought if it was like this on the first visit what is the rest going to be? I can talk about certain things that have happened in my life but not with people I don't know. So, at first I did not think I could do it.

Sonia highlights the ways in which she tried to guess what the social worker would draw upon to make the very first judgements of her and her home. After the visit it was clear that her self-esteem was affected because she started to feel vulnerable. Yet, it was this vulnerability that was then key to the adaptation she would have to make for social worker approval. Therefore, processes around recruitment have a psychological impact on foster care applicants that essentially demand they adjust to change with new approaches, norms and particular values of parenting, reflecting Russ's (2005) notion of the ethical self.

In contrast to Sonia, Dawn did not feel the initial questions asked by the assessing social worker were particularly intrusive. She took a very philosophical approach that stemmed from a higher level of self-confidence and self-esteem. She argued:

I think if someone intends to foster, they have to be prepared, to be, asked questions it is as simple as that. Furthermore, what can they ask me that I don't already know? I know about family history, my family background where we come from, and I know who my parents are and so on.

The psychological impact upon Dawn of the processes surrounding recruitment was far less intense than for Sonia. In fact, Dawn experienced a very short progression through the recruitment process that is atypical, since it usually takes approximately six months. But, there are exceptions to that rule when particular niches sometime emerge within the welfare market and usual managerial rules are broken. Dawn revealed to me that she was 'fast tracked' through her assessment just over eight years ago because there was a need to find carers willing to care for refugee children. As a consequence, her assessment was concluded within three visits over a period of approximately four weeks. The first visit, Dawn described as 'chit-chat'. On the second, they questioned her about her family background more thoroughly and then on the third visit they spoke to the other members of her household. By the time they inspected her house she said they were ready to place children with her. Consequently, Dawn did not undergo the same extensive experience as Sonia, who over time continually tried to guess what the social worker was looking for, and work out how best to present herself to them.

Unlike Dawn, Sonia's story is about the endurance of the more usual assessment structure that included the group process; the very thing Sonia had misgivings about participating in from the start. Sonia remembers it was during the second interview that she was told she was going to be part of a group of other applicants for the assessment training and was asked to write down her life history. The group was to be later given various scenarios to work on in order to tease out their feelings and form the basis for further discussion. Sonia told me there were painful episodes in her life she did not really want a

stranger, even a social worker, to read although she recognised it was important to express to the group how she was feeling. By censoring what she wrote about her life, Sonia felt it did not give her history sufficient depth for a group discussion. She was not quite sure what to expect from the group experience and how much other applicants would reveal of their own lives. As it turned out, she endured her worst fears when some applicants broke down in tears; she became terrified of the same thing happening to her.

Since the group approach can engender so much emotion, it raises questions about the implicit ways foster care applicants are selected according to what they reveal about themselves. And it also suggests whether applicants can simply state only what they think social workers want to hear. From this standpoint, Sonia questioned the necessity to tell all without censorship. Sonia privately explained that during the assessment there are always gaps that have to be filled in; "I lost a baby. I did not want to talk about it because it was a quite painful time for me." She was happy to write about her life story, but only up to a certain point. When it comes to the period in her life when she had an abusive partner, she really did not want to talk about that in a group. But as the assessment ritual progressed, Sonia felt the social worker might question the three to four year gap in her historical narrative. In case she was asked to elaborate on that period she realised she needed to have an answer and that in itself, created new anxieties. This complication of expectation and second guessing generates a new tension around the notions of honesty since Sonia and other carers recognise that to fit into the social work criteria there are a range of values they have to demonstrate in order to be approved. As a result, applicants tend to volunteer as much information as possible because somehow

they come to believe they are going to be found out if they don't. Many continue to wonder however what the best strategy might be, as Sonia explained:

I do reflect on the power of the social worker in getting the information out of me. But as the visits became regular I became more comfortable so I loosened up a little bit and it all came out eventually. I think part of the assessment is like getting therapy and helped me get to know myself and to get me to think about the emotional baggage a foster child would bring into my home. I did not want to share it but I did not know why I did not want to share it. It was not my fault what happened to me but I just did not want to share it.

Here, Sonia speaks in terms of a gaining closure on her personal emotional history together with a greater understanding of what she believed to be the function of the assessment process. She told me she realised the social worker needed her to understand how she was going to work with a child with emotional problems and how she would deal with it. So, despite being uncomfortable at first, the impact of the process meant that every day she came away discovering a little bit more about herself which gave her greater confidence. On the other hand, Dawn's narrative of being fast tracked through her assessment reveals an experience with far less anxiety than that of a rite of passage.

However, as an outsider I am not entirely sure the process is about the self-discovery and transformation Sonia professes it is. Although the general message emphasises honesty and reflection it is clear that it also functions as a method of surveillance. The

transformation of applicants is rarely as complete as the social workers would like to think. Although Sonia describes being transformed by being honest throughout the process she nevertheless still wanted to hold onto some degree of privacy. For many applicants the exercise similarly forced them to construct a persona that didn't necessarily reflect all areas of their lives. The necessity for social workers to subject applicants to such ordeals implies they believe emotions are more honest than straightforward vetting procedures suggests accordingly, the assessment system encourages the process as way of getting to the truth even if that is painful for the applicants. And the fundamental pathway is through a kind of test that within rituals often means pain. Thus, from an anthropological perspective 'the assessment' experience can be viewed as a ritual of transformation (Van-Gennep 1960). Therefore, the stripping down is the mid-point between the old and the new that entails carers experiencing re-education with a whole new set of values. As I have shown for Sonia, it starts with some resistance to sharing what she viewed as very private personal information. In the second stage, she goes through a period of liminality in which she shares her innermost emotions through the facilitation of the social worker. Finally, she feels transformed with a deeper self-knowledge that she believes will stand her in good stead to cope with future fostering situations. Despite possessing previous skills of parenting, the assessment process is perceived by Sonia to provide the conditions for her self-transformation. This therefore reinforces the reproduction of a certain model of family that attempts to create an ideal environment in which children should be nurtured. Furthermore, I argue the process explicitly conveys the Foucauldian notion of the link between discourse and power of the ideology of assessment to create the legitimization of the method. The ritualisation of the

assessment procedure represents a system of belief embedded in social work knowledge that is another example of Bourdier's notion of doxa.

However varied the assessment experience may be, the final hurdle that all foster carers face in their progress to complete incorporation into the system, and sphere of exchange, is to appear before a fostering panel. However, Zeta, my first example in the beginning of this chapter who started fostering in 1980, told me she had never appeared in front of a panel. When she was assessed over twenty years ago foster carers did not have to appear in front of a panel but were represented instead by social workers' professional judgements of their suitability. The fostering panel provides the final rubber stamp for the formal transformation of foster carers by approving them for registration. This final stage in the building of new legal families represents the establishment of a contract between the foster carer and the local authority or with a private foster agency. The role of the panel is to approve carers after reading the social worker's reports and scrutinising any other pieces of evidence as necessary. A meeting is convened to discuss the various merits of each case and interview each applicant. The assessing social worker accompanies the applicant. Some of the panel's questions are consequently directed at the social worker in order to clarify and explain various aspects of their assessment.

Many of the carers I spoke to told me they were incredibly nervous in front of the panel. Typically, most try to prepare for the questions the panel may ask by consulting friends and family who have already gone through the process. Once again, carers have an acute sense of having to fit in with a set of criteria that are not explicitly described. Applicants

are eager to give a good account of themselves that include demonstrating certain personal qualities. They have to describe how they will care for a child, and so it is not unlike attending a formal job interview. A great majority of them report that at some points during the process their minds went blank because they became so overwhelmed with all the questions. As such, the carers invariably view the panel in terms of extended surveillance. That extended surveillance now stipulates that Zeta attend annual review panel meetings based on a re-approval report prepared by her foster support social worker to demonstrate her value for money for continued registration. But at the pre-approval stage, after further private discussion, the panel makes its final decision to register new carers. This procedure has now changed; the discussion takes place in front of everyone involved, as one carer told me:

“I have never felt so humiliated, it is so wrong to have members of the panel discuss their final decision in front of me as if I was not there”. The carer said she was not allowed to add any further statements after being interviewed; any additional questions were directed to the social worker. She also told me, *“I could not help it, they said something about me and I interrupted and defended myself and they were surprised that I dared to speak”.*

Once approved carers are expected to embark on further training. This introduces the notion of professionalisation into foster care that reflects developments in policy under the Children Act 2004. Therefore, long established carers have to also focus on professional development. One of the aspects I have highlighted in Chapter Two is the idea that being professional is about helping society through a notion of vocation. Thus it

can be argued that professionalisation shift is an attempt to contain the contradiction by the introduction of other values, which means carers don't just do it for the money.

I have so far explored the motivation of carers whereby financial motives are rarely acknowledged and the fact that the steps taken by carers through recruitment convert them into commodities. Thus, in reality their labour value is underpinned by the fact they receive a level of monetary support that enables them, as far as possible, to provide a model of family life. In the next section, I will turn my focus to this financial allowance, which subtly defines both carer and child as commodities within Bowden's welfare market and the tension that results when viewed against the gift discourse as a perceived identifiable distinction.

2. Defining Commodities through Financial Allowance

In being defined as commodities with the receipt of financial allowance and reward, foster carers are trapped by the paradox of having to come to terms with money as well as other values associated with care. That paradox produces a level of disconnection among carers in being treated within a social work system. It is borne out by the fact that the carers in my research tended to speak very guardedly to me about the money they receive, and they were always very careful not to reveal the specific amount. Money seems to imply the downgrading and pollution of their caring role. This is despite the fact that the money undoubtedly helps them to fulfil their altruistic inclinations by supporting the needs of the child. But, as soon as finance is mentioned carers became cautious and immediately feel they are being judged. As a result, the discourse around gift-giving is usually seized upon defensively as the respectable and only face of fostering. Like it or

not the financial element of foster care has become normalised. That fact, I argue can be equated to Bourdieu's notion of doxa since it is an established taken for granted way in which foster carers practice. Zelizer's (1994) analysis within the Sociology of childhood supports my view above of the link between foster carers' defensive attitudes and money. She argues that the foster parent role remains ambiguous since foster carers remain uneasy about the discussion of payment and their motivation to foster state entirely different reasons than money. This hesitancy among foster carers Zelizer contends is a mask of their subjective need for the money is embedded within notions of shame about selling what is defined as a personal sacred task. Thus, personal performance demands something over and above their money equivalent, since the acceptance of money appears to disparage both the performance and the person. However, Zelizer's contends and as I reveal in research foster carers find ways to transcend the instrumental parenting contract by using their own funds for a foster child's incidental expenses as I discuss in the next section and which accords with the gift literature further on in this chapter.

2.1 Labour Value: Foster Carers as Commodities

The money that foster carers are paid by local authorities is regulated by a national standard. They are expected to use it for various types of expenditure for the child such as pocket money, clothing, travel and personal care. Private foster agencies set their own fees and it is up to the foster carers how they spend it, although it is implicit that carers are expected to spend the money in the same ways as for local authorities. If a foster child is taken on holiday with its carer social services will pay additional amounts for the foster child, although they are only allowed one payment of holiday money per year. As one

carer explained to me, if she takes her foster child on holiday over and above the once per year allowance she can only afford to pay the less expensive shorter trips to Europe. The children also get extra money for Birthdays and Christmas. One carer told me she uses the money buy the Birthday or Christmas present and if she has not spent all the money, she put the remainder into the child's savings. The purchase of presents, reflect another example of Lee Ann Fennell's concept of illiquidity.

Fennell argues that in Western cultures dominated by market exchange, the gift is a conceptual misfit because it embodies and perpetuates the two important characteristics of illiquidity and empathetic discourse. In this way, a gift's former commodity status is and symbolically erased through the actions of wrapping and removal of price tags, and replaced by layers of subjective meaning (Belk 1993: 90; Carrier 1995: 174-5 in Fennell 2002: 86). Hence, gift-giving practices calculatingly remove objects from the stream of trade by creating a process of de-commodification or illiquidity. And so the central theme of Fennell's argument that gift giving represents a specialised form of communication, (Fennell 2002: 86). This special form of communication is wrapped up in narratives of empathy wherein the context of foster care, the gift gains sentimental value above and beyond the market value of its underlying commodity that deepens and sustains the relationship between the foster child and carer. Futhergill (2000) makes a similar point through the notion of personalisation. An object that is a commodity when purchased for a present is decommodified argues Carrier (1995) through the process of appropriation. Additionally, the foster care allowance includes a reward element. Consequently, while the language of the gift is present in the recruitment of carers, it does not reflect the

managerial process that objectifies and assesses applicants according to a market value. Hence there is no gift exchange that is free of the element of commodity exchange.

When they do mention money, carers are usually keen to stress that they did not depend on fostering as their only source of income. Most, work part-time, for example in nursing, banking and social work. They stress that taking care of children from difficult backgrounds is about their strong feelings of giving back to their communities, reinforcing their continued resistance to viewing money as important. For example, when Zeta was asked by her foster support social worker whether she had received any money from social services when her first foster placement began she was surprised. Zeta told me she honestly did not know they paid for the children. She was used to living in a big family and when her mother died as a young adult she cared for siblings on a small budget and that was how she approached her foster caring. Such a comment is a good example of the ideology of altruism that I argue operates as ‘a labour of love’ and ‘transcendental goods’ in a third space between gift and commodity. The notion of gift exchange is inextricably linked to commodity exchange through social work governmentality of fostering.

A number of carers have shared with me the fact that their previous qualifications, such as in nursery nursing or social work, have an impact on the reward element of the allowances they receive. One carer told me that she had a National Nursery Examination Board Certificate (NNEB) qualification and together with extra training and this meant that every time she had a review she got some extra reward money. Foster carers without

previous qualifications are introduced to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) training opportunities. Training is now compulsory and endows carers with a semi-professional status.

However, because financial rewards are temporarily suspended if there are no children placed with the foster family, an explicit connection is made between the children and monetary value. Furthermore, this also introduces the market concept of supply and demand within fostering since carers enter into the supply side as active citizen-providers with the potential to offer 'best value' services as the subjects and objects of exchange. However, if a carer is identified as a good match for a child who is in the process of being taken into care, then a retainer is paid. Having examined the impact upon carers of their progress toward approval I will now turn my attention to established carers to explore their impressions of connecting to the social service system and social workers.

3. Established Carer's Perspective

The carer's perspective is about their relationship with the social workers, the ways in which they interact and negotiate reveals it to be of an ambivalent nature. One of the key things that carers tended to talk about is the ethnicity of the social workers. To a degree, their focus on ethnicity can be viewed as reflecting the ways in which they themselves experience being judged. They are deflecting onto social workers a discourse that connects ethnicity within social work with notions of a certain kind of understanding of people and relationships and subtle forms of values. The carers were further surprised by

the mixed messages they heard from social workers as they try to develop a care routine in their accommodation of children. It highlighted the fact that as carers try to connect with the system they come to realise social workers did not speak with one voice in terms of an abstract professional body or even as one borough but rather as individuals. Carers impressions I contend form a critique of managerial standardisation that is not as fully absorbed by social workers as one may imagine.

3.1 Carers Impressions of Social Workers

During their assessments, carers told me they dealt with social workers from various ethnic and racial backgrounds. From their experiences, some argue, social workers were ‘just doing a job’ while other carers expressed a real appreciation of the conduct of some social workers. One expressed admiration for a social worker that she said had strong feelings about the need for cultural sensitivity in relation to the children. By challenging, as she put it, “ a lot of stuff in a very professional way” the carer argued this works for the benefit of the child rather than just being politically correct. Despite this, the notion of a power relationship is an ever-present tension they are all aware of. Nevertheless, the opinion amongst many carers was that a good relationship with social workers depended on whether they are genuinely interested in doing their job in making sure the child’s needs are met. One carer said after her assessment was completed that she had built a good rapport with foster child’s social worker for nearly a year and a half. She said he had eliminated any negative feelings she had about social workers; he was punctual with his reviews and he would send her his notes. However, this views all changed; when he left the same professional approach was not continued by the new workers. She went on

to tell me she subsequently 'lost her faith' and more critical perceptions of social workers crept back. With similar sentiment, another carer expressed her opinion in the following way:

I know they get a lot of bad press but they do deserve it. Sometimes we hear about things that they mess up, how they don't listen to people, and children die. It seems like now everybody can become a social worker at the drop of a hat. But, the guy that I saw was very good, I don't know if it was because he was Black as well as being a Jamaican. We hit it off straight away and we sat and we talked about everything.

Another carer told me the White South African social worker she encountered because she is from Africa she was able to understand very well the issues of 'respect for elders' that were imposed by the extended family on a Nigerian girl that was in her care. There were times when the social worker recognised the pressure that was being exerted on the young person by her family and advocated very skilfully in the interest of the young person to gain their self esteem. The carer argues perhaps an English social worker might have missed those kinds of subtleties. Carers seem to be implying that in a sense the way in which social workers deal with differences in cultural background are examples of how competent they are at their job.

Some carers said they felt confused about the mixed messages they received which they related to a belief that each borough operated in 'different ways', manifested through the varied opinions expressed by social workers on the same issue. One carer gave me the following example that related to how late she should allow her foster child to stay out in

the evenings. She said one worker told her “he is nearly sixteen so yes you can allow him to stay out until twelve o clock as long as you know where he is”. In contrast, another said “no, until he leaves your home, he should be in by ten o clock and you have to sign that book to say he was. If not we want to know why.” On the one hand, carers view social work as a large abstract entity from which individual social workers speak with one voice. On the hand, they are surprised to find different social workers saying different things in view of the fact that they are trying to relate to the system.

Along these lines, the following section provides some further insights with descriptions of how different types of placements determine the main arena in which carers develop impressions of social workers. The following examples illustrate how emotions and the notion of gift exchange can be related to issues of socialisation and the identity of the children.

3.2 Carers Impressions of Children Perceiving their Needs

Foster carers are the main providers of substitute legal parenting for children who cannot live with their birth families. Each placement encapsulates various forms of foster care governmentality. One example is the emergency placement that seems to infringe on the regulations surrounding the notion cultural matching (see Chapters Five and Seven).

Sonia told me a couple of White British children were placed with her on an emergency basis, a boy for twelve weeks and a girl for six. She said the social worker simply acted on the fact that she had the space. She was normally used to working with younger children at nursery level, so it was a change for her to look after teenagers. Pam cared for a boy named Mustafa who was half Turkish and half African but did not know anything

about either culture. When issues of identity were recognised as part of some of his problems at school Pam said she worked in partnership with Mustafa's teacher and together they were able to address his problems. To further facilitate his cultural needs and that of her other foster children Pam often utilises the library to help gather information to help her with the children's personal development. On the other hand Ahmed, who came from the Congo, Pam said, brought a great sense of his culture with him and he knew why he was coming to England. Therefore, helping children to gain knowledge of aspects of their cultural and biological roots is upholding the gift discourse.

As Dawn's narrative shows she entered (though not intentionally) into what I described as a 'niche market' in foster care by caring for children that came under refugee status. She told me about specific cases in which refugee children voluntarily construct themselves as commodities through secrets and lies in order to progress through the social work system. For example, she had a boy who was supposed to be fifteen years old. She had to take him for dental treatment, but when she returned to collect him her dentist asked to have a word with her in private. The dentist told her there was no way the young man was fifteen, and estimated his age to be between twenty-one and twenty-five. Dawn then reflected on previous observations her husband had made, and the way the young man refused to accept being a minor. Having lied about his age he could not be the man he wanted to be in foster care. This account also illustrates that the cared for child or young person can be as strategic as the carer. As a result, Dawn took a pragmatic approach by fulfilling her side of the care bargain, and continued to treat the young man as if he was fifteen anyway since by definition if he was over eighteen he would not be in

care at all. She saw this as being professional and loyal to the values of foster care even if dishonest. In the end, the young man was forced to act like a teenager, whether he was or not. Dawn insisted he could not stay out late, but she was prepared to make allowances at weekends when he could come home late as long as he had money for his taxi fare.

It is common knowledge among all the foster carers I interviewed that ‘unaccompanied minors’ might be older than they actually claim and it has become a joke that carers often share with each other privately. Like Dawn they tend to deliberately ignore the fact and contrive to work inside the care system. Although this, of course, means that they can then receive financial reward as carers, like Dawn, their underlying motive is driven by their feelings that those individuals deserve some form of care anyway, and that being a little dishonest by “turning a blind eye” is far less important than providing the much needed nurturing family environment.

The gift discourse is very explicit within the next example of the ‘unaccompanied minor’, a category that is used to classify children who have been trafficked and as a consequence come into the care of social services. Under The Children Act 1989 they have the same rights of protection as all other children. The carers I interviewed talked about the strategies they encountered when caring for children who were classified in this way, the children themselves actively contribute to entering the care system and manipulate it as much as possible. The general view among foster carers was that such children often lied about their age because they are aware of the law in relation to age and benefits. They told me unaccompanied minors carry secrets and that such secrets refer to

information or misinformation that is given to them by those involved in planning their journey to the United Kingdom. However, it is not my intention in this thesis to explore this topic in depth but simply to provide the varied levels and contexts in relation to the child in foster care.

So far, I have presented the diversity among the children that come into foster care. I now turn my attention to the other kinds of considerations that carers have to take into account as they strive try to match the cultural needs of the children. The next section will highlight how food serves as an important vehicle to help children feel a sense of belonging within the foster family.

3.3 Food: A Sign of Giving Care

Gillis's (1996) exploration of the association of food with family is a notable contribution to my analysis within this section of the chapter in relation to notions of family and kinship within anthropology. He highlights the way in which food connects family members in the present as well as to their past and how taste and smells are very enduring features of the human experiences. Thus, the ritual that is created around can create a sense of belonging for a foster child/ren within the foster home in which he or she is sharing a meal with others. Like all rituals Gillis also notes, meal times carry the message of order, continuity and predictability. Furthermore, by the twentieth century food had become sacred to various groups of populations based on religion and the big Sunday dinner had established a tradition dating back to the mid nineteenth century. Murcott (1990) also analyses the how food is used to define identity among groups in society with

insider and outsider status according to culturally diverse cuisines as well as classificatory systems about food and the changing ways that food is thought of and treated that are also contested.

As carers endeavour to establish a degree of culturally sensitive care to match with the children, food is one of the key things that are associated with care and social relations. Sonia told me the food she cooked which was reflective of cultural background became a source of tension with the children's cultural background that had to be negotiated, which But, just as the children were adapting to the changes they were relocated to another family. Nevertheless, her food provided some level of comfort based on the fact that they have both remained in touch with her and one young man sometimes visits her for Sunday dinners. Another carer, Zeta, also told me that from her very first placement she immediately noticed was how food was an important comfort for the children. When the fostering support social worker visited her, Zeta reported how the children loved their food and that they eat a lot. Pam amongst a range of people I spoke to demonstrates some of the various ways the needs of children from different cultural backgrounds are met. She said that she found children from other cultures would normally eat whatever she cooked. For example she would take a Muslim boy, who, she said, had a lot of psychological problems, out shopping to allow him to choose the sorts of things he liked to eat. Sometimes she said he was quite happy, and even cooked his food for himself.

Another carer Rachel talked about providing for cultural needs in terms of thinking about her own identity. She commented on the importance to her of her race, ethnicity and

culture that influenced how she practices in culturally diverse family setting. Although she acknowledged that she has fostered mainly Black children, many came from different parts of the world so she always ensured that their varying cultural needs were met. For her, this related to their physical, as well as their dietary, needs. She believes food is one of the primary comforts of life and thinks it is extremely important to make sure she gets it right. She said even the foster children themselves often say, “Why is she making such a fuss? When we go out we usually eat whatever”. Rachael sometimes cared for Muslim children, and ensured that they got Hallal meat, even though her other foster children might report that the Muslim children went to McDonald’s for a burger. Her answer was that she is supposed to provide for them at home and this was the main place for her responsibilities. What they do outside is their choice. In this manner, the carer’s professional role is defined and constructed by the family home, as a physical space that also demonstrates their jurisdiction as carers. Carers meet the need of children within the parameter of their home, which is where they feel they have control. Hence, whatever happens outside that private sphere is seen as being less within their power to effect.

In this regard, foster carers experience a range of different types of scrutiny, which subject them to a number of checks and balances, that represent the weight of moral surveillance and power that regulates how they get on with their job. In the final part of this chapter I will explore the way in which foster carers are supervised and regulated by social workers according to managerial procedures of governance.

3.4 Reviews: Surveillance of Carers

Reviews are a form of surveillance that represents social work governmentality. It is something that they accept as part of their job. Foster carers tell me reviews can be quite daunting because all of a sudden they have a panel of people in their home asking them lots of questions and recording their comments. So carers feel their motives are continually judged by social workers, and in the end frequently feel they are not supported at all. In this way, carers live a 'double life' separating out their role as carer in the home, and carer in the social service fostering system. Review meetings are a form of surveillance of both the carers and the looked after children. Both parties are given one-to-one time with the social workers to discuss their feelings about the placement and then they are both brought together into the main meeting. Review meetings take place approximately four weeks after a child is placed into a foster family. This initial period serves to see how both parties settle into their new relationship and a period to recognise whether bonds of kinship and nurturing are being successfully established or not. After that review, if there are problems or areas of concern within the family social workers can decide to carry out their surveillance even more frequently, instead of a review every four to six weeks they would make them every two weeks to support the carer and the child in the settling process to prevent the placement from breaking down. One carer commented on her experience of a review in the following way:

I had about four people in my home for different things all of a sudden they were just all coming and I found myself thinking where did all these people come from? Two of them arrived together and one was a trainee so they asked if she could sit in and I said yes it was fine. There was the social worker and then there was

another person from the same organisation but a different section so for one meeting it was like eight of us in the end so I was really under the spotlight. But, they go from one extreme to the next when it comes to continuous support with social workers you either see them or you don't see them.

In exploring their feelings about being supervised by social workers, the example above highlights how it galvanises carers, and the way in which review meetings provided a real contrast with the general lack of support they experience from social workers more generally that are linked to issues of communication and lack of seamless handover of written information in particular between social workers.

When review meetings take place discussions are recorded in a report. If the social worker is subsequently off sick, or on leave, the follow-up meeting would still take place led by a replacement social worker who would inevitably ask questions that were already covered by the previous worker. This raises questions from carers about the notes that were previously recorded. So in their private complaints to me it was that in caring for the children there was little continuity and information never passed efficiently in the system. It is very rare that they get a social worker that would see the child through from the beginning to the end of a placement because staff changed so quickly. But as I have shown in Chapter Three, Bowden's reorganisation led to staff shortages. In Chapter Four I also show that social workers do not always update their files on the same day that they make their visits. Gaps in everyday practice in the passing on of information, is yet another example of the mess of social work practice. This, impacts on the foster carers in

terms of their levels of frustrations, their perceptions of social work professionalism, which are all reflected in the ways in which they see their support systems sometimes break down. As one carer said each time it happens it feels as if she is starting from scratch again. The contrast between a discontinuous and fragmented social care system and the idea that carers provide stable and coherent homes for children acts as an underlying tension.

Conclusion

In this chapter I examined foster care through the eyes of carers. It examined the ways in which people confer meaning upon their experiences of becoming carers through their insights and the various motives that led them to enter what I have presented as Bowden's foster care market. Despite an explicitly financial element to their job carers tended to highlight the gift exchange discourse. It emphasised carers' resistance to coming to terms with the fact that money is an essential part of meeting the needs of foster care.

It gives rise to a tension between the discourses of commodity exchange within the motives they prefer to highlight. However, I show how such a contradiction was being imposed upon them by social workers. I argued carers initially entered the market with a sense of free will they did not perceive notions of altruism or gift giving and monetary reward as two discrete systems. The paradox subsequently arises only after they colluded within the recruitment process with their own objectification to be acceptable by social

workers. Thus, in being forced to operate in a market, carers endeavour to find a balance between the two sides of their identity, which means they experience a form of double consciousness. In accepting to be transformed through assessment and surveillance they agreed to become a specific kind of carer within a system based on ideas of value for money and exchange.

I argued the social workers in my research were simply reflecting their perceived rigid distinction between economic exchange and gift exchange within a Western cultural context. Thus, I show the story about recruitment and transformation was partly about social workers imposing the idea that there is a contradiction with having money alongside other values. Therefore, in looking at the notion of gift exchange I have demonstrated it is the intangible things that carers receive in return such as gratitude and personal satisfaction. The other way in which the contradiction is contained is through the professionalisation of carers. I show that carers are expected to embrace professional development with continuous training. However, as I have shown in Chapter Two, professionalism is endowed with values surrounded the notion of vocation which means carers foster for the good of the children to care and to empathise and not just for the money. Therefore, gift exchange and commodity are inextricably linked.

However, in order to be approved by social services, all carers submitted to a ritual of assessment that effectively led to their transformation and conversion into commodities. So, the language of gift exchange competed with the managerial processes that objectified and assessed them according to a market value. Social workers employed

technologies of recruitment governmentality in the re-education of carers that encouraged them to rethink their values. The result was an intense emotional impact. However, I argued the transformation is not as complete as social workers may think since carers try hard to privately hold on to some semblance of their original values. Once approved, carers continued to feel their motives were always judged under the supervisory surveillance of social work reviews. Their impressions of social workers often led to ambivalence. Carers' impressions of social workers heightened in the placement arena where children were as strategic as carers. In trying to understand and interface with the foster care system carers increasingly came to understand social workers as individuals rather than as a professional body. That realisation was expressed through feelings of frustration arising from the high turnover of social workers that are supposed to support them and the child. Thus, I showed a lack of managerial continuity among social workers gradually exposed a mess of human errors that lead to inefficiencies in applying managerial procedures on the ground, leaving carers more hindered in their role. In finding ways to construct a cultural match with the children in their care, food became an important vehicle in the formation of the social relationship between carer and child. Furthermore, the care of children was essentially defined within the home as the sphere where carers stressed their control and influence. Thus, a contrast was revealed between a discontinuous and fragmented social care system and the notion that carers provide settled and coherent homes for children that represent an underlying tension.

In Chapter Seven, I will examine adoption as the route to permanence for a child in care. In so doing, I investigate the role of social workers in the construction of what they

consider the most desirable form of legal family through adoption. In representing a shift towards legal parenthood, adoption tends to be viewed in terms of a gift exchange discourse, with notions of permanence and security driven by ideas of care love and belonging. The implication is that potential adopters are required to fulfil a set of criteria that extends far beyond those for foster carers. Money is considered a contradiction when compared with fostering since prospective adopters are required to reveal to a greater extent their financial viability. However, with recent legislative changes, introducing financial assistance and statutory adoption pay for newly approved adoptive parents, the notion of commodity exchange is potentially introduced, suggesting a paradox in the overlap of two spheres of exchange.

Chapter 7

The Creation of Adoptive Families: Stepping Permanently into the Shoes of Birth Parents

Introduction

In the last chapter, I examined foster carers' perspectives of entering Bowden's fostering market and illustrated the ways in which potential carers conferred meaning upon their motives for applying to foster and their experiences in doing the job. Fostering is about the provision of family life for someone else's child within the foster family's home. In contrast, adoption is not only considered the most desirable outcome for a child in care but serves as another example of welfare governmentality. This chapter consequently seeks to examine the role of adoption social workers in the construction of the 'ultimate' family unit. The temporary nature of foster care is replaced with notions of permanence, security and achievement of what is perceived to be, a more resilient legal parenthood. The process of adoption results in the permanent transfer of parental responsibility from birth parents to adoptive parents. So, potential adopters not only have to fulfil all the criteria of foster carers but they also need to be ready to emotionally transform themselves even further while they participate in processes of objectifying themselves within adoption procedures to be approved (see Chapters Four, and Five). Adoption places less emphasis on processes of commodification but more on building permanent emotional bonds of kinship and family. So, although adoption is operating within the context of Bowden's welfare market, the notion of gift exchange at times become more

pronounced, since adoptive parents are not automatically given financial support under the same criteria as foster carers (see Chapters Five and Six).

However, adoption does represent a paradox, due to changes in legislation in the Adoption Act (2002) that have made provision for approved adoptive families in certain circumstances to receive regular established allowances similar to foster carers. Statutory adoption pay, like statutory maternity pay, through employers both support the process of new adoptive parents in creating kinship ties with the new addition to their family, or what Howell (2001) describes as a process of 'kinning,' in which, money as well as gift are equally important.

This chapter is divided into four sections, starting with the contextualisation of adoption within the anthropology of kinship, through Howell's (2001) analysis of Norwegian transnational adoption. This is followed in sections two and three by my outline of the procedures that trace the assessment pathway to the approval of adoptive families.

Section Four, examines the complexities of matching children with families and I present the narrative of adoptive parents, Barbara and David, whose experiences and insights provide an example of the contrast between policy and practice. I then show how contemporary adoptees are supported through a system that provides financial allowances, suggesting a shift away from any notion that there is mainly only one form of exchange in operation.

1. Adoption and the Anthropology of Kinship

Unlike the new reproductive technology, Howell (2001) in her analysis of Norwegian transnational adoption argues, adoption has received little anthropological attention, but have an important contribution to make to the study of kinship exactly because its procreative process is non-biological. “Yet, the semantic and choreographic value of biology lurks in the background” and so most adoptive parents grapple with the normalised biological foundation of kinship. Howell explains, Norwegian view of kinship in relation to descent and blood relatedness encloses the family within biologically founded relations where motherhood and fatherhood are highly valued as fulfilment of the self within the nuclear family. But, adoption challenges such notions and yet there are contexts in which kin networks incorporate non-biologically related selves into the existing kin categories that are based on biology thus expanding or restricting orthodox boundaries of kinship classifications and where the more socio-emotional features of people are brought to the fore. Transnational adoption Howell argues also highlights various key issues in ground-breaking ways, such as the relationship between nature and culture in constructing sociality, the significance of origins, reproduction and place. Moreover, transnational adoption provokes issues of race within the framework of radically different cultural backgrounds in the “domain of kinship that is already vulnerable in supporting relatedness”.

Howell further argues, that although the inclusion of adopted children into the kinship structure may appear unproblematic adoptive parents work hard at normalisation of their family through the various stages of the adoption process in creating “as-if blood” bonds.

Like David Schneider's analysis of American Kinship (1968), blood is the defining metaphor of Norwegian kin relatedness. Adoption not only confirms, but also changes the constraints of the biological basis for family and kin and in extending Schneider's argument adoption makes sense of the biological relationship. So, the Norwegian case indicates adoptive families self-consciously re-create the ideals embedded in cultural values about biological relatedness to accommodate their unique needs. In doing so, create what Howell calls self-conscious kinship through the process she describes as "one of kinning". By this means, the child is being incorporated into the adoptive parent's kin network.

In the following sections of this chapter I shall show the desires and emotions connected with adoption, and illustrates how notions of objectification and transformation are significant processes in the oscillation between biology and culture. I will demonstrate in this chapter how processes of 'kinning' occur as are part of the procedures of social work governmentality in adoption.

2. The Creation of Legal Families

Adoption is a legal procedure that facilitates a ritualised transformation of potential adoptive parents who have been assessed and approved for eventual permanent parental responsibility for their adoptive child by the court. Significantly, the child is viewed under the law as if it had been born into the adoptive family; a new birth certificate is issued from the Adopted Children Register. At the emotional level, despite the absence

of procreation between adoptive children and parents kinship becomes a significant idiom in adoption practices to surround the family as if they are biologically related.

In Bowden, adoption social workers have a dual role in the creation of adoptive families. They are responsible for the assessment of prospective adoptive parents and also the matching of those parents with children who are waiting for families. As such they perform the purchaser and provider function whereby approved adoptive families are bought and sold between local authorities and agencies as part of the matching complex.¹¹⁷ Children who are referred for adoption are discussed and their cases allocated within team meetings. Those discussions are embedded in the notion of ‘matching’ in much of what they do. The adoption team manager leads the meeting to discuss the various care plans that highlight the specific needs in all referrals in order to find suitable parents. Each case is allocated to social workers within the team. Adoption social workers explained that children might be referred for adoption from a variety of circumstances, including: -

- New-born babies that have been relinquished for adoption by their mothers.
- Children who are removed from their parents’ care due to child protection issues such as neglect, sexual or physical abuse, drugs and alcohol. Typically, these children would have been placed under care orders within their local authority because the plans to rehabilitate them back into the care of their birth parents have failed and therefore alternative options including adoption are explored.

¹¹⁷ Approved adoptive families are commodities as well as gift. Once they have been approved they are placed on a national database. So the receiving (purchaser) local authority will have to pay for social workers time in carrying out the assessment of the family to the provider borough.

- Parents with mental health problems that prevent them from adequately being able to look after their children. The children are removed from the family and placed for adoption.

While adoption is always regarded by social workers as preferable to foster care, they perceive differences in the emotional needs that motivate those who wish to adopt. Fostering is more closely linked with a general sense of commodity exchange and the market, and assessments are made of practical circumstances such as whether the foster child can have his or her own room which, as I have shown in Chapter Five, are therefore more measurable. Adoption practices also take into account practical considerations but they are more closely linked to emotional and psychological factors. According to social workers, many people choose adoption because of their physical and emotional struggles with limited fertility and they are considered to be making a crucial decision with lasting consequences. During their assessment prospective adoptive parents have to convince social workers, much more than foster care applicants, that they have a good thorough understanding of psychological facts, facts that inevitably remain relatively intangible. As far as social workers are concerned, the field of emotions, feelings and awareness can be associated with relationships involving notions of gift exchange. Moreover, social workers do not find these emotions easy to measure or compare to commodities. In the next section I will briefly explore the progression of potential adopters toward submitting an application to be assessed by making contact with social services and also the social backgrounds of potential adopters that are being represented.

2.1 Social Services: Potential Adopters Make First Contact

The first point of contact for anyone wishing to adopt is with the adoption duty social worker within their local authority that records some basic details onto a referral form. The form records contact numbers, features of the enquirer's experience of children, and their existing knowledge, if any, about adoption. An information pack is then sent to them that includes an application form and contains information about the type of children that are in care and in need of permanent families. Once an application form is returned it initiates the first contact visit by an adoption social worker. Prior to submitting their formal application to Bowden, potential applicants are invited to an information evening hosted by two adoption social workers. The evening is similar to the 'prep' day (see Chapter Five); it lasts for approximately two hours and refreshments are provided, but it is not considered to be a form of assessment by social workers. Unlike the 'prep day', the audience was predominantly White married or cohabiting couples. On the occasion I attended a meeting, there was one mixed Black and White couple and one Black female without her husband. The notion of the 'main carer' was not part of the facilitating social work discourse on adoption, even though single people are allowed to adopt. The social workers for that evening explored and shared some general information about adoption with the group that reinforced the content of the pack each person had received previously. In addition, they read out to the audience an example of a child of mixed heritage who was to be placed for adoption. The choice of that kind of example, I argue, serves to highlight how Whiteness continues to be naturalised and how notions of race and culture are classified in adoption and presented to the audience in terms of 'other,'(see Chapter Two). In the present context however, I focus on concepts of

matching as well as attachment, in matching, skin colour is one of several relevant variables.

Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and, before the session ended, everyone was encouraged to socialise informally with each other and with the social workers over refreshments. There were no evaluation forms to complete. I asked social workers about the backgrounds of the people who come forward to adopt and attend such meetings.¹¹⁸ The general consensus in the fostering and adoption unit, particularly among fostering social workers was that potential adoptive parents tended to come from White middle class backgrounds. Such an opinion would seem to imply, that it is only White middle class parents who are best able to meet social work concepts of attachment in their presentation to social services, and home visits. Fostering social workers believed the very idea of adoption was White and middle class and that was reflected in the adoption team, which had only two Black social workers that was quite a different ratio than other teams.

I was however given another perspective from one of the Black adoption social workers that became one of my important informants. Vivene is tall and slim and towers above her colleagues in the team. She maintains a calm persona in the face of the competing demands of her job. She told me, contrary to the claims made by others, that she believed potential adoptive parents were mainly working-class. I was intrigued, so I asked her to explain her definition of class. She said it was the 'typical family', in which the mother

¹¹⁸ The Adoption Act 2002 has extended its remit to include single people and same sex couples as potential adopters.

and father go out to work, they may have two or three children, and they owned their own home. Vivene's explanation was in fact based on her own family, which she seemed to use as a model to define and judge prospective adopters. Nevertheless, I pressed her for further clarification that led her to consider occupational status as a marker for class. She said that a highly professional couple, 'such as doctors' and depending on the area in which they lived might be considered by her to be middle class. Also, since adoption requires that prospective adoptive parents demonstrate financial viability, they tend to fit a middle class classification. But; she was keen to point out there was now a broad spectrum of people from various backgrounds, including single people, who are viewed today in favourable terms as potential adoptive parents.

In the following section I will examine elements of the assessment process I have previously outlined (see Chapter Five) but I concentrate on an exploration of notions of attachment in order to indicate the contrast between fostering and adoption. I show that adoption is concentrated on a caring emotional set of relationships, rather than the idea of simply finding practical solutions for a needy child. Table 5. below illustrates the various steps.

The Steps to Adoption

For potential Adopters

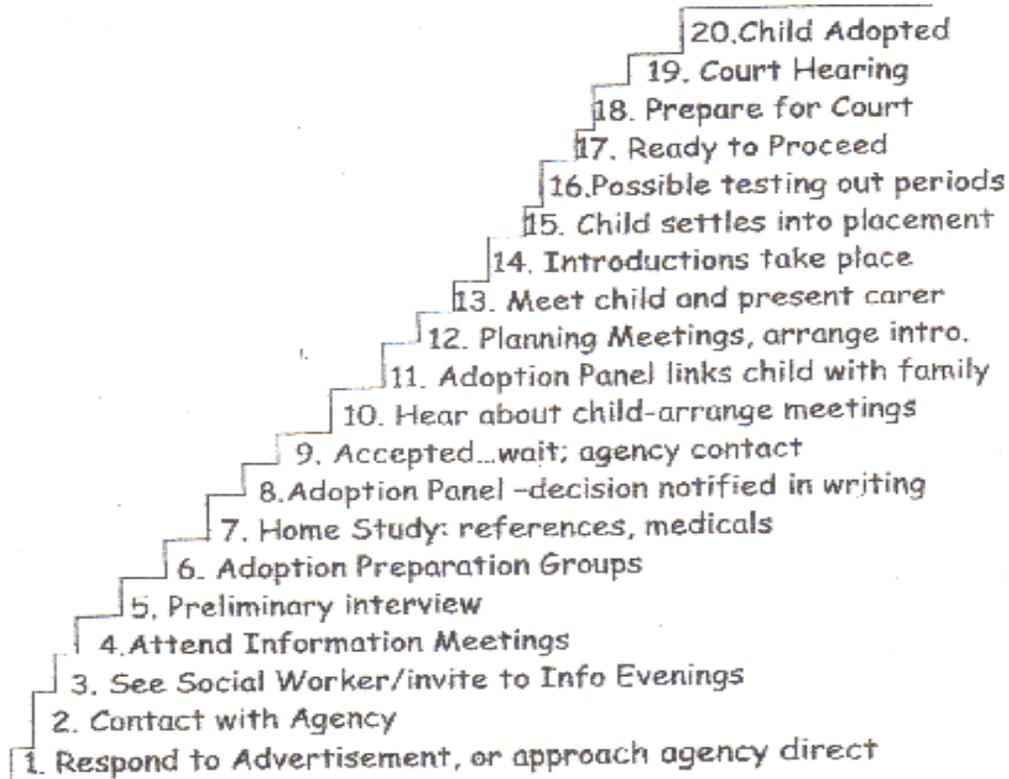


Table 5. Adoption Procedures for Bowden Social Services

2.2 Transforming Potential Adopters

The first building blocks in the establishment of legal families, emerges with the first meeting between social workers and potential adopters. Through the case-work approach, social workers seek to ascertain whether applicants have any prior knowledge or understanding of child development. It is important that all potential adopters demonstrate their understanding of children's needs as they grow and develop. Hence, they are required to gain and engage with attachment theory.



A Inuit Family.

The tenderness and responsibility in their treatment of children is a virtue of the Inuit which binds them closer to the brotherhood of civilized peoples than their skills at carving or with the needle G. R. King 1917, National Geographic Volume 31(564) in Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia 2005.

Attachment theory is a psychological theory concerning the relationships between humans, which are drawn upon in social work; which provides an important context for this chapter. The most important ideology of attachment theory made famous by John Bowlby is that a young child needs to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for social and emotional development to occur normally. Within attachment theory, it is argued, that infant behaviour in relation to attachment is primarily about

seeking closeness to an attachment figure in stressful situations. Infants become attached to adults who are sensitive and responsive to them, and who remain consistent caregivers from six months to the age of two; when children begin to use attachment to familiar people as a secure base from which to explore and return. In this way, parental responses lead to the development of patterns of attachment; these, in turn, will guide the individual's feelings, thoughts and expectations in later relationships. But, separation leads to anxiety; a typical response, following the loss of an attachment figure.

While further research by developmental psychologist Mary Ainsworth in the 1960s and 70s underpinned the basic concepts of attachment, she introduced and developed a theory in which she argued that attachment behaviour in infants had four patterns. She named them secure attachment, avoidant attachment, anxious attachment and disorganized attachment. Attachment theory has remained a benchmark as the dominant approach to understanding early social development, and the formulation of social and childcare policies about the early attachment relationships of children.

Any assessment from a social work perspective of potential adoptive parents seeks to assess their ability to manage a wide range of feelings, both in themselves and others. The resolution of any losses or traumas that they have experienced in their lives will be of key significance for them to reflect upon. For instance, if adults put themselves forward because of their own childlessness, through circumstances which involved miscarriage or the death of a child, it is important that they have come to terms with their situation since

failure to mourn that loss could have significant implications for their ability to bond with any child placed with them.

Thus, such ideal standards presented by social workers, that in no way represent the average family is what people who wish to foster or adopt have to fulfil. Social workers have to translate the concepts of attachment, set out within practice procedures through the Common Assessment Framework in more practical ways for assessing prospective adopters. Notwithstanding this, social workers are also eager to determine whether potential adopters have the space, the time and the commitment to adopt.

One of my significant informants, Mary, told me as we sat together munching on ready salted crisps, how the whole process felt like ‘judging’ first time adopters like her. A wide range of information is collected by social workers including the fit between the ages of children and potential adoptive parents. Applicants are probed about work commitments and how they might affect taking and collecting a child from school and the degree and nature of any extended family support. A social worker records the details of any brothers and sisters, parents and other potential support networks that an applicant may have. Medical and criminal information constitutes another important topic. Social workers expressed to me their hope that potential adopters would always be candid about any medical or criminal matters that may affect their application even though all applicants are automatically subjected to police checks.

After this first meeting is concluded, the information is reviewed, by the entire adoption team. Any matters arising, prior to the team meeting are dealt with by the team manager and individual social worker. Good practice is about trying not to keep applicants waiting too long between visits. The following narrative, recounted by a social worker Willimena who has worked in the adoption team for ten years typifies the extent to which team decisions and consensus building place limits on how social workers may exercise any autonomy. Willimena is considered as hypoactive by her colleagues, because, she is so energetic. She is petite and likes to wear very stylish glasses.

She told me about her first contact with a couple in their mid fifties, that she was assessing at the start of their increased scrutiny under a social work gaze. The couple lived in what Willimena described as 'a well kept house'. She said she observed a sense of 'vulnerability' about the wife based on her body language as the woman sat on the edge of her chair. Her husband, on the other hand, was noticeably less nervous. However, it was revealed during the meeting that the wife had a history of depression. The couple had been trying for some time to have a baby and they still hoped they would conceive naturally. Willimena confessed it was not completely clear to her at that stage exactly why the couple wanted to adopt. Since, they were both in their fifties Willimena wondered why they had left it so late to think about adoption. She immediately concluded there was no way they could adopt a baby, more because of their age, but the possibility of adopting an older child should be explored. However, older children come with more emotional problems that may present someone with a history of depression greater challenges in establishing attachment. Willimena discussed her misgivings with

her team manager and they decided within the team as a group to explore the medical issue further. They solicited additional advice from the couple's General Practitioner with the help of the medical advisor to the adoption panel. The General Practitioner reported that the couple could almost certainly cope with caring for a child. But, Willimena and her manager nevertheless decided to check further with the hospital consultant who was treating the wife. They believed this would provide a fuller picture of the couple.

This account highlights four factors in adoption procedures. First, the primary task of the first meeting is to provide a quick reconnaissance. Second, it facilitates the rapid pace of applicants becoming object of social work knowledge within adoption practice. Third, it further serves as an example of the various methods social workers employ using ideas of attachment as a baseline in their process of judging suitability to adopt with the medical gaze being drawn upon to provide an additional layer of scrutiny Rhodes (1993: 132). Finally, there is an evident tension in the ways in which individual social workers exercise limited professional autonomy having at every stage to automatically referred decisions back to the team.

In the following section the group sessions that are then held show how they assist as a second arena for selection. Again, theoretical ideas are used ostensibly to help applicants but also serve to discriminate and identify who might be suitable. The applicants are in this way further moulded through the power relations as subjects of adoption governmentality in their hope to achieve approval.

2.3 The Group Process: Transforming Intended Adopters

When applicants attend group sessions they are known through previous information gathered and recorded in the file after the first meeting with a social worker. The adoption team will have been provided with a sense of the participants through their team meetings; by the social worker that carried out the initial visit. A brief summary is relayed to the team under the various headings within the file. For example, name, address, age, any children already in the family, occupation, housing, contact with other children particularly if it is a childless couple. This data already suggests views about the suitability to adopt even though social workers have not yet officially or formally carried out any assessment.

I have illustrated how the preparation group provides a universal method for social workers to facilitate a kind of transformation in the recruitment of potential carers (see Chapters Five and Six). All applicants have to attend preparation group sessions that are held over a number of days. They are facilitated by two adoption social workers, and an adoptive parent is also invited to offer the benefits of their experience, acting as a potential counter balance to the official view. The sessions are structured around small and large group discussions with the routine use of case studies to facilitate discussions. But, as I have already illustrated, the preparation group sessions give social workers the opportunity to observe applicants in an interactive group process. Social workers told me that the sessions are designed to build on applicants' existing knowledge, by helping them to learn from and through their life experiences and engage with information using

real life scenarios for discussion. According to social workers, usually the scenarios cause emotional responses; some people break down crying over the impact upon children of the many issues such as sexual and physical abuse and on their behaviour. It is sometimes the case that the scenarios awaken dormant and unresolved abuse that applicants have themselves suffered but suppressed. It is precisely those moments of vulnerability that social workers often see as opportunities to make their professional judgements when they meet after the session. Such reactions are indicators of whether an applicant will last the course or withdraw early on in the process.

The information helps prospective parents to make informed choices about the journey they are embarking upon and the types of children that may be put forward for adoption. Applicants who have resolved their own traumatic history would be viewed as particularly sensitive and understanding of a child's issues of loss and trauma. Crucially however, is whether they have gained some resolution of the traumas. Adoptive carers need to be able to see beyond the immediate behaviour of a child in order to think about what might lie behind and motivate the behaviour. The ability to do this will enable parents to respond more sensitively and in turn help the child to manage the feelings more appropriately to increase their reflective capacities, and their own self awareness.

Group sessions are presented to applicants as simply sharing information. However, they also create knowledge in order to potentially transform the participants into adoptive parents. Adoption social workers told me that they observe group members and what

they say with great care. After each session the social workers meet to compare notes and discuss their impressions of the interactions between the people in the group. The groups' feedback is used to add to, or revise, areas within the training sessions, for example sometimes the group participants express the wish to discuss more real life issues and have less theory. Social workers try to incorporate such views in preparations for subsequent sessions.

I asked Vivene and others to explain why they embed particular theories within the scenarios that they use in training. I did not get a clear-cut answer from anyone I asked. Vivene, for instance, said, "After a while we don't become aware of what theory we are drawing on; we just do it." The sessions cover child emotional development, physical development and issues of loss and separation. But the assessment process, like other rituals, may be less about the meaning of the rules and more about the performance and the structure of the sessions within the sequence of events that unfold. The pace of the assessment also highlights the important temporal dimensions of the ritual. This process raises questions about how social workers are transforming potential adopters.

According to social workers I asked, it is advantageous for potential parents to understand the significance of attachment in relation to the psychological well-being of children and parents. This idea suggests perspective adopters who social workers have indicated come from middle-class socio-economic backgrounds do not have that prior understanding through the norms and values of their childhood or the wider society, and therefore need social workers. In the wider society, parents generally do not undergo such periods of transformation or training and so we might ask why do social workers

consider it necessary that these applicants should? As I have discussed earlier in the chapter, children who come up for adoption have suffered traumatic experiences and social workers see adoption as a way to fix or heal those children. But, I consider that there is also a moral judgement embedded in what I argue is a notion of privilege; social workers are granting prospective adopters the privilege of giving a home and receiving a child. This reciprocal relationship, I argue is what makes adoption more about the notion of gift exchange as well as fulfilling the creation kinship. Although located within institutional contexts, more contemporary literature that I explore extends and updates the application of gift theory.

Potential adopters are socialised within the group process into thinking about legal issues in creating attachment and building resilience in the adoptive child. When an adoption becomes final the adopters, are considered to be endowed with a wider range of values than foster carers to carry out their parental responsibilities. Concerns arising from the sessions about any of the applicants are recorded in the file for the social worker to act upon in their home study. When the group training is completed each case is allocated to a social worker to take applicants onto the next steps of the journey in their ritual that is my focus in the next section.

3. Approval Process: The Home Study

This section of the chapter focuses on the face-to-face interaction in the household between applicants with a single social worker during a number of home visits. The

home study is the second stage on the path to approval. As such it is another procedure for adoption governmentality. Unlike approval for fostering, home assessments are critical to the approval of adoptive parents. An allocated adoption social worker carries out a number of visits over a period of several months, meeting with everyone in the immediate family. Data is gathered about the structure of the family, along with an exploration of childhood experiences, past and present adult relationships, including divorce. Social workers explain how they aim to discover personal characteristics that are linked to social norms and values about family and parenthood and which are supposed to indicate motives for wanting to adopt that might be partly unconscious. In contrast to fostering, the process aims to predict the ways in which a potential adopter will develop an ability to meet the child's needs; needs that extend classification beyond practical requirements to include emotional and psychological issues as well. Other important considerations include approaches to the child's cultural background, spanning issues such as religion and language.

I asked social workers about how they actually structured their plans for such visits? I was told the first couple of visits deal with the immediate structure of the family and where people can be located within it. The assessing social worker, records information about the applicant's immediate and extended family noting any siblings, ages and their marital statuses to map the applicant's genealogy. For a couple, it means therefore exploring four sets of grandparents that represent their bilateral kin. Childhood experiences are also discussed and include any oral traditions that play a part of constructing the past. The importance of such tradition vary according to place and time

and create cultural messages by word of mouth across at least one generation that legitimate norms and values in the present. Social workers have told me some people volunteer more information about their family than others, reflected in the oral histories that prospective parents recounted. Vivene gave me the example of a couple she had interviewed. The man was Swedish while his wife was British born her parents were New Zealanders. Vivene said, *“he had a lot of stories to tell about his family and it was important to him to pass those stories onto any child, who would become a part of that history as they would be passed on to other generations. His wife on the other hand, had little oral history within her family.”* Locating applicants within a genealogical map of their family is supposed to enable the social worker to make an assessment of the entire family at a glance, while implicitly establishing the nature and importance of the various relationships. It is a tool to facilitate the building up of a picture of a family not only in terms of actual people, but the kind of family it might be. So the social workers can learn from life stories about trans-generational transmissions Bertaux & Thompson (1993) of family culture, what individuals accept and reject of the past in order to judge attachment patterns in relation to notions of an ‘ideal’ family.

One day, while I was talking ‘shop’ over lunch with Judith; a locum social worker in the adoption team she remembered a couple she interviewed. She told me,

“Jean and Denis Wilson both came from Scotland. Denis came to London to visit a friend twenty years earlier and decided to stay on. The couple had two daughters and wanted to adopt a son. When I interviewed them Denis felt there were more opportunities in London. Jean was a nurse and at age twenty one her

mother was pressuring her to get married but she said she had a mind of her own, she wanted to be a career girl so she grabbed the chance to come to London where she met and eventually married Denis. The couple was very committed to each other and their life stories talked about having strict parents. They were very keen not to carry on that tradition with their children. But they maintained strong ties with their extended families and their daughters were in fits of laughter when they gave me a flavour of the funny stories they shared with Aunts and Uncles, Cousins and Grandparents. Even though the parents had a strong sense of their Scottish identity, the children saw themselves as English and Londoners in particular.

There were no unresolved attachment issues for the Jean & Denis based on their upbringing and their children had secure attachment, demonstrating their ability to engage with attachment criteria for adoption.

The whole family structure thus comes under scrutiny as a social work gaze is focused on past generations and extended kin as well as the here and now. Social workers are concerned that their evaluation will be subjective as it is difficult to uncover such invisible values. In fostering, the focus is mainly the people in the immediate household where the physical environment can be measured and audited. In adoption, it is more about trying to measure things that cannot be measured such as care or feelings of affection for someone. Therefore the family tree becomes a device that is used to gain access to those insights. All families have secret or 'skeletons in their cupboards', and

social workers are trying to fit what they hear and observe into an ideal model of the family.

When the home study is completed the final stage for the prospective adopter is meeting with and being interviewed by the Adoption Panel. In the following section I will address three factors. First, I ask about the role of the panel in relation to the adoption team to establish what the panel judges that the social workers cannot. Second, I ask if the panel rubber-stamps the decisions of social workers and the team? Third, I ask what is the composition of the panel and why.

3.1 Facing the Adoption Panel

The role of the panel is to provide further checks and balances on the assessments of adoptive families carried out by adoption social workers through a report called Form F. The panel meets approximately once per month and Form Fs' are sent to each member at least a week in advance giving them time to read, make notes and clarify any queries before meeting. Beforehand, the manager for the assessing social worker is responsible for reading and thoroughly checking the report including spelling and grammar. According to one adoption manager, Form Fs' had to be of a very high standard since they could be sent across a number of boroughs after leaving the panel. At the panel meeting each case on the agenda is first presented with a précis of the Form F by the assessing social worker and is further cross-questioned. Appearing in front of the panel is quite an anxious ordeal for social workers. Since prospective adoptive parents are now required to appear before the panel alongside social workers, some of the questions are

directed to them. A social worker told me that a child's parents attends child protection case conferences, so it is important too that prospective adoptive parents appear in front of the panel to be questioned. The assessing adoption social worker accompanies applicants appearing before the panel. Questions from the panel are directed to the applicant as well as the social worker. Social workers are expected to coach applicants about the type of questions they should expect, but these are never entirely predictable.

Angela has been a social worker for over twenty years and she became a manager in the adoption team seven years ago. Her passion about adoption provided me with some useful insights. She gave me an example of how a social worker would begin their presentation to the panel:

“This is Mr & Mrs X; they have been referred to become adoptive parents. I have carried out the assessment and I conclude that Mr & Mrs X are suitable candidates to become adoptive parents, for the following reasons, they are compassionate; they have their own child and are very familiar with the issues that arise in parenting and they have shown they can adequately care for a child etc.”

When it comes to directing questions at the prospective adopters, specific issues in the report can spark a concern in some or all members. Angela gave me another example.

“If one of the members picks up on an issue like mental health that relates to a couple where the wife has had a nervous breakdown. The reasons surrounding the illness would have been outlined in the report. But, although the doctor reports she has fully recovered, the members will decide to give her a stress

scenario. They would ask, Mrs X how do you think you would cope with a child with difficult behaviour”

In the past this type of question would be directed to the social worker who, would have to demonstrate to the panel how the applicant would cope with the child in those circumstances. As Angela says,

“The idea behind the question is based on the fact that a child can appear happy and nice but when they are placed in certain situations the negative baggage they carry can come to the fore in their behaviour and there is evidence to show Mrs X has cracked under stress in the past.”

In addition, the panel explores financial matters. If they observe from the income and expenditure information that there is not much money left over when household bills have been accounted for, they would want further explanations about how the applicants intend to look after a child. When all the reports have been covered the panel makes a decision about each applicant through a voting system, where decisions carried with the majority vote. Once the panel votes, to recommend approval of one or all of the applicants, the recommendations go to the Social Service Director to be ratified and then the applicants are notified. Therefore, the panel does not rubber stamp the decision of social workers and the team. Instead, panel meetings represent an additional critical layer of surveillance of both based on internal regulation (see Chapter Four).

If an applicant is judged unsuitable, the assessing social worker would be coached by her manager how to tell the family.¹¹⁹ Sometimes a Form F is submitted to the panel and the members ask questions that neither the social worker nor team manager can answer.

Angela told me whenever this happens, it makes the team look bad but “*that’s what the panel is there for.*” The social worker would be required to carry out further investigations and the decision to approve would simply be deferred to the next panel meeting. On the other hand, if they pick up on something serious enough, the applicant will automatically not be approved. Applicants can challenge decisions and they can appeal; they have to read the report in advance that is prepared in cooperation with the social worker and sign it if they agree. The panel represents the final act of formal conversion of applicants into what would be considered the most appropriate and specific kinds of legal family. Social workers explained that they ask applicants to write about what it is like growing up in their family and something about what a typical day might be like in their current household. Applicants are also asked to explain what is important to them in terms of religion, food, education and social activities. One social worker told me she writes what the applicant says in italics ‘so it stands out’ in contrast to the other things she has written, and then she may comment on the citations.

The panel comprises representatives of social work professionals, adoptive parents and Borough council members, legal and medical advisors. The panel consists of ten people with an independent chair and vice-chair. The panel has an experienced social worker

¹¹⁹ The example of people who would not be suitable: schedule 1 offenders relating to violence, drugs and various abuses. In addition, people that have lost their children through previous child protection issues and try to adopt they would be refused.

from the adoption team and a deputy team manager in childcare. A medical advisor, an elected member from the council social services committee, four other people both professional and lay people two of whom have direct experience of adoption or fostering. The panel also consists of a legal advisor and social work advisor that are not members of the panel. The panel has an administrator who is responsible for taking minutes at the meetings and circulating the relevant documents to panel members. It is important the panel is representative of the community or society therefore it seeks to include members of ethnic minorities, a balance of men and women and people with direct experience of adoption and fostering.

4. The Matching Complex: The Importance of Attachment

Adoption social workers work with approved adopters to help them explore and decide on the child they want to adopt. If a suitable child is identified the prospective adopter is given the full details about the child and its background. The wishes of the birth family are also taken into account. In the judgments about the capacity to parent, the focus is upon the child's emotional, physical and educational development, along with the issues of health, ethnic, cultural and religious needs that also include language and geographical location.

Howell (2001) provides further insights at this stage of my analysis through her Norwegian example in terms of the complexities of the matching complex. Once the child has entered the family, Howell notes the adoptive parents begin to come to terms with the fact that the child has a biological and ethnic origin thus culture is biologized as

well as what Howell calls the folkorization of culture. Norwegian adoptive agencies encourage adoptive parents to learn about the donor country and familiarise their adoptive children also, even though few parents showed any interest in their child's country of origin, or the debates about identity and the discourse around the search for roots. Howell explains the message from adoptive agencies in the following way:

“Now they are at pains to explode the myth that the adopted child was born at the moment he or she was united with his or her adoptive parents. Not only was the child born in a foreign country they stress he or she was born of a flesh-and-blood mother, into a foreign and exotic culture. Unlike legal attitudes the child obtained is not a tabula rasa but a human being with a personal history” (2001: 217).

Howell further suggests messages transmitted by the adoption agencies can be misleading. On the one hand, they put adoptive parents through the assessment process and ensure they deliver the child to the waiting parents. On the other hand, the children will always demonstrate their difference in origin through their looks that is why cultural background is so emphasised. Furthermore, the underlying assumption seems to be that there should be a fit between appearance and culture.

In Britain where the socio-culturally diverse populations have long been established to a greater degree than in Norway and where ethnically sensitive social work was at the heart of anti-discriminatory practice (see Chapter Two). Thus, culture became biologized within adoption as a normalising discourse and ideology and within law through the

Children Act 1989 and Adoption Act 2002. Therefore, as I show below in table 6, in the matching process race is but one variable.

Table 6. The Key Feature of Attachment

Secure Attachment	Non-Secure Attachment Patterns
Positive	Negative
Emotional Warmth/Good Family Relationships	Lack of Emotional Warmth-Avoidance
Trust/Confidence/Social Skills	Lack of Trust- Ambivalence
Safe and Stable/Sense of Identity	Unstable and High Risk – Disorganised
High Stimulation/Intellectual Development	Very Little Stimulation – Anxiety

Other characteristics are also deemed important, for example it is judged a withdrawn child would not fit into a sporty or lively family. The gender of the child can also be dependent on whether space is limited in the home. Adoption social workers revealed to me they are inclined to recommend families adopt a child or children of the same gender if children have to share a room. Social workers also advise prospective adoptive families that the age of a child does not always correspond with their developmental age.

Although social workers have told me there are no hard and fast rules, they say to families, that they should think about how the child would fit in and if they could accept differences when it comes to details such as skin tone or physical appearance. As one of

the adoption social workers told me, 'when it comes to skin colour the concerns tend to be more about how the child blends in' with its adoptive parents. But a Black child is no longer automatically placed with a White couple. When the nationality and ethnic background of the family are examined, during the home study, questions of what cultural values will dominate the child's upbringing are explored. Social workers argue adoption automatically makes a child feel different, so to be placed in a White family where they are visually different just makes it even harder. One social worker describes this kind of adoption as the child sticking out like a 'sore thumb'. The idea of matching a child, under the logic of 'blending in,' runs through this final stage of adoption. In exploring what matching means to different participants, it is clear that it is not simple for, social workers when can match skin colour but not necessarily culture which relates to notions of norms and values and traditions. For example, children of dual heritage with one White and one Black parent are now being matched with mixed heritage couples, that represent an additional criterion of practice to which social workers have to adjust. It has been the case that children of mixed heritage went to Black families. But, what if the child is mixed in other ways? It would seem that the Black and White mixture comes to the fore more readily even though the mixed parents/couple; one who is Black and the other who is White have no experience of living as a person with a visible racialised mixed heritage themselves.

There have however been exceptions to that argument. Social workers have also told me that once in a while a 'special couple' would come along. Under close scrutiny, such adopters are thought to show how they could offer a child who was from a different

ethnic background some degree of belonging. One social worker gave me the following example:

“We once placed a child of mixed parentage with a White British man and his wife who was from the Philippines. They had a wealth of cultural knowledge based on their lifestyle that was the love of travel that was visibly evident in their home, their beliefs and attitudes. Not only were they assessed as suitable to adopt they could in fact support a child of mixed heritage to build their resilience and identity.”

In this case, it was perhaps the judgement of mixed cultural backgrounds of the couple that were ‘matched’ with the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the child. Thus, the ‘matching’ principle was maintained. Thus, notions of belonging in this context; are forged with the couple’s ability to help a child adapt to a diverse social milieu.

Social workers talked to me about assessing trans-racial adopters as a feature of their work that are now less common as I have previously discussed in Chapter Two. I was told, some applicants question the idea of ‘same race’ placements by arguing with social workers that ‘we are all the same’. Social workers pointed out to me that their investigations sometimes did suggest that adoptive parents would not be able to meet the ‘needs’ of a ‘Black child’. For example, they described how a genealogical exploration and a person’s social networks in the home study does not always make it immediately apparent how they would deal with hair and skin care issues of a Black child. These are some of the subtle differences that need to be addressed to build not only those children’s

resilience but also their identity. I have discussed above the tension that exists under the general banner of ‘matching’, which relates to many dimensions in terms of forging family relationships. In her case study of Norwegian transnational adoption Howell, (2001) contributes to our understanding of this discourse of matching. According to Howell, adoption provokes discussions of race and different cultural backgrounds; in the domain of kinship. In this way, adoption becomes more than the desire to reproduce; it is about fitting into a conventional model of the “normal family”, which I have shown is a key goal of the matching complex. The practices of matching can be further equated with Bourdieu’s notion of doxa. Howell additionally recognises possible tensions between the personal desires of adoptive parents and the public norms and values of the adoption agency which are framed in terms of attachment theories, leaving much to unpack about the complex values of kinship, parenthood and family life which are never straightforward. Nevertheless, once a definite match with a child has been officially approved, social workers confirm plans for the introduction to the child together with details about any proposed contact arrangement with the birth family. The introduction to the child is a gradual process, which takes place over several weeks and the child then moves into the home of the soon-to-become adoptive parents once the birth parents give their consent to the adoption.

Both child and parents move through a period of adjustment that also affects the extended family. But they remain under the social work spotlight with regular visits from social workers. This phase culminates with a detailed review after the first four weeks. These sequences of events, I argue symbolise a prolonged liminal existence. They eventually

lead the adoptive parents through the door that transforms them into legal parents with the application for and the granting of an adoption order by the court. At that point they step permanently into the shoes of the birth parents and at the same time it could be argued with the change of name and issue of birth certificate; the child too crosses a symbolic threshold into a new family. However, on the ground, the picture is often messier as the following narrative by social workers reveals.

Willimena and Angela explained to me how a particular placement, will become an adoptive placement pending the court's decision. They told me that there was no hurry to apply for an adoption order at that point. It was only at the time of a second review, when the child has been living in the family for four months that adopters are asked or encouraged to submit their application for an adoptive order. The court, can take up to a further six months to grant that order and require a formal schedule of evidence in a report which is prepared by social workers. Once again, the decision-making process shifts from the social worker to the legal system. Ultimately, a submission to the court depends on the family's circumstances. One social worker gave me the following example:

I remember a child with disabilities was placed within the perspective adoptive family and they took several months to go through with the adoption order. But, they felt they needed that space for the child to become part of the family and it took a long time to put them through.

Adoption social workers remain in contact with the family until the adoption order is made, which can take up to nine months after the child is placed. I asked another social worker Paulette, if she ever stopped visiting. She laughed and said she was sure they probably wished she did leave them alone, but the answer was no. She stressed that there was a lot more interaction between social workers and adoptive families in today's climate. Nowadays, she has to maintain contact with adoptive families to monitor the manner in which contact plans for the child are carried out. This could mean, for example, indirect or direct contact with siblings on an annual basis. Adoption social workers have to make sure contact takes place by setting up the venues and so they continue to have some involvement with the families.

In the following section I present the case study of Barbara and David as an example demonstrating how matching does not always achieve attachment even when the transfer appears to be straightforward.

4.1 Parenting Values: The Narrative of Barbara and David

Barbara and David, a Black couple, lived in South London and they became adoptive parents in the 1980s. Their story illustrates notions of matching and gift exchange. My first impression of Barbara was her great sense of humour; she had an air of confidence that made her stand out in a group despite her petite frame. We built up a really good rapport. Her husband David is tall, slender and quietly spoken but also very friendly and open. I met Barbara and David over drinks and they gave me their perspective of

applying to become adoptive parents. They both shared with me the ups and downs of building their family with the adoption of their second son.

When Barbara and David married, there was the possibility they would not be able to have children because Barbara had a history of fertility problems. However, she did conceive naturally and after a successful pregnancy gave birth to a son. She became pregnant again but lost the baby. Having both come from large families, they explained that they wanted more children and they wanted their son to grow up with another sibling.

They made contact with their local social services department and an adoption social worker visited to explain the processes involved. Barbara and David filled out the application form in the information pack and sent it off. Barbara tells me it took approximately six weeks after sending in their application for their assessment to commence; they had already agreed they wanted to adopt a son. Their assessment went smoothly with social workers doing the usual investigation of the family structure and genealogy, using techniques of re-socialisation to mould future parental values. She said that her social worker focused on her relationship with her mother and stepfather. However, she was unable to provide a lot of information about her birth father since her parents divorced when she was about seven years old and she only had limited contact with this man subsequently. Barbara knew very little about her maternal grandfather except that he was Asian. She knew her paternal grandmother, but nothing of her paternal grandfather. But she knew more about her aunts and her cousins.

As I have pointed out in previous sections in this chapter the focus for social workers is family relationships and significant events such as Barbara's mother's divorce and re-marriage. They would have investigated the impact of those events upon Barbara and her siblings. This is about a focus on the adult's attachment pattern. Assessment of an adult's attachment pattern can potentially provide an opportunity for that individual to understand his or her own characteristic pattern of behaviour in order enabling to adapt and change. Barbara and David argued that both their parents developed their nurturing skills with the birth of each child. When they applied to become adoptive parents, during their assessment they talked about drawing on the skills they learned together with nurturing their son. Thus, social workers can also employ attachment theory to explore the dynamics of Barbara and David's relationship.

Barbara and David were eventually recommended for approval by the adoption panel. Their son was already eight years old and they had wanted to adopt a child two to three years younger. They were invited by social services to look at the 'Be my Parent' collection of children needing adoptive families. Barbara said, "It was an awful experience. There were pictures of children and below the pictures is a brief description of their circumstances. Reading it was quite heart breaking". Barbara and David became increasingly uncomfortable; they told me it felt like going through a shopping catalogue and felt in some ways strongly immoral. Those feelings led them to eventually delegate the responsibility of choosing a child solely into the hands of the social workers.

A month later, social services contacted them about a child that they considered to be a suitable match. The child's name was Jason; he was five years old and lived with White foster carers in Yorkshire. When Barbara and David finally met Jason, they were struck by the fact that he could have passed for a member of David's family as he looked very much like David's sister, with the shape of his face and his smile. They both felt they could walk down the street and be seen as one family unit with this child. Here we have an example not only of the importance adoptive parents place on the child fitting into the family, but the social workers pre-empted this with their own subjective judgements Jason would not only fit in because of skin colour, but through claims made about his special features. The emotions that Jason's appearance produced in Barbara and David confirmed their earlier judgement that social workers were better equipped to choose the 'right child' for them. Furthermore, this meeting with Jason served to endorse the idea that there is a kind of objective truth out there, within social work knowledge, about the 'right child'.

When Jason was placed with Barbara and David he came, in their words 'like a world wind'. Problems over age-appropriate behaviour and the difficulties linked to his childhood trauma helped him develop what is known as 'disorganised' attachment pattern where fear and anxiety are heightened, through his experience of separation and loss of his mother which made his settling in very difficult. Information about Jason's past experiences provided a useful way for Barbara and David to understand elements of his behaviour. However, there were two significant incidents that shaped the unfolding relationships in the family. These occurred within the first three months of his placement.

The blame for this was placed at the door of his birth mother who had apparently abandoned him when he two years old at a very crucial time in his development, leaving him with little or no information about his past background. He was placed with a White foster family in a very rural part of Yorkshire where he stood in contrast to his family and surroundings, for there were no others like him in the area. He now had to adjust to new parents with a different racial background and to an urban rather than rural, environment.

Nonetheless, Jason began to settle in his new family. He accepted David as his father and Trevor as his brother, but he had real difficulty with his mother, Barbara. Barbara interpreted his lack of attachment to her as the result of past traumatic experiences with his birth mother. She supported her convictions with the following anecdote:

“I remember walking down the street with Jason and he kept walking ahead of me and I kept bringing him back to walk beside me. So, one day, I asked him why he always walked ahead of me in the street; was it because he did not like me? He said, “I like you, but I just wish you had White legs”.

Barbara felt Jason’s response spoke volumes about what he felt. But she and David reasoned that, with time and positive nurturing, Jason would develop a relationship with her as his mother. Furthermore, they were anxious already not to lose him. So, they applied for the adoption order. In granting the order, the court would have to decide on the evidence presented whether Barbara and David could meet Jason’s needs.

After three years in the family Barbara, told me Jason, became a great fan of Michael Jackson’s music. One day, Barbara said, she called Jason’s attention to a television

programme about Michael Jackson's life story. The programme revealed the stark contrast between the singer's features as a young boy and what he had become as an adult. Barbara said Jason looked at her with what she described as hate and disgust in his eyes and he said to her, "*I thought you said Black people cannot become White?*" With that revelation, Barbara and David came to believe that Jason would change the colour of his skin if he could, and choose to live in a White family. They understood that what seemed to be an obvious and, to a large extent, taken-for-granted match between child and parents in terms of skin colour did not necessarily produce attachment. Moreover, the ideology of matching and related issues of belonging in this case speak to classic social work notions of separation and loss, on the one hand, and the Black radical paradigm of identity confusion, on the other; (see Chapter Two).

Jason's negative feelings about moving to a family that differed to his foster placement were not addressed while he was in foster care. Whilst the White foster carer took care of his physical needs very well, the family would not have been deemed to fully meet the criteria for adoption. The case reveals how, by operationalising different priorities in fostering compared to adoption, potential areas of conflict can arise.

Barbara and David raised these issues with social services, in order to receive some therapy for Jason, since he clearly needed help to sort out his early life experiences in terms of his racial identity; and issues with his birth mother. Unfortunately social services did not respond to these concerns and, once the adoption was processed, the parents were left on their own. David and Barbara remained concerned about how Jason would form

relationships with any Black person and particularly Black women. By the time Jason was twelve years old, he had been permanently excluded from school. At the age of fourteen, he was offending to such an extent he chose to return to the care of the Local Authority.

In adoption procedures today, the family are entitled to support services, including financial support when the child joins them and before the adoption has been finalised through court sanction. Jason may have been judged to have additional needs in his care plan. If that were not the case, David and Barbara would have been entitled to information and advice on how to deal with the issues that gave them cause for concern even if they were not eligible for financial assistance. But, adoption relies greatly on the commitment of adoptive parents like David and Barbara to find coping strategies that might create attachment for adoptive children who were suffering separation and loss and which reinforces the discourse of gift.

Before concluding this chapter, it will be helpful to present briefly details about the allowances so as to consider how ideas about the fit between gift-exchange discourse and the notion of commodity exchange that financial support associated with adoption appears to suggest.

4.2 Post Placement/Adoption Support: Adoption Allowance and Statutory Pay

Within social work Freundlich and Phillips (2000) suggest on the one hand adoption can be practiced on the basis of a gift relationship and an act of altruism. But on the other hand, market led policies of the 1990s in the management of social need created a greater gulf between those who benefited from the market and a welfare underclass that did not. Thus, prospective adopters and birth families occupy different sides of the divide in the shifting ethics of adoption in relation to market forces. Hence, they argue, “*Adoption became an attractive cheaper alternative to other choices of care as costs involved are shifted to adoptive families*”. Hence, as I have argued in Chapter Three, care was redefined as part of the politics of value as social workers faced changes in the shift towards resource-led service delivery.

In the 2002 Adoption Act, provision for an adoption allowance was formalised. The money is paid either in a lump sum or through on going payments. It is through this form of provision that market forces become more visible where previously the gift relationship was more highlighted. Since April 2007, adoptive families are entitled to thirty nine weeks of statutory adoption pay (SAP) and Partners are also entitled to statutory paternity pay (SSP) at the same rate, regardless of gender. The insertion of money has produced a blurring of connection between two spheres of exchange whereby there has been a perception that there is a distinct difference between the two spheres. But as I have illustrated in Chapters Five, and Six the two are inextricably linked.

Adoption policy recognises the new relationships and adjustment that adoptive families experience through the provision of support. Adoption legislation places a duty on local authorities to provide a wide range of support services for all adoptive families ranging from information and advice, counselling to self-help groups. This increased level of support means a new area of change that social workers have to deal with.

Adoption social workers are required to make recommendations for any future needs that a child will develop in making the move into their adoptive family. The adoption allowance is designed to assist adoptive parents in caring for a child with additional needs. Yet the provision of that support may encourage a broader diversity people to consider adoption.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the role of adoption social workers in Bowden in constructing a new legal family. I discussed the dual role of the adoption team in the assessing and matching children with adopters. The differences between adoption and fostering were highlighted in relation to the intentions of potential adopters to achieve legal parenthood. Thus, adoption I argued created a shift toward notions of permanence and the expression of gift exchange above commercial considerations.

Idioms of the gift are embedded within the assessment of potential adopters, which serves as a mechanism of re-education that follows a particular structure using group training and home study sessions that objectify and construct applicants as subjects of adoption standards. The process creates certain kinds of knowledge by reinforcing and developing applicants' understanding of the psychological nuances of attachment, separation and loss, not only for the child but also for the applicants' themselves. The assessment ritual culminates with the production of a report for each applicant that is presented to the adoption panel. The report, like the case file of Chapter Four, serves as the final stage of objectification of persons and experiences for the managerial system within Bowden's Social Services.

The stage of matching of children with families focuses on notions of belonging and the needs of the child. By trying to 'match' a child to potential parents such things as physical appearances are taken into account, as well as apparently subtler elements of

religion or language. As my case study has revealed, putting an emotionally traumatised child into what is considered a ‘perfectly’ matched family does not always mean that the child will attach to that family with positive outcomes.

With the introduction of financial allowances into adoption provision, the notion of commodity exchange is blurred with the rhetoric of the gift. Such a change is potentially generating new tensions, as implicit contradictions underlying practice now have to be negotiated. The provision of financial assistance recognises that there may be consequences from earlier emotional trauma or physical disabilities that children will carry into their adoptive families with long term consequences. Financial provision also constitutes a vehicle to encourage potential adopters from a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds.

This chapter draws on all the significant themes that flow through my thesis. It shows how welfare needs constitute a particular idea of ‘the family.’ The inclusion of the contested notion of cultural matching was the consequence of a transformation of Britain into a visibly, multi-racial/ethnic society, which led to a radical critique of existing adoption practices. The emergence of resource-led services in the late twentieth century also changed the role of social workers. That change, meant adoption became part of the target-driven policies and highly ritualised procedures through which adoption social workers negotiated everyday work practices within an apparently objective and fixed framework of behaviour. In the context of the commodification of welfare and child protection more generally, adoption social workers became the purchasers as well as the providers of adoption services. They now find families and match targets within systems

of managerial and team surveillance. Furthermore, welfare policies have created the social conditions under which gift and commodity exchange can operate and indeed overlap within adoption. Social workers reported difficulties and tensions in trying to think across two spheres of exchange simultaneously. Adoption procedures have also created case files that reveal how social workers negotiate what is included and excluded in formal practices associated systems of managerial administration.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Implications of change beyond the identity of Social workers

This research has illustrated the impact of changing welfare policies on social workers within the public sector, through the study of a fostering and adoption unit in the London Borough of Bowden¹²⁰. This has been a small study of a particular place with a specific demographic makeup and history. However, while some procedures may vary, others are the same as elsewhere. For example, many of the issues that I have examined for child protection, fostering and adoption are relevant to not just other London Boroughs but to England and Wales, since all social workers use the Assessment Framework, (see Chapter Three) and are governed by the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and the Adoption Act 2002. Notably, the issue of race is one variable more central for social work practice in a highly multi-cultural borough like Bowden or London that is not typical across England and Wales. I argue that the strength of anthropological research is being able to obtain rich detailed description at a micro level and so inevitably, this methodology creates difficulties in generalising research findings. I employed an anthropological perspective to study the un-researched ways in which issues of welfare policy, governance and power affect people on the ground in their everyday practice. What is more, it does not entirely conform to a traditional approach in anthropological investigation. My methods were essentially defined by the circumstances that dictated the

¹²⁰This is a pseudonym for the Borough in which I carried out my fieldwork.

structure of my fieldwork. Carrying out a multi-sited study in a bureaucratic and urban environment within a city like London required modifications to the tradition of living with research participants and becoming immersed in their daily lives. Thus, my study was only possible by combining the collection of personal stories with structured and semi-structured interviews, gossip, and general conversations, alongside participant observation, which was constantly negotiated and at times contested. I will develop this further in the chapter, but first, I will outline my critical reflections of my findings.

In Chapter Two, I drew on various theoretical approaches to provide an analytical framework for examining how the family became a key instrument of social control. I use Foucault's important perspective of governmentality with its focus on power relations within systems of government and ideas of ideology and discourse, (Foucault1991). Foucault presented a useful historical argument in highlighting the evolving socio-political re-classification of the family away from a model of government with the emergence of the notion of economy whereby the family became the formation of an atom embedded in the composition of population. His ideas formed the basis for my argument in which I showed the evolution and legitimisation of social work in the operationalising of welfare policies to address social problems resulting from urbanisation due to industrialisation in the nineteenth century. Thus, the revolutionary rise of nineteenth-century philanthropy and charity in the governance of poverty through which 'friendly visiting' by middle-class women volunteers became ritualised I suggest was at the heart of reinforcing middle-class domestic ideology of the family producing doctrines of normalisation. I further highlighted the fact that as the household became

linked with the notion a private sphere and sacred domain of ideal womanhood. So, the interface of the household with public welfare gave rise to further ideological shifts toward the promotion of the respectable nuclear family.

Hence, I argued the ideology the family became a stable social norm and the regulation of the household was mobilised as a key instrument of governmentality. Other Foucauldian scholars such as Pasquino (1991) and Rose (1999) support my line of reasoning in arguing that population became the new object upon which emerging forms of power were being constituted and exercised giving rise to a new cluster of technologies relating to among others the institutionalisation of the family with the ascent of the 'social'. The surveillance of poor families and the classifications of their welfare needs during the nineteenth century led to further debates and political sanction in the formalisation of knowledge, and professionalisation of social work which subsequently located that knowledge within a female gendered field of practice through middle-class educated women is still to some extent a feature of the identity of social workers in the present time. Thus, with their nineteenth-century legacy of professionalisation, social workers became increasingly embedded within government welfare policy agendas. In closer examination of the concept of the 'social' as an historically emerging concept in the formation of the modern British state (Denzolot (1979) and Lewis (2000) offered a useful extension of Foucault's ideas by arguing that the discourses and institutional practices that emerged in the nineteenth century were embedded within the interplay of power and class relations within new norms of middle-class family values formulated through a moral gaze and value judgements. Thus, in the modern British state the opening

of that conceptual and institutional space is where the family became the locus of intense struggles in the political discourse of governments of both Right and Left.

Those struggles are based on social work practice through social workers' disciplinary approaches within which deviancy and abnormality were both constituted as the discursive frame of the surveillance and classification of the family. Thus, the regulation of population I show to be rooted in the creation of a body of knowledge as the criteria for classifying social work as a profession. In drawing on the sociology of profession with the work of Freidson (1986). I provide a context for social workers as active agents in carrying out welfare agendas. While Freidson points to the contested nature of the definition of professional, the Marxist approach of Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich (1977) implied that the nineteenth century was a pivotal period of social change when industrial capitalists supported the development of welfare services among others to exercise their power and control in workplaces and communities. These kinds of social relations I argued equated prominently with Foucault's theory of the art of government that supports Freidson's view that profession should be defined and analysed as an agent of formal knowledge creation. In addition, I have argued that social work did seem to be shifting toward total autonomy with its expert body of knowledge and skills that governed its qualifications and controlled routes of entry. However, that form of autonomy was not realised since further welfare reforms I suggest resulted in a de-professionalisation. But, Exworthy and Halford's (1999) provided a further nuance to my argument by implying that de-professionalisation should be viewed as more of a trend. Similarly, Clarke & Newman (1997) support the need for caution, using the concept of 'modes of

attachment', in arguing that the internalisation of managerialist corporate aims is much more complex in practice.

With my anthropological focus on presenting the family not as a specific set of social relationships defined by biology, but as a set of ideas, norms and practices that are reproduced and transformed in a changing world. I extended my argument to the dimension of race, to encompass the order and control of the Black family reflecting the changes within the British population in various regions of England and Wales transformed into visible multi-racial communities with the increasing migration of people from the New Commonwealth and beyond from the mid-twentieth century. I introduced the notion of 'Whiteness' though (Dyer 1997; Supriya 1999) as a taken granted racial category to show how notions of race and ethnicity underwent reclassification in the contested field of British nationality of populations that were not White. Thus, Bowker and Star's (2000) notion of classification as sites of political and social struggles was useful for my analysis. Similarly, Douglas's (1994) concept of purity and taboo provide a metaphor for how reclassification redraws social boundaries to maintain or create social order. Black and Asian populations became subject to classification and regulation in the construction of new racial subjects synonymous with certain social problems and notion of social fracture in the maintenance of efficient governmentality in the modern British state. As a consequence, charged political agendas like immigration control, within ideologies of assimilation discourse of 'good race relations' rapidly became naturalised. In response, a counter-discourse of 'Blackness' provided another layer of my analysis within the anti-racist literature (Goulbourne 2001; Mercer 1994; Sivanandan 1991; Hall

1996; Gilroy 1987; Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1993), as a site of social and political struggle in which the notion of an essential Black culture located in notions of resistance and insider knowledge gave rise to sustained criticism within counter critiques during the 1970s, which served as a forerunner for the shift toward ethnically sensitive welfare services. In this regard, I presented DuBois's (1994) notion of 'double consciousness' as an essential feature of how Black and Asian social workers functioned as cultural interpreters. Hence, in the context of social work governmentality, these critiques were strongest around the issues of trans-racial adoption. In this context, the ideas about the right kind of family was highlighted as White, British and nuclear, (Gill & Jackson 1983). The notion of cultural needs became pivotal in a society where skin colour in relation to the Black child was pointed out as an inescapable defining factor, (Penny & Best 1988; Ahmad 1989; Small 1986; Maxime 1986; Robinson 1995; Ince 1999; Schiele 2000; Mirza 1997; Bagley & Young 1982). Thus, The Children Act 1989 represented a landmark shift which took race, among other things, explicitly into account in the adoption policies relating to Black children, even though this remains contested.

I also highlighted in the narratives of two Black social workers the historical embodiment of macro policy in action to illustrate 'good race relations' on the ground. Together, they serve to demonstrate the original government policy response to growing Black populations, and the backlash to social work governmentality. I engaged Van Gennep's (1960) writings about rituals as rites of passage as a sub-text to the discourse of national belonging with the use of the concept of liminality as the space in which Black and Asian groups were socially located in continual transition on the margins of British society with

notions of implied deviant values through cultural difference. Thus, Black and Asian social workers became pivotal agents to intervene and regulate such families.

Hence, the recruitment of Black and Asian social workers became linked with notions of affirmative action which led to a perceived lowering of standards and shame expressed by black social workers. I concluded that where professionalism overlaps with the ideology of race and otherness the contested nature of professionalism becomes further highlighted, since it is embedded in the taken for granted category of 'Whiteness'.

Furthermore, whilst I have argued that there is an intricate link between the concept of double consciousness (Du Bois 1994) and the identity of Black and Asian social workers cast in a role of 'cultural interpreters.' In addition, I further demonstrated that the absorption of social work naturalised middle-class norms and values, whether consciously or unconsciously, inevitably brought all social workers, whether Black or White, closely in line with their nineteenth-century legacy; they are all constrained by welfare policy to construct welfare subjects in terms of the deserving and undeserving working-class poor.

The welfare reforms initiated by the Labour Government the late 1990s, I consider was reflective of Somerville (2000) argument of the family as an idealised working model for the normalisation of mutual interdependence. I argue the reforms reflected in part a continuation of the New Right trend that shifted to means-tested benefits advocating a broad discourse of work ethics with a notion of responsible citizenship based on its political rhetoric of modernising the British state.' In so doing, I drew on Hefferman's

(2001) argument to show how welfare reforms is linked to changing political ideology.

Thus, I show through Hefferman's argument that modification of Clause Four within the Labour Party's constitution is viewed as the moment when Old Labour became New Labour. So, modernisation was a metaphor for the politics of catch-up reflecting a new political consensus by Labour's accommodation to and adaptation of Thatcherism's neo-liberal political agenda. That shift in ideology provided the blueprint for the application of the modernisation agenda to Local Government.

I analyse this approach through the framework of Clarke & Newman's (1997) concept of the managerial state that they suggest represents a cultural formation based on a distinct ideological notions of practice that I argued became normalised in the twenty- first century and is essentially politically based on what Clarke & Newman calls normative power. Clarke & Newman show that normative power is embedded in managerial governance linked to issues of efficiency and performance as transforming bureau-professional approaches into corporate objectives outside of professional control that is enforced through budgetary restrictions and devolved managerial accountability reflecting the art of entrepreneurial governance. Thus organisational restructure is about the dismantling of old structures of practice. However, I draw on Halford & Leonard (1999) to show that the impact managerialism should be located in relation to other competing discourses in the construction of the self instead of being passively absorbed. This latest example of how social workers have to continuously adapt to government welfare policy agendas served as the key backdrop to my fieldwork.

In Chapter Three, I have shown how such top-down policies impact on the day-to-day practice of social workers in Bowden as an exemplar of New Labour's modernisation reform. I do so by building on the notion of governmentality with Bourdieu's concept of doxa through which I argue that change has become traditionalised and taken for granted. I show how social service reorganisation became normalised within the public sector; social workers in the fostering and adoption unit argued that they were used to their service being reorganised about every four years. My ethnographic data of the reorganisation of Bowden during my fieldwork highlighted the tensions between professionalism and managerialism as social workers adjusted to new terms and conditions of employment that not only reflected different modes of practice but also the spaces in which such practices were carried out. I argue managers in Bowden became instruments of power in the ritualisation of change reflecting the nature of modernisation in its classification and standardisation of discourses of efficiency. However, social workers talked about making an extra effort in their work to effect change by empowering and enabling social inclusion, which I argued represented a hidden professionalism and therefore a third space of operation between the contested field of professionalism versus managerialism. This space is also what Freidson (1970) refers to as technical autonomy.

Whilst managerialism is grounded in target driven outcomes that are to all intent and purpose measurable, the assessment of risk is less clear-cut. Some practices are very responsively led as shown through my ethnographic data. My first example was the hospital, which is a primary site of child protection intervention and the construction of

welfare subjects. I used that example to illustrate a classic link between social work governmentality and public institutions. Alison's personal narrative illustrates how social workers and medical professionals together objectify people under their joint gaze, what Rhodes (1993) refers to as a form of 'gesture' embedded in systems of practice, which can then extend its surveillance into households. My discussion also showed how resource-led services together with limited social work staff on the ground, contradict the ethos of care and support for families. Francesca's narrative demonstrated a related theme of how a social worker's intervention and surveillance into the private sphere of a family can arise from the family being judged as one that has broken social norms. That example illustrated that while the government's ideology about protecting the family relates to a nuclear ideal, at times even such families are viewed to be deviant. In addition, my analysis of the case-work intervention showed how it provided an important audit trail of the wider social services spheres of referrals into the fostering and adoption unit. In so doing, it becomes part of the objectification of individuals through bureaucratic rationalisation of case files and aspects of internal governmentality. To help me contextualise my data I drew on social work literature to help me gain a better understanding of the formal statutory legislative policy framework for social work practice, (Colton et al 2001; Davies 1998; Banks 2001; Kemshall 2002; Madge & Howell 2001; Fawcett et al 2004) which acknowledged this aspect of social work is most challenging and arouses more concerns.

In Chapter Four, I examined the case-work files and argue that they are inextricably linked to daily social work routines within systems of welfare administration with a long

tradition in social work as active objects and products of social work intervention into families dating back to the latter half of the nineteenth century. Instead of illustrating a Foucauldian version of the file, I draw on the Weberian notion of bureaucracy as a reflection of social modernity and classic sociological theory emerging at the dawn of the twentieth century. Weber was useful too for situating social work within the Western democratic state in which the process of bureaucratisation was borne out of particular historical developments, and the way in which the state exercised its authority in the regulation of populations through rational methods, such as keeping records. My argument also highlighted the similarities between Foucault and Weber in their mutual interest in social change manifested in the progression of the notion of rationalisation and how new mechanisms of bio-power validate methods of classification through surveillance and written records which relate to the production and formalisation of knowledge of welfare subjects by social workers that are supported by doctrines of normalisation as I have shown in Chapter Two.

Thus, as normalised objects, I argue case-work files function as technical devices to convert families into knowable and administrable welfare subjects that invariably position them at the centre of the tension between the objective and subjective recording that represent contradictions social workers experience and have to negotiate. I demonstrated how the files became a source of anxiety and negotiation among social workers, as they themselves become the focus of surveillance under systems of line management. The management of case files is the continual process of constructing an organisational and temporal order out of the mess of daily social work practice, by

attempting to create a single chronology. Thus, I further argue any suggestions of an objective truth is contested, since the case files create knowledge out of multiple social work assessments over space and time, yet give an impression of representing one account in one voice.

I provided a case study that eloquently demonstrated the construction of apparent objectivity in relation to case-work files. My argument extended to the role of interpretation with the example of Maureen, who accessed her social services case-work file several years after leaving local authority care. Maureen's story revealed how her file lacked 'objective truth', and thereby frustrated her. Instead, it divulged very minimal subjective descriptions of past events. By reading the file, Maureen created further narratives that bestowed meaning on its contents in order to fill in the gaps in her biography. In the end, Maureen clung to personal memories of the past, since the file did not provide the evidence she sought. Overall, the function of the file it could be said is to map out key moments and decisions that define and relate to social work practice, rather than an illuminating record of a personal history.

In Chapter Five, I then turned my attention to another example of objectification through the recruitment and management of foster carers in Bowden. Recruitment policy represents the way in which social workers, as agents of government welfare policy agendas, experienced the impact of the marketisation of welfare. I showed through the work of Clarke et al (2003) and (Kemshall 2002; Thomas & Pierson 1995) the marketisation shift began in the 1980s driven by the New Right and so the

commodification of welfare rests on the rise of quasi-internal social service markets within local authorities through the new politics of value for money and efficiency. That shift led to changes in the ideology of social work practice, with the redefinition of the welfare client into active citizen-consumers and introduction of the private sector. I argue not only were foster care applicants objectified they negotiated their value in specific spheres of exchange. I argued that such an approach has led to the commodification of notions of kinship, as foster care was re-thought as a product of market ideology driven by targets and costs. I strongly highlighted the notion that foster care applicants were converted into commodities because my analysis focused on the operation of social workers as purchasers and providers of care services in a welfare market where foster care applicants become the embodiment of that service. I draw on Norotsky (1997) whose work relate to economic anthropology to support my argument. Norotsky argued the concept of value was located within specific Western intellectual traditions that classified all aspects of production as commodities. Furthermore, in analysing Marx's theory of value Norotsky also highlight another key notion of the link between labour power and commodity. Thus, I argue the recruitment procedures is representative of a rite of passage, carers enter a sphere of production and reproduction of welfare, which is another example of the traditionalisation of practice. Therefore, Foucault's and Bourdieu's theoretical perspectives of discourse and doxa are useful to articulate the way in which notions of traditionalisation relate to the conventionalisation of ideology. I show how applicants became complicit in the process of commodification in order to fit selection criteria leading to a contractual relationship with Bowden's welfare market as active citizen-providers.

Nevertheless, despite operating in a market the connection of money with foster care was overlaid with a discourse of the notion of gift exchange by social workers and became part of my argument about the fee foster carers received. I draw on Fennell's (2000) notion of illiquidity where money as commodity par excellence is converted to gift through the stipulation that it is utilised for a particular purpose; caring of the foster child. Zelizer's (1994) analysis of the social meaning of money was useful to show how the value of children was reclassified. Carsten's (2000) notion of relatedness showed how kinship is being rethought within a consumer society drawing on Strathern notion of kinship being 'enterprised up'. However, my findings also show foster carers receive what is called a reward element for their services which I argue can be related to the labour of care, upholding the notion of commodity that I employed within the theories of (Norotsky 1997).

In Chapter Six I developed my analysis of social workers as agents of government welfare policy agendas by drawing on the perspective of foster carers. I argued social workers employed technologies of re-education within their assessment methods that had an intense emotional impact, which continued the theme of 'rite of passage', which again drew on the work of Van-Gennep (1960). However, I argued, the transformation was not as complete as social workers may wish to believe as I show carers tried hard privately to hold on to some semblance of their original values. I examined the ways in which prospective carers confer meaning upon their experiences by exploring the various motives that led them to enter what I have presented as Bowden's foster-care market.

Despite an explicitly financial element to their role, carers, like social workers tended to highlight what I argue is a counter gift exchange discourse. I further argue their articulations I perceived as emphasising their resistance to accepting a simple financial calculation as corresponding with meeting the needs of care. My findings reveal that foster care applicants approached fostering with a sense that values of altruism and gift giving do not conflict with monetary reward and were not two unrelated systems portrayed in the scholarly gift literature. But, being left with no choice but to operate in a market, carers endeavoured to find a balance between, what I argue are the two sides of their identity. A paradox subsequently arises out of their collusion within the recruitment process. In accepting their transformation through assessment and surveillance, they implicitly agreed to become specific kinds of carers within a system driven by ideas of value for money. Thus, I argue the carers become engaged in contracting as active citizen-providers.

I introduced the insights from gift theory into my argument through Osteen (2000). Osteen's analysis showed how the cultural development from the ideology of bourgeois individualism is embedded within the institutionalisation of the meaning of the spheres of gift and commodities. As a consequence gift within Western ideology became conventionalised as separate from market exchange. Thus, through Osteen's analysis I argue that within the traditional literature, fostering and adoption represents an anomaly. Instead, other ethnographic material on gift, were more suitable for the illustration of my argument. For example, Russ (2005) presents the notion that rather than expressing a distinction, gift and commodities constitute different practices and ways of encountering

the self; suggesting and I concurred with the view of caregivers as moral agents of exchange. Acting as moral agents carers are able to measure, and modify elements of gift and commodity, as fields of personal experiences and as forms of moral order, (Foucault 1990 in Russ 2005). Having shown social workers' struggle with budget constraints based on the notion of value for money, Russ provided another insight for my analysis of this theme in relation to fostering by showing how carers are simultaneously the subjects and objects of exchange. Indeed, I make a further point that the foster child and foster carer are the subject and object of exchange respectively. Thus, as Russ implies there should be no precondition that caregivers should negotiate between competing spheres of exchange in the provision of care since they embody gifts and commodities.

Read's (2007) analysis presents the broadening conception of nursing practice as a result of state led health care reforms I argued could be related in part to Russ's and my argument. Read showed how caring tasks located within personal networks and the private sphere of the household gained formal recognition splitting the cultural boundaries between the state and non-state forms of care and the rapid growth of what I have shown through my research as a mixed economy of welfare. However, Reads, fieldwork in a nursing home presented nurses adapting to new ways of caring echoing Russ's notion about different ways of encountering the self. So, like Russ's example nurses too in their interactions with patients reflect notions of subjective and objective positions of exchange all at once embodying gift and commodity. Thus, in drawing on Russ and Read I argued powerfully that foster carers embody explicitly a form of double consciousness. In addition, I build on the notion of encountering the self by arguing that

the 'labour of love' within Read's analysis represents the altruistic self that I argue can relate to foster carers and locates them in a third space between gift and commodity.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, I examined adoption in relation to the desired legal family, as an example of social work practice in relation to governmentality through welfare policy agendas. I commenced by contextualising adoption as the ultimate choice of care, and the dual role of Bowden's adoption team in assessing and matching children with adopters, whose approval they go on to manage. Essentially, adoption is conceived of as a further shift toward permanence and a genuine gift exchange discourse. The assessment of potential adopters sought to create an identifiable set of values through the education programme that introduced the psychological nuances of attachment, separation and loss, not only for a child but also for the applicants themselves. This education assessment, however, is also a form that concludes with the production of a report presented to an adoption panel. Comparable to the case files discussed in Chapter Four, the report sums up the final objectification of persons and experiences, but critically includes ideas of care and support defined outside a strictly market-based economy.

The complexities of matching children with families further highlights how ideas of belonging serve as an important facet of attachment that directs social workers' practice of 'matching' a child to potential parents. Howell's (2001) provided the contextualisation of adoption within the anthropology of kinship with notions of the biologisation of culture through the creation of self-conscious kinship. However, as my case study

revealed, putting an emotionally traumatised child into what is considered a ‘perfectly’ matched family does not always mean the child will attach to that family with positive outcomes.

As a postscript, however, with the introduction of financial allowances, it seems that a notion of commodity exchange is being introduced; so the clear distinction made between fostering and adoption is becoming blurred, and the rhetoric of the gift de-emphasised. This development may cause new tensions, since the contradictions obviously impact on social workers’ practice and have to be renegotiated by them. Financial allowances, however, are ostensibly a vehicle to encourage the inclusion of new potential adopters from a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Overall, the general theme that runs through this thesis on issues of child protection and fostering and adoption is the impact on social workers of changing welfare policies on the ground. I argued social workers are endowed with an historic normalisation of the link between welfare needs and a particular idea of ‘the family.’ Thus, the legacy of the nineteenth century is embedded in contemporary everyday social work practice, and continues to inform the classification of welfare subjects through notions of deserving and undeserving.

The policies that redefined social workers’ role in the twenty-first century were legitimated through political rhetoric embedded in ideologies of managerialism, marketisation and modernisation. Social workers responded by finding creative ways of

negotiating new notions of care, and maintain a sense of agency in a highly ritualised, target-driven bureau-professional work environment that is always changing. The latest reorganisation meant social workers have to negotiate contradictions and tensions between notions of professionalism and intense managerial control of resources-led services in a welfare market based on changing politics of value. They also had to negotiate subjective decisions within a seemingly objective and fixed framework of behaviour, since the notion of matching fostering and adoptive families with children was a contested field of contingencies as workers tried to think across two intersecting spheres of exchange. Ultimately, social workers have to cope with unstable and competing developments that continually manifest in the misfit between formal policies and the diverse situations social workers face in practice. This form of practice has been and will be an inevitable feature of social work practice since social workers deal with the dynamic phenomena of shifting populations in the same way as individual circumstances change.

Implications and practical significance

The aims, interpretations and analyses of this thesis are qualitative. In conducting the research I did not prove or disprove a fixed hypothesis, since my research was an exploration of the impact of changing welfare policy and the link with social workers' practice. In undertaking the research, I gained insights and understanding by becoming familiar with people's working lives. My interest remained in questions concerning ideas of the family, cultural values, identity and social change, and how these are being absorbed and legislated for within welfare delivery. Major legislative transformations

extended over twenty years have failed to deliver a sense of security or permanence among social workers in the public sector since social work is regulated by government agenda. For this reason, I wanted to capture social workers' sentiments, emotions and meanings in a continually changing work environment, in which adjusting to different ways of thinking and practicing have now become a norm.

The use of qualitative techniques provided the means to assess unquantifiable information. That information concerns social workers' experiences and reactions, which are not normally recorded. In exploring how social workers and my other informants gain order and give meaning to their daily lives, whilst making sense of themselves in relation to others, qualitative methods allowed me to share some of the understandings and perceptions of my informants. The analysis of the data gathered allowed me to discuss the social and organisational processes that maintain social workers' realities within bureaucratic and managerial systems of governmentality over time and space, through their perspectives, rather than any a priori set of assumptions. Some of my evidence is based on observations, while other elements required subjective apprehensions and interpretations in relation to the socialisation and re-socialisation of workers.

There is a paucity of anthropological techniques to manage urban public sector research. My research contributes to modifications of traditional techniques to enable the study of multiple sites and of individuals who do not exist in bounded communities. In the contemporary world, such a study requires research into new data sources such as e-mails

or phone calls, the internet and in common with other researchers, I had to participate in structured social activities at the convenience of my informants, in order to build up a general sense of the ways people worked together, and co-constituted underlying working values. Therefore, I had to take a flexible approach at all times, remain calm when faced with stressful situation and apply problem-solving techniques. Thus I had to be prepared to ‘think on my feet’ to meet changing routines and be able to multi-task. Also having good self-esteem is important to cope with frustrations that arise negotiating access and general acceptance where the notion of outsider is an ever-present emotion. Since my research has been informed by engagement with practice, and a particular interest in the unanticipated consequences of policies and developments, it seems pertinent to outline how my PhD might inform practice or contribute to discussions about reform and training. I summarise potential contributions in this conclusion.

My thesis offer insights into the work environment of the public sector, particularly in relation to the impact of developing policy on social work practice with families. It offers a way of looking at continuity and change, and how doctrines of normalisation are reinvented through bureaucratic rationality and authority of the state. Part one charts the evolution and professionalisation of social work and its continued presence within welfare state policies. Parts two and three focused on the politics of value in relation to marketisation and spheres of exchange, demonstrating how political agendas for welfare services are implemented through the family as a site of social work intervention, as well as an ideological concept. These processes were major indicators of the establishment of resource-led service policies, which had impacts on the ability of social workers to

deliver a good quality service without suffering burn-out. Thus, my findings are potentially useful for social work training, since they showed continued changes in policies do not reflect the realities of practice, which could have implications for newly-qualified social workers, faced with large caseloads in light of the tragic consequences for children and families that have been widely publicised. My findings are also important to demonstrate how an anthropological approach can offer insights that are critical and creative that will complement other theoretical approaches in social work and the ways in which anthropological thinking can be applied to all levels of practice which are not just to child protection and fostering and adoption. Thus, social work lecturers and students can draw on anthropological literature to inform their knowledge that is part of adapting a flexible approach to practice that is at the heart of twenty-first century work culture. The notion of cultural interpreter is still relevant with the noticeable shifting populations particularly in London; Black social workers now belong to a wider diversity of cultural backgrounds but so too do White social workers. So, how is social work training preparing all social workers to deliver evermore complex and ethnically sensitive social work in the twenty-first century and beyond?

My study adds further knowledge to the anthropology of policy, work, kinship and social change. Also relevant are economic anthropology, political anthropology, anthropology of welfare, organisation and applied anthropology. In looking at the creation of social norms and values through ideologies and discourses of power in the governance of populations through social work and social workers is an original contribution to how anthropologist and anthropology can contribute to research in Local Government that can

serve as an example to other areas in the public sector. While my work constitutes a modest contribution to these areas, its strength is in employing an anthropological approach, which emphasises that only through small-scale detailed ethnographies of what people actually do, can a more empirical appreciation of other abstract issues be grounded in everyday life. Thus, I demonstrate how traditional anthropological concepts, like kinship, ritual and spheres of exchange, can be applied to an urban bureaucratic context, whereby diverse situations social workers faced in practice, and the range of data sources that were engaged, represented the shifting field of anthropological methods and ethics.

As I conclude this thesis, I reflect on how the publication of various child protection serious case reviews have propelled social workers into the media spotlight and the consciousness of the general public in very negative ways. Reports have revealed that the family of Sharon Mathews in Yorkshire had contact with social workers before she was kidnapped (The Guardian 16/6/2010). Sheffield and Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board have apologised in a press conference to a family for failing to protect them from their father who repeatedly raped, physically and sexually abused them over three decades (BBC News 10/3/2010). Local Authorities, Police and Health organisations have been forced to give assurances that there will be changes in safeguarding systems, process and practices to better protect families from abuse.

In the meantime, the case in London that is still receiving extensive media coverage nationally is about Peter Connolly, widely referred to as 'Baby P.' His death, like

Victoria Climbié previously, means that social workers have experienced and will continue to experience more changes, with a forthcoming review of social work with children and families. On 16 June 2010, The Secretary of State, Michael Gove, invited Professor Eileen Munro from the London School of Economics to conduct an independent review of children's social work and frontline child protection practices. So, yet again, with a new government there are more changes. Furthermore, the Munro's interim findings reflected some of the issues in my own research. However, her final report advocate a reduction in bureaucracy and imply a return to professional judgement on the frontline of social work, suggesting a pushing back of managerialism. Also the Assessment Framework remains a robust assessment tool, but in line with good practice is due to be reviewed this year in line with the Munro report. Some social workers I have spoken to informally are now feeling the pressure of managerialism and a sense of not knowing what is going to happen next under the Coalition government. Yet again we have more examples of the issues of anticipation of change that I have illustrated in my thesis. This climate of continual revolution and search for meaning in their role appears to be the stable constant and a lasting characteristic of social work generally but more pronounced in the public sector.

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