

**SOCIAL WORKERS' EXPERIENCE OF WORK UNDER
CHANGING ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS:
AN EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL CRITIQUE OF BRAVERMAN**

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L.D.

LINDA DAVIES

SOCIAL WORKERS' EXPERIENCE OF WORK UNDER
CHANGING ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS:
AN EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL CRITIQUE OF BRAVERMAN

The first part of this study is an application of Braverman's thesis about the deskilling of labour to a social work context. Braverman claims a process of increasing managerial control over the labour process--a process of proletarianization is inevitable for workers in capitalist societies, whether in private or in state enterprises.

My study investigates whether this thesis successfully explains the experience of state social workers in a local authority social service department in London. The highly prescribed area of child abuse practice was chosen to test the Braverman hypothesis.

This research found that social workers' experience of management structures was not congruent with the Braverman thesis of labour process domination. His thesis contains a priori assumptions about the nature of the capital accumulation process, and thus about capital and labour. The Braverman approach thus could not explain the contradictions inherent in the organization and practice of state social work.

The empirical data thus required an explanation which went beyond simply disproving Braverman to develop an alternative approach to explain social workers' experience of their labour process. Although social workers may wish to reduce the uncertainty surrounding child abuse practice, and despite management's desire to limit practitioner discretion, there remains an inevitable core of uncertainty in the nature of the work which generates the requirement for judgment on the part of the front-line worker. Braverman's approach proved too deterministic to cope with these questions. I therefore develop the concept of "defensive social work practice" to explain the ability of state social workers to retain and exercise considerable autonomy within their labour process in a social and political climate of some hostility to the aims and practices of their profession.

CHAPTER ONE

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this thesis has been reserved for a methodological explanation of the process of this research. In giving primacy to and making explicit a methodological account, I hope to recount the research process as it actually happened, following the approach of reflexive sociology (Whyte, 1981; Bell and Newby, 1977; Corrigan, 1974). Such an approach explicitly rejects the assumption that research methods and methodology are neutral techniques objectively employed. Rather, it is advocated that a substantive and conscious recognition of the interactive relationship between the researcher and the methodological process be made. Most research reports include a methodology section which describes the research as a set of linear and discrete chronological events conforming to an ideal typical model (for example, theory, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion). Yet a considerable divergence often exists between

how the research actually got done and how it is presented in the written report as having been done. A reflexive methodological account reveals the actual process of the research, closer to the reality of the conduct of the inquiry. Such a description includes an account of the methods used to collect and evaluate data. As well, this approach to uncovering and making explicit the methodology contained in the research process includes as relevant data important biographical detail on the researcher. Such information is seen as of substantive importance in understanding the research process. Reisman has written, "The observer's participation inevitably evokes certain orders of data and closes off others" (1964, cited in Bell and Newby, 1977, p. 13). Similarly, Corrigan has argued that knowledge about who the researcher is may also provide the reader with insights or clues to the values and background of the researcher, thereby alerting him to issues the researcher may treat as problematic or unproblematic (Corrigan, 1974, p. 1). Saunders makes a related point, arguing that "empirical observation is itself to some extent paradigm-dependent; where we look and what we 'see' reflects our prior judgment concerning how social reality is constituted" (1979, p. 345).

A methodological account should also contain some insight into the theoretical thinking and rethinking that informed the research process, and should specifically elucidate the interrelationships between theoretical frameworks

and the construction of empirical sense. Throughout the research period, my thinking about the research problem continued to develop and change. A major turning-point came when I began my interviews with social workers engaged in child abuse work. This contact with the empirical world precipitated a kind of intellectual crisis in the research process. The theoretical framework I was using simply did not "fit" with the data being generated. My theoretical ideas in relation to the research shifted most profoundly at that particular time.

As Corrigan has emphasized, it is therefore vital to spell out the central theoretical tenets that have guided the research. This allows the reader to understand the thesis in the way it was written and therefore enables him to criticize it from within this understanding (Corrigan, 1974, p. 4). This chapter on methodology should then expose the scaffolding or inner structure of the form of this research report.

BIOGRAPHY: MY EXPERIENCE WITH ISSUES IN THE RESEARCH PROBLEM- ATIC

Since the focus of this research has to do with the nature of work and the labour process, it follows that some detail of my work history and experience is relevant. My initial formation as a worker was during my years as a secretary in banking and insurance industry in the late sixties and early seventies. This experience, as a woman performing

a clerical service for men was essentially one of subordination, which left me in no doubt as to the reality of hierarchical relations of control within such organizations. I subsequently trained to become a social worker and held a social worker's post in a Quebec public agency between 1974 and 1979. My social work role allowed me both casework and community organization practice. In the latter, I initiated, along with two other workers, an organizing campaign aimed at ameliorating the conditions of female minimum-wage workers such as waitresses and office workers in clerical positions. My interest in this was, in part, a product of my own previous work experience. As an organizer, my task was to animate other women workers to reject subordinate relations in their work. This was done with some success. In my casework practice I perceived my relations with clients as both helpful to them and also sometimes controlling of them. In other words, both care and control aspects were present in my practice. Similarly, my relationship to my social work supervisor contained both elements of control over and support for my practice decisions as well as considerable areas of discretion or practice autonomy.

The issue of subordination versus autonomy has thus permeated my own work history and experience. It is therefore not surprising that this history is brought to bear on the theoretical problematic I chose to study and research. The contradictory relations contained in my experience, both as a

woman and as an employee performing secretarial, community organizing, and social work roles, thus informed my relationship to the theories of subordination and control over the labour process.

My social work practice experience took place in Quebec in the early seventies. This was a society that had been in rapid and extensive transition since the early sixties. The changes were overtly visible in the rising influence of the Quebec state in all aspects of social life, and in the declining influence of the Catholic church. The rise of the French Quebec state also signalled a shift in the position of the English-speaking community. This community, despite its relatively small size in Quebec, had historically dominated in some areas, notably commerce and business. As well, anglophones had traditionally maintained and run their own institutions particularly in health, welfare, and education.

During my period of tenure, a massive reorganization of health and social service delivery systems was initiated. For social service organizations this meant a process of change from the traditional small, private social agencies to more highly centralized bureaucratic organizations reliant on business management ideology, practice, and techniques, such as PPBS (Planning Program Budgeting Systems) and Management by Objectives. It was obvious to me, as well as to others, that social workers were undergoing a transition from being privileged professionals to a status of workers or employees

of large state organizations; and for anglophone workers, such as myself, this process contained a heightened experience of subjugation within the shifting power relations.

GUIDE TO THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Theoretical perspectives on organization and control of work

In 1979, I returned to university studies full-time and became interested in the literature on the organization of work and the labour process. A major influence on my thinking was a book by Harry Braverman, Labor & Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (Monthly Review Press, 1974). Braverman's basic premise is that the capitalist labour process is dominated and shaped by the drive for capital accumulation. Degradation of work, according to Braverman, results from two central imperatives of the capitalist labour process. The first is the concern to cheapen labour, and the second is to guarantee effective capitalist control over the production process. Application of the principles of scientific management involves a process of continuous subdivision and reorganization of the work process to bring it under effective managerial control. Braverman argues that fractionalization and routinization of work has resulted in a steady decline in the skills, knowledge, and responsibilities of most workers.

This process of "proletarianization" is now believed apparent in the social work labour process. Marxist welfare

theorists have identified, in particular, the increasing separation of "conception" from "execution" in social work, where planning and coordination rests in the hands of management, while front-line workers execute predetermined tasks. The introduction of techniques of work study and measurement, standardization of social work functions, and computerized information-gathering and processing, it is argued, seek to fragment and routinize action and thus contribute to a "deskilling" of practice and degradation of work. This theory is extensively elaborated in the second chapter of this thesis.

Braverman's theory seemed to address some of the issues I had experienced in my work history, and particularly changes in the organization of social work which I had witnessed. When I began my Ph.D. studies in England, it was this theoretical perspective which dominated my thinking. Consequently, I approached my empirical work, interviewing local authority social workers, within this frame of my own experience and the theoretical perspective of Braverman. My decision to look at non-accidental injury or child abuse cases was consistent with the Braverman approach, because this was an area of statutory social work in England as well as in Quebec, where management intervention in the form of structures, policy, and procedures was most apparent. Therefore, I chose this area to examine in social work practice, since it seemed to me that it reflected the Braverman analysis of management control over the labour process.

To an important but lesser degree, another theoretical approach stemming from marxist, neo-marxist, and radical critiques of social work also informed my thinking (Parton, 1981; Galper, 1975; Simpkin, 1979; Bailey and Brake, 1975; etc.). This critical literature understood social workers as agents of social control who fulfilled a role in the reproduction of the social relations of capitalism.

Within the Braverman framework, the explanation for management control over the social work labour process was to be found on an economic level. Changes in the organization of social work were tied to a restructuring of the state which involved centralization of control and, importantly for this theory, financial controls. Within this perspective, it is argued that the crisis of capital beginning in the mid-sixties led to a series of cutbacks in the state sector in order to divert capital to private sector investment. Braverman's central explanation for deskilling is tied to the "needs of capital" to increase productivity and extract surplus value. Braverman's focus was on manufacturing workers. I was interested in exploring his thesis with regard to state social workers. I recognized that these constituted a quite different group from Braverman's core group, and the implications of this would need exploration. When this thesis has been applied to workers in the state sector, the analogy has been drawn on economic grounds. This simple analogy seems to imply that the state functions on an economic level only.

The relationship between the political and economic level is collapsed. Further, the ideological level was ignored by Braverman. Yet it is obvious that the state does operate within an ideological and political sphere. Braverman's thesis thus proved inadequate to fully explain or understand state welfare workers or my experience of social work practice.

The radical social work literature was useful in drawing my attention to the ideological level. Parton (1981), in particular, relying on Stuart Hall's approach, seemed to fill in some gaps left by the economism of Braverman. Together, then, these approaches understood social workers' practice as increasingly subject to management control, and, in turn, social workers as part of an oppressive ideological state apparatus in relation to the working class. While I felt that both of these perspectives have some resonance within the current context, it became obvious that they were overly deterministic in relation to the practice of social work.

Given my own experience of practice, it was difficult to conceive of the labour process of social workers ever being completely subject to such direct control strategies, given that their practice involves much direct face-to-face contact with clients, often outside the agency. Further, given the nature of human predicaments being presented to social agencies, the possibility of such standardization of practice seemed remote, even if it were thought desirable. A certain

level of discretion or autonomy, I began to believe, inevitably remained with front-line workers. The data from my interviews was not supporting a unilinear view of control where management structures determined practice behaviour. It became clear that these views were overly deterministic in that they did not take seriously the contradictory nature of social work practice which was becoming apparent even in statutory child welfare work.

At the point when I began my interviews with local authority social workers I therefore experienced a kind of crisis. The theories I was trying to use to explain the practice world didn't fit. This was, at the time, very unsettling because, to remain faithful to the empirical reality, I had to reject the theories I had become very attached to, while not having another neat theoretical framework to substitute. The anxiety this provoked perhaps says something about the structured contradictions of a foreign female Ph.D. student entering an academic setting where theory is hegemonous yet whose work history and research interest focuses on an activity that is essentially a practice.

Relationship of theory to the empirical world

"Remaining faithful to the real world" therefore meant a serious attempt to understand and explain the practice reality of British local authority social workers, and it also meant not denying my own experience of social work practice.

These experiences, I found, could not be adequately understood or explained using the theoretical approaches I had initially begun with. Neither the "proletarianization" thesis nor the "social control" thesis could capture or account for the contradictions of practice, the element of discretion social workers exercise, the struggles of clients, or the tension in management practice. This discovery has changed my relationship to methodology and theory and engendered a methodological shift in this research process and, subsequently, a theoretical shift in my thinking. At the beginning of this research process, I experienced theory, or at least some marxist theory, as both apart from and superordinate to me and my experience of the world. I now think that an adequate theoretical approach must be grounded in a dialectical relationship with the empirical world.

My experience of this research process therefore led to an intellectual/epistemological shift in how I view the world and what is the basis of knowledge. The fact that the raw data counted as knowledge, despite its incongruity with the theoretical framework I was using, required a reappraisal of that framework.

Part of this epistemological shift must also be explained by my exposure to the debates going on among British marxists writing on the welfare state during the period of my research. My awareness of the existence of debate and disagreement was itself an incentive to intellectual question-

ing, and this process was actively encouraged by the research supervisor, Paul Corrigan, himself a major actor in these theoretical debates.

Critique of determinist and voluntarist analyses of welfare practice

There is a paucity of marxist explanations that are both dialectical in their analysis and address specific social work practice issues. It is thus important to assess and criticize existing marxist analyses to achieve a tighter dialectic between theory and practice. In welfare practice, criticism can take the form of appealing to practice reality by highlighting the contradictions in the experience of practice which these theories may not take into account in any integrated fashion.

Another criticism of deterministic and functionalist marxist analyses is that the political implications of these theories are immobilizing. The message for welfare workers is that there is no progressive practice possible and therefore nothing one can do.

Thus, I am arguing that an adequate theoretical explanation must have a close relationship to a practice; it must be in tension with the practice level. This is implicitly a critique of the theoreticism of some marxist analyses where the explanation is abstracted and floats above the concrete experience. As well, the determinism in these theories de-

nies the movement contained in the structured contradictions within social work practice. Argument against determinism is continually present throughout this research. The precise ways in which the proletarianization thesis of Braverman and the social control thesis of Parton fail to explain both the macro-organization of social work and the micro-processes of social work practice are outlined in each substantive area and are drawn together in a conclusion.

While I have concentrated on criticizing the determinism contained in some marxist explanations, neither would I subscribe to the opposite position of a purely voluntarist model where events are explained as the outcome of intention without reference to structural factors. Evidence against this position is outlined in the chapter on historical developments which stresses the constraints on social work practice during the period of the 1970's and early 1980's. Evidence against a purely voluntarist model is also contained throughout the empirical chapters. Briefly, I think a voluntarist explanation ignores the need to situate social work practice within a precise historical context. Without this context, practice cannot be explained or understood. It is as if workers and their clients interact in a vacuum and "individual actions enter and leave the vacuum" (Corrigan, 1974, p. 23).

Resulting assumptions of this research

The practice of state social workers cannot be understood within a voluntarist framework as the practice of autonomous professional experts. Social workers must be viewed not only as individuals but, at the very least, as members of a specific occupational group with certain common characteristics (i.e., social workers are a group of workers who have undergone similar training and who carry on a practice within local state institutions with clients who have reasonably similar sets of difficulties). Although their predominant way of interacting with clients is through the individual casework relationship, what is important is the shared aspects of these social workers' and clients' experience. What is common to the experience of state social workers is more significant than the idiosyncratic individual histories of the specific individuals researched. The experience of the actors and the organization within which they practice thus must be located historically. This research does not support, on one hand, a view of social workers as simply part of an oppressive and monolithic social order, nor, on the other hand, a view of social workers as subjugated workers with little opportunity for resistance and no possibility of constructing a progressive practice. In sum, I am arguing that state social work practice is structured but not determined. This argument and its implications is most fully laid out in the chapter on "Defensive Social Work Practice."

In rejecting both determinism and voluntarism, the theoretical perspective I am adopting locates itself within a tradition within marxist thought which takes as central an analysis of contradictions. It attempts to explain phenomena through the analysis of movement and change, focusing on process rather than a static attention to outcomes. This necessitates a dialectical relationship between theory and practice and requires a methodology that reflects this dialectic.

PROCESS OF RESEARCH METHODS

Choice of research case example

The selection of local authority social workers practicing in the area of non-accidental injury as the specific focus of the research can be traced to a blend of biographical, theoretical and methodological reasons. Biographically, this fits with my history as a social worker in a bureaucratic state social service organization who has experience in youth protection work, including child abuse. Theoretically, the organization of work and control over the labour process was an area I had previously developed an interest in. Within social work practice, workers' experience of non-accidental injury casework within local authority social service departments seemed to represent the best case for a thesis of social workers' proletarianization. Methodologically, the choice of interviewing was a method both within my experience and social workers', and access was fairly easily arranged.

Interviewing as a research method also reflects my belief that how social workers recount and understand their practice is important and critical to an understanding of their experience of their labour process. This view is reflected in recent debates over what constitutes a proper research approach and method which have been advanced by feminist theory and research (Spender, 1980). The feminist challenge has included a valorization of subjective experience as legitimately constituting a representation of reality.

The rest of this chapter will discuss the details of the actual conduct of the study, including chronology, methods, population, and organization of results.

Chronology of the research

October 1981 -- October 1982

My first year involved reading and writing in a number of areas relevant to my research interest, including literature on the political economy of the British welfare state, the rise of the New Right, law-and-orderism, and analyses of moral panics. Another area of study was the literature on white-collar labour process, in particular the work of Harry Braverman (1974), but also including studies on managerialism in the state sector. Literature on the organization of social work, including literature on policy changes in the last fifteen years was also covered. As well, specific social work practice literature, DHSS and local public inquiries on child abuse, and British Association of Social Work publica-

tions were included. This allowed a familiarity with some of the major issues and debates within the profession in Britain, with a particular focus on non-accidental injury and juvenile justice practice.

During this period of reading and writing, I began to formulate a specific research question which could provide a concrete practice anchor to the study while exploring and testing wider theoretical perspectives and debates. I proposed to examine the impact on social workers and their practice of the changing nature of administration and organization of social services with specific reference to aspects of statutory child care. Within this, I chose to concentrate on non-accidental injury practice, as it represented the best area of social work to test the proletarianization thesis of Braverman. I expected that social workers practicing in this area would experience a great diminution of autonomy and a sharp increase in management control.

October 1982 -- October 1983

I conducted interviews with local authority social workers, transcribed tapes, and typed up several of the interviews myself. This allowed me extensive familiarity with the data. A preliminary analysis of the empirical material was undertaken and a first draft of this section was written.

October 1983 -- April 1984

A second draft of empirical material was completed. I wrote up a first complete draft of the theoretical chapter based on the former written papers from the previous year. The gap between the theoretical framework which informed several of these papers and the empirical data was becoming very unsettling. I was setting out theoretical arguments I no longer agreed with. Subsequently, through discussion with my supervisor, I came to challenge the original theoretical framework. This didn't mean I abandoned these theories and searched for another theoretical framework. These theories had informed the research process until that time. I therefore retained these perspectives as the basis of the theoretical literature but took up a stance of opposition to them. This required a rewriting of the theoretical material. A first draft of the historical chapter was then undertaken.

I also began teaching in a school of social work in January 1984, which provided both the opportunity to reread a lot of relevant literature and necessitated that I work out and articulate my present relationship to it for teaching purposes.

May 1984 -- May 1985:

Final rewrite of thesis

(A fuller description of this part of the research process follows later.)

Pretest of interview schedule

Prior to contacting the social service department, I met with five persons outside this borough who were all involved in child abuse work. These contacts were arranged informally. This included a principal social worker in a London Childrens' Hospital, a social worker with a NSPCC Special Unit, a social work teacher at another London college who had conducted research into child abuse, and two basic grade workers from two nearby borough area teams. In the latter two instances, I conducted open-ended interviews using a set of questions, described below, to prompt discussion. Discussion with all five persons enabled me to familiarize myself with some aspects of current practice in non-accidental injury work. These interviews alerted me to some of the issues in this area of practice, for example, social workers' questioning of the effectiveness of the child abuse register, the prevalence of grey-area or borderline cases, the role of the area review committee, and workers' anxiety and the enormous pressures associated with this type of practice. With this background I then felt ready to approach the borough selected for the research.

Site of the study

The social service department is located in an inner-London borough. It has many of the characteristics of a typical inner-city area: dilapidated buildings, rapidly declining population, loss of employment opportunities, and a

decline of services. Housing conditions are inadequate, as are recreational facilities. There is high unemployment and a disproportionate number of citizens in need of care and support. Urban problems experienced in this borough are such that it has been designated a "Partnership Area" eligible for special government assistance in tackling some of its difficulties. (See Appendix B for more detailed description of the borough.)

Access and selection of the social worker informants

Access to the social service department in this borough was arranged initially through a letter to the Director of Social Services explaining that I was a Canadian Ph.D. student at the Polytechnic of North London wanting to conduct interviews with social workers handling non-accidental injury cases. The Director of Social Services delegated the Assistant Director to handle my inquiry, who responded favourably to my request. He suggested I meet with the non-accidental injury coordinator for a general briefing and to select the area teams to be approached. He also requested a letter outlining more specifically what I wanted, what time commitment would be involved, etc., and offered to circulate this to the area teams. After discussion with the non-accidental injury coordinator, I selected two area teams. Within this borough, both teams were relatively large and handled a relatively high proportion of non-accidental injury cases, and thus were

suitable for my research. One team also operated with an explicit "collective" philosophy and model of organization. I therefore felt it might be interesting to include this team in the research to explore what impact, if any, this "alternative" organizational model had on their non-accidental injury practice.

The team leader of the first, more traditional, team was contacted. She suggested that I attend the next team meeting in order to explain my request and recruit volunteers. At that meeting I explained that I was a Canadian Ph.D. student registered at a local polytechnic. My background as a social worker was made clear, and I explained my interest in looking at their experience of practice in typical non-accidental injury cases was because it was an area of work in which there has been a lot of change and interest over the last ten years. I was particularly interested in exploring the implications for practice of changing forms of administrative control from their viewpoint -- that is, the social workers' viewpoint -- specifically to explore the relationship between administrative or management structures and controls and the effect on day-to-day practice. I asked for and got five frontline workers as volunteers for taped interviews lasting approximately one and a half hours. I assured them of confidentiality and the opportunity to read the finished research. At the beginning of the interview period I also took the opportunity to sit with the team mem-

bers of the first team when they were having lunch one day. This provided an informal occasion for them to question me a bit more. "What degree was I doing?" "Why had I chosen their team?" "Was Sandra's interview different from Marilyn's?" It was also suggested to me by the team that a group interview with the social worker subjects might be fruitful in stimulating more reflection and exploration, a suggestion I took up.

In addition to the five social workers, I also interviewed two senior social workers and the area team leader so that all hierarchical levels within the area team would be included and any difference in perspectives among them could be explored. This same process was repeated with the second "collective" team. The number of interviews thus totaled sixteen.

Method of inquiry: interview guide

Although the interviews with the social workers could be described as unstructured, I did have a set of questions to which I referred (see Interview Guide, Appendix A) as checkpoints in terms of the ground I wanted to cover. Often in an interview, because of the shared social work background between interviewer and interviewee, specific questions were not asked directly or formally. Instead, the conversation would cover this terrain quite naturally. I will describe important aspects of the interview process more thoroughly

but first I will comment on the set of questions I developed.

Whyte has argued that the first task of the interviewer is to build a rapport, and to establish a comfortable relationship with interviewees. The interviewer should deliberately steer the conversation away from evaluative topics and try to get the informant to talk descriptively (Whyte, 1982, p. 113). To facilitate a rapport, I began by asking social workers to "take me through a specific case from point of allocation to present status" (preferably a grey-area case). This was intended to encourage workers to begin with a description of their practice with one particular case, to describe it in the manner which they were used to, i.e., to describe the process in detail in social work language and terms. My aim was to get at the reality of practice through process and to reveal their experience of "structure" through an extensive description of the fine detail of practice. I also stipulated a "grey area" case. I explained what I meant was not an extreme, or black and white, case of child abuse in which quite indisputable and obvious damage to a child had occurred -- i.e., putting the baby on the cooker -- but rather a case in which the degree of risk and action necessary was not clear-cut, that is, borderline cases which could be described as falling into a "grey area." The latter constituted over 99% of cases presenting themselves to local authority social workers according to one expert, the head of a

hospital child abuse unit. For this reason I wanted to focus on typical non-accidental injury cases, despite the attention given in the media to sensational accounts of extreme cases.

Question 2 to question 4 were adopted from a master's research report on child abuse I had examined (Youll, 1981). They concerned social workers' preparation for and attitude toward child abuse work. I felt they might be useful in probing issues of professional confidence/anxiety felt by practicing social workers in child abuse work.

Another question concerned knowledge and assessment of the child abuse register and was included following my initial discussions on child abuse work with persons outside the social service department, where it was indicated that the functioning and effectiveness of child abuse registers was a contentious issue for social workers.

Given the media attack on social workers, a question was included on coverage of several tragic child abuse cases.

The last three questions (questions 7 to 9) really represent a separate aspect of the interview and concerned social workers' knowledge of policy and structure above the area team. Whereas in the previous questions I was attempting to have social workers recount and reflect on their own process and experience of non-accidental injury practice, in these latter questions I wanted to explore their experience of the organizational structure, in particular their knowledge of the structure above the area team level, their understanding and relationship to policy and procedure formulation.

Seniors' interviews

When interviewing the senior social workers I referred to the same questions; however, I substituted supervision for casework practice in questions one, two, three and four. Specific issues I wanted to tap with seniors included their attitude toward the practice autonomy of basic grade workers, adherence by themselves and their subordinates to the formalized procedures in non-accidental injury, and their relationship to the Area Team Leader in terms of accountability for supervisees' performance.

Area team leaders' interviews

For the two area team leader interviews, I used a different mix of questions (see Appendix A). This is the first managerial level within the social service department, and no direct practice is undertaken. I therefore felt I could ask these persons to describe the structure "as structure" rather than through an account of process, as occurred with those involved in direct practice. With team leaders I particularly wanted to explore the extent and areas of their autonomy from the social service department hierarchy (see Appendix A) and their management approach within the team.

Group interviews

The group interview of social workers took place after the individual interviews in each team were complete, and was

used as an opportunity to probe more deeply into some of the themes which had emerged from the individual interviews. These included the effect of the political orientation of the local council on area team practice; social workers' feelings of anxiety and the risks involved in non-accidental injury practice, including their fear of being blamed by the media and their attitude toward exercise of autonomy or discretion; and pressure or resistance to an overly cautious and perhaps coercive practice orientation.

Aspects of the unstructured research interview

Unstructured research interviews have been described by Sidney and Beatrice Webb as "conversations with a purpose." This form of conversation, according to Burgess, "incorporates elements of everyday life into the conduct of field research" (1982, p. 107). In my interviews with social workers, I wanted to understand their practice through an extensive description from the workers of their day-to-day reality and to get enough detail that themes could emerge and be checked for internal validity.

Although this form of collecting data may have the appearance of being without a structure, it is in fact always "a controlled conversation" which the researcher "guides and bends to the service of his research interest" (Palmer, 1928, p. 171). In my background, that is, in my training and work experience as a social worker, the interview is the stock in

trade. It is the major medium of social work practice and therefore was a comfortable role for me to adopt in conducting this research. In the beginning, however, because this was "research," I worried about "objectivity," how much I might be influencing the nature and course of the "conversation." I was advised by my research supervisor to act as I would as a social worker conducting an interview, that is, to go after the substance, clarify nuances and feelings. As Burgess states, researchers need to "follow their informant's response and to listen to him carefully in order that a decision can be made concerning the direction in which to take the interview" (1982, p. 108).

In the unstructured interview, the researcher has the opportunity "to probe deeply, to uncover new clues, to open up new dimensions of a problem, and to secure vivid, accurate, inclusive accounts from informants that are based on personal experience" (Burgess, 1982, p. 107).

Given that my questions were quite broad and general, the interview process itself needed to elicit "usable material" The pretest indicated that this would be likely. That such interviews can open up new dimensions of a problem was confirmed in the study interviews; for example, I was initially expecting to find evidence of managerial control in non-accidental injury work, but instead I found workers experiencing such management involvement as a form of support necessary to their practice. In another example, I expected

to find evidence of management domination of practice and instead found that workers could remain oblivious to management structure.

This method involves a tension between having in one's mind as the researcher an idea of what is important material to elicit (for example looking for evidence of proletarianization), but also, in the course of the interview, simultaneously actively listening to what one's informants are saying and therefore allowing the content of the interview to be influenced by what they see as important. Unstructured interviewing, then, involves both a free-flowing and a controlled conversation; the necessity to establish the framework within which the conversation will occur, but also to remain open to new dimensions and new clues. A necessary tension is therefore set up. In my interviews, the flow of conversation would often seem quite unstructured, yet it was very important for me to keep in mind what ground I wanted to cover. As my familiarity with this method increased, it allowed me to expand my attention and interest in new themes being defined in the research process.

Importance of identity between researcher and subjects

In conducting interviews for this thesis I was aware that this process was facilitated by certain important elements that were structured in my relationships to the social workers -- the fact that I was a social worker and a re-

searcher at the same time. This had effects on both me and the interviewees, I think.

In the beginning it sometimes felt like two workers talking over a case in a spirit of professional collegiality. But within the same interview, I would become conscious of my "researcher" role and "pull back." This forward-backward-inside-outside consciousness continued throughout the interviewing period. I found it helped to tape interviews, so that awareness of my "outside" role was minimized. I didn't have to be preoccupied with recording and thus be separated from the conversation. For the workers, I think my background as a social worker put me on the "inside;" I could talk the social work jargon and see the problem from their perspective as opposed to the client's, management's, the media's, or the public's perspective. But all the while, I was never fully "inside". There was always a certain distance in my relationship. Yet I was not fully "outside" either.

My background as a social worker could also contribute negatively to the interviewing process. In one instance, for example, I experienced the interview as emotionally draining. I found myself identifying with the worker's frustration and pain in dealing with the case she was describing. The details of this case were very similar to one of my own cases which had been quite difficult. In my discomfort, perhaps I "rescued" the informant too readily in the interview.

I also felt she might become fed up and want to discontinue the interview and I felt myself "joining" her in my comments too often or too readily which perhaps hindered a full exploration of her practice.

Throughout the interviewing period I relied less and less on my set of questions (apart from the first request to have the worker describe a non-accidental injury case). As I became more confident that I was getting "good material," it was easier to let myself be "inside" the informant's perspective. Burgess calls this being able to "share the culture of the informants" (1982, p. 108).

The Webbs (1932) admonished researchers to prepare in detail for unstructured interviewing. Preparation is also seen as important in being able to distinguish various shades of meaning that informants attach to situations (Burgess, 1982, p. 108). This aspect was made much easier for me as I had conducted several discussions with outside informants before I began my actual research interviews. But more important, I think, was the common ground of being a social worker talking to social workers. The difference in cultural backgrounds, a North American discussing practice with British social workers, was acknowledged by me and used to press for more detailed and specific description of British practice. Both these factors added to my legitimacy in inquiring into British practitioners' experience. However, the nontraditional or collective team was part of a more specific cul-

ture. They had a consciousness of themselves as a "different team" trying to practice within a different organizational model. This sets up a certain vulnerability. Their initial reaction to an outside researcher was, I felt, suspicious. In addition, they had had previous unsatisfactory experience with a researcher. My legitimacy with this team was therefore more tenuous and less easily established than in the more traditional social work area team.

EVALUATION OR ANALYSIS OF DATA

It has been acknowledged that data analysis is not a discrete and separate stage in the research process. Rather, data-gathering, analysis, and theorizing occur in an overlapping fashion. To understand the research process, it is essential to grasp the interrelationship between theory and methods of research, including observation, generalization, and hypothesis" (Burgess, 1982, p. 209). Burgess adds that "...theory cannot be put in a separate box, but is involved in constant interplay with the selection of research problems, methods of investigation, and with data collection and data analysis throughout the research process" (1982, p. 209).

Bensman and Vidich (1960) outline six specific functions of theory in social research.

1. The specification of possible areas of field work as the researcher leans upon the educated

perspective of his predecessors to guide him to important and significant areas of investigation.

2. The criticism of field work while doing it. Alternative perspectives in theory yield alternative perspectives in field observation.
3. The discovery of the limitations of one's original statement of the problem; the continuous discovery of new data compels new formulations of the problem.
4. The discovery of the limitations of one's own theory by its continuous confrontation with empirical observation.
5. The discovery of new dimensions of the problem.
6. The reconstruction of one's problem, field work, and past theory into a further limited and discrete theory to handle the problem. Such a theory is not final or general but adequate only to the specific problem in the specific field. However, this type of theoretical solution, in turn, provides raw materials for other research posing new problems, and these new problems as they are studied by other investigators in other settings contribute to the continuous cultivation of new theories (p. 582).

These elements identified above are relevant to the interaction between theory and empirical material in my study. Thus, the phase of data analysis in this research cannot be separated from my relationship to the theory or theories which were central to the inquiry. As I have explained, my relationship to the theories of Braverman (1974), Hall (1978, 1979), and Parton (1979, 1981) underwent a shift during the research period. I initially viewed the research problem within these conceptualizations, for example, the framework

of Braverman's proletarianization thesis provided an initial intellectual incentive toward the research question. As I began my empirical work, however, my relationship to this particular theory changed as the limitations of that theory as an explanation of local authority social workers' practice became apparent. This did not mean I abandoned Braverman's theory, but rather, that a major focus of my research became an exploration of the limitations of this theoretical perspective. This dialogical process between data and theory is important in understanding the process of data analysis used in this research.

Based on themes which arose in the data, and informed by my developing theoretical perspective, several initial coding categories were established (care and control, risk, media, formalized procedures and guidelines, hierarchy--democratic process, case conferences, and the NAI register).

This approach concurs with Whyte's view on indexing categories: "I do not consider it advisable for the researcher to determine his indexing categories before he starts field study... After eight or ten interviews, the researcher should have the feel of the situation sufficiently so that he can develop a reasonably adequate indexing system" (1982, p. 121). The indexing system then "should evolve in line with the type of analysis the researcher eventually intends to make... the process of indexing the materials is in effect a preliminary analysis of the data" (1982, p. 121).

Analyzing qualitative research data involves a gradual process of the researcher claiming or owning the data through the action of analysis. For these initial categories, the social workers' accounts on these themes were grouped in their words, for example, workers talking about "risk" in their practice. In the first draft analyzing the meaning of each theme, the description of, for example, "risk," was dominated by the interviewee's words. In the second draft, my analysis began to take on more weight so the data became interspersed with my analysis and commentary and their words. My commentary or analysis was informed by several things: first, my intimate knowledge of the data was consolidated through laborious transcription and typing up of several of the interviews (this is important in the process of the researcher's claiming of the data); second, my developing theoretical concerns which were also in flux, at first looking for evidence of Braverman and Hall's thesis and later developing a heightened awareness and emphasis on the contradictory nature of practice; and, third, discoveries or questions that occurred in the process of conducting interviews and analyzing the data. The issue of conflicting or contradictory statements and sentiments in evaluating interview data is addressed by Whyte (1982), who recognizes that ambivalence is often linked to individual experience of contradictions and competing and conflicting forces around them.

... Even when he [researcher] is unable to resolve conflicting evidence, his interviews should clarify the nature of the conflict and help to explain the base of the different accounts. In dealing with subjective material, the interviewer is of course not trying to discover the true attitude or sentiment of the informant. He should recognize that ambivalence is a fairly common condition of man -- that men can and do have conflicting sentiments at any given time. Furthermore, men hold varying sentiments according to the situations in which they find themselves. The research task is, then, not simply to discover a particular sentiment, but also to relate that sentiment to the events and interpersonal relation out of which it arises (p. 117).

The organizing themes or categories and the data I selected for inclusion represented material pertinent to both the Braverman and Hall thesis, and also data which refuted these theoretical perspectives, such as material which expressed the contradictions within social work practice. Thus, my selection of data reflects my changing relationship to the major theories I was addressing and reflected my relationship to the empirical world.

Whyte has commented insightfully on the process of data analysis.

The ideas that we have in research are only in part a logical product growing out of a careful weighing of evidence. We do not generally think problems through in a straight line. Often we have the experience of being immersed in a mass of confusing data. We study the data carefully, bringing all our power of logical analysis to bear upon them. We come up with an idea or two. But still the data do not fall into any coherent pattern. Then we go on living with the data--and with the people--until perhaps some chance occurrence casts a totally different light upon the data, and we begin to see a pattern that we had not seen before. ... I am con-

vinced that the actual evolution of research ideas does not take place in accord with the formal statements we read on research methods (1981, pp. 279-80).

There is "an active role between research and theory, in which research shapes, initiates, reformulates, deflects and clarifies theory" (Burgess, 1982, p. 210). Glaser and Strauss take this approach further and argue for the generation and discovery of theory from data. This opposes the positivist conceptualization of scientific research, where theories are assumed to have a prior and separate existence and can thus be subjected to empirical testing for verification. However, in the position of Glaser and Strauss, it is advocated that the data have an a priori position in relation to the generation of theory. This simply reverses the direction of empirical data and theory construction, and as such fails to capture the complex and dialectical relationship between theory and data. This research began by testing the theories of Braverman and Hall; yet, through close examination of actual practices, I found the theories inadequate to explain a specific practice level. While I have not explicitly tried to develop an alternative theory, the seeds of such a theory are implicit and most elaborated in the chapter on "defensive social work practice."

After this first draft of the empirical data organized around seven themes was complete, I then reworked the original categories and data into four collapsed headings: defen-

sive social work practice, support/control of social workers' practice, case conferences, and social workers experience of the social service department structure. The latter reflected the outcome of the methodological and theoretical shifts I have referred to.

At this stage of data analysis, I undertook a second draft of the theoretical chapters in which the theories of Braverman (1974) and Hall (1978, 1979) were approached again within an explicitly tentative and questioning form. This became necessary in order to take account of the empirical reality I had encountered.

ORGANIZATION OF RESULTS OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY OF WRITING

This research is presented in distinct chapters, for example, the chapter on theory is separated from the empirical chapters. I found this to be necessary in order to impose some rationality or structure on the presentation. However, the difficulty with this separation of material into discrete sections is that it tends to disguise the process of interplay between them. In reality the chapter on theory was written before and after the empirical material, the introduction at the last, and so on.

Therefore, the way the thesis was actually constructed is not readily apparent in the form of its presentation. The empirical work involved discoveries, in some case rediscove-

ries, which echoed my own experience, for example, the experience of social work supervision as not simply "control" but also support. These rediscoveries shifted my theoretical understanding, and therefore generated the need to rework the section on Braverman and the application of his proletarianization thesis to social work. This reworking of the first chapter happened midway through the research period in reality, yet in the form of the order of this report it is presented first. Thus the section on methodology is the key to understanding how this thesis really works, despite the order or structure of its presentation.

In this first chapter I have tried to inform the reader as to the process by which this research actually got done. This way of writing, while hopefully illuminating the actual research process, may also appear disorganized and incoherent at times, as is, indeed, the reality of a methodological process (Whyte, 1981). However, such a self-conscious explanation is necessary in order to allow the reader to fully understand my interaction with this study. If further research in this area were to be carried out, this form of methodological account provides the best possibility for replication.

The rest of the thesis is organized as follows.

Chapter Two: The Proletarianization of Social Workers?

Chapter Three: Recent Historical Developments in the Organization of State Social Work from a Political Economy Perspective

Chapter Four: Social Democracy and State Welfare Practice

Chapter Five: Social Workers' Experience of Social Service

Department Structure:

- case conferences and NAI procedures;
- relations within the area team;
- relations within social service department hierarchy.

Chapter Six: Social Workers' Experience of Practice: Defensive Social Work Practice

Chapter Seven: Conclusions to the Thesis

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROLETARIANIZATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS?

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with a theoretical explanation of the labour process of state welfare workers. Developments in the organization and practice of social work have been explained by some welfare theorists by borrowing the concept of proletarianization, which originates in a marxist theory of the capitalist labour process. Braverman's publication of Labour and Monopoly Capital, the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (1974) did much to popularize the proletarianization thesis. The chapter begins with a review of this thesis. Braverman used manufacturing workers as the major focus of his analysis; in order to apply his thesis to the labour process of workers within state welfare organizations, it is necessary to extend his framework.

We therefore include an analysis of bureaucratic control processes within the non-capitalist sector. Further, we ask what are the theoretical implications for state labour pro-

cesses of the debate over state autonomy. This is particularly important to an understanding of the welfare state as a particular form of class relation in capitalist societies. To analyze labour processes within welfare structures, we need to establish what the conditions are within the state which may give use to a fiscal crisis and resulting proletarianization of workers.

This primarily economic level of analysis is assessed as inadequate to a full explanation of welfare labour processes. We thus move to a consideration of ideological factors. The influence of social democracy as a dominant yet inherently contradictory political ideology is examined. The impact on state labour processes of the shift to the right in the ideological climate is subsequently addressed. Theoretically, the relation of the rise of the New Right to heightened control over welfare practice is illustrated in the example of a moral panic around child abuse.

We then explore how the phenomenon of centralization of power within the state, and a concomitant reduction of front-line autonomy, might affect state labour. Yet if a process of centralized control within the state is occurring, we need to ask what the postulated mechanisms are for exercising such control. To answer this, we examine theories about the implications of corporate management as a system of management control over labour processes which has its roots in the management of organizations in the private sector.

These theories are criticized as too deterministic, particularly in relation to state welfare labour processes.

The weaknesses of these theoretical perspectives then lead to a consideration of a countervailing theoretical explanation of control processes in professional occupations. Terence Johnson's analysis (1972, 1977a, 1977b) posits dualistic tendencies of autonomy and external control within professional occupations. Within Johnson's framework, we analyze how the changed relationship between the state and the social work profession might affect the labour process of social workers. We argue a dialectic between discretion and control characterizes social workers' labour process. Within this optic, contradictions surrounding the complex issue of professional autonomy in social work are described. Finally, we investigate the relationship of contradictory welfare ideologies to the problematic of autonomy within state labour processes.

LABOUR PROCESS IN THE CAPITALIST AND NON-CAPITALIST SECTORS

Braverman's thesis of the degradation of work

In his seminal analysis of the degradation of work in the twentieth century and the relationship of this phenomenon to the capitalist mode of production, Braverman is widely credited with reopening an important marxist debate on the capitalist labour process which is still actively ongoing.¹

Given the shifts in the occupational structure from manufacturing to service industries, as well as the growth in the public sector as a major source of employment, it is important to understand the implications of Braverman's analysis in these areas as well.²

If Braverman's analysis of the degradation of work is correct, then it should be applicable not only to workers in private industry but also to state workers, and to state social work in particular. In his book, Braverman, in a chapter entitled "The Growing Working-Class Occupations," applies his paradigm to clerical workers, service-sector occupations, and retail-trade workers. He also devotes a chapter to the "middle layers of employment," which he identifies as embracing "the engineering, technical, and scientific cadre, the lower ranks of supervision and management, the considerable numbers of specialized and 'professional' employees occupied in marketing, financial, and organizational administration and the like, as well as, outside of capitalist industry proper, in hospitals, schools, government administration, and so forth." He cautions against describing these as a "new middle class," arguing that they occupy an intermediate position in the process of accumulating capital, taking characteristics from both sides. However, he believes that this new middle class is qualitatively different from the old petty bourgeoisie in that it corresponds increasingly to the formal definition of the working class.

He notes that it possesses no economic or occupational autonomy, is "employed by capital and its offshoots, possesses no access to the labour process or the means of production outside that employment, and must renew its labours for capital incessantly in order to subsist" (1974, p. 403). He continues with this description of the new middle class:

Not only does it receive its petty share in the prerogatives and rewards of capital, but it also bears the mark of the proletarian condition. For these employees, the social form taken by their work, their true place in the relations of production, their fundamental condition of subordination as so much hired labour, increasingly makes itself felt, especially in the mass occupations that are part of this stratum. We may cite here particularly the mass employments of draughtsmen and technicians, engineers and accountants, nurses and teachers, and the multiplying ranks of supervisors, foremen, and petty managers. (p. 407)

While Braverman offers caveats to the effect that class cannot be understood as a simple formula, noting the complexity and difficulty in defining the intermediate strata of modern employment, the underlying assumption he makes is that the proletarianization process can be expected to occur in these occupations.

I will first examine Braverman's thesis and then consider some important critiques of his analysis in relation to the first group -- the private sector. Second, I will consider its relevance for the state sector, and for state welfare work in particular. This last area has been a relatively neglected area of research and analysis.³

Braverman employs a marxist framework in analyzing the principles of management, the role of science, and the evolution of modern technology, and the implications of these factors for the occupational structure. His basic premise is that the capitalist labour process is "dominated and shaped by the accumulation of capital." The essential characteristic of the capitalist mode of production is that it is a form of organization of labour in which "valorization is in command."

The worker enters into the employment agreement because social conditions leave him or her no other way to gain a livelihood. The employer, on the other hand, is the possessor of a unit of capital which he is endeavouring to enlarge, and in order to do so he converts part of it into wages. Thus is set in motion the labour process, which, while it is in general a process for creating useful values, has now also become specifically a process for the expansion of capital, the creation of a profit. From this point on, it becomes foolhardy to view the labour process purely from a technical standpoint, as a mere mode of labour. It has become in addition a process of accumulation of capital. And, moreover, it is the latter aspect which dominates in the mind and activities of the capitalist, into whose hands the control over the labour process has passed. In everything that follows, therefore, we shall be considering the manner in which the labour process is dominated and shaped by the accumulation of capital (Braverman, 1974, p. 53).

The capitalist mode of production thus ushered in a new set of social relations of production which are inherently antagonistic:

It was not that the new arrangement was "modern," or "large," or "urban" which created the new situa-

tion, but rather the new social relations which now frame the production process, and the antagonism between those who carry on the process and those for whose benefit it is carried on, those who manage and those who execute, those who bring to the factory their labour power, and those who undertake to extract from this labour power the maximum advantage for the capitalist (Braverman, 1974, pp. 68-69).

Surplus value may be extracted by capital in two ways, through the "formal" or through the "real" subordination of labour to capital.

absolute surplus value

The extraction of absolute surplus value involves the formal subordination of the labour process to capital. "In this context surplus value is extracted under conditions where the capitalist deploys his market power to extend the length of the working day, while the labourer retains some control over the actual process of production" (Elger, 1979, p. 64).

Workers who are controlled only by general orders and discipline are not adequately controlled, because they retain their grip on the actual processes of labour. So long as they control the labour process itself, they will thwart efforts to realize to the full the potential inherent in their labour power. To change this situation, control over the labour process must pass into the hands of management, not only in a formal sense but by the control and dictation of each step of the process, including its mode of performance (Braverman, 1974, p. 100).

Thus, to increase the extraction of surplus value, capital must turn to a more thoroughgoing and complex subordination.

relative surplus value

The tendency toward the extraction of relative surplus value involves the real subordination of labour to capital through a process of intensification of labour, increasing productiveness of labour through the conscious use of sciences, machines, and so on (Elger, 1979, p. 65).

To achieve real subordination, capitalist management must develop and maintain control over the process of production so as to ensure the greatest productivity and, hence, profit. "It ... becomes essential for the capitalist that control over the labour process pass from the hands of the worker into his own. This transition presents itself in history as the progressive alienation of the process of production from the worker; to the capitalist, it presents itself as the problem of management" (Braverman, 1974, p. 58).

Braverman argues that the drive for accumulation and the tendency toward the real subordination of labour to capital has not only led to progressive alienation of the process of production from workers but also to destruction of skills and meaning in work.

Degradation of work, according to Braverman, arises from two central imperatives of capitalist organization of the labour process: the first imperative is a concern to cheapen labour, while the second is to guarantee capitalist control of the labour process by removing from workers the means to resist and oppose management, which, he argues, was embedded in the skills craftsmen retained.

Scientific management

The strongest and most coherent expression of these imperatives of capital, Braverman states, is to be found in the scientific management movement in the late nineteenth century based on the theories of F.W. Taylor:

Scientific management, so-called, is an attempt to apply the methods of science to the increasingly complex problems of the control of labour in rapidly growing capitalist enterprises. It lacks the characteristics of a true science because its assumptions reflect nothing more than the outlook of the capitalist with regard to the conditions of production. It starts, despite occasional protestations to the contrary, not from the human point of view but from the capitalist point of view, from the point of view of the management of a refractory work force in a setting of antagonistic social relations. It does not attempt to discover and confront the cause of this condition, but accepts it as an inexorable given, a "natural" condition. It investigates not labour in general, but the adaptation of labour to the needs of capital. It enters the workplace not as the representative of science, but as the representative of management masquerading in the trappings of science (Braverman, 1974, p. 86).

Braverman enunciated three basic principles of Taylor's model:

1. The dissociation of the labour process from the skills of workers (by this it is meant the labour process is rendered independent from the skills and knowledge of the worker). As Braverman puts it, "for Taylor -- as for managers today -- no task is either so simple or so complex that it may not be studied with the object of collecting in the hands of management at least as much

information as is known by the worker who performs it regularly, and very likely more" (Braverman, 1974, p. 112). The labour process, therefore, "is to depend not at all upon the abilities of workers, but entirely upon the practices of management" (Braverman, 1974, p. 113).

2. The second principle, Braverman states, is the separation of conception from execution. Braverman notes this principle was crucial to the scientific management system:

Since this is the key to scientific management, as Taylor well understood, he was especially emphatic on this point and it is important to examine the principle thoroughly.

In the human, as we have seen, the essential feature that makes for a labour capacity superior to that of the animal is the combination of execution with a conception of the thing to be done. But as human labour becomes a social rather than an individual phenomenon, it is possible -- unlike in the instance of animals where the motive force, instinct, is inseparable from action -- to divorce conception from execution. This dehumanization of the labour process, in which workers are reduced almost to the level of labour in its animal form, while purposeless and unthinkable in the case of the self-organized and self-motivated social labour of a community of producers, becomes crucial for the management of purchased labour. For if the workers' execution is guided by their own conception, it is not possible, as we have seen, to enforce upon them either the methodological efficiency or the working pace desired by capital. (Braverman, 1974, p. 113)

3. The third principle involves the use of management monopoly over technical and scientific knowledge to control

each step of the labour process and its mode of execution. This principle is underscored by Braverman, using Taylor's own words:

Perhaps the most prominent single element in modern scientific management is the task idea. The work of every workman is fully planned out by the management at least one day in advance, and each man receives in most cases complete written instructions, describing in detail the task which he is to accomplish, as well as the means to be used in doing the work. ... This task specifies not only what is to be done, but how it is to be done and the exact time allowed for doing it. ... Scientific management consists very largely in preparing for and carrying out these tasks (Braverman, 1974, p. 118).

Insofar as Taylor's influence still dominates current management practice, Braverman argues that the work process continues to be subject to continuous subdivision and reorganization in capital's drive for control and efficiency. This fragmentation of tasks, along with these three principles, has resulted in the concentration of knowledge in the hands of a few, thus reducing the mass of workers to "detail labourers" or operatives. The fractionalization and routinization of the work process has resulted in a steady decline in skills and knowledge and responsibilities of most workers. Work has been degraded, Braverman argues, and labour reduced to the level of an instrument in the production process.

In the beginning stages of a specific change in the organization of the labour process, a new division of labour

may result in an increase in levels of skill for some workers, who become specialized, thus concentrating certain skills in some areas at the expense of others. For a period these workers may thus enjoy higher rates of pay and favourable working conditions; yet as the process of the division of labour continues these specializations will themselves be subject to some form of rationalization.

Braverman says this process began with industrial workers but has now progressed to white-collar sectors. As labour is displaced from industrial production, in part resulting from applying Taylor's principles, it is shifted into clerical work, which then carries out the conception function of the work process. In time, however, the proliferation of clerical work also leads to capital's need to apply scientific management techniques, leading in turn to standardization of clerical operations.

We have now described, in its major facets, the conversion of the office routine into a factory-like process in accordance with the precepts of modern management and available technology. The greatest single obstacle to the proper functioning of such an office is the concentration of information and decision-making capacity in the minds of key clerical employees. Just as Frederick Taylor diagnosed the problem of the management of a machine shop as one of removing craft information from the workers, in the same way the office manager views with horror the possibility of dependence upon the historical knowledge of the office past, or of the rapid flow of information in the present, on the part of some of his or her clerical workers. The recording of everything in mechanical form, and the movement of everything in a mechanical way, is thus the ideal of the office manager.

But this conversion of the office flow into a high-speed industrial process requires the conversion of the great mass of office workers into more or less helpless attendants of that process. As an inevitable concomitant of this, the ability of the office worker to cope with deviations from the routine, errors, special cases, etc., all of which require information and training, virtually disappear. The number of people who can operate the system, instead of being operated by it, declines precipitously. In this sense, the modern office becomes a machine which at best functions well only within its routine limits, and functions badly when it is called upon to meet special requirements. (Braverman, 1974, pp. 347-8)

Increasing mechanization of office work has resulted in a blurring of distinction between blue- and white-collar work, as the office comes to appear more and more factory-like. Middle management is not safe from this process of proletarianization either. Braverman predicts that the "computer may be to middle management what the assembly line is to the hourly workers," as the process of proletarianization continues.

... capital, as soon as it disposes of a mass of labour in any specialty -- a mass adequate in size to repay the application of its principles of the technical division of labour and hierarchical control over execution by means of a firm grasp on the links of conception -- subjects that specialty to some of the forms of "rationalization" characteristic of the capitalist mode of production.

In such occupations, the proletarian form begins to assert itself and to impress itself upon the consciousness of these employees. Feeling the insecurities of their role as sellers of labour power and the frustrations of a controlled and mechanically organized workplace, they begin, despite their remaining privileges, to know those symptoms of dissociation which are popularly called "alienation" and which the working class has lived with for so long that they have become part of its second nature. (Braverman, 1974, p. 408).

Braverman thus challenges the thesis that the increase in white-collar work represents evidence of a growing middle class. Rather, he argues these workers have become proletarianized by reduced autonomy, diminished responsibility, and diluted skills. He also disputes the argument that the working class itself has been upgraded through an increase in education levels and the decline of "unskilled workers," arguing instead that the official classification of occupations does not accurately reflect the actual exercise or distribution of skills. As evidence he points to the classifications of operatives as "semi-skilled workers," while farmworkers are classified as "labourers." Further, he argues that many workers now classified in a new category of "service workers" require very little training to perform their jobs. Rather than being upgraded because of greater education, Braverman asserts that the opposite trend is occurring through the progressive degradation of work.

Braverman further notes a tendency for newer occupations to become subject to management control systems:

New occupations as they are brought into being by the development of industry and trade, [and] are then routinized and subjugated to management control. As this tendency has attacked office, technical, and "educated" occupations, sociologists have spoken of it as "bureaucratization," an evasive and unfortunate use of Weberian terminology, a terminology which often reflects its users' view that this form of government over work is endemic to "large-scale" or "complex" enterprises, whereas it is better understood as the specific product of the capitalist organization of work, and reflects not primarily scale but social antagonisms (Braverman, 1974, p. 120).

In summary, the overriding concern of scientific management, then, is the question of management control. The production process must be so tightly controlled as to virtually eliminate the possibility of employee discretion (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980, p. 96). This same objective is the focus of bureaucratic control systems which characterize the organization of work of white-collar workers in most large organizations today, and as a construct is easily applied to bureaucratic organizations in the public-service sector. Such systems of bureaucratic control largely conform to the principles of Taylor's scientific management which Braverman has identified.⁴

Management's desire to ensure control of production and, therefore, to eliminate employee discretion thus underlies both scientific management and bureaucratic systems of control. Given that it is the latter which is more readily applied to state social work, it is important to examine the functioning of such control systems in more detail. Because Braverman did not specifically address bureaucratic control in any depth, we will rely on other theorists, such as Richard Edwards (1979), who have.

Bureaucratic control

Although bureaucratic control originated in capital's attempt to subject white-collar or non-production workers to management control, it is now the organizing principle in

both production and non-production jobs in many large firms (Edwards, 1979, p. 21).⁵ The defining feature of bureaucratic control, according to Edwards, is the institutionalization of hierarchical power.

"Rule of law"--the firm's law--replaced 'rule by supervisor command' in the direction of work, the procedures for evaluating workers' performance, and the exercise of the firm's sanctions and rewards; supervisors and workers alike become subject to the dictates of 'company policy.' Work becomes highly stratified; each job is given its distinct title and description; and impersonal rules govern promotion (Edwards, 1979, p. 21).

Unlike competitive entrepreneurial capitalist firms, modern capital attempts to ensure profits through a process of capital stability and growth through reinvestment (Hummel, 1977, p. 72). Such reinvestment activity sets up an imperative for capital to constantly try to reduce elements of uncertainty and risk in investment decisions; such reduction of risk is achieved through detailed calculation of all relevant factors and variables in production and distribution. This need to measure and to calculate is entirely compatible with bureaucratic organization based on rational and predictable action.

Rational action in a bureaucracy must, in theory, conform to two criteria. First, it must represent a logical means to a clearly defined end, and secondly, action must be visible and therefore open to scrutiny and control (Hummel, 1977, p. 27). In practice, criterion of visibility often takes precedence over end goals and is the basis upon which

standardization of operations and procedures is introduced. Worker performance is then judged largely in relation to compliance with procedures rather than output: means come to dominate ends. In bureaucratic organization the overriding imperative is to control. The bureaucratic form of control is embedded within the structure and organization of the firm; company rules serve as an impersonal control technique governing all aspects of organizational functioning and are elaborately and systematically set out. Management authority is legitimated through the establishment of bureaucratic control as power is exercised in a stable and predictable manner and appears to emanate from the structure itself.

Hierarchical relations were transformed from relations between (unequally powerful) people to relations between job holders or relations between jobs themselves abstracted from the specific people or the concrete work tasks involved (Edwards, 1979, p. 145)

Scientific management and bureaucratic systems of control

The impetus toward centralized management control over the process of production is common to both Taylorist and bureaucratic systems. Similar principles of work organization are applied in both systems to achieve this.

As described earlier, Braverman argues that the application of these principles has resulted in a process of proletarianization of formerly skilled workers. The tendency toward centralized management control and continuous subdivision of tasks also underlies bureaucratic control systems.

Bureaucratic control is based on a stratification of the work force into hierarchical categories with differences in pay, status, working conditions and opportunities for advancement or layoff and power over other workers. Stratification in bureaucratic systems goes beyond technologically rooted differences to establish social and organizational distinctions within the firm (Edwards, 1979, pp. 134-5). A major tool of bureaucratic control is the use of detailed job descriptions. Each job is analyzed and its components summarized in a job description which also assigns starting pay, location, and entry requirements for each job (Edwards, pp. 135-7). Job descriptions are to bureaucracy what time and motions studies are to Taylor's system (Littler, 1978).

Both bureaucratic systems of control and Taylorist systems share a propensity to ensure maximum dispensability of individual workers. Ideally, personnel should be interchangeable so as to reduce "dependence on the availability, ability, or motivation of individuals." This encourages a "minimum relationship between the individual and the organization in terms of skill, training, involvement, or complexity of his contribution" (Littler, 1978, p. 192). Bureaucratic control systems, however, can be distinguished from Taylorist models in that a career structure and career motivation are important features lacking in the Taylorist model. However, the principles of work organization within firms governed by bureaucratic control, such as the state welfare

organizations, are in conformity with the scientific management model of pure systems of capitalist production identified by Braverman. Therefore, the Braverman thesis of management domination of the labour process can theoretically be extended to white-collar workers governed by systems of bureaucratic control.

Criticisms of Braverman's thesis

Although Braverman's book was welcomed by the Left, certain criticisms of his analysis have been raised. The most frequent criticism concerns Braverman's neglect of worker resistance as an active force in the shaping of the capitalist process of production. This neglect leads to the view of the worker as a helpless victim from whom all skill and knowledge have been successfully removed. Critics argue that evidence suggests that workers have always resisted the organization and pace of production and have found methods within the shop of making work tolerable. By ignoring this potential for struggle, sabotage and alteration of management's theoretical ideal (Glaberman, 1976), Braverman has produced a distorted picture. This distortion, critics state, "only helps to sustain the viewpoint of official society which Braverman documents so well--that workers need only strong backs, someone else will supply the minds" (Glaberman, 1976, p. 52). In relation to manufacturing workers, Braverman's thesis has thus been criticized as both functionalist and determinist.

Braverman, it is argued, makes a direct and causal link between the needs and imperative of capital accumulation and the consequent proletarianization of workers. In his account workers are denied an active role in shaping and reproducing the capitalist system of production. Their position is, in Braverman's thesis, structurally determined.

In a detailed critique, Tony Elger (1979) disputes the prime focus on deskilling in Braverman's account of the transformation of the labour process. Braverman, he argues, does not get at the complexities of the transition from formal to real subordination. Rather, Braverman's account suggests a "uniform trajectory toward the realization of real subordination through deskilling" (Elger, 1979, p. 71). Thus, deskilling is presented as a concrete and successful strategy of capital which directly follows its impulse to control labour power. Worker opposition to this process is seen by Braverman to be "embedded in the ownership and control by workers of craft expertise or skills"; but, as Elger points out, complex competences (skills) may be thoroughly subordinated to capital and be subjected to both an extended working day and intensification, while collective organization may gain increased wages and the status of a skilled worker with little evidence of craft expertise (Elger, 1979, p. 64). He argues for a more "complex and sustained analysis of the historical development of capital accumulation, the contradictions to which accumulation gives rise, and the man-

ner in which such contradictions develop and are resolved in class struggle within and beyond production" (Elger, 1979, p. 70). This points to another difficulty with Braverman's analysis, identified by Elger, in that it tends to abstract changes in the labour process from the broader ideological and political contexts in which they occurred. Braverman thus misses the complex and contradictory relationships between "class relations in production and broader forms of political domination and struggle" (Elger, 1979, p. 61).

Thus, critics have identified some difficulties of Braverman's thesis in relation to workers in the profit-producing sector. How well does his thesis explain developments in the organization of work in the state sector, where profit maximization is not the objective and where the political and ideological context, clearly is an equally important consideration. This question constitutes a major focus of this research.

The relationship between strategies of accumulation adopted by capital and specific ideological and political context needs more specification. The latter is a particularly significant gap in assessing Braverman's relevance to the state service sector in general and social work in particular.

State organizations and state workers

Braverman made no special distinction between workers in the capitalist or surplus-value producing and/or realization

sectors and those employed in the non-capitalist sector. By implication, he assumed that the process of proletarianization is applicable throughout. Yet if the proletarianization thesis hinges on maximization of surplus value with control over the labour process as the means, this then requires an explanation as to how the thesis relates to workers, such as social workers, who are not engaged in the surplus-value producing process, i.e., non-capitalist state sector workers. Since Braverman did not address this issue, we need to supplement this theory by turning to others, like Carchedi (1977) and Johnson (1977a, 1977b), who have given particular attention to the nature of non-capitalist state organizations and their professional employees.

Carchedi makes such a distinction with reference to state organizations. He begins by distinguishing two fundamental processes which characterize the capitalist mode of production: the labour process (involving the creation of use value), and the surplus-value producing process which is specific to capitalism and to which the former (labour process) is subject under capitalism) (Carchedi, 1977). In the development of capitalism these two processes give rise to ever more complex and expanded functions in both the social division of labour ("collective labourer") and the "global functions of capital."

Carchedi identifies three stages in the development of capitalism. In the first stage the formal subordination of

labour to capital involves the subordination of the labour process to the surplus-value producing process "without any accompanying revolution in the technical conditions of production" (Johnson, 1977b, p. 102). The second stage "entails the adaptation of the labour process to the surplus-value producing process through a continuous revolution in the technical division of labour associated with the application of science and technology." Now the product is no longer that of an individual activity but of a developing complex labour process referred to by Carchedi as the "collective labourer." The increasingly cooperative nature of the labour process is reflected in the social division of labour which necessarily involves an extension of productive labour" (Johnson, 1977b, p. 103).

In the third stage of monopoly capitalism, "the role of the capitalist is similarly subdivided into fractional operations, so that the functions associated with the appropriation of surplus value are collectivized in the global functions of capital ..." (Johnson, 1977b, p. 103). The expansion of the functions of capital is dispersed to agents of capital, and involves the growth of complex organizational structures which perform collectively what under "private capitalism was the function of the individual personified capitalist" (Johnson, 1977b, p. 103). Within Carchedi's (1977) analysis, state enterprises can be subdivided into capitalist state activities (CSA) and non-capitalist state

activities (non-CSA). CSAs are profit-oriented, i.e., they engage in "production of or for surplus value" and reinvest the surplus value produced according to criteria of profitability rather than of customer needs. CSAs conform to logic of capitalist competition and accumulation; in Carchedi's terms they advance money in order to increase it (Carchedi, 1977, p. 130). In this category are state-owned steel works, state-owned banks, etc. Non-CSA organizations, on the other hand, are basically different from CSAs in that they advance money not in order to increase it but in order to meet needs (use-value production). The production process here is neither for nor of surplus value (Carchedi, 1977, p. 133). Examples of this type of organization would include state hospitals and, of course, state social work agencies. This is not to hold that non-CSAs do not have interconnections to production for surplus value. Lesemann (1984) and others have argued that Keynesian social management of the economy through manipulation of resource flows to public service organizations is linked to surplus-value production. Navarro (1976), similarly, has pointed out that the infrastructure of non-CSAs links to production for profit (hospitals -- technology, drug companies, etc.; social service residential institutions, council housing links to construction industry, etc.). Non-CSAs themselves, however, are not directly engaged in production of or for surplus value.

Therefore, Carchedi argues that the emphasis in non-CSAs is on use value rather than on exchange value. This, then, should have some impact on the nature of the labour process in non-CSAs. Clegg and Dunkerley (1980) note this in relation to hospital employees:

Hospitals, producing use values only, not surplus values, might be expected to develop quite different operations, activities, skills, specializations, and structures from those developed by parallel hospitals within the same society whose labour process is premised on production only for surplus value. We have here, irrespective of size or technology, an independent variable capable of structurally explaining why widely differing labour processes should emerge in a profit-oriented surplus-value producing hospital compared with a public use-value oriented hospital. (p. 487)

This distinction could well prove fruitful; however, Clegg and Dunkerley fail to develop it further, staying firmly close to their economic analysis based on Carchedi when looking at specific workers' experience.

For, having made this hypothesis, they then negate its importance by stating that it is a matter of indifference to the labourer whether they are oppressed within a private sector organization, CSA or non-CSA, because "use values are produced just as if they were capitalist commodities" (1980, p. 488). The explanation Clegg and Dunkerley offer for this is, however, not too illuminating -- it is because "all of this organization takes place in a structure which is embedded in the structure of capitalist economic criteria" (1980, p. 488). They further elaborate, with reference to

Mandel (1975), that non-CSAs are governed by an "allocation economy." The principle underlying an allocation economy is that "any savings on expenditure lead to a reduction in allocations." This encourages a wastage of resources and a material interest for all organization members to increase these allocations. As well, large allocations add to the power and status of an organization and can benefit some of its members. This would seem to make a case against management control over the labour process if this contributes to a reduced budget allocation of non-CSA employees.

Within this optic, Clegg and Dunkerley and Mandel have to concede that senior state personnel charged with control over the labour process of subordinates have an ambiguous and contradictory location because at the same time they seek to increase their budget. But for all these distinctions elaborated, the organization of work in non-CSAs can only be explained using this economically based theory by analogy, and a functionalist analogy at that.

We can conclude ... by saying that little objective differences exist between state employees and non-state employees at the level of relations of production. The only difference is that in the state sector wages are received which are produced in the productive sphere of the economy, and are paid by the state after a part of the surplus value which originates in the productive sphere has been expropriated by the state and reallocated among the various unproductive sphere of the economy (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980, p. 489).

Thus, despite his attention to differences in the non-capitalist state sector, Carchedi's focus is on economic cri-

teria only, and his analysis remains at a general level of abstraction. Carchedi's exclusive reference to the economic sphere is thus inadequate for analyzing state labour processes, since what differentiates the state from non-state enterprises is that the state operates as well in the political sphere. To explain the position of state workers, we need therefore to move beyond the economic level. The nature of the state in capitalist societies is the subject of wide and continuing debate within marxist theory. We need to address certain aspect of this debate on the state in order to understand the organization of state work in non-capitalist sectors. Specifically, we need to examine the issue of relative autonomy of the capitalist state from capital accumulation processes. This is important to any analysis of labour processes within the state sector.

DEBATE OVER STATE AUTONOMY

The Poulantzas-Miliband debate on the capitalist state

During the early 1970s, two major contributions toward a theory of the state were made by Ralph Miliband (1972) and Nicos Poulantzas (1972). We will briefly examine the main elements of this debate and assess its implications for an analysis of the position of state welfare workers.

Miliband and Poulantzas would both agree that the state in capitalist societies is a class state, which functions in

the interests of the capitalist class or fractions thereof; however, their explanations of how this occurs differ. This debate centres on the relation between the state and the economy and the extent and nature of autonomy of the state from the dominant class.

Within Miliband's analysis, the state is viewed as the instrument whereby one group achieves political domination over another: "The 'ruling class' of capitalist society is that class which owns and controls the means of production and which is able, by virtue of the economic power thus conferred upon it, to use the state as its instrument for the domination of society" (Miliband, 1969, p. 22). Research associated with this perspective has been directed to an examination of the dominant class, the mechanisms which link this class to the state, and the relationships between this class's interest and state action and policies.

A frequent criticism of the Miliband position is that he fails to acknowledge sufficiently any state autonomy. But Saunders (1979) points out that this criticism is not totally justified. Saunders believes that Miliband does fall short of a straightforward economic determinism and does recognize the state as exercising some autonomy from the capitalist class and its constituent fractions, even if this autonomy is only exercised in mediating between competing claims of the various capitalist factions. Miliband, in fact, expresses a compromise position, which sees the state acting "on behalf

of the 'ruling class' but not at 'its behest'" (Saunders, 1979, p. 162). A degree of autonomy is exercised by state agents in determining how best to serve the interests of capital as a whole. The mode of production, for Miliband, is then viewed as a constraint on but not a determinant of political action (Saunders, 1979, p. 162).

Poulantzas, on the other hand, takes the position "that the capitalist state cannot be understood as a 'thing' set apart from classes, but can only be analyzed as the 'condensate' of the political relations between classes" (Saunders, 1979, p. 181). He was critical of Miliband's instrumentalist perspective, which he felt portrayed the state as a passive tool in the hands of a class or fraction. Saunders succinctly summarizes the Poulantzian view:

The state is therefore neither an instrument of class domination, nor a centre of power independent from classes, but is rather the representation of the balance of class forces in any particular society at any particular time. In the present era of monopoly capitalism, it follows that, in the long term, the state necessarily represents the interests of monopoly capital, since this is the dominant class and the dominant political force. Nevertheless, the working class is clearly not powerless, and the state will therefore generate policies in the short term which favour its interests, even against the short-term interests of the dominant class. The consequence of this is that the state comes to perform a dual function. On the one hand it serves to unify the divergent fractions of capital under the hegemony of the monopoly fraction by safeguarding capitalist accumulation even against the immediate demands of different fractions pursuing their own short-term interests. On the other, it serves to fragment the unity of the working class by undermining its solidarity through short-run class compromises and reforms. In short, the state is "relatively autonomous" of any one

class, although it necessarily functions in the long term in the interests of monopoly capital (Saunders, 1979, p. 181).

He identifies how this view differs from Miliband's position:

It is important to distinguish this concept of "relative autonomy" from that employed by Miliband. For Miliband, the state is relatively autonomous in that the constraints imposed upon it are not total--those who control the state have a limited degree of discretion which enables them to decide how best to serve the interests of the capitalist class, and their decisions will not always coincide with the demands made upon them by members of that class. For Poulantzas, on the other hand, the relative autonomy of the state is structurally determined by the relationship between the economic and political instances in the social formation. Although the nature of this relationship will ultimately be determined by the prevailing forces and relations of production (i.e., the economic determines which instance will be dominant in the social formation), and in capitalism this ensures that the economic will be the dominant instance, it does not follow that the economic determines the political. Rather, each level in the social formation is relatively autonomous from each other, and it follows that the class practices which correspond to these levels will also be relatively autonomous. The state does not therefore directly represent the economic interests of any one class (Saunders, 1979, pp. 181-82).

Methodological dispute

Poulantzas criticized Miliband's work on the state for its reliance on bourgeois concepts. Poulantzas felt that Miliband was wrong to argue within the same epistemological framework as bourgeois theorists, for example, adopting the notion of elites and attempting to refute bourgeois claims through demonstrating their empirical inadequacy. Poulantzas

believed that Miliband thus failed to critique the concepts directly and, further, failed to introduce alternative marxist epistemological concepts. This methodology, Poulantzas believes, runs the risk of being influenced or contaminated by bourgeois principles. According to Poulantzas, Miliband thus does not comprehend social classes or the state as "object structures, and their relations as an objective system of regular connections ..."

Miliband constantly gives the impression that for him social classes or "groups" are in some way reducible to interpersonal relations, that the State is reducible to interpersonal relations of the members of the diverse "groups" that constitute the State apparatus, and finally that the relation between social classes and the State is itself reducible to interpersonal relations of "individuals" composing social groups and "individuals" composing the State apparatus. (Poulantzas, 1972, p. 242)

Poulantzas counterposes this with a conception of "social classes and the state as objective structures, and their relations as an objective system of regular connections" (1972, p. 242).

The relation between the bourgeois class and the State is an objective relation. This means that if the function of the State in a determinate social formation and the interests of the dominant class in this formation coincide, it is by reason of the system itself. Similarly, the members of the state apparatus function according to a specific internal unity. Their class origin-class situation recedes into the background in relation to that which unites them, their class position: that is to say, the fact that they belong precisely to the State apparatus and that they have as their objective function the actualization of the role of the State. The totality of this role coincides with the interests of the ruling class (Poulantzas, 1972, p. 245).

Further, Poulantzas criticizes Miliband's attention to the "motivations of conduct" of individual actors (capitalists) which, for Poulantzas, are irrelevant. For Poulantzas what is determinant of class is the objective place in production and the ownership of the means of production.

Miliband's response to Poulantzas (1972) raises some very important issues concerning the relationship of empirical inquiry to theory which relate to the methodology of investigation used in this research. Miliband charges that Poulantzas and other "structuralists" are so overly concerned with developing a correct theoretical "problematic" that they risk losing the essential connection with the concrete, empirical world.

It is possible ... to be so profoundly concerned with the elaboration of an appropriate "problematic," as to lose sight of the absolute necessity of empirical inquiry, and of the empirical demonstration of the falsity of these opposed and apologetic "problematics." ... After all, it was none other than Marx who stressed the importance of empirical validation (or invalidation) ... and while I do not suggest for a moment that Poulantzas is unaware of this fact, I do think that he, and the point also goes for Louis Althusser and his collaborators, may tend to give it rather less attention than it deserves. This, I must stress, is not a crude (and false) contraposition of empiricist versus non- or anti-empiricist approaches: it is a matter of emphasis -- but the emphasis is important (Miliband, 1972, p. 256).

In defence of his attention to motivation of individual capitalists Miliband responds:

One must refer to both not because managerial "motivations" are in themselves critical ... but precisely in order to show why they are not. By ignoring them altogether, one leaves a dangerous gap

in the argument which needs to be put forward against managerialist apologetics (Miliband, 1972, p. 257).

Miliband does, however, raise a more crucial point on the issue of motivation and intentions of the state elite. The structuralist position is too deterministic, according to Miliband:

What his [Poulantzas'] exclusive stress on "objective relations" suggests is that what the state does is in every particular and at all times wholly determined by these "objective relations": in other words, that the structural constraints of the system are so absolutely compelling as to turn those who run the state into the merest functionaries and executants of policies imposed upon them by "the system." At the same time, however, he also rejects the "long Marxist tradition [which] has considered that the State is only a simple tool or instrument manipulated at will by the ruling class." Instead, he stresses "the relative autonomy of the state." But all that this seems to me to do is to substitute the notion of "objective structures" and "objective relations" for the notion of "ruling" class. ... His analysis seems to me to lead straight toward a kind of structural determinism, or rather a structural super-determinism, which makes impossible a truly realistic consideration of the dialectical relationship between the state and "the system" (1972, p. 258)

Two criticisms of Poulantzas Miliband makes are particularly significant in relation to my research question and methodology in understanding the labour processes of state welfare workers. The nature of my research question necessitates relating theory to the concrete empirical world, as Miliband advocates, in order to grasp the day-to-day practice realities of welfare work. The explanatory usefulness of employing a more abstract approach in order to understand the

specifics of welfare workers' experience is of limited value in this. However, the methodology in this thesis also reflects a theoretical stance in which the state is not viewed as a monolithic structure. Rather, we assume that the form of the state at any particular point in time will reflect the dynamic of class forces. This position allows that the state functions with a degree of autonomy. At the same time, an understanding of class forces is important in exploring the theoretical nature of the welfare state in capitalist societies and welfare services as a particular sphere of welfare state activities. We need to consider the contradictory functioning of the welfare state in more detail before we can situate state social workers and their labour process.

Contradictions of capitalist welfare state provision

Gough (1979) analyzes the welfare state using a political-economy approach, that is, understanding the history of the development of social services in the post-war period from an economic viewpoint. Within this framework he does, however, stress the contradictions inherent to welfare-state activities. State welfare provisions often contain both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, programs such as housing, supplementary benefits, etc., offer much needed assistance to people, but on the other hand the bureaucratic and oppressive mode of operation acts to dominate and oppress both consumers and workers in these organiza-

tions. These contradictory tendencies embodied in the welfare state -- to both enhance social welfare and to repress and control people -- is a major characteristic of the welfare state institutions. Gough identifies a major contradiction of the welfare state in capitalist economies:

The very scale of state expenditure on the social services has become a fetter on the process of capital accumulation and economic growth itself. If capitalism more and more engenders a welfare state, it is also proving difficult for capitalism to cope with the problems of financing the requisite expenditure (1979, p. 14).

Rising levels of state expenditure on welfare state provisions also pose contradictions for capital. Although social programs such as unemployment and redundancy payments serve not only to adjust labour market conditions but are also politically necessary to the capital accumulation process, financing of such programs may inhibit the accumulation process as state revenue requirements are not only augmented but state spending is channelled into the public as opposed to the private sector.

The problem of financing the regulative machinery of the welfare state takes on an added urgency as the rate of capital accumulation and economic growth slows down. Gough's analysis of these contradictions allows us, by analogy, to theoretically identify the conditions in the state which may give rise to the fiscal crisis and resulting proletarianization of state workers. Several theorists have analyzed the relationship between capital in crisis and the restructuring

of the British state (Cockburn, 1978; Benington, 1976). This is important in situating an analysis of state labour processes within a specific historical context. This will be taken up in the following chapter, where we examine the specifics of the organization of the British welfare state in the 1970s and early 1980s.

In seeking to explore the implications of Braverman's analysis of the capitalist labour process for state welfare workers, we have so far identified as theoretically important an expansion of his economically based thesis to include an examination of the state and its relationship to the economy and social classes in a particular historical context. At this point, in order to more adequately explain the position of state welfare workers it is necessary to extend our analysis further to include an assessment of ideological factors. The significance of this level has been underlined by several theorists (Althusser, 1977; Poulantzas, 1973). A full understanding of welfare structures and labour processes at a particular moment therefore requires attention to this.

In the next section, we will consider the influence and current status of social democracy as a political ideology and practice which informed the construction of a welfare state in a particular period of capitalism, and assess the effects of social democratic ideology on the shaping of state labour processes. We will similarly review the implications for state labour processes of the thesis of a profoundly

changed ideological climate witnessed by the rise of the New Right.

IDEOLOGY AND THE WELFARE STATE

Social democratic ideology and welfare

The construction of welfare states post-World War II has been guided by the ideology and politics of social democracy, which describes a political and economic climate that was simultaneously dominated by the power of monopoly capital and an organized working class. Bolger and others (1981) elaborate on the contradictions inherent to social democracy: it "represents a set of ideas that are directly, and necessarily, contradictory in both form and content" (1981, p. 41), representing partially the interests of both capitalists and the working class, and will therefore always be essentially unstable. They continue:

Social democracy, then, has two important elements: first, it represents the clear link in the United Kingdom between state power and the working class; second, it contains inevitable contradictions since it tries to operate for that class within a capitalist society. If it were not an organic link, then its importance would be greatly diminished, and if it were not contradictory, then it could be simply accepted as working class or dismissed as ruling class (1981, p. 42).

Thus, these authors conclude that:

... social democracy contains inevitable contradictions within it. It is itself an arena of class struggle. Any social-democratic policies can to some extent represent the interests of the working

class, or the interests of the capitalist class; these interests conflict within both the construction and the implementation of these policies. The way in which they actually evolve and are put into practice is wholly affected by the nature and structure of the class struggle in our society.

Some specific contradictory aspects of social democracy include its acceptance of the capitalist economic system, while simultaneously rejecting the unequal outcomes of a market economy. Particularly, social democracy is concerned with the extremes or excesses of a market system such as extreme poverty or deprivation. Through reforms social democrats want to eliminate the unwelcome social effects of capitalism, and to promote humanistic values as an antidote to competitive capitalist values. The instrument to effect such reform is the state, which is seen as neutral and above class divisions. The state is posed against the market as an entity which can bring about progressive change. Crucially, social democracy believes social problems can be solved within capitalism, given the right political will. Such intentions are generally to be channelled through parliamentary representation and "consumer" groups pressure.

Change, because it is to occur within the dominant framework, must be argued for with reference to the dominant values of a market society -- that is, the "social" agenda is at all times to be subordinate to the "economic." Reforms

can only be effected if the nation can afford them or if these reforms do not threaten capitalist values, the work ethic, etc. Cost efficiency is a major concern in evaluating the success of social programs. Social democracy also places great faith in "expertise" and relies on the use of professionals in formulating and implementing social policies.

Faced with repeated failure to make a serious impact on social problems, social democrats often call for still more resources and more expert intervention. Yet critics contend that this approach not only fails to solve social problems but also fails to enlist popular support for social-democratic institutions because of the undemocratic way they function.

An appreciation of the connection between economic and ideological factors is crucial to understanding the threat posed to social-democratic ideas and practices during a period of crisis for capitalism. Such a period, it is thought, makes possible a radical shift in the ideological climate. Hall (1978) and others (Gamble, 1982, 1983; Simpkin, 1979; Cockburn, 1977; etc.) believe that social democracy has now collapsed in Thatcherite Britain. The ascendancy of the New Right's monetarist economic policies and anti-welfare state social policies, it is believed, has firmly swept away the old social-democratic order. Hall believes this has now been replaced by a new consensus based on "authoritarian populism"

(1979), which has taken hold as the crisis of capital has deepened. The impact of the New Right is seen not only in harsh economic policies, but also in social policies and the new politics of welfare.

This thesis of the law-and-order or "exceptional state" has been advanced by Stuart Hall (1978) and others. This theoretical position at an ideological level is similar to Braverman's approach to the economic level in that the notion of "control" over the working class is central. In order to theoretically situate the relationship of a changed ideological climate to the labour process of state welfare workers, we will consider Nigel Parton's (1981) application of Hall's thesis of moral panic to the issue of child abuse.

Rise of the New Right

The crisis of capital, Hall and others contend, has led to a right-wing ideological shift. Proponents of the New Right argue for the freeing up of market forces and concomitant reduction and reshaping of the public sector. Theorists of New Right economics and social policies point out:

At the heart of the Tory approach to the welfare state is the assumption that the market is the most efficient allocator of resources. Conversely, it is argued that the welfare state stifles individual initiative and limits "freedom." ... So ... the frontiers of the welfare state must be rolled back to make room for more capitalist enterprise and individual self-help.

The guise under which this classic laissez-faire aversion to state welfare has passed in recent years is the apparently apolitical notion of efficiency. Thus, the government has asserted fre-

quently that public expenditure must be cut back because it lies at the heart of Britain's economic difficulties and that there is no alternative ... (Walker, 1984, p. 50).

From the premise of an economic crisis, Hall and others are concerned to elucidate the ideological response to this crisis and the entrenchment of a law-and-order state or disciplinary state in Britain. This is most fully elaborated in Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order (1978). Of particular relevance to my research focus is their use of the concept of "moral panic" and their analysis of the role of such panics in securing a new ideological consensus. The term "moral panic" was originated by S. Cohen, who claimed that:

Societies appear to be subject every now and then to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person, or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests ... Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough but suddenly appears in the limelight (Cohen, 1980, p. 9).

Moral panics are signified when the "reaction to a perceived threat is out of all proportion to its actual existence." It is therefore argued that the "crime" and the reaction to it are perceived as a relation which expresses social forces and contradictions which must be examined within a precise historical conjuncture.

Hall and others undertake an analysis of "mugging in Britain in the early 1970s. The mugging phenomenon as moral panic is inserted, following Gramsci within a historically

developing "crisis of hegemony" of the British state. They believe that this crisis is signalled by "the exhaustion of consent established briefly in the post-war period of affluence, the failure of a consent mobilized around social democracy, and in the current period an attempt to build a right-wing consensus to legitimate the state's use of coercion" (Horton, 1979). The role moral panics play in creating conditions conducive to securing an "authoritarian consensus" and in the construction of "law and orderism" is examined by Hall. This crisis of hegemony is itself set against a backdrop of the steady deterioration since the mid-1960s of the British economy -- a crisis of British capital.

A "crisis of hegemony" is said to occur when the "consensus" mode of domination breaks down. In this consensus mode "a particular ruling class alliance has managed to secure through the state such a total social authority, such decisive cultural and ideological leadership over the subordinate classes that it shapes the whole direction of life in its image ...". In moments of "hegemony" the basis in exploitation of the social authority of the ruling classes is rendered invisible (Hall et al., 1978, p. 217). A crisis in hegemony, then, implies the opposite: "Moments when the whole basis of political leadership and cultural authority becomes exposed and contested." When this occurs a shift from consensus to coercion -- a move toward an "exceptional form of the state" -- may develop. In the exceptional form of the

state, the pace and scale of legal repression and control significantly heightens.

What role do moral panics play in the maintenance of such an exceptional form of the state? Moral panics are identified as "one of the surface manifestations of the crisis" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 211). Such panics serve to displace awareness of the wider crisis into an ideological form which may be contained and managed. Successful panics define the boundaries of concern within the dominant ideology and are critical in legitimating unusual state intervention:

"... the moral panic appears to us to be one of the principal forms of ideological consciousness by which a silent majority is won over to the support of increasingly coercive measures on the part of the state and lends its legitimacy to a 'more than usual' exercise of control" (1978, p. 221). As moral panics converge and overlap, the linking together of various themes can engender a spiral into a general cycle of panic. The construction of such a "social crisis" issues directly into a law and order society, "for the tendency to panic is now lodged at the heart of the state's political complex ... minor forms of dissent seem to provide the basis of 'scapegoat' events for a jumpy and alerted control culture; and this progressively pushes the state apparatuses into a more or less permanent 'control' posture" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 222).

Construction of "moral panics"

Hall and others identify a process wherein "a new construction of the social reality of the crime of mugging is formed which does not depend on its empirical reality" (1978, p. 29). The latter is subsumed within the new definition of the situation and the ideological frame applied to it. They also discuss how the media, police, courts, agencies of public signification and control (social workers, etc.) contribute to construction of panics.

These agencies must be understood as actively and continuously part of the whole process to which, also, they are "reacting." They are active in defining situations, in selecting targets, in initiating "campaigns," in structuring these campaigns, in selectively signifying their actions to the public at large, in legitimating their actions through the accounts of situations they produce. They do not simply respond to "moral panics." They form part of the circle out of which "moral panics" develop. It is part of the paradox that they also advertently and inadvertently amplify the deviancy they seem so absolutely committed to controlling. (1978, p. 52)

Nigel Parton uses the concept of moral panics in theorizing welfare practice during a particular ideological period in Britain.

Moral panic around child abuse

Parton (1981), following Stuart Hall's thesis, contends that the crisis of capital during the early 1970s also engendered such an ideological shift to the right in welfare policies. This period has been characterized as a time of recur-

rent crisis in Britain on economic, political, and social fronts. General anxiety, Parton believes, particularly among "traditional middle-class" groups, about a growth of permissiveness in the 1960s (liberalized abortion, divorce, homosexuality, rise of the women's movement) encouraged a perception that traditional values regarding the family and further, the whole "English way of life" were threatened (Parton, 1981).

The New Right, Parton states, gave political currency to these fears in its attack on "soft liberalism" and ideological promotion of the virtues of discipline, hard work, and self-reliance. Parton links the events in statutory child welfare practice in the mid-1970s to the increasing dominance of the New Right.

The series of child abuse tragedies and the social reaction to these during the 1970s and early 1980s have been theorized by Parton, following Hall, as moral panic. Starting from the premise that child abuse has existed in some form throughout history, Parton wants to explain how and why it came to be identified as a specific social problem, requiring active state intervention, in the early 1970s. He wants to insert this process of "discovery" and consolidation of child abuse as a problem within a larger context of changes in "material conditions and ideological forces" within British society. Parton examines Hall's description of the escalation process (signification spirals, convergence and thresh-

olds) in moral panics and applies this process to the "discovery of child abuse."

Parton identifies as important within this analysis "signification spirals" which can sustain the momentum of a moral panic by escalating the supposed threat. As well, Parton borrows the concepts of "convergence" and "thresholds" as escalating mechanisms. He analyzes these in relation to child abuse:

Convergence occurs when two or more activities are linked so as to implicitly or explicitly draw parallels between them. Another form of convergence is by listing a series of problems and referring to them as "the tip of the iceberg" -- a common sentiment found in discussions of child abuse. In both cases the net effect is amplification, not so much in the events being described, but in their "threat-potential" to society. This does not necessarily reflect real historical developments, for the process can exaggerate the degree of convergence or produce altogether spurious identities. Such elision also simplifies complex issues which would otherwise have to be substantiated. It invariably singles out from a complex of different strands the most worrying element -- usually the violent one. Such a process is very evident in the panic concerning child abuse for cases receiving media coverage have always been the most dramatic and violent usually where the child has been killed.

In the public signification of troubling events there seem to be certain "thresholds" which, according to Hall et al., mark out symbolically the limits of societal tolerance. The higher an event can be placed in the hierarchy of thresholds, the greater is its threat to the social order, and the tougher and more automatic is the coercive response likely to be. Three thresholds are identified in the hierarchy: (i) permissiveness, (ii) legality, and (iii) violence. As issues and groups are projected across thresholds, it becomes easier to mount legitimate campaigns of control against them.

Thus, if a new category of deviance is identified, child-abusing families, in which the chil-

dren are seen as being in actual or potential physical danger of violence it is clearly more likely that there will be a consensus that "something should be done" and that formal social control will ensue, than if they are seen as "neglectful," "inadequate," or "problem families" (as tended to be the case in the 1950s and 1960s). The intervention is likely to be more coercive and authoritative (Parton, 1981, pp. 395-6).

Several themes articulate within the moral panic around child abuse. Child abuse acts as a signifier of disintegration of traditional values, a breakdown of family functioning. The problem is defined in individual pathology terms -- bad mothers, bad families. The child abuse panic is also a powerful symbol of a crisis in social democracy, a crisis of welfare state model (Seebohm), in which the state's professionals fail to prevent or solve crises in families. In such a definition of the problem, attention is diverted from structural issues, which might be associated with a propensity to violence -- unemployment, housing, community disintegration -- and refocusses the crisis at the level of individual pathology and inadequacy and incompetence of welfare professionals.

The panic can also be seen as both an attack on the family and a bolstering of the family. Good families are reinforced and bad families punished. Public anger against "abusing families" and social workers has a contradictory edge: people fear that it could happen to them and fear the state's power to step in and remove children, even while demanding that "something should be done." The insecurity and

social anxiety which surrounds such a moral panic, Parton believes, provides the opportunity for a rightward shift in the ideological climate.

Following the theoretical position of Braverman (1974), supplemented by Hall et al. (1978), it would not be coincidental that moral panics occur within the context of an economic crisis and subsequent shake-up of capital. Such a context creates for the state an increased need for domestic stability. The experience of economic crisis heightens the need for state supports and underwriting of families' caring functions, yet the reduction of the public sector simultaneously denies this possibility. Families must therefore be disciplined to "manage" on their own; those who fail to do so are subject to coercive state intervention. Within this optic, the example of the moral panic around child abuse could be seen as a vehicle for heightened management control over statutory practice of state social workers. Such managerial control is consistent with the postulated tendency to centralize state operations. Management control over the labour process of welfare workers would be crucial to this process. In the optic of Braverman and Hall, then, it could be argued that the climate of insecurity in social service departments created by the child abuse panic facilitated the assertion of management control and the reshaping of social relations within the organization of state social work.

Finally, Parton, in following Hall, is thus attempting to apply this thesis of a new ideological hegemony to a specific practice level in the field of child abuse. This alerts us to the fact that front-line welfare workers may be affected by the new ideological climate of which the moral panic around child abuse is a part, and Hall's thesis suggests that workers will be reacting in certain ways. We will test the validity of these beliefs in the chapters examining the historical development in the organization of state social work (chapters three and four) and in the empirical examination of the nature of child-abuse practice (chapters five and six).

MECHANISMS OF CONTROL OVER STATE WELFARE WORKERS

Hall's (1978, 1979) thesis of ideological determinism is consistent with Braverman's (1974) thesis of economic determinism in that they both advance the notion of control as crucial. In Braverman's case, he is concerned with capital's control over the labour process in production settings; while Hall is concerned with the state's reassertion of ideological control in a period of hegemonic crisis which, it is argued, issues into the "law and order" exceptional form of the state. However, the mechanisms of exercising such control over state welfare workers require further specification.

How is the exercise of control over state workers achieved? In this section we will review some theoretical hypotheses about such a centralization of control, and assess how this contributes to an explanation of the labour processes of state welfare workers.

Winkler's view of the changing role of the state

Winkler (1981) addresses the issue of administrative control and this expands our analysis of the organization of work in the state sector. His contribution, although primarily concerned with structural economic relationships between capital and state, does have the merit of isolating an element which is central to our problematic -- that of the tendency to limit public expenditure through the mechanism of tightening discretionary spending in state bureaucracies. This adds an important piece to our understanding of the current situation.

Winkler argues that discretion is, in the current period, increasingly exercised negatively in order to limit state expenditure in the non-productive sectors.

This argument rests on the assumption that a necessary concomitant to the restructuring of capital was an expanded state role in the economy and centralization of its powers. This expansion of the state sector, according to Winkler (1981) signaled a change in the nature of state activity in both social and economic spheres toward more directive inter-

vention. Winkler advances the proposition that the nature of state activity is shifting from a "supportive" role (state has a residual role in sustaining and improving market functioning through adjusting cyclical fluctuations through manipulation of national and aggregate economic variables) to a "directive role" (state positively attempts to guide and control the economy). Such a need for more directive intervention on the part of the state is the product of long-term structural changes in the nature of capitalist economies and cannot be reversed at the whim of government, Thatcher notwithstanding. (Winkler [1981] outlines several structural processes which promote the tendency toward a directive state role. These include increasing concentration of industry; fall in profitability, which encourages the state to act as direct provider of investment capital and guarantor of profits; cost and risk of much advanced technological development and the state's enlarged role as direct mediator between capital and labour.) Further, a more directive state will, of necessity, seek more flexibility of intervention and this leads to expanding its discretionary powers. This exercise of discretion by an interventive state is particularly contentious in social welfare domains.

Winkler states that a period of financial crisis of the state and the "retreat from the concept of a comprehensive welfare state" means that state organizations will increasingly exercise discretion negatively, i.e., in denying or

discouraging citizens' claims upon the state (Winkler, 1981). The government response to its financial incapacity to meet increased demand for social programs because of the deteriorating economic situation involves a two-pronged attack, both material and ideological. Reducing state expenditure has involved the transfer of financial power from local to national government in order to more effectively control level and area of expenditure. On the demand side, an ideological program is set in motion to change and restrict the definition of "need" and to "off-load" onto the community the responsibility for "welfare" (Winkler, 1981, pp. 105-9).

Negative discretion and welfare services

At the level of state welfare services, the exercise of negative discretion on the front line of welfare organizations requires the adoption of more selective eligibility criteria for welfare services (e.g., fewer places in residential facilities, nurseries, old people's homes, daycare, etc.). Furthermore, increased policing of social security claimants, such as fraud investigations with set monthly targets for savings, also has the advantage of good mileage to deny and reduce state obligations by discrediting recipients as scroungers.

At higher administrative levels, Winkler believes, the exercise of negative discretion by local and national officers and elected representatives involves choices and deci-

sions about how to implement budget cuts, charges for services (prescriptions, transport), leaving vacant posts unfilled, closing or delaying opening of residential facilities, and so on (Winkler, 1981, p. 108).

Political functions of discretion

Finally, the existence of discretion serves political purposes as well, Winkler contends. The substitution of administrative for political decision-making can disguise political issues as "technical" problems, deliberately fudging contentious policy issues. This is particularly common in the use of discretionary formulas and regulations.

This growing level of discretionary state intervention has prompted a revived concern for the rights of individual citizens, and fueled anxiety concerning exercise of "professional" power within state organizations as these are the front-line and visible representations of the "welfare state."

Simpkin highlights another aspect of this growth of public bureaucracies. He sees this development as part of "the organizing activity of the state is that it represents an evolving form of mediation and control (Simpkin, 1979, p. 126). Hummel (1977) adds that bureaucracies in the state sector serve capital's need for predictability of the social and legal context in which capital accumulation takes place. Stability is obtained by a process of subverting political

issues into technical or administrative questions to be resolved by experts (technocrats). Public bureaucracies take on an apolitical appearance which hides the fact that essential political decisions regarding the application and enforcement of social policies are undertaken without political participation. Administration thus replaces politics in the interests of maintaining stable social and legal conditions conducive to the exercise of economic power (Hummel, 1977, p. 74). In this way, the political climate is regulated through bureaucratic functioning of public organizations. Winkler (1981) and others therefore suggest a process of increasing centralization of state power and the depoliticization of state activity has occurred.

Centralization of power within state structures

Saunders reminds us of a distinction within the local state between the role of urban managers as mediators between public and private sectors at the local level and the role of local state managers in mediating between the central state and the local population. Saunders points out that the 1974 reorganization of local government and the introduction of a corporate-management system in England and Wales had implications for this latter mediating role (1979, p. 171). Jessop (1982) suggests that the corporate planning model introduced into local authorities following the 1974 reorganization "helped to insulate local power from popular control while

tying it in more closely with centralized policy making" (Saunders, 1979, p. 171).

Control over local state spending is important if a national economic strategy for capital regeneration is to be pursued by the central government. As Saunders suggests, a corporate planning model has implications for the relative autonomy of urban managers "who begin to look less like mediators and more like puppets on the end of Whitehall's strings" (1979, p. 171).

Theorists such as Benington (1976), Cockburn (1977), and Frost (1977) also argue that the corporate management model is a management system based on centralized control and is associated with the development of monopoly capitalism. For example, Cockburn links the development of corporate management with the parallel growth of monopolies and concentration of the manufacturing sector in Britain after 1960, noting that trends of multinational diversification into different product markets required equally sophisticated management methods to cope with the new scale and complexity of their operations (1977, p. 7).

Thus, the corporate management system is seen to be linked to capital restructuring. This same management system of centralized control, it is argued, is borrowed from private capital and is introduced to local political state structures. These theorists argue that state structures reflect the needs of capital in a given specific period. The

corporate management model being applied to local government in Britain (described in more detail in the following chapter) was based on consolidating control over all aspects of corporate functioning through the institution of a strict hierarchy of organizational positions with clear lines of authority and accountability. Cockburn describes this as "a marriage of management and science" whose aim is to construct "a centralized scientific management which looks at the system as a whole, its goals, strategies and growth" (Cockburn, 1977, p. 67).

This tendency toward centralizing and strengthening of management control, Benington (1976) and others argue, represents a "restructuring" of the state which was necessary to complement the restructuring of British capital in a period of crisis.

Centralization of decision-making power and state labour processes

What is the theoretical relationship of corporate management to the labour process of state social workers? As we have noted, Gough (1979, 1980), Bolger et al. (1981), and others view these changes as part of a process of "restructuring" of the welfare state begun in the mid-1970s in Britain which complemented the wider restructuring of British capital. Frost (1977) states that a major determinant of the nature of state social work is its material dependence on the

state for its existence. Because wages for these employees are produced in the productive sphere of the economy and are paid by the state through taxation of surplus value, Clegg and Dunkerley analyze that these workers therefore are not "governed directly by market conditions but indirectly by dependence on revenue from public funds" (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980, p. 544).

Some theorists of the labour process, such as the Brighton Group, take the position that state social work is unproductive labour in that it does not create but is financed out of surplus value, but although social work in marxian terms does not directly fall under full force of the law of value, it is nevertheless subordinated to the aims of capital as an aspect of the general conditions under which valorization takes place (Brighton Group, 1977). Changes in the organization of social work and the changing nature of practice are therefore linked to prevailing economic and ideological conditions and to their political management.

Frost argues that introducing corporate management structures in the state sector created the conditions necessary "to reduce labour costs and make state service work more productive in order to reduce its consumption of surplus value produced in capitalist production" (Frost, 1977, p. 8; Davis, 1979). As previously noted, Clegg and Dunkerley concur that despite the differences between non-CSA's, CSA's and organizations in the private sphere, the relations of produc-

tion are generally similar for both state and non-state employees: "Use-values are produced in these organizations just as if they were capitalist commodities using systems of bureaucratic control" (1980, p. 488). In their view, organization of and control over the labour process of public sector workers mirror the capitalist labour process of the productive sphere. We will now investigate this hypothesis in relation to one group of state workers -- state social workers.

Application of the proletarianization thesis to state social work

Frost (1977) contends that many of the features of the capitalist labour process have now been reproduced within the social work labour process. The trend toward centralization of management control within social service structures is theoretically analyzed by Frost, following Braverman, in terms of the scientific management principles of Taylor. Within this framework, it is postulated that control over the labour process is sought through the separation of "conception from execution" of tasks. Further, it is argued, planning and coordinating functions, i.e., conception, are increasingly controlled by a small number of senior managers and administrators. The performance (execution) of tasks is then carried out by front-line field workers. This concurs with Braverman's analysis that the "overall purpose of all

administrative control is, as in the case of production controls, the illumination of uncertainty and the exercise of constraint to achieve the desired result" (Braverman, 1974, p. 265).

However, within social work the basis for technical control is limited because of the unpredictable and unique nature of the input (clients), and the basis of social work production in specific skills largely employed in face-to-face contact with clients beyond management scrutiny. Social workers are thus not subject to direct monitoring; management must rely on indirect means through administrative procedures and its control of resources which may shape practitioners' options.

At the same time, since labour costs do represent a major portion of local authority spending, Frost maintains that control over the labour process of state workers is necessary to improve the productivity of social welfare organizations. He argues that management efforts are directed toward increasing the rate of exploitation of state workers and further through a subdivision of social work activity into separate tasks which may then be performed by cheaper units of labour such as social work assistants. These processes, Frost argues, combine to produce a tendency toward deskilling social work practice and proletarianization of the social worker (Frost, 1977).

Braverman (1974) identified this as "the disassociation of the labour process from the skills of the worker, the

labour process must be rendered independent of craft, tradition, and workers' knowledge." In this process, once management's monopoly over knowledge of the production process is complete, each step of the labour process and its execution can then be controlled. In social work we would expect it to be reflected in a trend toward increasing separation between control and practice. However, perhaps because the basis of service delivery is through individual social workers to individual clients, this latter state of total management monopoly becomes difficult to envisage.

Immediate control over her labour process is maintained by the social worker precisely because much social work practice is composed of direct face-to-face interaction between the worker and client(s), often outside the agency. Direct monitoring is therefore not feasible; rather, management must use more indirect means of control, such as coordination of resources, and conformity to bureaucratic norms, such as obligatory recording and filing activity reports on practice.

At a higher level, conformity of the social service departments to central state objectives, it is argued, is secured not only through financial manipulation and legislative exigencies, but increasingly through administrative regulations and procedures directed at various client groups. State welfare organizations borrow from private industry notions of rationality and efficiency, and operationalize these through the adoption of management techniques reliant

upon quantifiable measures such as cost-benefit analysis, planned program budgeting systems, etc.

Does this form of management control perhaps extend to social work, capitalist work relations, and division of labour, which echo the principles of Taylor's scientific management? As we have seen, some theorists believe that these tendencies are now apparent in the social work labour process. These tendencies are perhaps most advanced in the area of statutory work, such as child abuse, which has been an area of social work practice subject to management intervention. However, it is clear that this analysis of the capitalist labour process cannot be mechanically applied to social work since the latter is a process under the control of the state. As we argued previously, the state is a political apparatus which takes its form through the balance of class forces; thus, changes in the organization of state social work cannot be explained as a directly economic occurrence subject in the same way, as Braverman tried to explain the capitalist labour process (Frost, 1977).

Given the difficulty of direct monitoring of welfare labour processes, a certain level of discretion, we would expect, remains with front-line workers. Further, given the nature of human predicaments being presented to social service departments, the possibility of such standardization of practice seems remote even if it were thought desirable. As will be seen in later chapters, the data from the research

fail to support a straightforward thesis of proletarianization where front-line discretion is exercised. Braverman's analysis therefore may be overly deterministic in relation to the practice of social work. Further, his thesis fails to address the contradictory nature of social work practice, particularly apparent in statutory practice, where both care and control objectives simultaneously exist.

Another difficulty with the thesis of proletarianization as applied to professional occupations is that it seemingly ignores theories concerned with the opposite tendency of "professionalization." The Braverman thesis of the degradation of work, although seductive, does not adequately dispel the opposite notion of social workers as powerful professionals whose decisions are assumed to be highly discretionary and not subject to public accountability and control. This "professionalization" thesis, advanced by Wilding (1982) and others, posits the ability of professions to gain for their members on occupational monopoly which allows them autonomy to determine occupational tasks and functions, and achieve high status and rewards. How can we account for the popularity of this position, particularly among consumers of professional services? Why, on one hand, do theorists posit increasing management control over professional workers within state bureaucracies, while on the other hand, an image persists of such workers as powerful professional experts? How can these opposing views be explained? What seems necessary

is a theoretical framework which can accommodate both of these tendencies. In other words, we need a conception of professional production processes that takes account of the dialectic between discretion and control. Johnson's (1977a, 1977b) analysis is fruitful in this regard. We will therefore first present his position on processes of occupational control and assess its explanatory usefulness for the current organization of social work.

A COUNTERVAILING VIEW OF CONTROL PROCESSES IN PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONS

Johnson's model

Johnson (1977b) has elaborated on the processes of control in organizations and class structuration with reference to knowledge-based professional occupations of the "new middle class." Johnson argues that professional occupations can be analyzed in terms of their production relations, following Carchedi's (1977) distinction between two fundamental processes which characterize the capitalist mode of production: the labour process (involving the creation of use value) and the surplus value-producing process, "the latter being specific to capitalism and its determining feature."

These two processes, the labour process and the surplus-value producing process, give rise in the development of capitalism to more and more complex and expanded functions in

both the social division of labour ("collective labourer") and the "global functions of capital." In the process of capitalist development outlined by Cardechi (see pp. 62-63), productive labour comes to encompass "a wide range of work activities within the collective labourer" while "the global functions of capital are dispersed to agents who are not themselves owners of the means of production" (Johnson, 1977b, p. 103).

Johnson uses Carchedi's formulation for an explanation of the process of bureaucratic growth.

The growth of bureaucratic organization is not then merely the result of the cooperative nature of the labour process determining the coordination of the social division of labour--the functions of coordination and unity--but also involves the function of capital: that is, the extent to which the work of control and surveillance in respect of the surplus value-producing process is now performed by a large number of agents (Johnson, 1977b, p. 103).

Johnson also accounts for differences between forms of occupational control:

The dual processes of production are then directly related to the dual nature of bureaucratic organization and the resistance or non-resistance of occupations within such organizations is determined by the extent to which their work tasks are an aspect of the collective labourer or the global functions of capital (Johnson, 1977b, p. 103).

Professions in bureaucratic organizations

How has Johnson applied this analysis to professional occupations in bureaucratic organizations? Johnson argues that such occupations may contain elements of both the collective labourer and global capital.

They are, then, part of a class which carries out the global functions of capital without owning the means of production (therefore distinct in relation to a capitalist class) while at the same time and in various ratios carrying out the function of the collective labourer--they are then both labourer and non-labourer, exploited and exploiters (Johnson, 1977b, p. 104).

While these conceptual categories may be somewhat vague, what we can still usefully retain from Johnson's analysis is his emphasis on dualistic and contradictory tendencies within occupations. An adequate analysis of professional occupations therefore needs to take account of this duality. Competing views of trends in the professional occupational production process as the proletarianization thesis (with which Braverman is associated) and the professionalization thesis (which Braverman and his followers hoped to counter), Johnson believes fail to adequately integrate this duality:

In the first instance, the professions are seen as undergoing a process of proletarianization deriving from the increasing subordination to bureaucratic authority: a process which is seen to be inherent in rationalizing consequences of large-scale enterprise. ... The implications of the second view are that the strategic authority structures of post-industrial societies will be characterized by the domination of professionals rather than their subordination, thus creating the conditions for the emergence of knowledge based occupational groups as the dominant class--some form of technocracy (Johnson, 1977b, p. 298).

These dichotomous views fail to grasp, according to Johnson, the dualistic character of the occupational organization of knowledge. This duality has been conceptualized by Jamous and Pelouille as the "technicality/indetermination"

ratio in any occupational production process (Jamous and Peloille, 1970). Technicality is the condition of external intervention; the extent to which a systematic body of knowledge is utilized in the justification of competence or expertise and is therefore vulnerable to routinization and fragmentation (Johnson, 1977b, p. 99), as against the process of indetermination, which focusses on those aspects of professional organization of knowledge which function as a barrier to such intervention. The conditions for indetermination, what Jamous and Peloille refer to as "the virtualities of an occupation, the bases of its mystique, the sources of its legitimations, the elements of its ideology" (Johnson, 1977b, p. 99) are the key to a profession's ability to successfully resist bureaucratic authority. The conditions for technicality and indetermination which derive from the fundamental dualism of the capitalist mode of production enable us to identify the class characteristics of professions of the new middle class. Occupational tasks

... may include either the typically fragmented and routinized tasks of the collective labourer or functions of coordination and unity, which are equally a product of the labour process and therefore the collective labourer. In such occupations, technicality is the dominant element in the occupational organization of work, and saturates occupational ideologies (Johnson, 1977b, p. 104).

But on the other hand, as Johnson describes, at certain levels of the occupational organization of knowledge the conditions for indetermination are created. This applies to spe-

cific professional positions whose activities are, according to Johnson,

associated with the global functions of capital, particularly in respect of the work of control and surveillance, and including the reproduction of labour. In fulfilling the global functions of capital, such occupations are protected from the processes of work devaluation which constantly affect the collective labourer (Johnson, 1977b, p. 104).

Proletarianization can thus be considered as a process which does not merely refer to a devaluation (degradation) of work in terms of further fragmentation or routinization of tasks within the labour process, but also refers to the elimination of that element of work associated with the global functions of capital (Johnson, 1977b, p. 104).

In some occupations, lower levels of professional work may be subject to technicality (routinization and control by management); whereas higher levels, the elite of the profession, may create through political processes conditions for indetermination and therefore retain professional control over their work. These latter activities are associated with the global functions of capital in respect of control and surveillance (Boreham, 1983).

Johnson notes, however, that supervision and management itself has a double nature and involves the work of coordination and unity which are also aspects of the collective labourer. As noted, he emphasizes that when we conceptualize professions, it is important to bear in mind the dual nature of the processes of technicality and indetermination, since

to do so will produce an accurate understanding of certain professions in the new middle class, i.e., as containing elements both of the "collective labourer" and of the "global functions of capital." Keeping this in mind, this conceptual duality also enables us to analyze

... the conditions under which distinct forms of the institutionalized control of occupational activities emerge, are sustained, or break down--that is, the political and ideological processes which operate to determine the ways in which occupations are controlled, are themselves structured by this duality. (Johnson, 1977b, p. 105)

Despite the vagueness of the concept of "indetermination," Johnson's formulation does, however, point to the fact that reciprocal influences between occupational control and political processes do exist to some degree. Johnson thus argues that the degree of autonomy an occupation enjoys is linked to the degree "to which it functions to promote and maintain capital. ... The ideology of professionalism will be an effective strategy only when its claims coincide with, and draw upon, the dominant processes of capital" (Johnson, quoted in Heraud, 1970, p. 19).

Johnson thus situates his analyses of control over professional occupations within the context of processes of capital from appropriation to reproduction. He identifies three forms of occupational control -- professionalism, patronage, and mediation (heteronomy), which he sees as processes integral to class structuration and reflecting a dominant mode of production (Johnson, 1977b, p. 106).

1. Professionalism -- which involves colleague control of work activities "can arise only where the ideological and political processes sustaining indetermination coincide with the requirements of capital; that is, where the core work activities fulfill the global functions of capital with respect to control and surveillance including the reproduction of labour." He cites the example of medicine in this context, where the monopolization of "official" definitions of illness and health and credentialism, involving monopolistic practices and occupational closure fulfills ideological functions in relation to capital and reflects the extent to which medicine in its role of surveillance and the reproduction of labour power is able to draw upon powerful ideological symbols in the creation of indetermination" (Johnson, 1977b, p. 106).
2. Corporate patronage -- is a form of client control and defines a situation in which the level of indetermination is reduced by the subordination of work activities to rationalizing and routinizing effects of managerial definition, so stressing technicality as the basis of expertise. The typical worker under such a system is an agent of the collective labourer, although functions of supervision in relation to control and surveillance may be carried out. At the same time, however, a small high-status elite may be largely the agents of global

capital, themselves creating the conditions for the routinized work activities of colleague subordinates. Accountancy is identified here as characteristic of this form of occupational control.

This description has the merit of explaining differences within occupations, both in terms of varying ratios of technicality and indetermination and of lack of homogeneity in market capacity, status or class. This form of occupational control may be applied to some elements of the social work profession, where an elite may be seen to combine dual functions of both global capital in respect of control and surveillance of junior workers and elements of collective labourer in terms of coordination and clinical supervision functions.

3. The third category of heteronomy (mediation) is a form of institutionalized occupational control -- wherein state mediation of occupation-client relationships occurs. In this form of occupational control, "the authority to determine the recipients and content of practice is removed from the producer and consumer clients" (Johnson, 1977b, p. 108), e.g., where "state agency funds or is the employer of practitioners with statutory obligation to provide a given service." Johnson notes that the significant factor here is that the occupation is guaranteed a clientele which is constituted by state definitions of need and the manner in which such needs

may be serviced. This form of control may be applicable to much state social work, particularly statutory duties.

State heteronomy then focusses the problem of class location at the level of ideological and political processes affecting indetermination and resulting from the functions of the state in the reproduction of labour power. However, the extent to which the state captures through its own definitions, the client, occupational services, is subordinated to principles of technicality; the ideological bases of indetermination are not available for purposes of occupational exploitation (Johnson, 1977b, p. 108).

As Heraud (1978) notes, Johnson's argument suggests that relations between the state and the professions are complex.

It is not just a question of a monolithic state transmitting the demand with which "servant" professions automatically comply. Tensions will develop because the state will come up against power bases in the professions (such as colleague control and professionalism) developed during an earlier, more individualistic, phase of capitalism, when corporate control was less prominent. (p. 19)

Heraud sees professions such as social work as associated with reproduction processes of capital (by which the capitalist system as a whole is maintained and replaced):

This means the maintenance and replacement of the labour force, to which recruitment should be continuous and uninterrupted for capital appropriation to occur. Thus, health and welfare services are necessary for existing workers, while education and training facilities are important, both directly and because they underpin the ideological processes that supports the relations of production (Heraud, 1978, p. 18).

Reproduction processes, Heraud argues, may be relatively autonomous from processes of appropriation of surplus value. Professions associated with reproduction, therefore, "do not necessarily respond to the direct dictates of the central mechanisms of capitalism; thus, between the state and the professions there are discontinuities and areas of autonomy that preclude a rigidly deterministic model" (1978, p. 19). This analysis does not concur with Braverman's thesis, since he did not account for such complexities in his analysis of labour process determinants.

THE DIALECTIC BETWEEN DISCRETION AND CONTROL: STATE SOCIAL WORKERS' LABOUR PROCESSES

Social work profession in Johnson's model

Within the social work profession, various levels of activity and tasks can be differentiated; for example, senior administrators in social service hierarchies may retain a powerful and privileged position. This segment of the profession, which may be associated with devising, installing, and supervising bureaucratic control systems needs to be differentiated from basic-grade social workers, whose practice is the object of such constraints. Another aspect of differentiation must take account of the split between statutory and non-statutory duties. The former are more directly defined by the state and may contain a different ratio of tech-

nicality and indetermination than the latter activities. A combination of forms wherein the elite of the profession may stress the technicality of "colleague-subordinates," creating conditions for work devaluation may occur, while at the same time their function in servicing capital (e.g., through compliance with privatization, cuts, etc.) creates the conditions of indetermination in relation to their own organization of knowledge as work.

Because welfare professionals as part of the new middle class are situated in an ambiguous "intermediate" position within the social relations of production, political and ideological factors have important implications in determining their class position. Mediating structures between state policy and the situation of welfare workers further complicate any attempt to specify class relations. Furthermore, the tendency toward the "proletarianization" of social workers, teachers, and their deskilling associated with the assertion of managerial control may simultaneously be associated with the expansion of their policing and surveillance function over clients and students as the definition of "normal" practice becomes narrower. If, as Carter (1985) suggests, part of the function of social work is "to individualize and constrain working-class protest, does this not affect the class position of social workers, not only abstractly, but also in their practical day-to-day relationships with clients."

These differences within the various levels of the social work hierarchy need to be borne in mind. Simultaneously, the nature of the labour process of state workers must be examined in relation to a more generalized class analysis. As Boreham claims,

The legitimacy claimed by professional elites is subject to wider social structures of power which condition the success of the indetermination process. Thus, a critical analysis of the professions must be firmly located in theorizing the conditions for indetermination, in identifying the pivotal element of the professions' support of capitalist regulatory mechanisms both in the labour process itself as well as in broader, hegemonic processes of control of social and political structures (1983, p. 701).

Yet if front-line state workers are under increasing control and pressure from above, this may encourage a more overtly political response amongst welfare professionals, e.g., militant trade unionism, campaigns against cuts, which links workers' interests with interests of working-class clientele, etc. Although class position may be objectively identifiable, the implications of this position are not straightforward, as there is an interactive relationship between people's objective position in the class structure and their consciousness and action.

Professional power is not an abstract entity, existing as it does within a specific historical context. Any examination of the power modern professions hold in relation to the general public must therefore be analyzed with reference to the political, economic, and ideological forces which con-

struct the framework for its exercise. This is crucial to understanding the conditions for indetermination which Johnson has emphasized. As has been suggested, for social work the key issue is the connection between the profession and the state. We will outline in the following chapters the significant changes that have taken place in the organization of social work in Britain over the last decade. Specifically, we will examine how the Seebohm reorganization, which was initiated by a Labour administration in the early 1970s, created new social service departments in local authorities and sanctioned their expansion in both size and mandate. Consistent with the more general growth of the "welfare state" in Britain during this period, such expansion reflected the social-democratic consensus that "social problems" could be resolved by the state through a program of increased expenditure on social services which were to be managed and staffed by experts in the social welfare field. This close profession-state alliance provided a context within which the social work "profession" flourished.

This changed, however, under the Thatcher government; both the desirability and effectiveness of welfare professionals has been subject to increasing skepticism from several quarters. In Johnson's model, the "conditions for indetermination" available to welfare professions such as social work were under attack by the Thatcher regime. For Parton (1981), following Hall (1978, 1979), this shift is charac-

teristic of the rise of the New Right and its successful establishment of a new hegemony. It is clear, however, that the Thatcher administration did signal a change in the relations between the welfare professions and the state: social work, in particular, is viewed with suspicion by the Thatcher regime.

Professionalization and social work

What is the impact on social work labour processes of the process of professionalization? Within the analysis of Johnson (1972), the process of professionalization is seen to be essentially a political one whereby some elite segment of society is persuaded that there is some special value to the profession's work. Hamilton contends that aspiring professions must convince those with power that it will be to their mutual advantage to bestow the title of profession upon them. He considers social work's ambitions in this light and argues that to be a professional is to "clearly identify with the standards and values of the status quo" (Hamilton, 1974, p. 337). Wilding, too, illustrates how welfare professionals have defined problems so that they are resolvable within the existing order and make claims to expertise that constitutes a form of political domination (Wilding, 1982, p. 17). Simpkin takes this analysis further, rejecting increasing professionalism as a strategy for social workers to defend against their eroding status, as it separates and divides them from

other workers and clients with whom alliances must be formed as a basis for any real social change (Simpkin, 1979).

N. Parry and J. Parry argue that the rise of unionism following the 1974 reorganization of local government was one of the factors which countered the drive for professionalism in social work (Parry and Parry, 1979). Such analyses of the process of professionalization bring into question the nature of the autonomy that is generally regarded as an element integral to social work practice. The relationship of autonomy and control thus must be viewed as a dynamic one, subject to tensions experienced by both social workers and management. As suggested earlier, using Johnson's (1977b) model a rightward shift in ideological terrain can be seen as an erosion of the "conditions for indetermination" of welfare professions.

If professionalization is a political process, the degree of professional autonomy will be largely shaped through interaction with the state. This is particularly relevant to social work, which is highly dependent on the state for its organization and status. At its present stage of development, social work relies on the state for its enlarged institutional base and public-funding support. As Johnson (1972) notes, such professions are governed by state-constituted definitions of need and service response. Social work has directed many of its goals and methods of intervention to managing the social problems defined and prioritized by the

state (i.e., delinquency, child abuse, etc.). Lesemann (1977b) argues that in the context of the present economic crisis, the state's efforts to control social work through hierarchical organizations and administrative/bureaucratic procedures can be seen as an effort to control and manage an expanding client population. Yet it is difficult to see this control as linear and absolute.

If, as Johnson's analysis suggests, a dialectic between autonomy and control exists, the nature of this interactive relationship in social work practice then requires further examination. This can be pursued through an analysis of the notion of professional autonomy within social work. Claims to professional autonomy are most clearly associated with the casework model of social work practice.

Professional autonomy and the casework model

N. Parry and J. Parry analyze how the casework model was used since the early 1950s by the social work elite as a unifying ideology in an attempt to establish a professional mode of occupational control. Yet the development of social work in capitalist societies under state auspices has seen an organizational model which is a hybrid mixture of elements of both professionalism and bureaucratic hierarchies, which they term "bureau-professionalism" (Parry and Parry, 1979, p. 43). Inherent to this mixture, they suggest, are certain tensions. Thus, the issue of professional autonomy is rather

complex in social work. Some of the themes surrounding this issue, its association with the casework model, its ideological force, the organizational constraints on autonomy, and contradictions of professional autonomy therefore need to be addressed here. The related concrete initiatives of the British Association of Social Workers are outlined in chapter four.

The therapeutic casework model has long been claimed as the basis of social work's expertise and its justification for professional status and autonomy. Not surprisingly, it is that social work method which finds greatest similarity to the well-established medical profession and its model of intervention. Its reaffirmation as the sole form of professional social work intervention is perhaps not surprising during a period when the profession is feeling under attack. Although the method itself does not necessarily engender unequal power relations, critics argue that in the context of statutory regulations, hierarchical social service establishments and diminishing service resources, it can serve to do so (Davies and Thomson, 1983).

The professional casework model contains many weaknesses and contradictions. Professional social work is still held up as a useful means of addressing social problems such as delinquency, child abuse, etc. There is an implicit assumption here that such problems can be resolved within the existing social order; yet this assumption exists side by side

with an unavoidable awareness of the structural determinants which produce such social problems and of the class background of social work's clientele. In social work practice, "social" problems become individual problems and those "afflicted" are thought to be amenable to case-based "treatment." As Simpkin (1979) points out, the success of the reform is seen to depend on the competence of those carrying it out, while the viability of the reforming activity itself is left unquestioned. The overriding desire to firmly establish professional status leads social work to promote and accept such a mandate. To counter it seems to beg the question of the utility of social work at all within a social-democratic framework, and particularly during a period of ideological attack from the right. Professionals justify demands for such autonomy by reference to their "expertise." Such expertise, particularly in the case of social work, is not simply a technical commodity and cannot be abstracted from the cultural and political context in which it is operating. Adler and Asquith point out that the process of professional socialization "through training, apprenticeship, and professional acculturation," in conjunction with the exercise of discretionary decision making, enables such professions to "foster and sustain their own versions of social reality and their own conceptions of the social order" (Adler and Asquith, 1981, p. 27). The debate on professional autonomy is complicated by contradictory ideologies which are

in current circulation, identified by Wilding, one that professions should be free to get on with their work, guided by an "ethic of service" and sense of professional responsibility, and the other that professions ought to be accountable to a society that supports them and whose resources they use (Wilding, 1982, p. 127).

Professional autonomy, according to Wilding, is generally defended on three grounds:

- 1) reality argument--professional work is difficult if not impossible to adequately supervise;
- 2) expert argument--such work is so esoteric that only other professionals can understand and assess it;
- 3) argument of principle--professions should be "free" so they cannot be used as instruments of coercion by the state (Wilding, 1982, p. 118).

The first argument does not apply to social work in that supervision is an accepted and integral part of "professional development." As regards the second argument, the validity of "social work expertise" as a basis for granting discretionary powers has recently been subject to question and doubt, particularly in the area of protection of children and parental rights. In terms of the third argument, social work as a profession directly employed by the state to carry out state social policies has difficulty in a stance that seeks to maintain territorial distance from the state and complete autonomy of professional practice.

Social workers are not deaf to the increasing calls for professional accountability. Within the profession itself,

however, there is a lack of clarity concerning issues of autonomy. Glastonbury suggests that there are currently two views. One states that social workers, with their clients, should have control both over decisions they take and resources to carry them out. Going with such autonomy would be the acceptance of the accountability for such decisions. The other view concedes that some autonomy over decisions and resources must be sacrificed in order that the agency, rather than the individual social worker, should take responsibility for services offered and not offered (e.g., rationing of services is not the responsibility of social workers) (1980, p. 23). This latter view suggests the tensions and constraints associated with the bureaucratic organization of welfare. Social workers do not operate as independent professionals with unfettered discretionary powers; rather, they are bound by a variety of organizational and structural constraints which limit their discretion. They are thus subject to direction by administrative superiors and policies and procedures of the social service department.

Social workers' exercise of discretion

Despite these constraints on "unfettered autonomous practice," much social work practice may still be considered as highly discretionary. Further clarification of this term may be useful.

Types of Discretion

Dworkin (1977, p. 32) distinguishes at least three meanings to discretion:

1. weak sense of the word, where someone has to use his judgment but is bound by the standards laid down by higher authority;
2. weak discretion -- person has final authoritative interpretation of rules but may not have a choice; and
3. discretion in strong sense when someone is simply not bound by standards set by the authority in question.

Both (1) and (2) above may be part of the social work role in local authorities. "Interpretation" of rules certainly seems applicable to social work functions, given the vagueness of goals and guidelines to practice (see chapter four), yet such interpretation takes place within standards set by local authorities and national government.

Gilbert Smith (1981) rejects any attempts to define a priori the different possible meanings of discretion and any a priori assumption that discretion is a good or bad thing. He stresses that the meaning of discretion "can only be understood by studying its use in specific contexts since the language of discretion can only be understood in relation to the action of discretion." He thus calls for more empirical research examining how discretion is used by different groups in practice. Such research, by focussing on "operational philosophies" can analyze the assumptions which inform discretionary decision making.⁶

Since the objectives and aims of social work often are not and probably cannot be precisely defined and specified (e.g., promoting "welfare of the child, acting in the child's best interest"), how are these notions operationalized in practice? To analyze this, Smith (1981) states that it is necessary to link the exercise of discretion with the operational ideologies of those involved. It is therefore important to understand the subjective meaning welfare workers assign different phenomena in order to comprehend what role such workers play in constructing their task. Even in situations where action is meant to be guided by more specific "rules" (guidelines, procedures, legislation), the "meaning of the rule is equally determined by the situated actions which are deemed to constitute that rule" (Smith, 1981, p. 62).

Smith (1981) shows that several studies on social work practice have shown that social workers actively contribute to the interpretation of legal regulations, procedures, etc. The issue of social work autonomy/discretion becomes more problematic in this view because although there is clearly room for "discretion," the substance of the discretion may be moulded and shaped by such operational ideologies. Smith (1981) further suggests that many decisions thought to be at the discretion of the individual practitioner may in fact be highly predictable and even predetermined. Rees, in his study of social work in Scotland noted, "despite wide terms

of some legislation, social workers were concerned to parcel their responsibilities in ways which conformed to familiar practice and some traditional professional ideas" (Rees, 1978, p. 52).

"In spite of the central position of discretion in the imagery of professional social work ..." Smith states, "a growing body of evidence suggests that social workers are probably behaving in ways which are very much more highly routinized than is generally acknowledged certainly by social workers themselves" (1981, p. 52). He identifies several grounds for this belief derived from empirical research: for example, discretionary decisions that elicit dispute and/or are questioned by "outsiders" are justified by reference to their routine or usual nature ("only a matter of routine"). Another indicator of the routinized discretion he identifies is the extensive reliance on files and recorded information which precede or substitute for face-to-face interaction with clients. He questions the claim that the exercise of discretion in social welfare takes place on the face-to-face level between individuals, noting that many decisions in social work occur when the client is not with the social worker and may be crucial in terms of the clients' "organizational career" (e.g., allocation, case conferences, case closure, social inquiry reports). Such decisions rely heavily on recorded information. But such information must be packaged to fit agency forms and procedures for recording,

i.e., predetermined categories of "problems" or "needs" such as "marital" or "financial," or "no further action," etc. The framework for the exercise of professional discretion is thus constructed through such forms and categories and social workers are socialized to rely on the use of common labels and short-hand terms. "Indeed, such routine recognition and the action and influence proceeding from it is the mark of a competent worker" (Zimmerman, 1969, p. 354). The tendency to categorize and routinize their work is strengthened, Smith believes, by the phenomenon of "bombardment." The agency must ensure the continuous flow of clients through the system and "... routine roles, standard categories, and automatic procedures are simpler, smoother, and generally much more efficient at ensuring the continuous flow of clients through several stages of an agency ...". Smith likens this process to that of continuous production in an industrial setting. A further paradox suggested by him is that "those who are thought to occupy discretionary positions ... may well not whereas those who are thought to occupy more mundane positions ... may in practice effect a discretionary service" (Smith, 1981, p. 58). Receptionists, clerks, etc., may exercise discretion within apparently routine clerical and administrative functions, e.g., defending or overloading professionals through their gate-keeping function. If this is an accurate reflection of how social work discretion is in practice operationalized, individual workers participate in it to

the extent that they share the professional ideologies and adopt dominant operational philosophies in the process of learning to behave as a social worker.

It is the existence of this "discretion" which confuses the issue of personal accountability and responsibility social workers feel for events concerning their individual clients. When things go wrong, it is the individual practitioner who carries the weight of the blame despite the reality that many tragic situations can neither be predicted nor prevented. If social workers had no discretion, they would neither feel nor could be made to feel responsible in these situations. Smith then advocates a questioning of the whole area of professional discretion or autonomy. He lays stress on empirical specification and corroboration as to the existence of such discretion and how it may be exercised. This confirms the direction this research has followed in the attempt to test out Braverman's theory on a specific group of state workers.

These issues reflect a complex reality of state social work. The question of autonomy and control cannot be seen as a static or linear relationship where varying amounts of one or the other can be measured or said to objectively exist within the profession or at different levels of the hierarchy. Rather, the labour process of social workers must be understood as subject not only to administrative/bureaucratic control but also simultaneously composed of professional pro-

cesses within social service departments. We see both elements struggling for dominance, but neither achieves complete hegemony. This complexity is belied by the proletarianization thesis of Braverman (1974), which would posit the inexorable and inevitable evolution of management control over state workers and a resultant deskilling of social work personnel. Similarly, the ideological determinism of Hall and Parton does not credit the power of counter-ideologies. Social-work ideology and practice, though, poses its own set of problems. Although much ambiguity and confusion characterizes such professional ideology, its force is apparent within welfare practice. We will briefly examine the relationship of social-work ideologies to the problematic of discretion or autonomy within labour processes which we have been considering.

Professional ideology supervision and indirect control

Smith (1977) offers another viewpoint on the issue of control versus autonomy in his emphasis on elements of professional ideology which are transmitted through highly valued training and supervision and other means of socialization; these, he argues, exert their own control, acting as an indirect means of eliciting social workers' compliance to organizational norms. Professional ideologies thus represent an internalized ideological control of labour processes. Such hegemonic control is distinguished from technical and administrative control, which are external to the worker.

A large part of the task of ensuring adherence to organizational policies and procedures falls, in social work, to supervisors who contribute to the socialization of junior workers. This could be viewed as an activity which is intrusive and as potentially limiting the discretion of front-line social workers. Supervision

... is characteristically exercised by a senior professional holding some organizational accountability for the work of the supervisee by means of discussions focused on situations with which the latter is currently involved. It is thus a professional function carried out by people with some managerial authority (supervisors are clearly involved in prescribing work and seeing that it is done) (Mapstone, 1978, p. 78).

Yet the role of supervision in social work is not straightforward in that it combines an uneasy combination of educational, supportive, and administrative functions. The way social workers experience supervision may support the presence of such indirect forms of control of social service practice, which operate in conjunction with that exercised by the formal authority of managers. Supervisors and most social service managers are social workers by education and previous experience, and this professional status contributes to their legitimacy. Research indicates that workers often do not seem to experience their direct management/worker relationship as coercive (Davies and Thomson, 1983; DHSS, 1978b; Lalonde-Gendreau & Renfret-Raynor, 1982). Rather, supervision seems a pivotal point of contact between various organizational levels and the point where administrative and clini-

cal issues are merged in the construction of social work practice.

Payne (1979) states that supervision in social work is predominantly individualized and serves a dual agenda. He makes a distinction between "developmental supervision," designed to advance the personal professional development of the social worker, and "administrative supervision," which ensures adherence to policies and procedures of the organization. Although these may be analytically distinct, in practice the two agendas intertwine and overlap. This adds to the confusion about the degree and area of discretion of the individual social worker.

But it seems clear, however, that supervision is not simply an unequivocal means of control over front-line practitioners, as the proletarianization thesis would suggest. Further, research (Hey and Rowbottom, 1971; Lalonde-Gendreau and Renfret-Raynor, 1982) has suggested that some social workers wanted more rather than less supervision and complained that not enough guidance was forthcoming from supervisors. This expressed need for more direction perhaps reflects the ambiguity and confusion which attends much social work practice or, in Pearson's terms (in Jones, 1975), the moral and political dilemmas with which social workers are confronted. These dilemmas are exacerbated by the existence of various contradictory ideologies which surround social work practice. The area of child welfare practice, for exam-

ple, is one which is riven with contradictory ideologies. These reflect debates carried on in the larger society, which continue unresolved. This adds to the confusion and lack of clear guidance and direction for social workers in carrying out their practice and exercising discretion.

Contradictory ideologies of social welfare intervention: the justice versus welfare debate as one example

The 1969 Children and Young Persons Act contains a striking example of contradictory ideologies toward children, represented in the "justice versus welfare" debate. Two contradictory themes permeate welfare practice with children, that of "justice" versus that of "welfare." These contradictory principles were institutionalized in the Children and Young Persons Act of 1969, which was partially implemented in 1971. (A review of legislation, including this Act, pertinent to child welfare practice is contained in Chapter Four.) Although the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act is primarily of significance in relation to juvenile delinquency, the dispute between the justice and welfare models of practice (care versus control) have broader implications for social work practice, including child abuse, for example in the approach to parents whose children are thought to be at risk of abuse or neglect, and therefore a discussion of the contradictions expressed in this Act is warranted.

The contradictions of the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act

This legislation was the product of a protracted debate between adherents of two contradictory approaches to juvenile delinquency which reached a peak during the 1960s in Britain.

The "welfare" treatment model views the causes of delinquent behaviour as linked to deprivation and deficiencies both within families and in the larger society. Advocates of this model argue that distinctions between offenders and non-offenders are artificial; punitive interventions are therefore inappropriate; rather, the objective of intervention should be rehabilitation through treatment. On the other hand, those who support the "justice" model seek to establish or re-establish a distinction between the "deprived" and the "depraved" in the belief that the idea of criminal justice and welfare are not compatible (Morris et al., 1981, p. 14). This approach favours a traditional idea of natural justice based on notions of individual responsibility and punishment. The "justice" model has adherents from both left- and right-wing camps. Right-wing supporters are concerned with the protection of the public, which they believe requires punishment-oriented disposals and custodial sentences. Supporters of the justice model on the left are interested in protecting children's legal rights, which they feel are violated in the welfare response to juvenile delinquency. "Treatment" is perceived as at best useless and at worst actively harmful to young offenders.

Two opposing pictures of the young offender emerged in these debates. One, in line with the welfare model, sees him as a "dependent victim of circumstance whose offence was a cry for help and who therefore needed care and treatment," while the other, tied to a traditional justice model, sees him as "a miniature adult with free will and a keen sense of 'right and wrong' and natural 'justice' which must be protected by due process of law and if necessary dealt with by control and discipline" (Packman, 1981. p. 111).

In their most progressive forms both models give some credence to structural causation of juvenile delinquency. In practice, however, the production of juvenile justice operates within an individualistic framework which negates an approach based on a structural analysis of juvenile crime. Young offenders are processed one by one and the boundaries of the debate are such that the dispute is to what degree individual dispositions should incorporate therapeutic or justice measures.

Both the content of the 1969 legislation and the nature of its application reflect these disagreements. It can be argued that the least progressive aspects of both models presently surround the practice of welfare with juveniles in Britain today. The 1969 Act has been described as "unbalanced and contradictory due to the force of two ideological positions contained in it" (Parker et al., 1981, p. 3).

Weakness of both the justice and welfare models

In its pure form the justice model is concerned with simply establishing individual guilt or innocence followed by suitable dispositions. As such, it locates itself directly within what has been described by Bolger et al. (1981) as a long tradition of individualized and coercive regulation of one class by another. In its more progressive version, the justice model advances some valid criticisms of the coercive nature of the "welfare" approach and recommends safeguards for the legal rights of children (i.e., least restrictive and determinate sentences, proportionality of sanctions, etc.). The Justice for Children lobby maintains that the welfare model personalizes and medicalizes delinquent behaviour, which obscures political and economic realities. These criticisms could be applied to child abuse and many other social work concerns. The object is to adjust the individual, not to promote change on a wider level. In its present form, these criticisms of the welfare model have merit. However, the potential of the justice model to promote fundamental social change is quite dubious given its individualistic framework. The justice model in practice implicitly accepts the individualization of social problems as offenders are dealt with one by one in the judicial process. This framework denies the possibility of any action that addresses the fact of common class backgrounds between those who carry out the "justice" process and those who are processed. Attention

to the structural roots of juvenile delinquency or child abuse or neglect, i.e., bad housing, poor schools, financial problems, lack of opportunity for acceptable achievements, etc., is absent. As a progressive force the Justice for Children lobby is thought to have serious limitations (Bolger et al., 1981).

The welfare model at present is also a very weak force for social change. It can, in fact, be seen as an incursive means of "normalizing" elements disruptive to the status quo. The therapeutic rationale is necessary in ideological terms if attention is to continue to be directed to the family as the source of the problem. Yet the welfare model perhaps has more potential to develop and incorporate a structural analysis in an intervention strategy. Its present articulation is weak and confused and lacking a strong political base. It may, however, contain the seeds to an alternative conception of promoting "welfare" around which an alternate strategy of intervention could be developed. The potential of the welfare model has, however, been dealt a serious blow with the developments in the area of statutory work with child abuse, as will be seen later. This has also weakened the claims of social work for professional status and autonomy.

Contradictory nature of welfare labour processes

Professional ideology and the indirect forms of control it supports, may limit and restrict social workers' analysis

and action in organizational struggles, much as it often restricts intervention with clients to individual adjustment and "coping." Yet the existence of contradictory ideologies and debates, both within welfare practice and in the larger context, does indicate that an element of uncertainty or discretion exists which allows a certain margin of manoeuvre in labour processes. As we discussed earlier, welfare-state institutions are often regarded with ambivalence by those who use them, which perhaps reflects the contradictory tendencies embodied within such institutions to both enhance and negate welfare. Bolger et al. (1981) take the position that welfare services are arguably the outcome of working-class pressure, but at the same time such services are not controlled by them. This contradiction, they argue, is the source of tension and conflict within welfare state institutions. Moreover, the practice of state social work itself is inherently contradictory, as it embodies both care and control aspects. These conditions for welfare practice suggest, then, that social workers cannot be simplistically described as ideological agents of social control--"soft cops," as some radical critics would have it. This view reduces social work practice to a coercive ideological activity devoid of useful skills or expertise and incapable of benefitting anyone who has the misfortune to experience it. As we have seen, an alternative but related analysis focuses on the organizational context within which social work is practiced and argues

that social work practitioners are becoming increasingly "proletarianized" through the trend toward increased managerial and administrative control systems in the context of ever-shrinking resources. Yet the logical extension of this view sees social workers themselves as mere technicians whose practice is determined by a centralized and alien management.

Both these views seem to be inaccurate descriptions of the realities of social work practice, which is neither simply ideological, i.e., social workers as agents of a monolithic state which advances ruling-class interests; nor is social work practice adequately described as subject to a Braverman-type analysis of ever-increasing managerial control and subsequent deskilling of practitioners. While these perspectives may have some resonance within the current organization and practice of social work, it is my view that they are over-deterministic in relation to welfare practitioners. Johnson's (1972, 1977a, 1977b) analysis of social work profession subject to state mediation and the use of technicality/indetermination ratio has the merit of allowing us to theoretically capture the interactive relationship between autonomy and control which perhaps more accurately characterizes state social work in Britain.

ENDNOTES

- 1 There are numerous theorists who are now working in the area Braverman was concerned with. The interest in the labour process debate sparked several academic conferences (for example, "Organization and Control of the Labour Process, Braverman and Beyond," sponsored by the Aston-UMIST Management Departments, March, 1983).

As Tony Elger states, Braverman's central position in this area is beyond doubt.

The Marxist analysis of the capitalist labour process is a relatively recent but increasingly significant aspect of the general renewal and development of Marxist analysis of contemporary capitalism. Braverman's Labour and Monopoly Capital has been one of the most influential contributions to this development and remains the fullest restatement to date of some of the fundamental themes of such an analysis. His work has served as both point of reference and inspiration for many current analyses of the transformation undergone by the labour process, the changing structure of employment and class composition, and the sources of wage labour in the era of "monopoly capitalism." Indeed Braverman's eloquent contribution is reminiscent of that of his mentors, Baran and Sweezy, in the manner in which it has confronted some of the major orthodoxies of bourgeois social science and provided a focus for debate of issues which should be central to Marxist theory. ("Valorization and 'Deskilling': A Critique of Braverman," Capital and Class, Spring 1979.)

- 2 Metcalf & Richardson note that the service sector now accounts for well over half of the employment in the country. The U.K. Economy. A Manual of Applied Economics. Sixth edition. A.R. Prest & D.J. Coppock (editors). London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976, p. 243.

- 3 The following are exceptions to this: Paul Davis, "The Organization of State Social Work: Skill, Professionalization and Management Control." M.A. Thesis, University of Warwick, September 1979; and Nick Frost, "Working for the State: The Determinants of the Social Work Labour Process." M.A. Thesis, University of Warwick, September 1977.

4 Littler has analyzed the relationship of Taylorism to bureaucracy, and concludes that "Taylorism represents the bureaucratization of the structure of control, but not the employment relationship." For a more detailed discussion, see Craig Littler, "Understanding Taylorism," British Journal of Sociology 29 (2) (June 1978).

5 Edwards, in Contested Terrain (1979), outlines three types of control systems:

Simple control: Simple control was the predominant method in small nineteenth-century business and may persist today. A single entrepreneur or small number of foremen and managers run the firm directly and personally. (In these businesses, power was exercised often in an arbitrary and unsystematic form. Substantial competition in products markets precluded the possibility of investing resources and energy into more sophisticated management structures. By the end of the nineteenth century greater concentration of economic resources began to undermine simple control. The need for coordination and greater planning accompanied the new scale of production and complexity of the product.)

Structural control: Structural forms of control include systems embedded either in the physical structure of the labour process (technical control) or in the social structure (bureaucratic control).

Technical control: In technical control systems, machinery itself directs the labour process and sets the pace of production. This method of work organization attempts to reduce workers to attendants of prepaced machinery. However, this system also offers the possibility of collective worker opposition to capitalist control through sit-downs and strikes.

6 Smith makes the following distinction between "ideologies" and "operational philosophies": "Ideology -- usefully confined to sets of ideas expressed at relatively highly abstract level; 'operational philosophies' are, on the other hand, more concrete 'working' arrangements and are operationally situated. Operational philosophies guide action in situations but are then subject to 'situated accounts' which render intelligible otherwise meaningless situations." ("The Place of Professional Ideology in the Analysis of Social Policy," Social Review 25:4 [1977]: 843-865.)

CHAPTER THREE

RECENT HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ORGANIZATION OF STATE SOCIAL WORK FROM A POLITICAL ECONOMY PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will continue to use the theoretical framework suggested by the approach of Braverman and Hall and Parton to analyze specific changes in the British welfare state in a particular period. We will assess the extent to which these theoretical tools deepen our understanding of the political, economic, and ideological contexts of the organizations in which state welfare labour processes occur.

Following Braverman's theory requires an examination of the political economy of Britain in this period (1960 to 1980) in order to situate state welfare organizations within a political economy perspective. We thus begin by highlighting the salient elements of the crisis and restructuring of British capital during this period. From here, corresponding changes in the state are examined which have been similarly described as a process of restructuring. The consequence of these processes for local government organization and management are then described through an examination of the corpo-

rate management model, which was introduced to local authorities at this time. The specific implications of corporate management for control over state labour processes are examined. A political economy perspective also necessitates an examination of the attack on welfare spending which began in the mid-1970s.

In addition to the Braverman perspective, we need to focus in this chapter on the rightward shift in the ideological climate as posited by Stuart Hall. Hall's thesis requires us to examine his theory of hegemony in practice. We therefore discuss the rise of the New Right in Britain and assess the impact of this on welfare policies and practices. Within this optic, we devote attention to Parton's application of Hall's thesis to a specific moral panic around child abuse in Britain beginning in the mid-seventies.

The chapter concludes with an overall negative assessment of the explanatory usefulness of these theoretical approaches in understanding the organizational context for welfare practice and illuminating specific state labour processes.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING

Crisis and restructuring of British capital

What was the nature of the crisis in British capital during this period which prompted what has been termed a "restructuring of capital"? What did this process of "restructuring" entail?

A serious decline in the British industrial economy, relative to the world economy was quite apparent by the 1960's, although the process is said to have begun much earlier (Gamble, 1982). Indeed, Hobsbawm (1965) traces the problem facing British capital in the 1960s and 1970s to its historic position as first industrialized capitalist nation whose economic infrastructure was intimately connected with and dependent upon the vast British empire of colonies. The collapse of this empire, coupled with the rise in economic power of foreign competitors such as the United States and Japan, are crucial factors underlined as contributing to the "crisis of British capital."

The crisis revolved around the declining profitability of the industrial sector of the British economy. The lack of reinvestment in the industrial base was reflected in the slowing down of the growth rate in the GNP in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with an actual drop in the 1970s. British capital instead was investing in the financial sector, but this investment, as opposed to industrial investment, is international in nature and easily shifted about the world as profitability dictates. Finance capital is therefore not necessarily beneficial to Britain itself, as multinational finance is not governed by national allegiances. Carter (1985) states that the interests of finance capital in Britain have tended to supercede the interests of other capitalist sectors:

Based upon Britain's historic importance in the sphere of world trade and the role of sterling as a reserve currency, financial capital and its representatives in the Treasury and Bank of England tended to be dominant in any conflict with the interests of industrial capital (Carter, 1985, p. 130).

However, the political commitment following World War II to maintain full employment in Britain provided the ground for a renewed struggle between different capitalist sectors. Full employment required domestic expansion. As Carter explains, "As domestic expansion sucked in imports and widened the balance of payments deficit, pressures mounted upon the government to deflate the economy. The result of these competing pressures for full employment and a strong pound was Britain's 'stop-go' cycle" (Carter, 1985, p. 130).

Jessop summarizes the effect of this Keynesian-inspired policy:

... the policies intended to maintain the position of sterling discouraged and distorted industrial investment through high interest rates to attract foreign funds and prevent the flight of "hot money," restrictions on investment outside the sterling area ... and recurrent bouts of deflation to restrain home demand and "free" resources for export production also inhibited industrial growth due to resulting high "unproductive" state expenditure on the military sector--especially in comparison with Japan and Britain's competitors in Europe. At the same time, the reflationary measures intended to restore full employment after each "stop" phase tended to prevent the onset of economic crisis which could have precipitated the restructuring of industrial capital in the interests of more streamlined and profitable production (Jessop, 1980, p. 32).

The post-World War II world economic boom masked the full extent of the crisis of profitability in British manu-

facturing industry. Yet by the 1960s this trend was clearly apparent (Carter, 1985, p. 131). As the industrial base began to weaken, it was believed that a "restructuring of capital" was necessary. The objective was to streamline the economy -- to rid Britain of unprofitable enterprises or "lame ducks."

Bolger et al. (1981) concur that restructuring of capital became necessary when the growth rate and investment in British industry began to decline noticeably in relation to other capitalist economies, producing a profitability crisis for British capital. The search for better profit opportunities led to a flow of capital abroad, while the increasing dominance of foreign competition created a deepening crisis in Britain by the mid-1970s. It was at this point that British capital underwent a major restructuring, involving a shift in capital concentration from manufacturing to finance, plus take-overs and increased monopolization and rationalization in the manufacturing sector. This led to mass redundancies, escalating unemployment, and sudden disintegration of whole areas as capital moved out.

The process of restructuring was effected through take-overs of weaker firms and mergers, thus creating larger and more concentrated industries with more centralized and distant decision-making. Restructuring of industrial capital also resulted in a process of rationalization and redundancies which affected not only individual workers but whole communities and regions.

British industrial capital was not alone in efforts to rejuvenate the industrial base. From the early 1970s, the state was actually involved in trying to do something about the difficulties facing capital. Changes in the organization of state structures are thus linked to the problems faced by British capitalism.

In particular, the effects of this crisis for capital had important ramifications for the structure and organization of local authorities.

Restructuring of the state

As discussed in the previous chapter, several theorists have argued (Gough, 1979; Cockburn, 1977; Bolger et al., 1981) that a process of restructuring of the state began in the early 1970s which complemented the new organization of industrial capital. This process involved a reorganization aimed at "modernizing" state administrative structures, creating bigger and more centralized local authorities. In 1971, the Local Government Act and the subsequent 1972 structural reforms created larger units of government in order, it was claimed, to achieve "efficiency, economies of scale, functional effectiveness, and an adequate capacity to plan and organize" (Carter, 1985, p. 137). These reforms of local government were promoted as an administrative reorganization, a neutral rationalization of a system that needed to be brought up to date. But, as Carter suggests, these aims are

not neutral. "A dual process of transition has occurred in local government: both its importance to capital has increased and its internal relations have become more polarized ..." (Carter, 1985, p. 137). This theme of centralizing and strengthening management control was also reflected in several other reports of bodies appointed by the central government to study similar aspects of government functioning. It is argued that this phenomenon represents a "restructuring" of the state, which was necessary to complement the restructuring of British capital in the same period.

Bolger et al. (1981) argue that part of the rationale for this process, which was initiated under the auspices of a Labour government, was the assumption that large and powerful state organizations were necessary to deal with larger units and organization of capital. Since these organizations would be controlled by Labour politicians, it was felt that this would strengthen and thus could benefit the labour movement.

Benington points out, "local government reorganization made it possible for bigger firms whose interests cut across local authority boundaries (the motor industry in the West Midlands, for example) to 'reconcile' their forward plans and negotiate their needs for land, planning permissions, and roads over a wider metropolitan area of government" (1976, p. 11). An important aspect of the "modernization of the state" was the reliance and faith put into expertise and scientific methods of planning, which is consistent with the

social-democratic context in which these changes were occurring.

The introduction of corporate management to British local state structures

These trends were apparent in the adoption of a "corporate management" model introduced into local authorities in the early 1970s. This management model enabled the state to regulate economic activity in a more direct manner through a centralization of decision-making power. The aura of scientific credibility encouraged an approach to social and economic planning which belied the political nature of such decision making and instead treated these as administrative or technical difficulties which could be resolved by policy experts. It is thought that this seriously reduced the power of elected officials who could be held accountable to the local population.

The corporate management model, according to Bolger et al. (1981), was first developed within the private sector in the U.S., and was subsequently adopted by sections of British capital in the early 1960s.

The basic proposition of corporate management identified by Benington is that "local government can no longer be treated merely as a series of separate services set up to fulfill various statutory duties. Instead, in order to tackle complex community problems, local government must be organized and managed as a whole" (1976, p. 12).

This model of local government functioning is likened to that of major capitalist enterprises. Several councils employed private management consultants, all of whom share common assumptions. The consultants' recommendations had, according to Benington, these common characteristics:

1. The creation of a Policy and Resources Committee (consisting of the Chairman of the major service committees or other senior elected members) to provide coordinated advice to the Council in the setting of its plans, objectives, and priorities.
2. The appointment of a Chief Executive to act as leader of the officers of the local authority and principal adviser to the Council on matters of general policy.
3. The setting up of a management system usually based directly or indirectly upon the American concept of PPBS (Planning, Programming and Budgeting Systems). The PPBS approach sets objectives, plans, and programs to try to meet those objectives, and develops a budget which attempts to measure outputs as well as inputs (Benington, 1976, p. 12).

The corporate management philosophy and model were ratified by the Bains Committee report on the New Local Authorities: Management and Structure (HMSO 1972). These views and assumptions were also shared and reflected in other official government reports at the time (Maud, HMSO, 1967; Redcliffe, HMSO, 1969) which reported on managerial methods most appro-

priate to local government. As Carter states, these reports conveyed a common message of integration, control from the top, more efficient use of money and labour, and forward planning (Carter, 1985). Benington notes that a survey of local governments in the early 1970s indicated widespread adoption of the corporate management model which instituted centralized and hierarchical management control within local authorities (1976, p. 12).

This centralization of decision making, coupled with the reliance on management experts, shifted power away from the bottom layers in local government structures. This shift was reflected in the increasing importance of policy advisory committees. Benington states:

Current organizational developments thus may tend to harden the division between policy-making and implementation--between those who are incorporated into the "management" part of the pyramid and those whose work brings them into contact with the outside world (Benington, 1976, p. 15).

In the larger political picture, the structural centralization represents a shift in power not only within local authorities, but also shifts the power balance between local and central government, with the local state increasingly subservient to Whitehall. Thus, management models and techniques which were identified with progress and success in industry were eagerly received by state managers. The application of corporate management methods was regarded as a sign of sophistication and maturity. Foren and Brown likened the

new large-scale local authority social service departments to "big business" and warned that local authority administrators "will need therefore to study the techniques which big business firms have found it necessary to adopt and be prepared to be influenced by principles of management theory" (1971, p. 53). Similarly, Kogan and Terry call for the need to "pay heed to efficiency output, budgeting, economy, clarity of organization, and other management virtues ..." (Terry, 1971, p. 7).

The significance for my research question of this centralizing tendency, reflected in the introduction of corporate management, is the assessment of its possible effect on control over the labour process of social workers. If one of the objectives of such a management model is to maintain centralized management control over the organizations' operations, this may in turn reduce the discretion of front-line workers. The emphasis on cost-efficiency and cost accountability may also encourage scrutiny of worker tasks and functions within this narrow economic context. It has thus been argued that welfare practice is increasingly prescribed by management through bureaucratic controls and routines. Moreover, rationalization and speed-ups of the work process are also said to be occurring.

These changes in the organization of social work are thought to have resulted in an increased distance between those who actually carry out day-to-day practice and those

who are involved in the overall planning and conception of welfare services. This is consistent with a process and form of organization of work which Braverman (1974) has described in the private capitalist sector. Braverman's (1974) description of the effects of scientific management in the workplace may thus have some explanatory power in analyzing the effects of the "restructuring of the local state" on welfare practice.

Pressure on welfare expenditure

Another important element in the discussion of the political economy of welfare work in this period is the attack on public expenditure, which got underway in the mid-1970s, well after the corporate management model was in place.

Following World War II, concerted growth of the welfare state occurred in Britain. In particular, there was unprecedented growth in public spending on the personal social services, especially during the early 1970s, albeit from a very low base (Ferlie and Judge, 1981). But as the economic crisis made itself felt, by the mid-1970s, the expansion of the welfare state ended. At this time, public spending was being targetted as the source of Britain's economic problems. As Joyce et al. (1985) explain,

The theory of monetarism, which was gaining popular acceptance amongst economists and politicians, suggested that inflation and poor industrial performance were the result of complacent and lax control of the money supply by governments which borrowed excessively. The solution to Britain's economic

ills was seen increasingly as the reduction of the public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR).

A period of contraction and cutbacks, at least in relation to identified "need," was then begun. The exact figures on expenditures in this period are a matter of dispute, both politically and intellectually; further, the matter is also both economically and financially complicated. It is thus very difficult to confidently recount the actual form and nature of the cuts, or even if expenditure has actually fallen. Given this confusion, Joyce et al. (1985) have usefully addressed the question of how cutbacks should be defined. They ask, "is a cut only to be observed when real expenditure falls?" (p. 43). They draw attention to the different possibilities for implementing cuts by first describing the characteristics of a standstill, or no-cut, situation, identified by Webb and Wistow (1982). This, then, provides a basis for answering the question of whether cuts can occur even though real growth in expenditure may have taken place. These features are:

- 1) a constant volume of services of a standard quality;
- 2) changes in the cost of providing a standard quality of service are fully reflected as increases or decreases in the budget;
- 3) need remains constant;
- 4) services are provided free or at a charge which remains constant relative to other price changes;

5) non-financial constraints (e.g., controls over manpower) do not affect the production of a constant volume of a standard quality of service (Webb and Wistow, 1982, pp. 42-43).

Using this basis, Joyce et al. illustrate the different types of cuts that have been made, for example, in the area of home helps (documented by a NUPE Working Party Report.) These include reducing the standard of service by cutting the number of hours allocated to each case while the numbers of old people incapacitated and living alone was simultaneously rising; undermining the standard of a service through the use of untrained volunteers; and the introduction and/or increase of charges for service in many authorities. They conclude that a cut in service may be seen to have occurred even if real expenditure on the service may have increased. "Indeed, there may have been cuts even if the volume of service has stayed constant or even increased. An expansion in volume may be achieved by reducing the standard or by increasing charges on client groups ..." (1985, p. 43). This broad definition of a cut, Joyce et al. also note, is implicitly accepted by the government in its explanation and defence of certain cuts (Joyce et al., 1985, pp. 45-46).

The central state has used a variety of mechanisms to try to accomplish the objective of reducing the public sector borrowing requirement through increasing controls on local authority spending. Cuts in public spending and a cash lim-

its system which reduced supplements against inflation were introduced under the Labour government in the mid-1970s. Further cuts were imposed as part of the conditions of a 1976 International Monetary Fund loan, resorted to in order to shore up the falling pound (Joyce et al., 1985, p. 32). The 1979 Conservative victory ensured the continuation of the attack on public spending. Joyce et al. describe the various methods employed by the Conservatives; these include planned cuts, cash limits, privatization, and underspending by some local authorities.

What is the impact of these initiatives on local authority social service departments? Following Joyce et al.'s definition of the meaning of cuts, we can surmise that this attack has a bearing on welfare work both in terms of its organization and in terms of what resources workers have available to offer clients. As we have noted, there was a period of vast expenditure on the personal social services after the Seebohm reorganization in the late 1960s. The first half of the 1970s has been described as a "golden age for spending on the personal social services" (Ferlie and Judge, 1981, p. 313).

Welfare expenditure, which is related to need, is difficult to control, as the potential demand for resources is unlimited and certainly would be intensified in an economic crisis, as Britain was experiencing. The corporate management system, however, provides a means of central managerial

control over resources and is thus crucial to limit spending connected to need. Local authority social workers began to experience tremendous resource pressure from the latter half of the 1970s. In line with Joyce et al.'s explanation of cuts, such pressure is experienced despite the fact that this may not necessarily translate into actual figures. Demands on social services are increasing in a context of decreasing supports, and welfare workers are caught in the middle of this squeeze.

The severe pressure on expenditure in the public sector further was accompanied by an ideological attack on the welfare state itself. This is seen as part of a wider shift right in popular ideology which Thatcher has successfully grasped and manipulated. This heightens the climate of hostility for welfare work.

CHANGING IDEOLOGICAL CLIMATE

Rise of the New Right in Britain

Hall et al., in Policing the Crisis, attempt a periodization of the elements which have produced this shift toward "authoritarianism populism" currently thought to be dominant in Britain:

... The construction of consensus, as the condition for the post-war stabilisation of capitalism in the circumstances of the cold war; the establishment of a period of extensive hegemony in the 1950s; the disintegration of this "miracle" of spontaneous consent; the sterner, more troubled and unsteady attempt to put an essentially "labourist" variant

of consent together drawing on the social democratic repertoire; its exhaustion, coupled with the rise of social and political conflict, the deepening of the economic crisis and the resumption of more manifest forms of class struggle; the attempt to rely on a more exceptional form of class domination in the 1970s through the state (1978, p. 218).

Thatcher, in placing her party's policies in opposition to those of Labour, sought to address a similar working class population directly, "declaring herself on the side of the people against the bureaucracies of the trade unions, the nationalized industries, and the welfare state" (Gamble, 1983, p. 11).

Through this ideological campaign Thatcher tried to win support for monetarist economic policies wherein financial stabilization has been pursued without regard for the destructive social consequences. In a political-ideological dimension, the promotion of values of individualism and self-sufficiency meant ordinary people learned not to look to the state for help or support.

The New Right and welfare

Three key political and ideological areas of welfare have been identified as important ones for the Tories since 1979:

1. privatization--promoting use of private welfare provision, particularly for care of the elderly;
2. volunteerism--encouraging volunteers to fill the gaps in state provision; and

3. identifying the family as main provider of care, reinforcing dependency of women and restricting their opportunities (Stein, Frost, and Hayes, 1982, p. 48).

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is contended that the "lurch to the right" signalled the collapse of the social democratic consensus. "Economic decline and the repeated political failures to reverse it have steadily undermined the possibility of maintaining a social democratic state in Britain even as an objective of policy. The New Right grasped this earlier than anyone else" (Gamble, 1983). This collapse, it is thought, has had a real impact in policies and practices of the public social service. Social workers are said to be carrying out a rationing function in reducing demands on the state for services and resources by tightening up discretionary eligibility. In the field of child welfare, law-and-orderism is mirrored in the punitive "short sharp shock" approach to deterring delinquency.

The Tory approach to welfare work was foreshadowed by Sir Keith Joseph in a statement at a meeting in Cornwall in 1974. He is reported to have said "that socialism made excuses for the rise in crime, violence, and vandalism, particularly amongst the young, and too much confidence was placed in the corrective power of unproven social work" (Stein et al., 1982, p. 49). Parton (1985) has described the intention of Tory family policy is to make families independent and self-reliant and, in particular, to reduce the role of state welfare services. One of the recurrent themes advanced by

critics of the welfare state centres on the issue of discretionary power that professions such as social work are said to have acquired and to exercise. This, coupled with a growing recognition of the welfare state's apparent inability to substantially reduce inequality, fueled the backlash from both the left and the right against the welfare state and the social-democratic principles upon which it was founded.

The Tory think tank on social affairs has argued against the "inflated and expensive training of social workers with no visible benefits." The aims and objectives of the profession, as expressed by the Seebohm Committee and the British Association of Social Workers, have been described by them as "meaningless gobbledegook," and they further argue that its practitioners enjoy a monopoly, not being accountable to consumers through the market. At their most vitriolic, they accuse social workers of being a self-seeking, manoeuvring professional class climbing to power on the backs of the poor (Anderson, 1981, p. 8). This shift in relations between the state and the welfare professions has left social work somewhat isolated and exposed to criticism from other quarters.

The radical right campaigns for law and order, the need for social discipline and authority. As we have already noted, Hall and others see this swing to the right as a response to a crisis of hegemony, following the exhaustion of a social-democratic consensus (1978). We have also discussed in the previous chapter how Nigel Parton, following Hall, makes a theoretical link between the rising dominance of the

New Right and the panic around child abuse. In keeping with our attempt to examine the theory of New Right hegemony in practice, we will here consider Parton's analysis of a specific moral panic around child abuse in Britain in the 1970s.

Moral panic around child abuse in Britain

Parton argues that the launching of child abuse as a legitimate problem required the coalition of certain professional and organizational interests in the mid to late 1960s. Parton (1979, 1981) focuses on the role of certain critical actors at this time, notably the NSPCC research unit, Tunbridge Wells Study Group on Child Abuse, pediatricians and forensic pathologists within the medical profession, and Sir Keith Joseph, Minister for Social Services, DHSS. He describes these interests acting as "moral entrepreneurs" whose efforts served to elevate their status and attract additional resources. (Parton points out, for instance, that the NSPCC decision to set up a research unit occurred at a time when its functions were being overtaken by local authority social service departments and its funding base was very precarious. The Research Unit provided a new and distinct role for the organization. In the same vein, status differentials within subsections of the medical profession could be altered through the generation of a panic around child abuse.)

Parton describes these interests as sharing a common view of the problem in which child abuse was essentially con-

ceived as a generationally transmitted disease associated with malfunctioning families (Parton 1979, p. 439). The appropriate response was to apply treatment to individual families through the use of professional rehabilitative relationships. Prior to 1973, the concern over child abuse was not widespread but rather confined to a few experts working in this area. As Parton notes, however, all this changed with the Maria Colwell case.

The official inquiry set up by Sir Keith Joseph in response to the death of Maria Colwell in 1973 marked the turning point in public awareness and anxiety over this issue. Parton emphasizes the role of Sir Keith Joseph and the decision to set up the inquiry in mobilizing public opinion. He argues that Sir Keith's attendance at a Tunbridge Wells Study Group conference on child abuse was the crucial factor in his decision to set up the inquiry and that this pre-empted the massive publicity which followed. This formulation seems to imply that without Sir Keith the whole panic may never have developed, yet similar panics have occurred throughout Europe and North America. This suggests that perhaps Parton's focus is too narrow and gives undue weight to certain events.

The significant role played by the media during and subsequent to the Colwell inquiry was important in escalating and sustaining the panic. For example, The Sunday Times commented that the death of Maria Colwell "dramatizes a national scandal" and represents only the tip of the iceberg (Parton,

1973, p. 393). Following Colwell, a series of subsequent scandals and reports fueled the panic. Parton rightly argues that the social reaction to child abuse at this time cannot be separated from the context of broader material conditions and ideological forces within British society during this period, although he gives dominance to the influence of "ideological forces."

Effect on social work practice

According to Parton, developments in the area of statutory work with child abuse has had far-reaching effects on the development of child care practice in general. In the wake of media scandals and the moral panic surrounding tragic incidents of physical abuse, administrative efforts to monitor and control practice have been stepped up. The child-abuse panic, Parton believes, produced a climate favourable for management to "consolidate administrative and managerial procedures in the new social service departments" (1979, p. 441). As noted, this process of management consolidation is linked by Bolger et al. (1981) to other developments in the restructuring of the local state (Maud committee on local government, cutbacks in housing and education, introduction of corporate management); which, in turn, they argue, is related to the restructuring of capital engendered by the economic crisis.

After the Maria Colwell tragedy, Parton and others contend, a shift in the social work role occurred. Social ser-

vice departments, anxious to avoid similar incidents, have become "more overtly controlling, potentially more punitive and act as an adversary as often as a helper" (Packman, 1981, p. 183) in dealing with families. It is argued, for example, that the increased use of Place of Safety Orders reflects this. Packman notes that they are used not simply for infants who may be in physical danger, but for a number of reasons, including removing adolescents deemed to be in moral danger or beyond parental control (Packman, 1981, p. 184). Further, despite the original conception of a protective emergency measure, Place of Safety Orders are now used, according to some critics, as a powerful means of exerting control over children and families who do not conform or whose behaviour is found wanting (Morris et al., 1981, p. 97). Since the death of Maria Colwell use of Place of Safety Orders has risen dramatically. As the following table shows, Place of Safety orders more than tripled in a three-year period following the Colwell Inquiry.

TABLE 1
The Increase in Place of Safety Orders 1972-76

date	Number of place of safety orders*
March 1972	204
March 1973	214
Maria Colwell Inquiry Sitting	
March 1974	353
Publication of Maria Colwell Report	
March 1975	596
March 1976	759

*Note: In force in local authorities at 31 March 1972-76.1

Parton notes, further, that there is also evidence of an increase in the numbers of statutory removals of newborn babies from their parents. Parton cites a study by Tredinick and Fairburn (1980) where a 61% return to a questionnaire to 132 social services departments, identified 160 babies taken into care at birth since 1967. The data from this study in Figure 1 highlight the increase in such action since the 1960s.

Figure 1

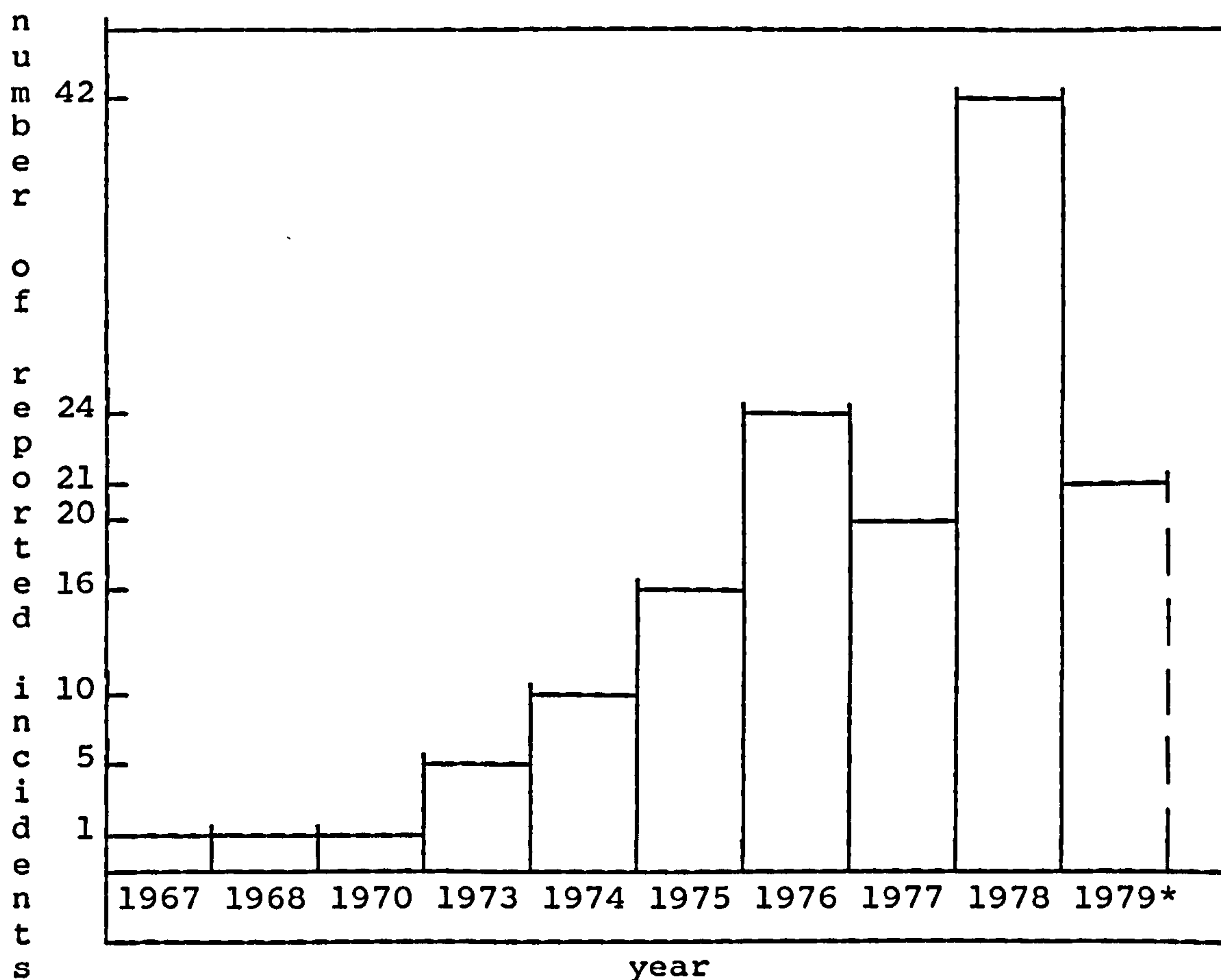


Figure 1. Newborn "removal incidents reported per annum (141 dated actions, twins counted as one); * denotes midyear only.²

In addition, Packman states, the number of court-ordered admissions into care has increased in relation to voluntary admissions and the length of time in care is longer (Packman, 1981, p. 183). The climate of anxiety, it is believed, has encouraged an emphasis on detection and prevention in a narrow sense; thus, social service departments are directing their attention to "at-risk" populations such as "pre-delinquent" deprived kids, thereby increasing the scope of "surveillance." Research on child abuse registers does indicate a high proportion of those children identified as actually or potentially at risk of abuse come from working-class or unemployed families.³

Using this evidence, Parton concludes that the panic around child abuse meant that social workers were pressured and harassed into a more coercive and punitive approach, characterized by "increased surveillance and direct control of certain families, particularly the disreputable poor" (Parton, 1981, p. 392). Parton believes that families in contact with social services are thus separated and stigmatized, reflecting a shift in family welfare policies from those designed to support the disadvantaged to those which punish them (Parton, 1981, p. 407). Moreover, this emphasis on detection of abuse broadens the field of observation and monitoring; the "social control net" is expanded, and, Parton contends, the social work role increasingly is one of "policing." He claims that while the overall conceptualization of

the child abuse problem is still based on medical and social welfare models there has been increasing use of intervention that is authoritative, intrusive, and insistent" (Parton, 1981, p. 392). From the perspective of the social work practitioner, it is clear that the effect of the public scandals in child abuse cases has contributed to a climate of anxiety. Recent research has characterized social workers' feelings concerning their relationship with the community as quite simply, "fear" (DHSS, 1978b).

Resource allocation

The combination of the child-abuse panic and the cut-backs in the public sector, Parton (1981), Kerr (1981), and others claim, have produced a biased allocation of resources. NAI cases are considered top priority to the detriment of other types of services, such as to the handicapped or the elderly. Further, Parton believes, support services such as daycare and nurseries, etc. are reserved for "at-risk" families, thus exacerbating the role of social workers as "regulators of the poor" and providing a "stigmatizing and selective service." Given the Colwell Inquiry into social service responsibility for a child's death (discussed in the next chapter), fear of a similar public trial of an individual social worker should an incident occur has seriously weakened social workers' resistance. Thus, Parton concludes, the climate and means were created to discipline both "devi-

ant families and woolly do-gooders" (1981, p. 406). The Colwell inquiry, he believes, provided the opportunity to hot-up the ideological battle between traditional and social-democratic forces in the form of debate about the nature and direction of social work:

The new profession of social work and the establishment of social service departments following the Seebohm Report could be seen as the most concrete expression of the philosophies of the welfare consensus. On the one hand, young "namby-pamby, pussyfooting" social workers were seen by traditional middle-class groups as the worst representatives of the "soft liberalism" which had heralded in the era of permissiveness. Not only were they prepared to let the "innocent" suffer, they were prepared to excuse the guilty of their wrongdoings. It was felt that such workers were now having misguided effects on the most vulnerable and deviant families in society. On the other hand, these representatives of the social-democratic welfare consensus were treated with suspicion by elements of the working class. They were often experienced as snooping do-gooders who were more concerned for the undeserving scrounger than the respectable and hardworking (Parton, 1981, p. 405).

Social workers in particular were perceived, Parton states, as typifying the soft liberal approach, and the highly publicized errors in the Colwell and later scandals provided strong ammunition to the traditionalist assault. This assault was fueled by what Parton describes as a "growing sense of disquiet" about the quality of service and efficiency of the new social service departments, particularly in relation to children's services which were thought to have suffered since the reorganization.

Thus, Parton, within the same optic as Hall, links the rise of the New Right with a panic around child abuse. The

argument is thus advanced that the Colwell and subsequent tragedies provided a vehicle for tighter management scrutiny of social workers and control over their practice. In the same vein, Jones describes a "coercive tilt" in social work, and argues that state social work will come to exercise a more explicit pressure on the working-class poor (1983). As we have seen, certain statistical evidence could be construed as supporting these claims; for example, the increase in Place of Safety orders following the Colwell tragedy and the increased numbers of children in care. But perhaps these might alternatively be explained as a response to a real increase in violence and family deterioration, given the augmented pressures of the period. Certainly one would expect the effects of the economic crisis to have some impact on welfare practice. The pressure on resources, in combination with greater economic difficulties experienced by the working class, creates a context wherein social problems will increase and social relations become more fraught. Yet, as we have discussed, the institutions, policies, and legislation which bear on welfare practice were constructed within a social-democratic framework and perhaps continue to reflect those assumptions and contradictions. The contradictions of the family and the state's relationship to it continue under Thatcher despite declining resources and attacks on the welfare state. Certainly, the Tory administration professes a belief in and respect for the family unit and the desire to

keep it intact, while at the same time recognizing the state obligation to ensure the protection of children. This complexity, however, is not accounted for in the Parton analysis.

SUMMARY

At this point we need to assess whether the political economy framework, as suggested by Braverman's approach and the New Right law-and-orderism thesis, analyzed by Hall and others, have adequately explained the present organization and practice of statutory social work. As we saw in the previous chapter, Braverman's thesis would explain these developments in the organization of social work by borrowing the concept of proletarianization, which originates in a marxist theory of the capitalist labour process. As we saw, Braverman's basic premise is that the capitalist labour process is dominated and shaped by the drive for capital accumulation. Degradation of the work, according to Braverman, results from two central imperatives of the capitalist organization of the labour process; the first is the concern to cheapen labour and the second is to guarantee effective capitalist control over the production process. These involve a process of continuous subdivision and reorganization of the work process to bring it under effective managerial control. According to

his theory, the fractionalization and routinization of work results in a steady decline in the skills, knowledge, and responsibilities of most workers. Thus, Braverman makes a direct and causal link between the needs and exigencies of capital and the proletarianization of workers. While Braverman has described important and real aspects of reality in his notion of deskilling and degradation of work under monopoly capital, his analysis contains a certain inevitability, a determinism which blocks from consideration other aspects of reality. For instance, Braverman's theory might be applicable to the introduction of corporate management in local authorities, but does not help us explain the more immediate level of, for example, the legislative framework for practice or the organizational model of decentralized area teams. Further, even at the macro level of political economy, we have seen that Braverman does not give a central place to the contradictions to which the accumulation process gives rise and he therefore underplays the possibility of human action, the struggle of class forces in the shaping of the organization of the labour process. Then, by a narrow focus on the production setting, changes in the labour process are abstracted from broader ideological and political contexts in which they occurred or are occurring.

These weaknesses are apparent in applying Braverman's thesis to an analysis of changes in the organization of state social work and the decline of the traditional professional

model. The proletarianization thesis as applied to state workers explains developments by reference to a restructuring of the state, which is linked to an attempt to reduce expenditure or consumption of surplus produced in capitalist production, i.e., to make state service work more productive in the sense of economic efficiency. State social workers, in this view, are becoming increasingly proletarianized in the trend toward ever-increasing managerial and administrative control systems in the context of ever-shrinking resources. At the extreme this view of social work practice is prescribed by a centralized and alien management, who themselves are responding to central government policies, which in turn directly reflect the interest of capital at any given point in time.

Braverman's analysis, however, does highlight certain characteristics in the current organization of state welfare work. These elements are most convincing when taken in a macro context of political economy, but even here the analysis is limited to an economistic explanation of changes, which is insufficient to understand the organization of social work. Perhaps this analysis is too far removed from the day-to-day reality of welfare practice to have a direct explanatory usefulness. To compensate for the limitation of Braverman's political economy framework, we turned to Stuart Hall's thesis to address shifts in the ideological-political dimension. Using Parton's application of Hall, we have at-

tempted to assess the impact of these on welfare practice. Again, while maintaining a certain coherence and power at a macro level, this theory suffers, at the level of specifics, from a determinism or inevitability it posits. The corollary of the exceptional state thesis at the level of local authority social work, views social workers as "social control agents" who are engaged in policing families and the working-class poor for a hegemonic ruling class. This unilinear view thus posits a picture of total and successful control of both welfare workers and their working-class clients. Such a view fails to take account of the contradictory nature of state social work practice, it fails to take as central that welfare practice embodies both care and control elements.

The deterministic nature of this thesis hinders its ability to explain child welfare policies or the Seebohm reorganization of the personal social services. Further, the role of the Labour Party, under whose auspices the current framework for child welfare practice was constructed is not addressed by these theories.

As we have argued in the last chapter, a better understanding of the context of state welfare practice requires a theoretical framework which takes account of the contradictory character of its construction. These contradictions emanate from the nature of social democracy. As discussed in the previous chapter, social democracy is an ideology which

has governed the development of the welfare state in Britain, and perhaps continues to guide its functioning, Thatcher notwithstanding.

To sum up, in this chapter we have considered the political economy context of social work practice, as suggested by the theory of Braverman. The theory of Hall and others on the rise of the New Right also led us to examine this ideological dimension in the construction of state welfare work. The limitations of these approaches have been noted. Braverman's thesis, although useful in alerting us to the importance of some tendencies apparent in the changed organization of state work, was found to be overly deterministic and not useful in explaining the ideological or political context of welfare work. Although the thesis of Hall, picked up by Parton in relation to social work, is important in drawing attention to the shifting ideological terrain at a macro level, its determinism prevents an appreciation of the contradictory policy and practice contexts of child welfare work.

To compensate for these insufficiencies, we will turn in the next chapter to an analysis of social democracy in practice. Within this optic, we will examine the organization of local authority social service departments and the contradictory legislative and policy context for child welfare work.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Parton (1985, p. 123) is here citing C. Hallett and O. Stevenson, Child Abuse: Aspects of Inter-Professional Cooperation (London: Allen and Unwin, 1980).
- 2 Tredinnick, A.W. and Fairburn, A.C., "Left Holding the Baby," Community Cases 10 (April, 1980): 22-25; and Tredinnick, A.W. and Fairburn, A.C., "The baby removed from its parents at birth -- prophylaxis with justice," New Law Journal, 19 (June, 1980): 498-500.
- 3 See Smith, S.M., Hanson, R. and Nobel, S. (1974) "Social aspects of the battered baby syndrome," British Journal of Psychiatry, 125, pp. 568-582; Rose, R., Owtram, P., Picket, J., Marran, B. and Mann, A. (1976) Registers of suspected non-accidental injury: a report on registers maintained in Leeds and Manchester by NSPCC special units, NSPCC; Creighton, S.J. and Owtram, P.J. (1977) Child Victims of Physical Abuse, NSPCC.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND STATE WELFARE PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we will explore the specific context for welfare labour process in local authority social service departments since the Seebohm reorganization. This is, in effect, an analysis of social democracy in practice. In contrast to the optic of Braverman and Parton we adopted in the last chapter, we will here stress the contradictory and non-determinist nature of this context for state welfare practice. We need to examine what this means in relation to statutory child welfare practice in the late 1970s and early 1980s. To do this we will discuss the contradictions of the 1968 Seebohm reorganization of the personal social services. Within this we also need to address the tension between bureaucratic managerialism and its opposing tendencies of professionalism and trade-unionism, which crystallized following the Seebohm reorganization.

Another section in this chapter will describe the legislative and policy framework and structures which bear on

child abuse practice. The relationships of these to state labour processes will be assessed. Finally, the impact of the Maria Colwell tragedy, and the subsequent public inquiry, in 1974 will be looked at from within this perspective.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE

Social-democratic ideology in Britain has a material force and presence. It is the ideology which presided over the post-World War II development of the welfare state and has remained dominant at least until Thatcher's election victory of 1979.

The politics and practice of British social democracy can provide us with an analytic understanding of the reorganization of social services in the early 1970s and the child welfare policy and legislative contexts in which social workers' statutory practice with child abuse is carried on.

The British Labour Party is a major institution which reflects and promotes social-democratic activity. It has long been viewed as the party of the working-class, yet while in power must attempt to represent those interests through a state apparatus and state policies within a capitalist economic context. As we described in Chapter Two, this is an inherently contradictory position in capitalist democracies -- trying to put forward the interests of the working class while maintaining conditions for capital accumulation, which requires subordination of working-class interests to the dominant logic of capitalist values and institutions.

The contradictions of social democracy are similarly reflected in welfare structures. The Seebohm reorganization of the personal social services was constructed within a social-democratic ideology. The important features of this reorganization will be examined to assess the implications for labour processes in state welfare organizations.

The contradictions of the Seebohm reorganization

The Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services (Seebohm Report) of 1968 was a major landmark in the development of social services in England.

Prior to the Seebohm Report, social work services were scattered and diverse. Specialist services in child care work existed through Children's Departments set up in 1948. The Seebohm Report laid the groundwork for the Local Authorities Social Services Act in 1970. This legislation created a social service committee and required the hiring of a social service director in each local authority. It also promoted the unification of social services through the creation of a social service department in every local authority. This new social service committee in the local authority, it was hoped, would rank as a major committee able to jockey more powerfully in the competition for resources. The mandate given to social services by the Seebohm Report was extremely broad, all forms of social distress should be their concern.

Social workers employed by these new social service departments were to be "generic" workers able to perform a variety of tasks previously handled by a number of different agencies. In the Committee's words, what was needed was "a wider conception of social service directed to the well-being of the whole of the community and not only of social casualties" (Seebohm, paragraph 474). The Committee did note, however, that structural inequalities persisted in Britain despite welfare state provisions. Seebohm himself estimated that low income and poor housing accounted for 60% of all social service cases (Bolger et al. 1981, p. 63). Yet despite this recognition of the underlying causes of many social problems, the major recommendation of the Inquiry was an expanded and improved family-based service. Thus, while the structural nature of problems was acknowledged the proposed solution focusses attention on individual victims. As Bolger et al. (1981) note, this constitutes one of the major contradictions expressed in the Report and which attends much social work practice. Significantly, the exclusion of rank-and-file social workers, client groups, and trade-union representatives from the Seebohm Committee left them in a relatively weak position to influence working conditions and the nature of the organizations and systems which were adopted (Glastonbury, 1975, p. 291; Bolger et al., 1981, p. 52). These glaring omissions on the Seebohm Committee membership were consistent with social-democratic preference for impartial

experts rather than looking for guidance to those directly involved as providers and users of welfare services. As Bolger et al. state,

... women were poorly represented (only two out of ten), despite the role that women play both as providers of the service and as recipients of welfare provision. Also, within the social work professions themselves, there was strong representation of the establishment and no rank-and-file social worker, nor was there anyone with detailed recent knowledge in either the practice or receipt of the service (Bolger et al., 1981, p. 52).

The Seebohm report further laid emphasis on the need for accessibility of services, the need to engage in preventive work and the need for community development. The adoption of the area team structure in which teams of social workers were to be located directly within the communities they served and with maximum authority for decisions to be delegated to the head of each area team was the organizational form thought most appropriate to these tasks. The decentralized area team structure separates line staff both physically and psychologically from administrative headquarters. This decentralization was directly counter to the overall thrust of centralization contained in the Seebohm Report (and other government reports at this time). The social services gained political and budgetary strength through the centralization of functions, yet in order to deliver services, it needed to operate through decentralized and widely dispersed area teams. This provides a potential, albeit often unrealized, for a more collective approach to social work practice and a closer

relationship between area teams and the communities they serve. This constitutes a second major contradiction of the Seebohm reorganization (Bolger et al., 1981).

The Seebohm reorganization of the personal social services can be seen as consistent with the social-democratic British state's political commitment to solving social problems; yet the resolution of such problems must be consistent with the essential features of a capitalist economy. The post-Seebohm organization context for social work thus set up several structured contradictions. Bolger et al. argue that

such contradictions are inherent to social services. ... Social services cannot even simply exist as a bureaucracy which provides a form of controlled expenditure for monopoly capital. It also has to provide a form of service which forces it to come into direct contact with working-class people (Bolger et al., 1981, p. 60).

Welfare workers within state organizations experience these tensions in their day-to-day practice. Such tensions and contradictions are not accounted for within the framework of the proletarianization thesis, nor are they addressed in the optic of Parton and others, who view welfare workers as essentially control or policing agents. The complexities of welfare practice are belied by the determinist nature of these theoretical approaches.

A specific consideration of one element of this conflict and contradiction bears further examination for our research problematic on state labour process. We have previously noted the hybrid mixture of elements of both professionalism

and bureaucratic managerialism which characterize the contemporary organization of social work. As well as professionalist interests, we can also identify trade-union activity as opposing forces to the tendency toward managerial control in social service departments. We will examine the nature of this context in more detail and consider how this affects state labour processes.

Managerialism and deskilling in social service departments

Following the Seeborn reorganization the rapid expansion of management personnel led to the instalment of new and inexperienced management, who were unsure of their organizational authority; this, coupled with the ongoing instability of the front line (high turnover, new range of tasks, lack of training and experience) provided fertile ground for the strengthening of management control (Glastonbury et al., 1981, p. 71). Bolger et al. maintain that this is reflected in the trend toward increased separation between management control of social service organization and planning on one hand and the day-to-day practice of basic-grade social workers on the other. Glastonbury comments that "the separation of the process of making policy decisions from the task of their detailed implementation places front-line social workers in a relatively powerless positions vis-à-vis actions of the department" (Glastonbury, 1975, p. 290).

Social services departments are typically characterized by a hierarchical chain of up to ten levels from basic-grade

social worker to director. Further administrative personnel have more status, authority, and pay than practitioners (Glastonbury, 1975, p. 291). Promotion in social service departments involves moving up the ladder into administrative posts, given the absence of a career path for practitioners. This gap between senior management and front-line practice suggests that front-line work with clients is devalued. Seeborn himself, in The Times (July 10, 1976), indicated that social workers were spending up to two thirds of their time keeping track with administration and attending staff meetings, etc., and that those who plan and coordinate social services, set priorities, and control resources have no contact with consumers of services and little contact with those who directly provide social work services. Glastonbury further argues, "the most senior staff are at risk of isolation from the professional function of the agency by drawing their advice and information from middle-grade administrators and professional (non-practicing) advisors ..." (Glastonbury, 1975, p. 291).

Moreover, Bolderson and Henkel describe social workers as operating in a situation in which "value conflicts and unresolved objectives are left lying around to be stumbled over at every step" (p. 17). The effect of this, they state, is that decisions that were traditionally thought to be the terrain of workers and their clients may now be pulled up the social service department hierarchy or elected members may

decide to involve themselves in decisions about individual cases. Child placement procedures were examined in one local authority, and it was found that despite their administrative job descriptions and their distance from the scene of action, senior personnel felt that they should make crucial decisions in specific case decisions (Glastonbury et al., 1980, p. 102). Such aspects of current practice, Bolderson and Henkel argue, create a climate in which workers hesitate to make decisions themselves and practice "defensive social work," in which covering themselves is the main concern. Youll also points out that one effect of decisions being taken by those removed from direct client contact is that issues tend to be seen in black and white, with finer points, nuances of feelings, not taken into account; this tends to conservatize decision making in the direction of short-term safety and reduction of risk, while ignoring issues of long-term interest (Youll, 1981, p. 30).

Another obvious constraint on front-line practice identified by Bolger et al. (1981) is the hierarchical control over availability and allocation of resources. As we saw in the previous chapter, current government policy of cutbacks in public expenditure puts pressure on social service departments to tighten centralized control over resources through bureaucratic rationing devices. This affects material aids and supports as well as placing increasing strain on social workers' time and labour power (increased caseloads, freezing of vacant posts).

The priority given to statutory cases in terms of time and other resources may also be an important limitation on social work practice autonomy. Statutory work already confined by legal and judicial imperatives has, since the Colwell tragedy, been a target for heightened management monitoring and control of practice.

Glastonbury et al. point out that management in some areas has made attempts to measure and standardize social work tasks. "Job analyses are being carried out with a view to establishing the range of qualifications required and implementing an appropriate division of labour" (1980, p. 43). Time-related quotients are used to break down social work labour processes into a number of activities and match these with both expenditure of time and level of qualification of worker. The rise of the "generic" all-purpose social worker and the decline of specialisms following Seebohm, Frost has argued, have reduced basic-grade social workers to jacks of all trades and masters of none. This trend is also cited in the increasing employment of social work assistants on unskilled tasks.

Countervailing forces to management control: area team structure

Against the postulated tendency for decreasing autonomy of social work practitioners, Bolger et al. (1981) identify the area team structure which is decentralized. The effect

of the decentralized area team structure can provide a barrier to management monitoring and control over social work practice, as it separates line staff from administrative headquarters. Immediate control is maintained by the worker because much social work practice is composed of direct face-to-face interaction between worker and clients and often takes place outside the agency. As we noted earlier, the area team structure offers the possibility for more collective work and approaches.

Unionization

In N. Parry and J. Parry's description of the rise of unionism following the 1974 reorganization of local government, "the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) quickly became the most important and powerful representative association for social workers" (Parry and Parry, 1979, p. 44). This collective organization of welfare workers within NALGO, is another potential vehicle for collective resistance to management control. The NALGO Action Group, a subgroup of NALGO, was set up as a forum for discussion and organization within the union. The organization of shop stewards' committees provided a voice for the views of rank-and-file workers and offers an alternative democratic structure to the hierarchy imposed by management (Bolger et al., 1981, p. 73). The NALGO social work strike of 1978-79 was, Bolger et al. believe, a collective experience which was

directly counter to the individualization of most social work activity. The strike also led to activities that "challenged the right of social work management to manage" (1981, p. 75), thus generating the possibility of an alternative definition of what social service is or should be. Such collective action by social workers provides a crucial basis for countering the tendency toward managerial dominance.

Professionalist forces

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) represents the intellectual and material forces for professionalism and professionalization in British social work structures. In addition to NALGO, BASW has also constructed a power base which opposes managerial control over social work practice. BASW, in particular, has promoted claims for professional autonomy in social work. BASW has maintained an emphasis on the therapeutic casework model as the basis for demands for professional autonomy. The social work task, according to BASW, is to "promote the improved functioning of an individual through the medium of personal relationships ... and ... involves the creative application of skills derived from values to help meet individual needs through interpersonal relationships between worker and client" (BASW Social Work Task, paragraph 3.11). BASW is conscious, however, that social service departments, the major employer of social workers, are called upon to provide other, less exalt-

ed services. They are thus at pains to distinguish the provision of various practical and financial services (aids to handicapped, elderly, provision of telephones) from the therapeutic casework service. In their view, the former involves execution of "prescribed tasks" and so does not require the attention of a "professional" social worker. The latter, however, should, they argue, be the reserve of the profession. They are thus seeking to maintain their claim to professional status by narrowing the range of services that require "professional" attention. In return, it is agreed, all other social service department tasks can be carried out by less professional and less expensive labour. As Glastonbury describes, professionalist advocates have made some concessions in terms of managerial demands for "efficiency." Much recent research carried out by the profession reflects an effort to make explicit and quantifiable the units of activity that comprise the social work role (case review systems); although they caution that the path to greater efficiency "must not be at the expense of the quality and nature of the services to individual clients" (Glastonbury et al., 1980, p. 23).

Integral to the nature of this professional defense is an acceptance that no additional resources will be forthcoming. Whether this is an acknowledgment of the futility of asking for "more" in the current climate or whether this indicates a loss of faith in the traditional social-democratic solution (more resources) is a matter of conjecture.

Rather, BASW emphasizes that what is the "inalienable element" in social work is that its actions are guided by "an underlying ethical approach" based on the dignity and worth of each individual. In their discussion of "professional values," BASW does acknowledge a distinction between "ultimate values" and "instrumental values." Ultimate values, they state, as expressed in the code of ethics, enjoy a broad consensus amongst social workers. Instrumental values -- the means to achieve those ends -- do not enjoy such a consensus. This perhaps refers to the major ideological and methodological disputes within the profession. The professionalist power base is undermined by the impression of BASW as the association for the elite of the profession. This was fueled by their early reluctance to admit "unqualified" social workers (only approximately 40% of social workers in social service departments are qualified, although membership is now open to anyone doing a social work job [Bolderson and Henkel]).

Together, BASW and NALGO do, however, represent forces against managerialism in local authority social work. Such countervailing tendencies are not treated as significant in the thesis of proletarianization, yet it is clear that they represent the material result of the contradictions which accompanied the Seebohm reorganization.

As well, local authorities have, since Seebohm, undergone numerous and varied departmental reorganizations, some-

times involving a centralizing shift, and at other times a decentralizing of organizational structures. These attempts to "get the structure right" also stem from the built-in contradictions discussed above, which are part and parcel of social-democratic welfare model. There has further been continuous debate concerning practice approaches within social service departments. This can be seen in the movement back and forth between, for instance, a community or patch approach and individualized family-based intervention, similarly, the arguments for genericism vs. specialism. Efforts to resolve the contradictions continue, given the social-democratic legacy which is premised on the hope that social problems in capitalist society can be overcome given enough expertise and resources. The recent Barclay Report (National Institute for Social Work, 1982), commissioned by the Thatcher government to inquire into the role and tasks of social workers, represents the latest document in this tradition.

We have so far discussed the 1968 Seebohm reorganization of the personal social services, highlighting its contradictory nature, which laid the groundwork for an ongoing struggle between centralizing managerialist forces and their opponents. We can now turn to an examination of the legislative and policy context for child welfare practice in local authority social service departments. These are as well constructed within social-democratic ideology and politics, and reflect contradictory and conflicting objectives. In partic-

ular, the tension between care and control is a constant theme in the approach to social work practice with children.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK IN CHILD ABUSE PRACTICE

A brief sketch of state intervention with children includes the following benchmarks. The earliest piece of legislation which concerned children was the 1601 Poor Law which made provisions for "destitute" children. Such provisions included substitute accommodation in workhouses, homes, approved schools, and boarding out. The objective of this policy was not so much to promote the individual welfare of indigent children as it was to ensure the regulation and social management of potentially dangerous or troublesome groups (Bolger et al., 1981, p. 84). Later, the principle of state intervention into the private sphere of the family was legitimated by the doctrine of "parens patriae." This doctrine formed the basis for state regulation of parent-child relationships (Morris et al., 1981, p. 1). The 1908 Children's Act established the principle of separate courts for the hearing of cases involving juvenile offenders; however, the adjudication process was not unlike that for adults processed in criminal courts (Morris et al., 1981, p. 13). The Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, reflected the willingness of the state to intervene in family life in order to protect children. Emergency powers of entry were granted to the police under this act. By 1948, a new orientation in

state social policy was embodied in the form of the 1948 Children's Act, which evidenced a concern for the welfare of individual children.

1948 Children's Act

A significant break with the principles of the previous period occurred with the passing of the 1948 Act. This law created a specialized service for children based on individual treatment. The Curtis Committee Report of 1946, which formed the basis of the Act, wished to improve the conditions of substitute care. The death of a child in foster care in 1945 provoked demands to ameliorate the standards of such care for deprived children. Foster care was regarded as the best alternative to the natural family environment. Inadequate early environment often related to maternal deprivation or deficiency was theoretically linked to deviant behaviour. The war had been a major source of family disruption and upheaval contributing to greater concern for the future generations. The 1948 Act broke new ground in its consideration of the needs of the child and thus represented the beginnings of the "welfare" model of child care policy. By the 1950s the emphasis had expanded to include the notion of prevention. This involved efforts to keep children in their own homes through supports for the family, including an intensive family casework service aimed at the psychological readjustment of deviant families. This was, however, supplemented by

a more coercive element of control in 1952, when an amendment to the Act guaranteed social workers the "right of entry" into private homes to ensure the safety of children who were suspected to be in need of care and protection. Court proceedings against parents could be initiated if necessary, thus providing a legal basis to the control element of social work practice with families. Juvenile crime continued to rise. In 1960 another government committee had been mandated to consider how to deal with the problem (Packman, 1981).

1963 Children and Young Persons Act

The link between child neglect and juvenile delinquency was well-established in the practice of child care professionals when the Ingelby Committee Report was produced in 1960, which preceded the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act (Packman, 1981). Children's departments had begun extensive work with "depraved," i.e., delinquent, kids and had concluded that these kids were "no different" from the "depraved" children they were seeing who had not come into contact with the law. Both were victims of family and environmental circumstances and suffering from broken, neglectful, or unhappy homes. Therefore, legal and administrative distinctions between the approach to offenders and to non-offenders were seen as artificial (Packman 1981, p. 11). The neglected child became the delinquent child, and so it followed that "the prevention of distress in families would have

beneficial results in the prevention of deviance" (Packman, 1981, p. 65).

This thesis found support in the deliberations of the Ingleby Committee. Disturbed by the rapid increase in juvenile delinquency during the 1950s (Packman 1981, p. 65), the Committee needed a more sophisticated explanation for rising rates of delinquency than the earlier simple structural explanations related to war-time deprivations. Why was delinquency on the rise in the affluent 1950s?

The new cause for delinquency was located directly within the family. Theories advanced were based on the relationship between child neglect and deviant behaviour. Neglect was very broadly defined "to include not only the 'inadequate and substandard family' but also families in which there was a 'maladjustment of personal relationships'" (Packman, 1981, p. 65). The 1963 Children and Young Persons Act sanctioned the emphasis on preventive casework with families. The philosophy of the Act was firmly entrenched within the welfare model of juvenile justice. This Act was also significant in that it sanctioned the provision of material and monetary assistance on an emergency basis, thus linking therapeutic services with financial aid and engendering a whole new problematic of resource control for social workers. During the 1960s the workload of the Children's Departments grew dramatically, accompanied by large increases in staff. A variety of innovative programs and techniques designed to support

families were floated such as family advice centres, flying angels, holiday break arrangements for mothers, self-help groups, etc. (Packman, 1981, p. 70). This could be described as the high point of the welfare model to date. Delinquency rates, however, did not abate. Debates about the cause of juvenile crime and the most effective method of dealing with young offenders ensued.

1969 Children and Young Persons Act

As discussed in Chapter Two, the justice-versus-welfare debate preceding the 1969 Act resulted in a compromise legislation packed with contradictory orientations and, as such, left social workers without clear guidelines to follow. Bolger et al. (1981) discuss how the legislation was pushed through by the Labour party without broad-based political support for its welfare aspects. Rather, the "welfarist position," in typical social-democratic fashion, had been constructed and promoted by a coalition of experts--key figures in the parliamentary Labour Party, organized professional interest groups, and Fabian academics. As Bolger et al. point out, significantly, this coalition excluded representation of working-class opinion, and thus failed to secure working-class support for the progressive aspects of the legislation it was trying to promote. The legislation, left to be implemented by the Tories, came under strong attack from anti-welfarists. Thus, despite the original intentions of

the Act, several key sections were not implemented or were suspended. Specifically, provisions concerning the reduction of the permissible age for prosecution and restricting prosecution proceedings for older children were not enforced. The court also retained the power to order junior detention centre and borstal training sentences. New provisions which did come into force included those concerning care orders which replaced approved school orders and fit person orders, and the new provisions on supervision which transferred responsibility for younger children to the social service departments from the probation service. These inconsistencies provided a framework in which the welfare and justice models clashed head on. In practice, the struggle between the two centres on the "care order" which transferred significant sentencing powers from the courts to the Local Authority social service departments. A magistrate wishing to remove a child to residential care was required to make a care order, as the former approved school orders and fit person orders were abolished. This leaves the responsibility of choosing the type of residential care and placement in the hands of the social worker. This loss of magistrates' authority is compensated for by the fact that they can still sentence offenders to detention and attendance centres and can recommend borstal training. Morris et al. thus claim, "It is they who are responsible for producing the expanding workload and punitive disposal patterns of the past decade" (1981, p. 21). Thus, it is

felt that children have become pawns in a power struggle between social workers and the court.

Despite the fact that care proceedings were made possible even in cases involving an offence, the number of care proceedings decreased between 1971 and 1977. Instead, punitive disposals which were to be abolished are used more frequently by the juvenile court (Morris et al., 1981, p. 17). The total number of court prosecutions has also risen. Intermediate treatment schemes designed to discourage placement of children in institutions have not been adequately developed and supervision in the community has increased only slightly (Morris et al., 1981).

Coupled with the contradictory provisions contained within the Act, the localized nature of its application has added to the chaos within the juvenile justice system. Recent research has revealed that wide discrepancies exist between the various magisterial jurisdictions both in terms of interpretation of the Act and nature of disposals (Parker et al., 1981). Meanwhile, juvenile crime continues to rise, creating pressure for wider use of punitive measures.

Justice versus welfare -- the continuing debate

The social work profession through its professional association, the British Association of Social Workers, accepted the broad principles of the Act which pertained to "welfare" and campaigned for full implementation of the law.

The social work role was generally defined "to advise, assist, and befriend." Yet the integration of social and legal aspects of the juvenile justice system means that social work help is often compulsory, legally imposed through care and supervision orders. Such disposals to treatment programs and facilities have been a source of sustained controversy since the 1969 Act. Critics call for the removal of the welfare function from the juvenile justice process; however, given the limited and inconsistent nature of its presence, one can argue that the welfare model has never been tried (Bolger et al., 1981, p. 92). Rather, as Parker et al. state, the welfare model "has been scapegoated ... by the law-and-order lobby of the New Right" (Parker et al., 1981, p. 244), who imply that the social work influence on the justice system is a major cause of its failure. But recent studies indicate that power in criminal proceedings, in any case, remains largely with the local police and magistrates (Parker et al., 1981).

In care proceedings, however, social workers do have considerable discretion, and their track record here leaves them open to heavy criticism. The social work profession is accused of violating children's legal rights; these have been subordinated to the ideology of treatment. The Justice for Children lobby believes compulsory treatment is tantamount to an indeterminate sentence and is often perceived as a form of punishment by the client (Parker et al., 1981, p. 117).

Juvenile misconduct, they argue, is reframed by welfarists as evidence of individual or family pathology by self-serving professionals whose only stake in welfare is ensuring the dominance of their modes of intervention. Further, they contend that medicalization of juvenile offending is encouraged by the use of psycho-pathological descriptions of clients as "personality disorder," "psychopath," etc., which not only stigmatize but may become self-fulfilling prophecies (Morris et al., 1981, p. 39). Moreover, they state that the language of diagnosis and treatment masks the "real criteria of assessment: the age, sex, and geographic location of the child and the availability of vacancies" in treatment programs and substitute care (Morris et al., 1981). Social Inquiry reports they describe as "character assassinations which seek to inculcate the child and thereby provide legitimation for greater incursion into his life than could be provided by the circumstances of the event" (Morris et al., 1981, p. 39). Treatment may actually have harmful effects, such as impeding educational progress and employment opportunities. The Justice for Children lobby claims that since knowledge about the effects of treatment is inconclusive it is fairer to ensure respect for the legal rights of children by leaving moral judgments and treatment objectives out of the justice system altogether. Therapeutic services, they contend, must be voluntary (Morris et al., 1981).

This is regarded as unrealistic by others, who point out that all statutory systems, including NAI work, inevitably

involve making moral judgments. Particularly in care proceedings, the situation cannot always be reduced to fit the natural justice model of individual guilt or innocence tied to an appropriate disposal. In difficult, possibly irreconcilable situations the burden of making these judgments falls largely on social workers. Parker et al. maintain, therefore, that social workers should not be admonished for making such decisions; rather, criticism should be directed at the quality of such decisions (Parker et al., 1981, p. 215). Yet, as we have described, the 1969 legislation failed to develop a working truce between its welfare and justice components. The contradictions remain. Harris has summarized the situation: "... there exists sufficient space between the extremes of justice and welfare for courts to act according to such different principles that it is barely credible that they coexist within the same system" (Harris, 1981, p. 250).

1975 Children's Act (post-Colwell)

The 1975 Act following the Colwell Inquiry (see discussion below) reflected a retreat from the assumption that the natural family was best. Rather, it was concerned with promoting a more accessible and efficient framework for adoption. The Act established the principle of giving "first consideration" to the interests of the child in adoption proceedings and care arrangements. This legislation intended to curb parental power by such provisions as: after six months

or more in care, parents are required to give twenty-eight days' notice to the local authority of their intention to remove their child from care. Further parental rights can be assumed by the authority on two further grounds--only one parent need be unfit, and after three years in voluntary care the obligation to prove unfitness of parents is removed (Morris et al., 1981).

There has been divided opinion on the consequences of this Act. Commentators such as the Child Poverty Action Group (Holman, 1976) have regarded it as punitive and threatening to working-class families; whereas Jean Packman (1981) views the legislation as fundamentally progressive, since it increases the rights of children in having a say where they are placed. Yet the impact of the fiscal pressure in the late 1970s meant that only sections of the Act which represent cheaper alternatives in provision were initially enacted, and potentially beneficial aspects were therefore undermined (CSE, 1979, p. 100).

The impact of Maria Colwell and other tragedies (see discussion below) were also felt in the reports of a "Select Committee on Violence in the Family. "Violence to Children 1977" and the "Response to First Report from the Select Committee on Violence in the Family 1978." In consideration of the problem of violence to children, Youll contends that their reports reflect a "cycle of violence" theory of causation which ties violent behaviour to issues of family pathol-

ogy and inter-generational relationships. Structural factors, such as poor housing, pressures of poverty, etc., although mentioned, are not given much weight (Youll, 1981, p. 18). Most of the recommendations were concerned with pragmatic issues of inter-agency collaboration, procedural measures, availability of advice for parents, and better communication amongst practitioners.

Under the Thatcher administration, the Child Care Act 1980 and the Foster Child Act 1980 were passed, both essentially consolidating legislation, amalgamating existing laws in relation to children covering protection, care and control, fostering, adoption, and custodianship, but importantly making no commitment to additional resources. Acceptable policies, to the Tories, it is believed, "involve one or more of the following criteria: no increase in cost, redistribution between client groups, and greater use of the private and voluntary sectors" (Stein et al., 1982, p. 48). However, even a clear ideological position is difficult to directly transfer into political practice. Legislation rarely commits resources or makes any explicit reference to costs. Generally, one governmental hand makes legislation for programs and services while the other hand, that of the Treasury, makes expenditure plans. There has been much continuity in child-care policies between the 1974-79 Labour Administration and the present Tory Administration. Some commentators, however, point to "a political discontinuity." It is argued that the

cuts to welfare spending implemented by Labour between 1974 and 1979 were initiated at the behest of the IMF -- and thus were carried out with a certain reluctance. In contrast, the Tory efforts to control public-sector borrowing required a "wholesale economic, political, and ideological attack ..." (Stein et al., 1982, p. 49). As we have seen, however, the success of this attack is a matter of dispute.

In any case, despite the Tory intention, the legislative and policy context for child-care practice remains contradictory, unclear, and loosely formulated. Youll, in an overall summary of the NAI context, remarks that government concern over child abuse is wavering, and special funding is generally unavailable. Further, she argues,

No firm definition of child abuse/neglect has been laid down. Definitions provided by law are vague, and leave much room for interpretation ... Values promulgated show a wide variation, all as far as can be judged, of equal concern. Thus, the value of the family is held equally with the rights of the child, and where interests conflict, the child is accorded not paramount consideration, but 'first.' Rights of parents are redefined to diminish the absolute position of biological parenthood and to give status to emotional parenting/bonding.

As well, the dominant assumption about causation is the cycle of deprivation/cycle of violence transmitted through generations, and the focus of intervention is at an individual or family level (Youll, 1981, pp. 21-22).

DHSS circulars regarding child abuse

There is another level of state intervention in England, that of DHSS recommendations, which needs consideration before we can evaluate the significance of state intervention in shaping of the labour process in child abuse cases.

The Local Authority Social Service Act 1970 requires social service departments to "act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State" (Section 7). Besides monetary control of expenditure, the Secretary of State periodically issues circulars through the DHSS giving information, advice, recommendations. These are instruments through which central government can "quickly update information, redefine areas of concern or priority, and make procedural changes" (Youll, 1981, p. 23).

Typically, circulars have been issued following major inquiries into cases of child abuse. Youll identifies two of these DHSS circulars as particularly significant in shaping NAI practice, one in 1974 and one in 1980.

Circular LASSL (74)13: Non-Accidental Injury to Children was issued shortly after the Colwell Inquiry Report and asked local authority social service departments to submit a report to the DHSS about their administrative procedures and the extent of the problem. In terms of administrative arrangements, the circular recommended setting up Area Review Committees of senior-level officers as policy-making bodies; the calling of case conferences for all cases of suspected

non-accidental injury; and to consider setting up central NAI registers of cases.

SOCIAL SERVICE MANAGEMENT OF CHILD ABUSE CASES: AREA REVIEW COMMITTEE, CASE CONFERENCE, AND AT-RISK REGISTER

The April 1974, circular thus signalled the establishment of a two-tier system of management of NAI cases: the area review committee and the case conference (LASSL 1974 13, Cmnd (74) 8). The Area Review Committee is the main policy-making body in child protection, responsible for developing procedures for NAI case management at the regional level. One hundred and two ARC's have been set up in England and Wales. These committees are multidisciplinary. Major representatives include personal social services, education, health, and police. One of the major tasks of the Area Review Committee is the setting up of case conference procedures and the at-risk register.

The purposes of the case conference, as specified in the borough studied (see Appendix C), are:

- a) to share amongst people concerned all the information available at the time concerning the family and the child/children;
- b) to decide what immediate action is required; and
- c) to agree on a long-term plan if appropriate and possible to do so.

In addition, it is stipulated that any agency (education, welfare, health, police, etc.) whose suspicions about a

child are aroused should be responsible for the initial investigation and medical examination.

The case conference is meant to be a decision-making forum, and "membership must include representatives from participating agencies (as well as persons directly involved) with sufficient seniority to act on behalf of their agencies." It is further specified that while the case conference cannot commit the SSD to any particular form of statutory action, "it is most important in normal circumstances that the Department should comply in detail with the decisions/recommendations of the case conference." Deviation from this requires the consent of the Assistant Director, Field Services or the Director of Social Services. The importance and authority assigned to conferences is unambiguous.

The DHSS recommended that one of the participants in a case conference assume the role of "key worker," who will take responsibility for the actual management of a specific case, and through whom information is channelled and coordination takes place.

The role of the police in case conferences is a contentious issue. This stems from the prosecuting powers of the police, which may be in conflict with the therapeutic orientation of social services. This highlights the tension between care and control elements.

In addition, Area Review Committees have set up in their regions at-risk registers, which are registers of all chil-

dren who are suspected of being at risk of abuse or neglect. There is, however, considerable disparity amongst regions as to the criteria for registration, information provided to the register, and criteria for removing a child from the register (see below).

As regards intervention, DHSS circular LASSL (74)13 recommended immediate hospital admission where there is reasonable suspicion of non-accidental injury. However, no definition of either child abuse or reasonable suspicion was given. Given the emphasis on early detection and first action of hospital admission, the DHSS seemed to be promoting a cautious, "play-safe" approach (Youll, 1981, p. 24).

The 1980 Circular followed the Select Committee Report on Violence 1977 and was concerned to establish greater uniformity and standardization in the management of NAI registers given the variation between registers across local authorities. Prior to this, Shearer commented, "Barnsley has a population of 229,000 and some 200 children on the register; Somerset a population of about 410,000 and some 30; East Sussex has a population of about 660,000 and 1,500 ... and there were no demographic or otherwise sane explanation for the variations" (Shearer, 1978). Youll states that "this circular is the strongest attempt so far to standardize procedure and provides the first comprehensive definition of child abuse" (1981, p. 26). Emotional abuse as well as physical abuse and neglect were identified. Further, a social assess-

ment of the family background as well as medical assessment is required in the diagnosis of NAI.

Youll points out that these two circulars, as well as the intervening ones, are notable in the emphasis they put on procedures and routines: "There's a tacit belief that good communication and orderly, meticulous monitoring and recording will diminish the incidence of abuse" (1981, p. 26). Despite the emphasis, however, Youll states, "Guidelines for practice and making judgments about particular situations are left to a high degree of abstraction and the clarification of principles for practice is not attempted" (1981, p. 27).

Youll summarizes the framework provided by central government, local authorities, and SSD departments through legislation, policies and recommendations as follows: "... whereas legal remedies and administrative procedures are on the whole finely drawn, matters of definition, priority, values, and principles are left ambiguous, conflicting and/or capable of wide variation of interpretation" (Youll, 1981, pp. 27-28).

Thus, despite the assumed intention to tighten up controls and move toward a prescription of practice, the impact at a specific level is perhaps not consistent with these objectives. "The law embodies significantly different values about individual and family rights and definitions provided for the social worker in relation to child protection, even though attended to in DHSS guidelines, are written at a high

level of abstraction. We can conclude that formal statements of social policy attend mostly to administrative, legal, and procedural arrangements, and underlying principles and goals are left implicit, open to interpretation and/or ambiguous" (Youll, 1981, p. 75).

Thus, the legislative and policy context for child welfare practice mirrors the contradictions and confusion of social-democratic reform. The existence of opposing ideologies of "justice versus welfare" is reflected in the social service department mandate to ensure the "protection" of children, which inevitably embodies both "care" and "control" elements. It also contributes to the oscillation back and forth as regards the extent of parental rights versus the obligation of the state vis-à-vis children. The policy context provides evidence of the social-democratic faith in the technical expertise of professionals charged with intervening at the level of the individual, despite some degree of awareness of wider structural forces which bear on problems of child welfare. Despite evidence of much success, there remains a persistent belief in the capacity of the state to intervene and resolve social problems relating to children. Social workers carrying out statutory child welfare practice are the material embodiment of these social-democratic contradictions. It is crucial to emphasize the complexity and confusion of this role in attempting to understand the current construction of welfare labour processes.

The moral panic precipitated by the various child abuse tragedies in the late 1970s and early 1980s has exacerbated these tensions. We will examine these events in Britain next.

CHILD ABUSE INQUIRIES

During the early 1970s social service departments were trying to come to grips with the double reorganization following Seebohm and local government reorganization, which generated some confusion as to the roles and responsibilities of the new social service departments. These difficulties were aggravated by the events surrounding several tragic cases of child deaths due to physical abuse. The first and most famous of these was Maria Colwell in 1973. This and the subsequent inquiries in England have played a significant role in shaping social work practice in non-accidental injury. The Colwell Inquiry set up by Sir Keith Joseph following the Colwell Incident marked the turning point in public awareness and anxiety over child abuse. The legacy of Colwell is central to understanding social workers' attitudes toward NAI practice and public attitudes toward social workers. As described above, these inquiries prompted DHSS recommendations regarding NAI practice. We will consider these events in light of their implications for constructing welfare labour processes in non-accidental injury cases.

Given the significance of Colwell, we will examine this case in some detail. A brief résumé of the facts include:

Maria Colwell (DoB 25/3/65) died on 7 January 1973 at the age of seven, being one of nine children that her mother had borne by that time. She spent over five years in the foster care of her aunt, but was returned to her mother and stepfather, Mr. Kepple, at the age of six years and eight months, being placed on a supervision order to the local authority from that date. The family was visited by a variety of social workers, and concern about Maria was expressed by her schoolteacher and by neighbours. However, she was "battered" to death by her stepfather on the night of the 6/7 January 1973 and was found to weigh only about half the average seven year old. Mr. Kepple was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to eight years imprisonment. He had a poor health record and had previously been convicted of two relatively minor offences of violence. The Secretary of State set up an official inquiry, the report being published in September 1974 (Parton, 1981, p. 411).

The Colwell Inquiry ran for forty-one days, with oral evidence from 70 witnesses, written evidence from thirteen more, and a total of 99 documents and exhibits. Media coverage was intense. The local Brighton paper gave it saturation coverage. The Times alone gave it 320 paragraphs, whereas, prior to Colwell, between 1968 and 1973 only two mentions of child abuse occurred in that paper (Parton, 1979, p. 440). The sustained coverage of the Colwell Inquiry ensured that child abuse had arrived as a public and professional concern.

During this period, social work as a profession was in centre-stage and under heavy criticism from the public for its highly-publicized errors in the case. Ann Shearer, in a series on the child-abuse tragedies in Social Work Today (January, 1979), describes the Colwell Inquiry process:

There was an inquiry with a vengeance in this case. Denis Allen has called it a "trial by ordeal." The gallery was packed with people who had already, for the most part, made up their minds about who was to blame. The inquiry itself had many of the trappings of a court of law without its protections. The chairman of the inquiry panel several times referred to the East Sussex barrister as "counsel for the defence" and the notice outside read, No cameras in court.

The social services people were completely unprepared for this, they say. They weren't even represented by a QC at first and had to bring one in after the first three weeks or so when it had become evident that this was a contest for heavyweights. "It was bizarre," remembers Jeanne Wall. "It was so beyond one's experience to be a sort of pawn or puppet, pushed and pulled. It felt so totally unreasonable, so totally unjust, so totally untrue. The whole thing was unreal. One was quite unable to talk freely about what had happened. Because of the the quasi-judicial set-up, like a trial, the cross-examination, one had to answer only what one was asked, with no opportunity to talk. It was so unprofessional -- Olive Stevenson apart -- and so sensational which was beyond our experience, because until that time nothing had been more private than social work (Shearer, Jan. 9, 1979, p. 14).

The Report to the Inquiry not "only found that East Sussex had failed by its own professional standards, as it itself knew, but threw the very nature of professional practice into question -- and that in an authority whose senior officers were then, and are now, nearly all specialists in child-care" (Shearer, Jan. 9, 1979, p. 13). The Report censured the two social service departments involved, yet despite this it was the individual social worker who carried most of the burden of blame. Her role got more attention in the report than any other professional worker.

... the Colwell inquiry showed -- as did its report -- that whatever may be said about societal and

collective responsibilities, it is inevitable that no individual social worker can expect to escape the most minute examination of what they did or did not do if an inquiry is set up into something that went wrong. Diana Lees, who was Maria's social worker from 1970 until her death, was in the stand at the inquiry for 25 hours. She had to have physical protection as she went in and out of the hearing (Shearer, Jan. 9, 1979, p. 13).

The focus on the individual worker created considerable anxiety for other practitioners. The competence of the profession was being publicly doubted. As Shearer continues, the report "raised fundamental questions about the very principles on which social work with children in care and their families is based, most particularly about the tangled triangle of child, foster parents, and natural parents" (Shearer, Jan. 9, 1979, p. 12).

Although Colwell was certainly the most important incident, several other tragedies followed. By 1978, there were ten published reports on the death of, or grave injury to, children with whom social services were actively involved. What was the impact of this on social workers and their practice? NAI became a top priority for SSD's, perhaps at the expense of other services. NAI work is also the most prescribed area of practice, with a manual on child abuse for practitioners. As well, NAI work is governed by its own hierarchy of accountability and structures in the area review committee. Following Colwell, anxiety and fear seemed to be the dominant feelings of social workers engaged in NAI work. This was noted by Parsloe and Stevenson (DHSS, 1978b), in their research, wherein they claimed that social workers:

... were most often concerned with non-accidental injury to children and, in every study of area teams, social workers referred, not simply to the professional anxiety which such situations created, but to their fear of being found wanting and called to account. This applied right across the United Kingdom, and the phrase "another Maria Colwell" was the common shorthand used by many social workers, some of whom, one suspects, had not read the report and were not using it as a symbol of the complexities of the "tug of love" but simply the horror of a child on their caseload dying at the hands of a parent (p. 322).

SUMMARY

It is difficult to underestimate the impact of the Colwell and subsequent tragedies in creating a climate of anxiety around child abuse practice. How have this fear and anxiety affected the labour process of state welfare workers in child abuse cases. We saw, in the previous chapter, that Parton and others argue that the child abuse tragedies provided a vehicle for tighter management control over welfare work and that a more coercive and controlling practice ensued, consistent with the rising hegemony of the New Right. However, we have questioned the determinist nature of this argument in relation to welfare work, stressing instead an analysis of contradictions of welfare practice.

The specific relationship of non-accidental injury practice to the current social and economic conditions requires further exploration. In the following chapter, we will undertake a specific empirical examination of non-accidental injury practice in two London borough social service departments in order to begin to address this.

In this chapter we have highlighted the contradictory context for welfare practice in the area of child abuse. We previously argued that the limitations of the theoretical approaches of Braverman and Hall required an alternative theoretical approach which takes as central the analysis of contradictions inherent to social-democratic ideology and practice. In this manner, we have discussed the contradictions of the Seebohm reorganization, including the battle between managerialism and its opponents, the activity of the Labour Party, and the child welfare policies and legislation. This allows a wider understanding of the framework for child welfare practice in Britain in the late 1970s. The discussion of the Maria Colwell inquiry has raised the issue of a new coercive tilt in non-accidental injury practice, the room for which is contained in the contradictions of a mandate of child protection with its care-and-control tension.

We will now turn to an empirical examination of non-accidental injury work to further our understanding of such practice in the current context.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL WORKERS' EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL SERVICE

DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

In previous chapters, changes in the organization of social work since the implementation of the 1970 Local Authorities Social Services Act were considered. Since that time, several theorists argue, a process of bureaucratization in social service departments has greatly reduced the autonomy of social workers as practice is increasingly subject to management control. Professional control over the social work labour process is thought to have been subverted by hierarchical management structures and bureaucratic exigencies. Workers, it is said, feel they are being deprofessionalized within local authority structures and are powerless to assert professional influence over departmental policy (Jones, 1983; Simpkin, 1979; Glastonbury et al., 1980; Bolger et al., 1981).

As we saw in Chapter Two, theorists following Braverman (1974) have tried to explain recent developments in the organization of social work by borrowing the concept of "proletarianization," which originates in marxist theory of the capitalist labour process. An empirical examination of the structures which bear on practice and social workers' experience of these will provide a clearer understanding of the nature of contemporary social work labour processes.

In this chapter, data are presented from my interviews with sixteen local authority social workers employed in two area teams in an inner-London borough; these workers were all qualified social workers, but with varying lengths of experience. Also interviewed were four seniors and two team leaders. Apart from the two team leaders, all fourteen social workers were directly involved in statutory cases of non-accidental injury. Workers themselves were interviewed in order to gain an understanding of their experience of the structures which bear on statutory social work practice. Non-accidental injury cases were discussed with them because this is clearly an area of current social work practice that has been subject to management intervention. Given the history of child abuse inquiries, this area of practice is associated with a considerable degree of risk for children, consciousness of which and possible attendant publicity raises the risk as well for workers and their departments. Management's response to this has been to tighten up policy and

procedures governing non-accidental injury work. A child abuse manual (see Appendix C) is provided to workers which spells out step-by-step procedures to follow in conducting non-accidental injury practice, including when and how case conferences will occur, operation of the non-accidental injury register, use of place of safety orders, and so on. This area of practice, then, can be differentiated from most other areas (for example, work with the elderly or welfare rights), in the extent to which it is subject to management structures, controls, and direction. It therefore represents the best case example in social work for the Braverman thesis of proletarianization which posits a process of management domination over the labour process.

The questions posed specifically by this study are: what is workers' experience of management control in statutory practice with children? What do the data from interviews with local authority social workers tell us about the "proletarianization" thesis?

CASE CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

Aspects of non-accidental injury case conferences represent a specific structure that bears on non-accidental injury practice and permits management to exert a closer scrutiny of and control over social workers' decision making. It could therefore be argued that this is a mechanism which weakens professional autonomy and thus contributes to proletarianiza-

tion of welfare workers. Hence, the questions to be considered from the evidence of this study are, what is social workers' experience of the case conference structure? Do case conferences limit individual workers' discretion and, if so, how do practitioners experience this? We will first examine the formal objectives of the case conference structure and, second, we will examine this structure in workers' practice experience.

Regular case conferences became mandatory in non-accidental injury work with the issuing of DHSS Circular LASSL (1974) 13, which immediately followed the Colwell Inquiry Report. The Colwell Inquiry identified lack of coordination and effective communication between involved parties in the Colwell case as a major weakness. Case conferences were meant to redress this. As well, conferences were envisaged as a mechanism whereby decision-making in specific cases could be shared.

As we noted previously, according to the departmental child abuse manual, the purpose of the case conference is:

- a) to share amongst people concerned all the information available at the time concerning the family and the child/children;
- b) to decide what immediate action is required;
- c) to agree on a long-term plan if appropriate and possible to do so.

In addition, it is stipulated that any agency (education, welfare, health, police, etc.) whose suspicions about a child are aroused should be responsible for the initial investigation and medical examination.

The case conference is meant to be a decision-making forum, and membership must include representatives from participating agencies (as well as persons directly involved) with sufficient seniority to act on behalf of their agencies. As also noted in the previous chapter, it is further specified that while the case conference cannot commit the social service department to any particular form of statutory action, "it is most important in normal circumstances that the Department should comply in detail with the decisions/recommendations of the case conference." Deviation from this requires the consent of the Assistant Director, Field Services, or the Director of Social Service. The importance and authority assigned to case conferences is unambiguous (see Appendix C).

Thus, the formal objectives of the conference are clear, but how do case conferences work in practice? How do social workers believe that they function? And how do these data relate to the proletarianization or reduction of professional autonomy thesis we are concerned with?

- Are case conferences a mechanism for limiting individual social worker's' autonomy or discretionary decision making? If so, do social workers resent this encroachment or welcome it?

- Do case conferences allow social workers the opportunity to reduce risk to themselves; i.e., is there collective accountability for case dispositions?
- Do case conferences really represent collective decision making and shared responsibility for those decisions?

To answer these questions we must consider them in a specific empirical situation.

Positive aspects of case conferences

Generally, case conferences were perceived by line social workers as helpful mechanisms for bringing involved agencies together to consider a specific case situation. This comment by one worker was quite typical:

It's important to have a regular review of the case in terms of what direction the case is going, whether any signs of deterioration or symptoms have occurred, and setting up further goals.

The status assigned case conferences, a front-line worker felt, encouraged inter-agency cooperation and commitment to the process.

There is a certain status to the meetings and agencies probably do feel bound by the decision, whereas perhaps if you're trying to convince perhaps the education welfare that a certain course of action was the right one they perhaps wouldn't necessarily have to along with that, and they might sabotage what we were doing, whereas if you have this area review committee which everybody has to come to it does bind people.

Social workers often viewed case conferences as an opportunity to offload anxiety, acknowledge difficulties, and

share information in order to build up a clearer assessment of the risk to a child. A team leader expresses this:

... I find case conferences quite a relief to know that you're all coming to some joint decision. ... You feel unburdened a bit.

... On the whole, the sharing of information and the acknowledgment, that it is extremely difficult to do something, or if you can't do it, is helpful provided that you have got colleagues around, other agencies that you can trust, and that trust is built up. ... That decisions around NAI are not ever made in isolation or by two people working separately. It's a very traumatic thing which needs a lot of discussion and going over and looking at every angle before decisions are made. The knowledge that in the end that decision, if a decision has been made in that way, that decision will be supported, somebody is not left to carry the can for that.

This last point, "the decision will be supported, somebody is not left to carry the can," articulates a significant statement about the issue of professional autonomy and discretion. Given the risks in non-accidental injury practice, practitioners are expressing a desire for a dilution of their individual responsibility and autonomous decision-making power. Rather, a "shared" decision-making process of case conferences is seen as crucial, as this worker states:

In most case case conferences, you really, as a key worker, rarely make decisions on your own, it is always a collective decision, you can sit and argue it out but it's quite collective ... you're still left to your own devices, but there are certain points, crucial points like, should they go on the register, should we take out this interim care order, should we monitor, and who is going to go and visit and how often, that kind of thing.

Social workers, then, engaged in non-accidental injury work welcomed the chance to share decision making in particular cases, and so did not view the obligation to conference as an intrusion into their professional autonomy. This team leader describes this in a clear summary of this point:

I think the thing about support is the major thing in all areas of work, particularly NAI, that any social worker who is dealing with NAI is in a state of acute anxiety. ... I think it's almost impossible for the social worker who is nearest the situation to actually be the one that makes the decision, an enormous amount of back-up has to go into that to enable that decision to be made and to make it feel like a shared decision and which doesn't free that worker from feeling awful about the situation but at least it takes a bit of the immediate crisis out of it.

Another front-line worker concurs that this need for support exists:

You can discuss a difficult situation with those people and you do actually come out at the end feeling we have all participated in the decision even if we carry the can at the end of it. The decision is there, it's on paper at the conferences, we have minuted that, but what it actually feels like a supportive decision and not a theoretical decision.

Conferences provided an opportunity for workers to express their uncertainty in particular cases. This social worker confirms this function:

I mean, one of the useful roles of a conference is the various people off-loading their anxiety about a particular family ...

It is obvious that part of the intention of setting up case conferences was to relieve some of the burden of respon-

sibility on individual social workers in non-accidental injury situations by having decisions and the responsibility for them rest with the conference members as a whole. Social workers interviewed were, in general, relieved to have the opportunity to reduce their individual discretion in this way. Yet, despite this official intention and formal statements to this effect in the handbook, social workers do not always feel the burden is a collective one.

Barriers to collective decision-making

One of the main hindrances to collective sharing of responsibility identified by social worker informants is the pivotal role of the "key worker" in a case. A worker who had often occupied this role states:

The key worker coordinates what's happening, if someone went away from the conference and later on became concerned about the situation, they should inform the key worker, who is still sort of keeping some sort of rein on what's happening around the family.

Yet, as another worker points out, the role is almost always assumed by themselves as local authority social worker:

There's often a sort of implicit assumption that of course the social worker will be the key worker in a case. There may well be instances where that's not at all appropriate, for instance if the parent has got a close relationship with, say, the health worker or an education welfare officer maybe, if there's been a lot of contact over school things. Perhaps they've never even been seen by social services, they've never come near this agency, and we've never had any reason to visit them. You know, there might be grounds for arguing that another person should become the key worker.

In terms of appointing another participant "key worker," a third social worker comments:

I think probably very rarely that might happen, but I think it's more often the case that it's the social worker. And sometimes at conferences I've actually said, you know, this is a decision we have to make where people are ready to get up and pack their bags and go assuming almost that the social worker is the one who takes on that role, even when another person might be more appropriate.

Despite the influence attached to the key worker role, several workers felt, then, that this role should not necessarily be reserved for a social worker. This worker sums this up:

In an NAI case conference the key worker is allocated and there are very few occasions when the key worker isn't a social worker, be it to a hospital social worker or within the borough. You will never get the health worker nominated as a key worker even though a health visitor has direct access into that family and to situations where examining the child and weighing, or actually seeing the child without clothing.

Social workers' desire to share decision making in non-accidental injury cases has been further undermined by the fact that agencies such as social service departments and the police have the right to unilateral action. Even if a consensus among agencies can be reached, social workers still felt the burden was not equally shared. As this non-accidental injury worker says:

... When you look at press reports of NAI, you never get this impression, it's always, the social worker has failed in this direction or whatever. In actual fact, that is part of the reason for having a conference. So although it's this agency, for

instance, that would take the care proceedings if that seemed to be necessary, and although every agency has the right to their own unilateral action, thus if the police decide they have to prosecute in a certain case, I think they might go ahead and do that regardless of what other people in the conference felt should happen ... Similarly, this agency would have to take care proceedings if they felt that that was necessary and there was evidence to do so, even if there were other people at the conference who perhaps felt that action was a bit too drastic, unnecessary, or whatever ... Mostly people are in agreement, but anyway it's this thing of shared responsibility that's supposed to be there and yet in some ways I often feel that the other agencies don't necessarily see it that way.

Thus, rather than rejecting outside interference into social work practice, workers expressed resentment that they alone seemed to carry the greatest share of responsibility. A certain element of discretion remained with social workers within case conferences despite their desire to reduce or relinquish part of it. Particularly if something goes wrong in a case, the SSD in general, and more often the individual social worker herself, it was believed, would be targetted for blame, despite the fact she was not handling the case alone. Workers complained that other participants and the public seem unwilling to acknowledge shared responsibility in non-accidental injury cases. This same worker elaborated:

Well, it doesn't always feel as though it is. When I talk about shared responsibility, it's shared responsibility for examining the situation and really for determining the degree of risk, that's one of the purposes, you're actually looking and saying that action needs to be taken to protect this child, so you share information in order to make that decision, but you also share some degree of responsibility, if you're all sitting round, for that. I mean, if three people are sitting there saying that, you know, this is not too risky, there

are these positive factors that seem to suggest that and such an incident is less likely to occur again, these kind of things, and it is a shared responsibility. You've all come to a conclusion at the end of the conference with certain courses of action -- so you've made quite important decisions, it's not a unilateral decision by the key worker. It doesn't always feel that way, it doesn't feel that way outside, I suppose. I think as far as the general public is concerned, it's seen as a social services responsibility, if they didn't take more steps than they did to protect a child. I have never yet read any report which talked about the non-accidental injury procedure or the conferences that preceded any tragedy ...

LD: Is that what you mean when you say it doesn't always feel like a shared responsibility?

It never ever says, why, in three conferences, four conferences, six conferences that were held, why didn't this agency or that agency or the other agency decide that more should be done. I mean there's a certain logic there, because in the end it's the social services department that would remove the child through court proceedings, so I suppose there's some justification there for seeing us as the people who've failed ... But I still get back to the same thing that part of that decision has been shared with other people in a conference situation, and it doesn't feel as though they do share properly in that responsibility; usually the buck's passed clearly back to us.

The potential for a real collective decision-making process and responsibility sharing is thus subject to a number of factors. Social workers may therefore make an evaluation of the potential for this and act accordingly. For example, long experience of working together can lead to useful interchange and greater sharing of decision-making responsibility. A worker describes this process:

Well, I've been here for years, so people are bound to get to know you, you do develop a good relation and it makes an awful lot of difference ... You are likely to be more honest, you can even show them

that you're quite vulnerable in the situation with your fears and anxieties. But you can only do that as a caseworker if there's trust and people trust you too, or else you can't expose yourself in that way.

The desire to share the burden collectively in non-accidental injury work can also conflict with the perceived necessity to cover oneself or risk expressing doubt of one's capacity to handle the case in a competent, "professional" manner. Familiarity with conference participants makes the task of monitoring risk easier, as this worker explains:

I know the health visitors that work in my area and I trust them to phone me if they think something's wrong. I know that some schools are better than others about reporting incidents. So I know if I have a school that doesn't want to pick up things, I've got to be more careful. In fact, if you have other professions which are concerned and involved, it does make it much easier as such. You don't feel as if you're carrying the whole lot. But in a sense what I'm saying is that you've got to know your area and who you're working with as well as to know how intensive your work has to be -- you know, where you can relax and not relax.

LD: So what you're saying, then, is that the front-line people that are involved with the family, that have some contact with the family, there is a possibility of sharing the work in some kind of way, although you feel you're ultimately responsible. For people that have no direct contact with the family, then, essentially it's a question of presenting the case in such a way that they will follow your professional judgment, that you can't really expect a collective decision when some people are much more involved.

Well, they can't give you an objective collective decision if all they have is information you're giving them. Because I'm giving them my information and they make the decision on that.

However, when the social worker is the only participant with first-hand involvement with the family, the effective-

ness of the case conference as a collective decision-making body is obviously rather limited, as another worker explains:

All these people turn up and nobody has anything to say and it's just you reporting back ... Nobody has any contact but you. So you sit there and you report and everybody says tap, tap, you know, and that's it.

On the other hand, she continues:

You might have a case that the doctors are involved, the health visitor is involved, the police have become involved and called in in a crisis, and everybody has an opinion. These are the cases where maybe people have been involved and then you can make your decision.

LD: If they've been involved?

Well, yes, I mean, they can only give you an opinion if they're not involved. And again, they're trusting you what you're telling them is the truth. But if people don't trust you, they are going to keep on asking questions, asking questions, asking questions.

Social workers, then, desire to share the decision making and, therefore, the responsibility for events in child abuse cases. Case conferences can go some way toward achieving this, particularly if the participants know and trust each other and if the participants all have first-hand knowledge of the clients in question. Yet social workers feel that a greater portion of responsibility remains with themselves, especially if other participants are only peripherally involved with the family. Social workers may, in this type of situation, even feel they have undue influence in the direction of decision making in terms of manipulating a decision or outcome. These workers comment:

I don't think you do it consciously, but I'm sure sometimes they're there and they are supposed to be making a collective decision, and you think, blast it, they are not involved at all, they just come here, you know, every six months, and they are throwing these things at you, what right do they have. ... You know, why are you questioning me? There's so many things that go on and I think when you get a lot of people, maybe they don't trust each other and things go wrong.

Conferences are just reporting back. They make a group decision but I think any key worker ... can manipulate a decision how they want to, especially when the group doesn't know the case that well, they look to you to tell them what's happening. So if you want to, I mean hopefully you never do it, but unless everybody else is just as responsible, just as involved, then you can manipulate any decision that you want.

This is compounded when a social worker is the key worker, her senior chairs the meeting, and the agenda is set by social services. This type of situation worried social workers, as this senior describes:

A senior who is involved in a case, managing a case also chairs a meeting and in fact can dictate the agenda and the outcome ... I do not think someone who has got an interest, a vested interest in a case, should also be the person who is chairing; it should be an independent person who can make independent assessment or contributions or directions ... I would much prefer that and I would then feel the presentation of a social worker and perhaps a senior has been accepted by someone else or amended by someone else rather than, at present, because to a large extent the dictation of a case can occur within supervision and all we are doing is pushing the view before that group, but I don't think that is on, really.

This would seem to indicate that practitioners are seeking opportunities to reduce their influence in conference decision making. This would not seem to support the thesis of

Parton that workers are being harassed into a coercive practice vis-à-vis their clients. Rather, it seems that workers experience a vacuum of guidance and direction.

On the other hand, neither did social workers want to be bound by a conference decision they disagreed with. This team leader gives an example:

I have also been in conferences which have felt very destructive, very heavy around difficult situations where, in one fairly recent example here, where I reconvened the conference the following day because I was so unhappy about what happened at the initial conference, where I felt there had been no regard to the impossibility of actually carrying out the decision the conference had made. It had taken place, not here, and chaired by myself or another social worker but in a hospital chaired by a consultant with very little sympathy; there had been a very heavy police presence which hadn't wanted to listen to what we were saying. It was a situation where two children had been removed on a place of safety order, where we did not necessarily think that that meant they should be away from home, although there had been quite severe bruising on the children. There had been an extremely violent reaction from the family as a result.

LD: As a result of the place of safety order?

Yes, and I could see the whole thing spiralling into a very heavy decision about the future of the kids, which was not actually related to their needs but to the people's feelings about the parents ... that was what it felt like at the end of the first conference, and having thought about it and having had a particularly difficult time in trying to arrange parental access within 24 hours, we reconvened the conference and said, look, we have got to think again, we are being pushed into a situation which is not good for the kids. We were also frightened of the situation with these parents that we were going to make the wrong decisions ...

The above statement, by a team leader, indicates that the social service component of the case conference was able to influence and reverse a case conference decision they were unhappy with executing. This lends credence to the view of the reality of a margin of manoeuvre practitioners have and which they do exercise.

Inter-professional differences and conflicts in handling decision-making authority can arise over the attitude toward parental rights to participation in such decisions. Social workers generally felt parents should be fully informed as to conference proceedings and even felt they should have a right to be heard at conferences. Yet, as this senior describes, this belief is not acted upon.

I wanted the parents to know that the police were there and that the police knew all about this without telling them the police were going to come. The police were saying, if you tell them I'm going to visit them, they'll have time to concoct a story. But I felt badly because the family didn't know that the police were present at the case conferences. We hadn't deliberately omitted to tell them, but we hadn't. We don't have a sort of a thing where you would automatically say: "Now we've just had this case conference and I think you should know that A.P.C.D., etc., were present ...". I suppose some people say it but my guess is that most people probably don't, they just say, we're just had this case conference and we've talked about X, Y, and Z, and these are the decisions that we've made. So people aren't aware that all these people have got this information about them which is not good. ... To sort of demystify it, really for the parents' sake, would be better.

She states further:

I think parents should have the right of appeal, to be able to put their case to somebody impartial.

LD: Do parents ever get invited to the meetings, the conferences?

I know that from this particular office someone once wanted to invite a parent and that although this agency would have been willing for them to take part in at least part of the conference, not necessarily to be there for the whole of the time, but in fact to contribute their own feelings toward the end of the meeting, that there were other agencies whose representatives said that they would leave the meeting if this parent was allowed to come in.

Another senior worker agrees:

Well, I think the biggest hole is the parents, in this borough anyway, they are not allowed to come to case conferences, NAI case conferences, they're not allowed to put their point of view. I can see that if you're going to be exchanging confidential information or whatever, it would be difficult to have the parents there, but I feel really in principle that the system should be altered so that they can be there. It should be made more accessible to them.

What can be deduced from this desire to have more client involvement and representation at conferences? We can see that social workers recognize the power and importance that such bodies can exercise over clients' lives. They therefore are anxious to limit this by increasing parents' voice in decisions. This is consistent with social work values and ideology about clients' right to self-determination. This belief is in conflict with the "social control" thesis of Parton et al., where social workers are themselves increasingly controlled and, in turn, subject their clients to a coercive control.

However, other agency participants have strongly objected to the idea of parental involvement in decisions being

made about them. A front-line worker explains:

... I can only presume that they felt too threatened by that, I mean, a lot of the people who come to the meetings don't necessarily have the direct contact with the client and I do think they get very frightened. There was an incident prior to that in this office where in fact the parent, having been informed about the register, asked the social worker who had been at the meeting that had made this decision. She was a new worker who saw no reason not to tell that parent who had been there. This parent then did a tour of the different agencies asking to see the different people who had been at the meeting. I mean, not with a loaded shotgun or anything, and I don't think being excessively aggressive, but there was a tremendous fuss and furore after that and I think it led in fact to a policy within this department that although you are able to tell people the agencies that were represented, I can tell my parent that yes, the police were there, the area health authority, the education people were there, but I shouldn't actually use the names. Personally, I feel that's a bit of a copout, a bit of a nonsense. ... The whole purpose of these conferences is supposed to be that there's some kind of shared responsibility for the decision that's made ...

So this social worker not only would like to see clients represented, but further would like the other participants to accept this.

Another source of tension is police involvement in social work practice which relates to aspects of both the care and the control social workers see themselves as juggling.

The policeman who came here was attached to me for the day ... we did a couple of visits, he was all right, and then he and I, you know, we had such a bloody argument at the end of it and I just thought he had no understanding at all. We were absolutely poles apart. It was like he would have given them all a short, sharp shock, and he thought I was going, oh, the poor little things, they're all deprived, which is far from the truth, really.

Police presence highlights the "control" elements in statutory child abuse work, which social workers want to temper with the "care" elements.

Summary -- case conference structure

The data on case conferences, then, show that social workers are uneasy about exercising professional discretion in non-accidental injury cases, and therefore want to widen and share this responsibility. Individual professional autonomy is experienced as a dangerous thing; it is the individualized element of this discretion which makes it frightening. Workers, therefore, are actively seeking structures which offer protection and support. Case conferences provide some opportunity to share their anxieties and the burden of risk and responsibility. However, practitioners felt that the case conference structure does not go far enough toward collectivizing responsibility; workers still feel they ultimately will be held responsible for events. This leads to a contradictory position in which, on one hand, they want their influence and discretion limited, but on the other, they want to influence conference functioning, for example, to discourage a heavy police orientation toward punishment and control and to open up conferences to greater parental participation.

Apart from the case conference structure, other management-initiated intervention into non-accidental injury prac-

tice includes the child-abuse manual of procedures on how to conduct non-accidental injury cases. One of the major themes that emerged from the interviews concerns workers' experience of and relationship to such management procedures contained in the child-abuse manual (see Appendix C). This aspect of the data is important in its connection to the thesis of Braverman and others, who would view management-initiated procedures as a form of bureaucratic control over workers. It is important, then, to examine front-line workers' experience of and relationship to non-accidental injury procedures in order to assess the relevance of Braverman's theory for the practice of social work.

NON-ACCIDENTAL INJURY PROCEDURES

Lack of awareness of management controls

One significant finding concerning the issue of management procedures dominating social work practice was that it was not uncommon for workers to exhibit a lack of awareness of and knowledge about management-initiated structures and procedures, both in terms of their content and nature and the source from which they emanated. For instance, when queried about the child-abuse manual for practitioners on policy and procedures, these workers responded:

I don't know, I really don't know. I have no idea where it came from, up in King Street somewhere, so it came from ATL level or above. Whether ATL's were actually involved in its writing and its composition I do not know.

I'm not sure as I have never read it. It sort of appeared in my pigeon-hole one day and I think it

had the Coordinator's name on it so I think it's he who keeps the at-risk register. I really don't know who wrote it, to be honest.

The case conference? I think that is in the green book, which I haven't read.

LD: Do you use the handbook when you are on duty?

Well, I never have.

I have never read it, perhaps I ought to now after this.

LD: Do you use the handbook?

No.

LD: Have you seen it?

Yes, I have seen it. ... I have looked at it occasionally, but I have never read it properly or digested it properly.

LD: So you don't have an opinion as to whether it's a useful thing or not?

No.

I queried one worker, who described a particularly difficult non-accidental injury situation:

LD: When you got the allocation and were advised by two colleagues that it was up to you whether you took the place of safety order at that point, or whether you should wait until you contacted the parents, did you think of consulting the manual about that?

No, no, at that time I didn't even have a handbook. I got my handbook after my first Place of Safety order.

Similarly, knowledge of the management-initiated structures which directly bear upon non-accidental injury practice was often very scanty. For example, the Area Review Committee is an inter-agency body with membership of senior offici-

als "which reviews all aspects of the management of cases of child abuse" and advises "on the formulation of local practice and procedures to be followed in the detailed management of cases" (see Appendix C).

In response to a question about the Area Review Committee, a worker commented:

I don't know much about that, I didn't know they existed. That's a big gap, isn't it.

This kind of comment would not seem to indicate much support for the thesis of social work proletarianization. If practitioners can remain oblivious even to the existence of structures and procedures which are meant to guide their practice, the case for proletarianization is obviously weakened.

Even where practitioners were aware that structures and procedures existed, they did not necessarily have any familiarity with the way these functioned or their composition, as this interchange with a senior shows:

LD: Okay, so tell me something about the register, then, the criteria for the register and how it operates. Tell me about the register, is it effective?

Well, I think I have to get the manual out for that. I couldn't do it out of my head, off the top of my head.

LD: Well, tell me about the register more generally, what are the criteria for putting a kid on the register?

Well, even for that I'd have to get the manual out.

LD: Well, there are physical criteria, physical abuse, but it can be more than that, can't it?

The thing is I'm not absolutely sure, to be honest. I mean, I think it's getting wider and wider, every borough varies, you don't want me to get the manual, eh?

LD: No, do you consult it a lot, the manual?

A bit, yes. Not enough, really, I don't think. Well, to be honest, I haven't had a good look at the manual, I feel really bad.

LD: Do you think it might solve all your problems then, you figure?

Well, it might, I mean I do ... if things happen then I do look in it.

Anxiety about procedures

On one hand, there is the feeling that the manual is important, but it often does not seem it is important enough to be read, even though this induces guilt related to expectations that workers and especially seniors should be familiar with such procedures. This senior says:

To be honest, I'm not absolutely clear on that. I do feel quite guilty, really, I'm not absolutely clear on that. The thing is, I suppose if I got the manual out, we'd learn it. I think really the manual should be used more.

The presence of formalized procedures can, however, generate anxiety and guilt when workers try to make their practice conform to the official model. The chaotic reality of case development and events may often be at odds with the linear steps and categories laid out in the manual, as this worker notes:

... The other thing about it is it's nicely typed up and quite informative if you're lucky enough to be able to start on page one and work your way right through to page 20, great.

Another practitioner agrees:

Therefore, instead of using the manual because the manual makes it look so simple, you do steps one, two, and three; now, this never happened in this case because in the meantime, taking the kids and placing them with foster parents, the parents came to pick up the girls from the childminder and she could not say to them, look, she was bruised so I took her up to Social Services. Instead, she sort of said, well, Social Services have got them, and wouldn't be very forthcoming with information.

As Glastonbury notes, the formal procedure for non-accidental injury cases "assumes that such events have a clarity that makes them amenable to a set of rules" (Glastonbury et al., 1981, p. 98). There are, perhaps, two levels of reality given credence here, the one imposed by management of laid-out formal instructions for handling non-accidental injury cases, and the other reality of day-to-day practice of individual workers in which the manual does not necessarily have an overt relevance nor a determining presence.

Rules as support

Yet even though the procedures may not impose directly on day-to-day practice, the existence of such manuals may be experienced as a support rather than as an unwanted controlling structure. For example, as this senior states:

When I worked in another borough they had an absolutely fantastic manual. You'd never need to put a foot wrong with that.

Similarly, the worker who said she consulted the manual "if things happen," i.e., if a non-accidental injury emergency presents itself, indicates that at such times workers may refer to the manual with relief rather than perceiving such formal instructions as an incursion into their professional autonomy. This senior says:

... I was dealing only with intake duty and we had a lot of NAI work coming in there. So I would just get out the manual and go through the manual with the social worker and say you must go round and you must do this and you must do that. If they won't do this, tell them this. I mean, I know it's only a guideline but I think guidelines help reduce people's anxiety.

Another senior comments:

I think it is quite good and I think it was really needed because a lot of us are quite vague about the procedure. However superfluous the procedure might be in terms of the case and what actually happens, it is clearly laid down and easy to follow and that means workers of different ranges of experience can come to that booklet and actually sort out the nuts and bolts of what they see when and what they do next and they can make sure they haven't missed something. I mean, when things are really tense it can be really easy to forget the health visitor, say, that could be a crucial thing but you are so busy rushing about you have forgotten the health visitor because you are too busy thinking about the kids, getting the kids to hospital or whatever. Then you might miss an agency out and I think that is why the book is quite good, it is a good check so that you make sure that you do not miss anything.

This front-line practitioner agreed:

Yes, it's quite clear and straightforward ... you can't keep it all in your head and you just keep it on your desk. I got it on my desk at the moment and if you need to clarify ... it's easy to refer to. I mean, it's not something I could quote you off pat, obviously. And the sort of work I do, like with NAI, you very rarely think about the reg-

ister, it's just working with the family; but when you need to it's quite clear, I think.

As these comments indicate, the manual of procedures can offer workers support and assistance in some high-risk and tricky situations.

Procedures as protection

The bureaucratic nature of the management "solution" to the panic around child abuse associated with increased use of case conferences and a proliferation of procedure manuals did, however, make some workers suspicious and doubtful of the purpose and effectiveness of this policy. It was seen by these workers primarily as a protection for the social service department against potential public criticism in the wake of successive scandals in child abuse cases. Notwithstanding this, though, media-heightened anxiety around child abuse also affected workers on the front line who felt vulnerable and exposed, and so experienced a need for protection themselves:

You're anxious, because if the kid dies, or is horribly maimed and you've been going in to that family, you're the one who's going to get the blame.

There's very much the tension about the situation that if you make a mistake, and you're quite likely to make a mistake, it's going to be your fault.

The handbook serves a symbolic function, in that it represents that the social service department has considered the problem of child abuse, or perhaps the problem of child

abuse scandals, and even has a formal policy and procedures manual as evidence. This symbol, although useful to local authority councillors and senior management, also protects front-line workers:

I mean, it's good to know that you've actually got a guideline, don't get me wrong, I think it made me feel a lot safer to know you've actually got a guideline, so if anything goes wrong, you can say, look, we've got an official guideline, this is what we're going by, whereas if you were all by yourself as a social worker, on your own initiative, you make your own decisions, and I'm really glad there is a guideline because it's such a sensitive and highly explosive area.

... So the anger at them [abusing families] becomes focused on the agency which purports to deal with these cases, and the fault is therefore left on the agency door if accidents happen, and I think this has influenced administrators and local authorities into ensuring that there are guidelines and procedures to be followed so that one is exempt from guilt.

LD: In terms of having gone through the proper channels?

In terms of actually children coming to harm and that harm being publicized.

It is clear from these comments that welfare practitioners are looking for some measure of protection and support from their departments in carrying out this stressful and demanding work. Particularly in the area of child abuse, where anxieties run high, social workers feel at considerable risk. Management has responded to the panic by tightening up administrative checks and controls over practice. Formal procedures and structures can be experienced by workers as a necessary support rather than as an incursion into their

practice autonomy, in that they provide to some degree a "map for action" and some defense against public criticism and scapegoating. Yet, given the often chaotic reality of events in such situations, this type of response can at the same time generate anxiety as workers attempt to make their cases and practice fit the formalized version.

Interpretation of rules

The view of social work practice, as determined by management structures and procedures, is further countered by the impossibility of complete subjection of social work practice to a set of rules. It is also clear from the data that workers' judgments and interpretations are inherently necessary in day-to-day practice situations even where rules are meant to be applied, as these comments indicate:

... So I don't really think it was procedures he was following. I really don't know what he was doing that day. I don't think you can hide behind procedures ...

However much you try to standardize a procedure, the people's judgment about where that procedure is applicable will always vary and some people philosophically will do their best to keep everybody off the register and some people will say that everybody ought to be on the register. Some people will just forget to take them off and then it isn't a foolproof way of making sure that that is the hard core of real problems at all.

Well, I don't think there's any procedure which says you have to strip-search children. It's the interpretation, isn't it ...

I suppose the only purpose it serves when you have procedures is that it does help you to sit down and think, and you know you've got to collect your

facts and it's an incentive as such. But I don't know how it safeguards the social worker on the front line or what she does with the family or not actually.

... And that is my frustration, you know you have these procedures but unless you've got good practice to go with it, it's meaningless.

LD: So despite the procedure you still have an element of individual judgment?

Yes, that's right.

Modification of rules

It is this element of individual social workers' interpretation of rules set down by the social service department which provides her with room for discretionary judgments. An example of such "room to manoeuvre" is portrayed in this senior worker's description of a decision as to whether or not to place a child on the non-accidental injury register--the formal social service department criterion is that this should be done where there is "grave professional concern" on any one of three criteria of abuse or neglect--physical, sexual, and emotional.

Physically and emotionally, we looked at both aspects and it was felt that the kid was emotionally at risk and was physically at risk. But it was also looked at in terms of whether there was any advantage to the work with the family with the kid being on the register. In other words, was the situation going to arise where being on the register would help the kid, and in that particular situation it was felt that this was not the case and that the kid would not benefit particularly by being on the register so the kid did not go on the register.

LD: That is interesting because ... according to the procedure the kid should have been on the register but the group, from what you are telling me, is in-

interpreting procedures or modifying procedures as they go along in the process of doing the work.

This shows that there is not necessarily a direct, unilinear relationship between a set of rules and practitioners' adherence to them. Rather, workers intervene in this relationship and may ignore, adapt, or change the rules as they see fit. Thus, despite these procedures, non-accidental injury practice still contains elements of uncertainty. This aspect of non-accidental injury will be further discussed in the next chapter, on defensive social work practice.

Summary -- non-accidental injury procedures and structures

What does this examination of social workers' experience of formal management structures and procedures tell us about the theories of Braverman and Parton? We have examined a set of structures and procedures that surround non-accidental injury practice. It is true that non-accidental injury practice has been subject to detailed and obvious management intervention. Such intervention has taken the concrete form of a manual of procedures which attempts to spell out the precise manner in which suspected child abuse cases should be handled. At the recommendation of the DHSS, management has also initiated structures which bear upon non-accidental injury practice. The non-accidental injury register and case conference proceedings theoretically must be followed in non-accidental injury cases. This, then, represents the best

case for the theories of Braverman and Parton in relation to the organization of the labour process of social service workers.

How does this empirical evidence reflect on the proletarianization thesis of Braverman or the "social control" thesis of Hall and Parton? First, it seems apparent that welfare practice is not subject to management control in any direct fashion. Practitioners retain considerable discretion, even within a case conference structure which is meant to limit their autonomy, and with non-accidental injury procedures which are meant to direct their practice. Moreover, welfare workers expressed anxiety about the margin of manoeuvre or element of discretion that remains and wished to reduce this further.

The experience of the relationship to non-accidental injury procedures, when examined empirically, contradicts the proletarianization thesis. Workers do retain practice discretion despite management intervention. Furthermore, rather than experiencing the management procedures as an unwanted form of management control over practice, workers experienced these as protection for themselves. This necessity of "protection" for workers will also be examined in more detail in the following chapter, on defensive social work practice.

We have so far considered workers' experience of procedures and structures which bear specifically on non-accidental injury practice. I will next address two more genera-

lized aspects of social workers' experience of structures. The first aspect concerns their relations within the area team, i.e., between front-line workers, seniors, and area team leaders. Some aspects of these relations will be examined within the context of a discussion of the differences between the two teams, as this is how these data emerged. Such differences concern organizational models and ideology within which the two teams function. Second, I will examine some team members' experiences in relation to the social service department hierarchy, i.e., relations external to the area team. Implications of this empirical data for the theories I have been arguing against, as well as those for practice, will be discussed.

EXPERIENCE OF AREA TEAM STRUCTURE

Social workers were interviewed in two area teams in an inner London borough. One of these teams was unusual in that it functioned on a collegial model with an explicitly democratic philosophy. This required that all team staff, from clerical and administrative through to the team leader, were regarded as equals, and that all participated in team meetings and group supervision. A senior explains the team's commitment to operating collectively in a non-hierarchical fashion.

I think everybody is seen here as colleagues. That includes the admin and that works much better. I

mean, this team is unique; if you were to ever study teams, we're set apart, because we've got an open-door policy which is the only one in the country and usually we work our way as a team. I mean, there are some things that other people would do, guidelines that are set down, but we just work our way in the best interests of our clients.

That this team could set up a non-hierarchical method of functioning itself runs counter to the thesis of management control through centralization of power suggested by Braverman's thesis. It also belies the position of Hall and Parton of a right-wing hegemony, in that it fails to express itself in the specifics of a social service department area team. Yet the attempt to function collectively certainly countered the prevailing norms of organizational structure within the local authority.

Team leaders' role

This way of operating puts strains on the area team leader of the non-traditional team, who is seen by the SSD hierarchy and the outside world as still accountable for the actions of his team members, despite the democratic philosophy and collective identity of the group. The team leader thus felt it was necessary to have a constant flow of information among group members and particularly with himself as the area team leader.

Yes, it is a problem, but it works on the basis of trust, I mean, I have to trust as team leader here, the rest of the team to recognize that accountability and therefore to make sure things are known and shared. You cannot be accountable for things you do not know about -- and to share infor-

mation and to be sensible about decision making. I think it is a difficult system but it has worked; ultimately I am accountable for everything that goes on in this office and everybody recognizes that. I have never yet come across a situation where I have been sold out by the team, although the process of arriving at that point is a very complicated one and takes a long time and often decision making takes a long time; everybody knows that at the end of the day if I am to carry the can and the team have always been very good about making sure that things were covered and done properly and that I have all the information so that if I carry the can at least I carry it with full knowledge.

Rather than the team leader representing managerial control over subordinates, the opposite seems to be expressed here; this team leader is dependent on his team members' collective cooperation in equipping him to carry out his role vis-à-vis being accountable to the social service department hierarchy.

This area team leader, in weekly team-leader meetings, also adopted a position of representing his team by explicit mandate. As one of the line team members states:

He much more sees himself as mandated; the rest are hierarchical managers.

Supervision of practice

Another area where differences between the two teams was most apparent concerned the nature of supervision. Supervision in social work is normally carried out on a one-to-one basis with the immediate senior. In the "collective team," this had been replaced by group supervision. As this senior describes:

I would like to point out that supervision is not traditional in this team and that we have no offi-

cial one-to-one supervision except for new staff members, who are given an option of about six months in one-to-one supervision, or students. All the rest of the supervision is done in groups, all of it and the admin are included in those groups as well, and I think that is actually quite important in terms of the supervision that cases get because they get a much more different thing than you would get in a one-to-one and that is the philosophy of the team.

Participants in group supervision process praised this aspect of team functioning, believing it helped to promote a strong team identity and solidarity amongst members. The team leader states:

Other teams work on different supervision systems and we like to work on group supervision principally and that makes for much more group feeling. I mean, the team also has a very strong group identity as a whole team. I have known when members of the team happen to be around at five o'clock in the evening when a decision has to be made in an NAI case to sit down together and thrash it out for an hour and a half before the decision was made. There is a feeling of corporate responsibility.

This form of supervision was felt by the team to be superior to the traditional model in meeting workers' practice needs. Here, a senior expresses this:

Because of the group supervision in my experience people feel much more open about discussing their needs in the group than they do frequently in one-to-one, because you get personality clashes in one-to-one sometimes that frequently are never resolved so really you get no supervision effectively. Some social workers get no supervision because they don't like their supervisor and quite often they are quite right not to like their supervisor. Supervisors are frequently distanced and aren't feeling anxieties of actually doing the job and that is why we have made sure here that the seniors and the ATL carry cases and do duties like everybody else, no fancy back-up, they actually do it,

there is no way they get used to sitting in a little office.

Further, seniors in this team felt it allowed workers access to a greater pool of experience and knowledge.

... The other big aspect of supervision in the team is that there is an awful lot of informal supervision in that people are encouraged as a matter of course to share experiences on cases and there is a lot of common knowledge and people don't gravitate towards the seniors or the hierarchy for supervision, they gravitate towards the experience and the knowledge. That is the theory of it. So that is quite different perhaps to most traditional teams.

All workers get just the normal group supervision unless they wish to speak to any member of the team who felt they had either experience of the family or who had experience of a similar case. That would be encouraged.

What do these descriptions of peer supervision tell us? It seems that practitioners do not reject the idea of their practice being subject to supervision in this team. It is not experienced as a mechanism of bureaucratic control; rather, it is viewed as a necessary and welcome sign of support and opportunity to learn and improve their practice. The fact that such evaluation and direction of practice are undertaken in peer groups, it was felt, strengthened team solidarity. Thus, we can see that workers are looking for structure to frame their practice and are satisfied when this can be undertaken collectively.

The proletarianization thesis would view the supervisor in social service departments as immediate management. Yet often the way social workers experience both group and indi-

vidual supervision and supervisors does not confirm the proletarianization theory. If this were correct, social workers would experience their immediate management as many other workers do, for example, as analogous to the foreman on an assembly line. Clearly, in these descriptions of supervisory relations within the non-hierarchical team, the foreman analogy does not hold. Even in the traditional team, where one-to-one supervision was still common, the foreman analogy clearly does not fit.

This traditional area team operated with a combination of one-to-one and group supervision. They expressed some doubts about the feasibility and effectiveness of exclusively group supervision. As the senior from the traditional team says:

Well, also I think people feel and quite rightly, they wouldn't get enough time and space in group supervision. I don't know how you can only have group supervision and everybody's cases to be dealt with. I don't see how it works, really. Group supervision is only a recent development and in my group we haven't really got it off the ground yet. I mean, I would see it as more people bringing cases really and getting a wider view on their cases. But people are fairly reluctant to bring cases because it's exposing yourself to more than one person. And so we tend to do themes like working with Nigerian families or problems with residential adolescents, things like that.

Some of the benefits of one-to-one supervision were also pointed out by this senior:

Well, I think it's seen as a bit of a goody, really, that this is your time for you, and to talk about your cases and to say whatever you want and to review your development as a worker. It's a more protected thing.

LD: A protected space?

Yeah. Rather than group supervision, where you're much more vulnerable.

It is interesting to notice the use of the terms "exposed" and "vulnerable" here. To feel exposed or vulnerable perhaps means worker fear they might not measure up to an ideal of what a competent professional should be. That is, the notion of professional autonomy requires practitioners to be capable of functioning autonomously in a sure and competent manner. But workers frequently do not feel this way, and individual supervision is the terrain in which workers have most often been faced with these feelings. This can mean anything from denial or hiding these feelings from superiors or, on the other hand, risking "exposure" in the attempt to get some guidance and support. However, it is clear that even where supervision is carried on on an individual basis, as in the traditional team, it is not necessarily experienced as a simple control mechanism.

Perhaps the group supervision model was seen as successful in the collective team precisely because this individualism of practice is broken down through group responsibility for many difficult decisions. Workers may thus feel that it is okay to fall short of the "autonomous professional" ideal promulgated by the elite of the profession. This ideal is replaced by the value placed on team support and identity which counters some of the anxieties and risks associated

with non-accidental injury practice. As a practitioner in this team says:

I can't emphasize too much how much team support I got and how much senior support I got from my senior because he actually gave up his case and spent a lot of time. A lot of support, I mean, this team is a team in anything you do, not just NAI but any crisis-oriented work you do, which I think is very important, not just on NAI, but NAI being such a crucial thing and a sensitive thing.

She continues:

Everybody knows this team and how -- knows our way of working. I think people admire, I mean I've always admired this team. As a student I always wanted to come here and work, they fight for places to come here as a student 'cause it's completely different, 'cause it's team work.

The point this worker is making is critical to this thesis. Workers want guidance, they want support, and they want structure. Yet they want these in a way that does not individualize them. The "team" is crucial to workers as a significant source of support and guidance. Given the importance of the seniors' role in providing this, it merits a more detailed examination.

Seniors' role in the traditional team

The different philosophies of the two teams were quite apparent in seniors' perception of their role. In the traditional team, for example, one senior felt that it was his responsibility to monitor closely allocation of cases and case-load type and number of workers within his catchment area or "patch."

LD: Is that your decision, who's eligible for what kinds of cases?

Yes, I think that is my decision. ... people can take the case on and if there is no reason for me to exclude any of the workers in my patch, it would then be a question of assessing within the patch and within my experiences of individual supervision I provide as to who has got the space to take that case on in terms of the intensity of pressure existing in other cases and the number of cases that they have.

LD: Then people volunteer?

Yes, people volunteer. If people say that they don't have scope to take that kind of case on and that's the universal statement made by the patch, and I don't see any reason to disagree with that that kind of case would be held on duty or by myself until such time as a space was available. So I do not in fact allocate a case irrespective of the kind of space that exists, there has been no need at the moment to go systematically through someone's caseload, to say you must drop this because this is higher priority. At the moment what is happening is that the patch has been able to absorb NAI cases that are referred to us.

Another senior, however, within the same traditional team, tried to operate with less direct or overt direction:

We just hope that things are kind of worked out in a way that we don't have to come into direct conflict with other people.

When people bring cases to me, you know, they come for advice, guidance on what to do. I don't see why what I've got to say is any better than what anybody else has got to say, you know, a lot of people that work here are just as experienced as I am. They've got suggestions to make or ways to move forward, especially when you're stuck.

It is interesting to note this discrepancy within the same area team in the two seniors' perceptions of their role. This indicates that an element of discretion or man-

oeuvreability also exists in how the seniors' function is performed. Thus, we see differences in perception as to the necessity or desirability of monitoring and directing subordinates' practice.

Seniors' role in the collective team

However, these statements from seniors in the traditional team can be contrasted to seniors' perception of their role in the other collective area team. Here, as this senior describes, the function of monitoring allocation and case-loads is assumed by the participants of the supervision group as a whole:

Allocation in an NAI case would be very much up to the individual, there might be supervision group pressure for somebody to take less work or for somebody to take a couple of cases, but that is not up to the senior, that is up to the group to say, look, you have got too much, you can't take any more. It is up to the senior in the sense that the senior should be the one who spots it because they know everybody's cases and they know much more of the overall picture, but it is not exclusive in the senior's job ...caseload management is within the supervision group, but at the same time it is very much up to the individual, individuals take what they feel they can take.

He continues:

It wouldn't be my responsibility as a supervisor, as a team member, and that is why we don't work in a hierarchical way, it would not be me as the supervisor to say I don't think that you are experienced enough to take this case, therefore I am not letting you do it, I could never do that. What I could say in the group, that as a member of the group I am not actually sure that you can cope with this, perhaps we should all have a talk about it and see what you think, so the group would discuss it, not just the supervisor. That does occur occa-

sionally, like it might be that somebody builds up too many of one case type and that the group would look at that and say you have got too many kids in care or you have now got four kids on the register and there is no way you should have any more so it would be group pressure not senior pressure, but it would happen that way. People would be sort of confronted as a colleague.

Summary -- relations within the area team

We have seen that between these two area teams there are quite apparent differences in the nature of their functioning, one operating within a collective structure, while the other operates within a traditional hierarchic model. We also saw that this had implications for the role of team leaders and seniors and, in particular, for how supervision was handled. There were, as well, some differences in the seniors' perception of their role within the same traditional team.

That these differences between teams doing identical work exist at all argues against the success of a strategy of bureaucratic standardization and control posited by the proletarianization thesis. These team differences also alert us to the fact that many factors may be important in constructing a practice approach, one of which is quite obviously a clear, consciously adopted ideological position. This does not support the thesis of New Right hegemony. Such hegemony cannot be seen in the specific nature of practice in these social service department area teams. The fact that one area

team can function on a "collective" model shows that practice conditions are not "determined," notwithstanding the ideological inroads of the New Right at a macro level.

Moreover, despite differences in ideology and organizational models between the two teams, it is clear that in neither can we speak accurately of their immediate management level as the equivalent of a foreman as the proletarianization thesis would suggest. Instead, regardless of organizational structure, workers experience their peers and immediate management within this team level as a source of support and protection in carrying out very high-risk and anxiety-provoking practice.

What about the management level external to the area team? We will now turn to an examination of organizational relations between the level of the area team and the social service department.

EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE ABOVE THE AREA TEAM

How do social workers experience organizational structures external to the area team within which they work? What are the relations of area team workers to the hierarchy within the social service department and the borough council? In other words, what is social workers' experience of power within local authorities? Is their experience coloured by the political orientation of the particular local government

administration? Evidence showed that workers felt that one of the major influences on the environment of social service departments as structures within which social workers are employed is the political complexion of the council they are working for. Although this research was conducted within a Labour borough and the experience of this will be examined, several workers first described their experience in other boroughs under Conservative and more right-wing administrators as a point of comparison.

Under Tory boroughs

In general, social work practice was perceived by social workers to be more difficult under a Tory council as compared to a Labour borough. In a group interview, these workers describe their prior experience of social work practice within more right-wing boroughs:

When I worked for a right-wing Tory council, there was less resources all round and less sympathy for the work we were doing and therefore any projects which were aimed at preventative type of work were not given credence, I mean that would just be seen as wasting money ...

... Lack of resources can also mean lack of information as well, there is greater pressure to make assessments with less information and carry out policies with less resources ... There is certainly greater stress and strain, greater turnover of social workers in these situations, and I think that is the way social workers are being used to hold on to things which they are not able to, they are not able to actually give respite resources to families.

... With a more right wing borough they'll be looking at segregating clients at the very hard end, a

very deprived model of what clients are like, those are the only kind of people who would have access to resources.

In this research, the council governing both area teams had recently undergone a political shift toward the ideological left. This shift, in itself, is not accounted for in the "rise of the New Right" thesis. Despite the New Right's increasing dominance at the central government level, certain local governments are exhibiting a contradictory shift left.

Senior management appointments

This political shift had immediate and direct implications in the appointment of most senior social service department management posts. The change makes a difference in social workers' experience of power, as this senior explains:

... In terms of appointments I would feel much more confident of getting support from our present Assistant Director than I would from our last [under SDP] and in a sense they were both political appointments.

The former Assistant Director was always conscious of the council he was working to, and because of that when he knew that they were interested in hierarchical power, he didn't use the team leaders very much at all. As soon as the power changed, you see, he switched over and started giving them more power again.

LD: Did you deal with the former Assistant Director at all?

No, well hardly, well a couple of times, and it was a totally different field. He was much more directive and tried to impose limitations to what you were doing.

A left-wing council administration, workers felt, was

more sympathetic to the need for social services. A team leader says:

The climate seems to have shifted from the former council. Things are more optimistic now, things are about to move in some direction but it's going to take time. I think social workers were demoralized in this borough under the last SDP administration, we were all under attack personally. It's difficult to separate the attack on social workers as a whole, personally, from social work policy, and the two come together.

A senior concurs with this:

We had this council who were very right wing, and they were continually harping and criticizing and picking up everything and lots of little niggles but every single thing that anybody did was criticized and questioned; they were constantly writing memorandums saying, "I saw Mrs. X, who I understand has got telephone for the chronically sick, walking down the street by herself yesterday, why has she got a telephone?" You know, when you are trying to fend off that sort of level you end up not having policies, I think.

The political orientation of the Council, workers felt, then affected the nature of power relations between senior management and the area team workers. Under the new administration, workers felt that the views of social service staff were of more account. As this worker describes:

The style of administration reflects on the style of the Director, where the Director either chooses, partly chooses and partly has to be more open to consultation now than he was two years ago.

Another says:

Our present Assistant Director is very approachable and will discuss individual issues and policy issues with any grade. I could just ring him up and say, "I've just had an NAI conference and I don't like that bit on the second page, maybe something should happen about it." That is not a formal

channel, it's just that the bloke we've got at the moment is alright but the bloke we had before was bloody awful and he would not even talk to basic grade workers. He used a hierarchical system of minutes or written communication, but would not talk to basic grade. So there's no clear structure, it's dependent on personalities and I think it should be formal routes.

Thus, we can see that the political orientation of the Council has an impact on constructing the framework for social workers' experience of how power is distributed within local authorities. This aspect of the construction of welfare practice was left out of Braverman's analysis of changes in the labour process. In the theories of Hall and Parton, the political dimension is assumed to be dominated by the New Right. Yet left-wing Labour administrations have been recently elected with a mandate to work against the centralization of power the central government Tories wish to see and which the former local administration was engaged in.

A specific example of how the political orientation of councillors has an impact on social work practice can be seen in how complaints against the social services are handled. Complaints in this borough are funnelled through a case review subcommittee on which councillors sit.

This worker describes the change in relations between this council committee and front-line practitioners which accompanied the political shift:

The previous administration subcommittee was very prone to making decisions and taking the decisions out of our hands, out of the hands of the social workers. This subcommittee likes to discuss major decisions and may make suggestions about those de-

cisions. It is less likely to interfere with social work practice as long as they are convinced that it is reasonable practice. They do like to be kept informed.

She adds further:

Well, it is certainly much much more rational discussion that goes on. There are now a number of those people on the committee that have a lot more knowledge of professional matters than the previous committee did. They will argue on professional grounds but they won't react in the same way as the last committee did, which were far more inclined to oppose things on principle because they had been put up by social workers.

A process of centralization of decision-making authority, which was initiated by the previous administration, has been halted by the new council:

... The previous council had plans to sort of reorganize us more centrally, centralize us, really -- rather than decentralize us as it is at the moment, and there was quite a lot of opposition to that, from workers in area teams anyway, and part of the problem was that we were saying there was no consultation.

Devolution of decision-making power

Signs of the intention to shift power downwards to the area team level have also accompanied this political/ideological shift at the council level. This is illustrated in relation to controls over financial expenditures, as this senior comments:

Well, we have sort of decentralized authority as far as, I mean, I could sign up to 100 pounds and the team leader could sign up to 200. But if we spend more than 200 a year on any one family, it has to go through the Assistant Director.

A team leader states:

There are still a range of decisions on money and resources, which were during the last administration removed from team leader level, and which some of them are due to come back to team leader level, but still haven't, e.g., restrictions on expenditure. For instance, approval for enhanced payments for foster parents, payments for placing children in private establishments, and money paid to young people who have been in care under section 27 or 29. These sorts of decisions are now Assistant Director decisions but are supposed to be coming back again.

Area team policy input

Some mechanisms for area team workers to influence development of social service department policies which govern approach to service delivery have also appeared recently; under the new administration both team leaders and seniors have formed groups which meet on a regular basis. This senior from the traditional team describes:

In terms of policy formulation, I think the most powerful group in the field social workers' group is the area team leaders' group, because they sit on quite a few working parties. They formulate policy issues which are amended or accepted or rejected by the Assistant Director and Director, but very often changes occur as a result of deliberations of those groups. But there has been by no means an automatic acceptance that senior social workers should be involved, as there has been with area team leaders. ATLs meet weekly and have a very kind of standard agenda and they have other bodies reporting to them so they have much more information. Day-to-day practice issues may be addressed by the seniors.

Another worker within the team agrees:

The team leaders' group is getting more important; previously it was only reacting.

LD: To policy that was initiated elsewhere?

Yes, and so it became a matter of complaining about policy that was initiated elsewhere, they were being asked to implement these policies, but now it is initiating policy, and I think it's working much better in that respect.

It is clear, then, that these workers feel that team leaders do have an important role in the formulation of social service department policy. Seniors, however, are not seen to enjoy the same influence. A senior from the traditional team describes the functioning of the seniors' group:

The seniors' group now meets once a week to consider anything that senior social workers are concerned about and which they wish to share with other seniors. It has representation, not formal representation but by invitation, on various working parties within the borough, i.e., under fives, mental health practice, etc., which examine certain policy areas ... It is used as a forum, really ... there is a need to harmonize the policies of various teams, i.e., transfer of cases, and that would be an appropriate place to discuss that, as seniors are intimately involved ... It has also made certain responses to policy changes which have come from Director, Assistant Director, and ATL's -- reacting to things that other, higher management are wishing to pursue, so it's a reactive and proposal kind of body ... I think potentially it could be a very powerful and potentially a very important group, but we are only just now beginning to get into shape, it's more talking shop with reference to the working policies of those outside that group. So it's a bit emasculated, but hopefully that will improve.

Another senior in the traditional team expressed confidence in the ability of the area team to influence policy development and to give feedback on how well policies were operating in practice:

From this level, if we are concerned about policies, I would express my concern to the area team leader and I would also go to the seniors' group and express my concern there.

In terms of non-accidental injury policy, which is developed by the Area Review Committee, this same senior comments on the possibility of making representations to this group.

Comments were invited about formulation of NAI procedures and the content about indicators to look for from seniors and ATL groups and other interested bodies. That is a standing committee involved with updating that so I mean there is scope to put comments in there for consideration. There is scope to inform this body which meets every quarter, which has representations from senior social workers, ATLs.

However, basic-grade workers' relationship to policy-making remains more distant. This basic grader from the traditional team states:

You see, I'm not sure exactly who is represented on ARC committee, but I believe I'm right in saying that no front-line workers are actually present. I might be wrong about that, I think not. I presume at some level one would be able to express views to them which might or might not be discussed before that committee, I don't know. It's not something that's ever happened to me.

By contrast, the "collective team" had much stronger views on area team input, feeling that the present structures inhibit worker influence. Despite some input of seniors and team leaders' views, the collective team perceived decision making to rest largely with the management group (which consists of the Director of Social Services, Assistant Directors of the different functional areas). This had dampened earlier enthusiasm for the staff participation policy in this team. This senior from the nontraditional team says:

In the past there had been attempts in the department to set up policy groups, advisory groups, and what have you, and there has been no way of feeding them into the management group who in the end make the decisions. They have been advisory, and on occasions the management group has just said that's very nice and gone and done the opposite.

Another worker adds:

Yes, and the groups that have done the work of the department have tended to be seen as advisory rather than decision making, and therefore in the past there was a lot of anger around people doing a lot of work and then being told that is interesting but we are not interested.

This senior, from the collective team, clearly felt that basic graders and seniors were excluded from policy input.

I think our channels on affecting policy, I mean as a basic grade and as a senior, are pretty appalling. I mean, the management structure is really such that I suppose in theory ideas around policy are supposed to go through the area team to the area team leader, then it's taken to the area team leaders' meeting. But it is quite clear that the area team leaders' meeting has no power because there's another management group above that, and they have not got a direct link. They have different management groups for different things from what I understand, but basically there is no clear way that a basic-grade worker can make a contribution about policy directly to the group who actually formulates it. I mean, they do not have any direct input either, which I think is ridiculous, I think they should be actually senior representation, ATL representation, and basic-grade representation at all policy-making groups.

Summary of impact of political orientation of council

In general, evidence presented here indicates that practitioners' relationships to and experience of the social service department hierarchy is not a static phenomenon, but rather it is influenced to some degree by the political will

of the administration. The relations under the present Labour council are clearly preferred by front-line workers. There is, they felt, some degree of openness to the area team viewpoint, and some degree of autonomy over day-to-day practice which area teams exercise.

Some disagreement also exists, however, between members of the two area teams researched, as to how much input they have and their satisfaction with this. It is possible that the "collective team", given their own organization of work at the team level, would have higher expectations for participation in decision making than the more traditional team.

In considering social workers' experience of power within social service departments, it is important to remember that a lack of awareness of management policies (for instance in the finding that it was not uncommon for workers to indicate a lack of knowledge about the nature and functioning of the social service department hierarchy and where policies such as the NAI handbook emanated from) will inhibit worker influence. Without a familiarity with such structures, effective policy input cannot occur.

Hierarchical distance

It is also important to note the perception of several workers, which illustrated a large gap between senior management and the front-line workers and a feeling that management could not be counted on for support in crucial moments such

as in the event of a disaster. This contributes to workers' feelings of powerlessness and isolation, as this worker says:

Well, it seems that in the past when social workers made mistakes, it depends on what kind of management you have, you know, whether they actually admit that they're collectively responsible, and they don't throw the social worker to the lions. I don't know, I suppose basically what I'm saying that I feel that ultimately the social worker is responsible, the management can do a few things to enable her to carry on with their job. But you can bring out as many handbooks and guidebooks as you like, but it's not going to change the way a social worker works.

A senior adds:

Well, I mean, the thing is knowing what she's like, I don't expect anything from her. But I think it's quite an important job. I don't know what the position [of the NAI coordinator] would be if there was a tragedy anywhere.

Another worker agrees:

... For instance, with the previous Assistant Director, I knew that if I made a mistake or somebody was getting at me, I knew that I wasn't going to expect any support as such, that he'd probably cut my throat if he could.

These workers reflect this distance between the area team and head office:

I suppose, when I think of King Street and the Area Review they seem alien. They seem something up there which has nothing to do with my work down there.

The Director of Field Services is not involved, not unless there is some problem or the press has caught onto something, then he knows to have a report.

The lack of management involvement or support of front-line workers contributes to workers' sense of powerlessness.

These problems were especially apparent in relation to the hierarchy specifically related to child abuse practice.

Role of non-accidental injury coordinator

One senior management post which directly concerns the social service department approach to non-accidental injury practice and could potentially be quite important in workers' experience of non-accidental injury practice is that of NAI Coordinator. The function of this position was described by front-line workers as follows:

There's only really one person at Head Office who's responsible for the register. The NAI coordinator, that's her job, it's one person's job to make sure that case conferences are called. She sometimes comes and chairs the meetings. But it's her job to make sure the procedures are followed.

We've got an NAI Coordinator, she's supposed to keep a list of all the children on the register ... She's supposed to come to the NAI case conferences, but of course she can't come to all of them. I see it's just a purely admin thing, like she's got the names on the register, you send her the case notes on the conferences so if anything happens in a crisis then our duty team can pick it up and see what's happening, so it's useful in that way, but it's just having a person in King Street, you know, collecting data.

Widespread dissatisfaction and frustration were expressed with the functioning of the person in this position, as these comments indicate:

It's one of these very dysfunctional things ... it hinges around the personality of the person in the in the NAI post, and the way that person herself does not function and the impossibility of then getting anybody to work satisfactorily.

It's basically to do with the fact that there is a person sitting in that coordinating post who is there because they did not function in another post and is a law unto themselves and who people coming in at admin level find it impossible to work with, so, short of getting rid of that person, which the department would find it difficult to take on, nothing is going to change, is it.

For example, considerable frustration was expressed at the Coordinator's inability to resolve an issue of clerical/administrative support in recording minutes of case conferences.

She is invited to every case conference, the first case conference. But to be truthful she has no clerical support at all and she is often affronted by people assuming that she is going to minute the case conference because she is the coordinator of the child abuse register. It's a great bone of contention. If you can go outside of the social service department you will be supplied with a minute secretary, you go to area health, you go to voluntary agencies, somebody does the minutes. If it's here we have had to give up requesting a minute secretary from King Street because we never get one.

What happens now if we were holding a conference here and if I was supervising it would mean that I would be chairing and the social worker attached to the case would more often than not be doing the minutes, which limits the ability to contribute.

LD: Has a case been made to King Street?

Yes, time and time again.

LD: Who do you make it to?

We make it to the Assistant Director, Admin Service, and the Director, and the Assistant Director, Field Services. We have done it so many times.

Thus, workers felt that their needs and requests for administrative support were repeatedly unheeded. Workers also

felt the NAI Coordinator should be more actively involved in the handling of non-accidental injury. Several workers indicated that they wanted more clinical and less administrative/bureaucratic involvement from the person in this position. This front-line worker, for example, states:

... if she's the coordinator, she is meant to be at the conferences, as a point of duty; or if she's not there, her assistant or somebody should be there because she's the one who is keeping the damn records. She's meant to be more involved, not so laid back.

LD: So you don't see that role should be one that is just administrative, keeping records, you think it should be more active?

Yes. I haven't had contact with the Coordinator on my first case since the last case conference. She hasn't contacted me and asked what's going on. Which I think should be done every three months, even to phone or send a questionnaire around, have you done this, is this happening, etc., to monitor it. So I mean, to me there's just a lot of paper-work stuck away in drawers, if it's on the register, that's it. Not unless something absolutely blows up again.

She continues:

I think that's where management can come down and know what's going on here on this level. This is what I'm saying about keeping in contact. Management doesn't know that the case is blown up, they don't know, 'cause it's on the register and that's it, the social worker gets it on but they don't know what happens after it has calmed down, which I think is quite important because then you could then get together to be able to come and discuss and come up with ideas. Some ideas are quite good, but you need management with you because they actually protect in one instance so you need to work together with them ...

She elaborates on this:

I think that the Coordinator at this moment could do a lot more than what she does do, in terms of

coming down and circulating the area teams. Even if it is to come round once every three months and find out what's happening, how many NAI's we've got, what is going on, how are you finding it? Those kind of things. Do exactly what you're doing now, sitting down and going through things, setting time aside. ... Feedback, there's no feedback.

As noted earlier, some workers expressed doubts about the dominant management response to the whole area of non-accidental injury, which could be characterized as a bureaucratic administrative one designed to protect the social service department from public criticism in the wake of successive scandals in child abuse cases. A senior says:

... there is the focus of public indignation with regard to children at risk and who is culpable, and the current problems that the families have who have this kind of syndrome occurring is not appreciated by the public at large, and so the anger at them becomes focussed on the agency which purports to deal with these cases and the fault is therefore left on the agency door.

It was felt that management's desire to have clear procedures stemmed from this necessity to be protected from public criticism. Yet some workers thought that a procedural orientation hindered alternative, creative social service responses to the problem of child abuse:

I think things can be managed out by procedures as well as procedures being enabling, they can divert from progress sometimes because people think we've got procedures. If only we followed these, then it would be all right.

Within management response to all this, I think there is a distinct lack of imagination, for instance, I think family care work and fostering schemes that involve foster parents with families rather than with just kids, I think there are lots of imaginative, constructive ways that NAI can be

looked at in terms of approach. ... we could recruit loads of local people who would be very good at going in and helping somebody who is going through a bad patch with the kids and actually doing the work and being paid for doing it rather than splitting the family up -- you know, here we go, kids one way, parents the other -- to actually put something in rather than come in and carve the thing up.

Workers also felt the lack of support for their practice in the scarcity of resources which they could offer clients. Everyone was aware that there were no greater resources forthcoming with which to tackle the problem of child abuse, as this senior's comment reflects:

I am very disappointed that the response from management has been procedural, I mean, it hasn't been anything to do with resources, nothing to do with day-care, nothing to do with reasonable housing, nothing to do with looking at why people end up in situations where they just cannot cope and actually looking at the broad political sense or narrow political sense of local resources. There has been none of that, they can all set wonderful registers, you are not actually spending money to do that, you can send a few memos round a few minutes a few middle-management twitter about. It doesn't actually cost you anything but you look as though you have done something when you actually have not done anything.

The lack of resources, coupled with the emphasis on following procedures and defensive administrative behaviour, caused another senior to speculate about a shift in the nature of practice in child welfare.

We are being used, the way we are being used is they say you have got to make this decision and this is the information we give you. If you are wrong, then you are not doing your job properly. The kind of information you have and the kind of decision you have to take become one step greater -- you can't say okay, I can't help this family by

myself but perhaps I can use a day nursery or something else that is needed, but it is not available. Do I then decide to remove the children? So it's a bigger step than you would want to take ...

Another senior says:

I mean, fighting for money is the hardest thing in the world and that is upper management's job, and they don't like it. ... our day-care provisions, from what I gather, virtually all the kids who are ending up in day care other than child-minding in this borough are somehow or other at risk.

Workers, then, have expectations of management in the social service department that management at all levels has a responsibility to be involved and supportive in establishing conditions for a creative clinical practice in non-accidental injury. These expectations were often frustrated by the present departmental approach to non-accidental injury work.

Summary -- relations above the area team

In this section we have examined social workers' experience of the structure of the social service department above the area team. Social workers' power within social service departments was seen to be affected by the political and ideological orientation of their local government employers. These findings refute the thesis of proletarianization of state social workers and the thesis of ideological hegemony of the New Right, which would posit a steady diminution of workers' control, as power would increasingly be centralized in management hands. The determinist nature of those theo-

ries is not reflected in the experience of practitioners. Their influence and autonomy underwent shifts back and forth corresponding to changes in electoral power. The fluid nature of this phenomenon itself argues against a deterministic and foregone conclusion on the position of state welfare workers. We also find that such workers were actively seeking structure and support for their practice, and desired the opportunity to influence policy and inform management of practice issues. The opportunity for this input was believed to have expanded with the current left-Labour administration, which was engaged in a process of devolving decision-making power, rather than the centralizing tendency of the previous local power. Workers, however, were not entirely satisfied with the nature of management's response in the area of non-accidental injury practice, particularly, which was characterized as still both too distant and too bureaucratic.

In the next chapter, we examine social workers' experience of practice in the current period, which I have characterized as "defensive" social work practice.

CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL WORKERS' EXPERIENCE OF PRACTICE: DEFENSIVE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

Through the empirical data, an alternative theoretical explanation of social workers' experience of practice in the field of non-accidental injury work is presented in this chapter, which I characterize as "defensive social work practice." In previous chapters, both deterministic and voluntaristic theoretical explanations were seen to be inadequate to understand social workers' practice in non-accidental injury cases. We have argued that while it is clear that general economic and political conditions for practice at this time exert significant constraints on practice, this does not imply that practice is in any way "determined" by events and forces at this macro level. Similarly, the shift rightward in the ideological context, coupled with a specific moral panic around child abuse, can alert us to the influence of these events on current practice without reducing practice to

a simple consequence of these factors. As we have seen, neither of these perspectives addresses the contradictions inherent to the policy and practice of child welfare work (see Chapter Four). In the area of child abuse practice, for instance, social workers have been caught between two contradictory messages: on one hand, they are criticized publicly as "baby-snatchers" while, on the other, they are criticized for failing to sufficiently protect children and to prevent abuse. This reflects contradictory ideologies we as a society or as a community hold concerning families and children. Similarly, on the one hand, we think families should stay together and that children belong with their parents, while on the other we think that children have rights, and that we have a responsibility to defend and protect them.

As outlined in the previous chapters, it is obvious that the traditional professional model is under attack at the present time. Social work, in particular, has few friends among the Right or the Left. The traditional model of individual professional autonomy, based on therapeutic casework practice, is increasingly seen to be untenable, especially in relation to statutory practice with an involuntary clientele. Current climate for practice thus puts social workers on the defensive, and undermines any residue of nostalgia for the traditional professional model that they might harbour. This throws social workers into a position where they feel "determined," and can lead to a "crippling fatalism" among

state welfare workers, where they adopt a stance of passivity and subordination.

In contrast to this picture of social workers as successfully controlled technicians, Johnson (1977a, 1977b) provides us with a theoretical framework which allows us to capture the existence of dualistic and contradictory tendencies in the control of professional occupations such as social work. As we described in Chapter Two, this dualistic character of the occupational organization of knowledge has been conceptualized as the technicality/indetermination ratio (Jamous and Peloille, 1970) in any occupational production process. "Technicality" is defined as the condition of external intervention, the extent to which a systematic body of knowledge is utilized in the justification of competence or expertise and is at the same time, therefore, also vulnerable to routinization and fragmentation (proletarianization). Where technicality elements within an occupation are high, the conditions for proletarianization exist. This is countered by the process of "indetermination," which refers to aspects of professional organization of knowledge which function as a barrier to such outside intervention. The conditions for indetermination, what is referred to as "the virtualities of an occupation, the basis of its mystique, the sources of its legitimations, the elements of its ideology," (Johnson, 1977b, p. 99) are the key to a profession's successful resistance to bureaucratic authority. Using John-

son's theoretical framework and the concept of the technicality/indetermination ratio, we argued a position in Chapter Two which posits a dialectical relationship between autonomy and control in state social work. If Johnson's model is correct, that is, if this dialectic exists, then a certain margin of manoeuvre is available to welfare workers, and this has implications for the possibilities of resistance. We can examine the data in light of these dualistic and contradictory aspects with a view to identifying empirically the conditions of technicality/indetermination in social work production and the relationship of these to "defensive social work practice."

DEFENSIVE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The process of making sense of the empirical data involved an internal debate for the researcher, with both determinist and voluntarist explanations of the nature of contemporary social work practice. Crudely, the former view sees workers as successfully controlled by management structures and hierarchy, while the latter view seemingly ignores the organizational and social context of practice and sees workers as autonomous and individual professional experts.

This chapter represents the end result of this debate, or at least the state of play at this moment. The term "defensive social work practice" thus reflects my understanding of social workers' relationship to this area of statutory

child abuse practice. It is a term that captures a historically specific problem. Prior to the Seebohm reorganization of social services in 1970 and, even more significantly, the Maria Colwell Inquiry of 1974, this term had no currency. Now, however, it speaks to three interrelated aspects of conflict and concern within the present organization and practice of social work. The first reflects a process of "bureaucratization of social service departments" -- the fact that welfare work, since the implementation of the Local Authority Social Services Act in 1970, is increasingly subject to bureaucratic stringencies, particularly in relation to non-accidental injury work. The second aspect of conflict concerns the attack on social work and the scapegoating of social workers which was precipitated by a series of child abuse tragedies, the Colwell inquiry of 1974 being the first and most famous. The effect of the public scandals in child abuse cases has contributed to a climate of anxiety in social service departments. As we have noted, recent research has characterized social workers' feelings concerning their relationship with the community as quite simply "fear" (DHSS, 1978b). Between 1974 and 1978, thirteen of fifteen inquiries into local government involved social service departments and the majority of these were related to non-accidental injury cases.

The third aspect of the term "defensive social work practice" reflects a situation where, despite bureaucratic

constraints and anxiety generated by public scandals, social workers still continue to carry on a practice and involvement with their clients. It is impossible for social workers to be totally passive. Any activity, even simply knocking on a client's door, constitutes some form of intervention. Defensive social work practice thus reflects the outcome of the collision of these two contradictory forces surrounding current practice, one cramping and constraining social workers' activity, while the other reflects the activity inherent to any "practice." This contradiction creates further anxiety for workers, as it typically occurs within a casework structure which individualizes both clients and workers.

In the previous empirical chapter, where we examined social workers' experience of the social service department structure, we saw social workers actively seeking structure and support. The anxiety and tension associated with child abuse work has thus encouraged the emergence of a practice which could be characterized as "defensive." At one extreme, "defensive practice" can be described as a behaviour "in which the worker and the Department act to cover themselves rather than in the interest of the client 'just in case' any one of them is held accountable through the political system for any act of omission" (Rouse, 1979, p. 264). "Covering oneself" is further elaborated when workers are, for example, "paying more attention to the faithful enumeration of statutory visits and inspections in their files than to the real

content of either visits or records, or to other priorities which discretion may indicate or necessity demand" (Simpkin, 1979, p. 129). To "cover oneself," i.e., to reduce the risk to oneself, social workers may engage in these forms of practice. This may indicate not only a preoccupation with adherence to bureaucratic rules concerning practice, i.e., making sure that all bureaucratic expectations are conformed to in terms of future accountability, but also engaging in practice that directly tries to reduce risk in a clinical sense. Decisions may thus be made which reduce uncertainty in the situation rather than help the client.

However, both these aspects were identified by social workers as potentially at odds with and detrimental to their notion of "good practice." In the words of this senior:

... It's very easy to get yourself involved with the work and cover your own ass and not actually do the work, it is quite easy to follow procedures in the manual, get a kid on the register and get it all perfectly written up but you haven't actually done the job you should have done, which may have been something pretty difficult in the situation, confronting maybe a parent with something or whatever...and I think that is one of the difficulties about it because there are so many procedures it can fog the real issue. You can get lost and forget what you are supposed to be dealing with is a family that in one way or another is having problems.

Thus, practice strategy which tried to completely eliminate risk to the social worker is recognized as unworkable.

Taking risks equals good practice

Despite the impression created by media coverage of ex-

treme cases of child neglect and abuse, most statutory non-accidental injury assessments do not present such an obvious and clear-cut degree of danger to the child. Instead, the majority of non-accidental injury cases that are presented to local authority teams are characterized as borderline, falling into a grey area of "uncertainty" as to the degree of risk. (One expert in the field, the head of a hospital child abuse unit, estimated that grey-area cases account for 99% of non-accidental injury work.)

Given this reality of ambiguity in risk and judgment needed presented to social workers, the consensus among social workers, seniors and team leaders I interviewed was that taking risks is inherent to social work practice:

I think social work is a risky business, you take risks all the time.

...if you're a social worker, a lot of it is about taking risks really.

I think most social work is about taking risks, yes.

It is not simply that taking risks is sometimes inevitable or necessary, it is even regarded as a sign of "good practice" particularly in the area of statutory work with children. Risk to the social worker is thus compounded by its association with "good practice." As a senior says:

... I think that it is quite understandable that social workers are frightened of taking risks, I mean it is taking risks that matter in that situation.

A front-line worker agrees:

I think good child care practice involves taking risks.

For example, returning a child home after an incident of abuse obviously courts some danger but may be deemed appropriate in casework terms, as this practitioner indicates:

...and so there has been a lot of very risky difficult work in terms of placing the kids back which was the correct decision but created a lot of anxiety.

In such situations, the child may be placed at risk but so do social workers put themselves at risk.

Coercive intervention, such as a court order to take the child to a place of safety, which might be the surest method of prevention of abuse by parents or caretakers, is in any case rightly regarded with ambivalence by workers. This method of eliminating "risk" is not seen as consistent with "good practice," as this worker explains:

I mean you could imagine a certain form of social work that tries to exclude any of the risks which would be very unimaginative and not necessarily of any use to anybody. If you're always going to whisk people away for their own protection, that's not necessarily the right thing to do ... I think if all you're going to do is march in and try to remove children at the slightest suspicion, then the potential for doing any kind of social work with families is removed, because if I were a parent I would certainly not want a social worker through my door, if that's all that they were about. You know people are not going to confide in you their fears, I mean if I fear I might harm my child and want to actually pour that out to someone because I get to feel so screwed up sometimes I could just put it through the window--and

I'm really scared that that might happen one day,
I'm not going to tell a social worker, if that's
all that social workers do.

A senior concurs that such over-cautious behaviour is not
feasible:

Well, you can't remove every child from a family
who's got any sort of bruising, it's not appropri-
ate.

LD It's not clear-cut you mean?

Well, no, I mean, it's not appropriate.

The buzz words "right thing to do" and "appropriate" re-
flect the value of client self-determination within social
work ideology, the value of people's right to autonomy or
dignity, for example, old people's right to live on their own
even in filth and squalor, parents' right to struggle with
their fears of smashing up their kids. These values, present
equally in "society" as in social work, perhaps set the scene
for risks. At the same time, this "autonomy" is conditional
or limited and social workers have to guess where to draw the
limits to such "self-determination" -- i.e., to what degree
will they permit "risk" to exist, before they feel compelled
to intervene in a decisive manner. Social workers believe
then, that good clinical practice requires the exercise of
discretion and judgment, i.e., living with a certain degree
of uncertainty and, therefore, risk. An overly cautious
practice simply oriented to a procedural covering of oneself
tries to eliminate uncertainty at the expense of sound clini-
cal objectives. This worker recognizes this:

Individual social workers and conferences sometimes have been pressurized into taking actions that they haven't properly thought about by their fear of the press.

Social work notions of what constitutes "good practice", then, seems to be in contradiction with this overly cautious and bureaucratic practice. Yet there is, at the same time, a real need to protect and cover oneself as a social worker. Thus, we can explain the phenomenon of "defensive social work practice" as a response to both of these aspects of current statutory practice. Defensive social work practice is an eminently understandable practice theory and behaviour developed by social workers in the course of negotiating their day-to-day child abuse responsibilities. In this area of practice, it is intrinsic to "act"--to make decisions and take steps; yet, at the same time, the high level of risk and anxiety makes it equally necessary to protect or cover oneself.

We can empirically examine social workers' experience of casework practice in this area to grasp the interaction between the economic, ideological, and political conditions for welfare practice, and the margin of manoeuvre in action that social workers have. We can, on the one hand, identify some factors at the level of practice which promote or encourage a self-protective response. Yet the data, at the same time, provide evidence against the possibility of an unlimited "rule-guided" practice. We will therefore also consider what elements of micro practice encourage "uncertainty" and there-

fore require discretionary action. The existence of such discretion substantiates the reality of social workers' margin of manoeuvre. If this manoeuvrability exists, we need to further consider how social workers are exercising the discretion they do have.

WHY DO PRACTITIONERS LOOK FOR RULES?

Media and Moral Panic around Child Abuse

As elaborated earlier, public reaction to the issue of child abuse following the Colwell Inquiry took the form of a "moral panic" which was largely shaped by media coverage. The impact of this type of media attention had a direct bearing on the production of caution in front-line social workers.

You always imagine in the back of your mind -- what if this case goes wrong and my name is splashed all over the press.

One of the significant characteristics of these inquiries, and subsequent coverage in the media of the inquiries' findings, is their tendency to focus on the actions of the individual social worker to the relative exclusion of either her immediate management or the department hierarchy. This can in part be attributed to the casework structure which individualizes both social workers and clients. Quite naturally, this tends to make social workers feel vulnerable and exposed in their handling of non-accidental injury cases. The most striking theme, not surprisingly, is the pervasive

feeling of anxiety such attention causes in social workers which these comments reflect:

I suppose my feeling every time is, thank God it wasn't me, it could so easily happen.

When a child abuse case hits the press, then everybody thinks three times about the ones they are engaged in at the time.

Everyone is very aware that they might read about themselves in the newspaper and this either makes them very careful or they panic and it becomes a muddle, anxiety and not being able to cope.

Most social workers I interviewed felt that the "panic" created in the media had had a considerable effect on practice, a negative impact in relation to the need to exercise discretion and take risks which is identified with "good practice." Such spotlighting of social work action perhaps has led to an overly vigilant practice, as this team leader says:

Panic has had a considerable effect on practice. Social workers feel they are carrying the can if something goes wrong and this leads to people, not being adventurous and being over-cautious, i.e., taking less risks particularly in returning an abused child home, for instance.

Another worker believes that:

Some good practice has come out of the attention but negative also in the sense of discouraging risk-taking on part of social workers.

This worker cites an example in relation to the child abuse register:

To begin with families were being put on the register willy-nilly because most people we visit are vulnerable and if the majority of people we are dealing with are families, then there's no end

really to who you could put on and I think it got out of hand, especially in some boroughs ... where there's not a great deal of supervision, social workers are unqualified and feeling very exposed, then obviously the temptation is to put people on.

People were playing safe, they are a bit less paranoid now but still erring on the side of over-caution.

This strategy has been criticized:

Certain civil rights groups argue that perhaps we are overly cautious and then we're open to the charge of baby-snatching...

The effect of this spotlighting of the activities of social work practitioners has been to create a climate of anxiety. Social workers look for means to protect themselves and, in so doing, may adopt a more cautious form of practice.

Defensive administrative response to panic

Senior social service management response to the panic around child abuse has taken the form of increased bureaucratic covering. A manual of procedures (based on DHSS circulars) attempts to dictate the precise manner in which suspected cases of child abuse are to be handled. As Glastonbury notes, "Non-accidental injury procedures attempt to clarify accountability, define roles and provide step-by-step guidance on a basis that all practitioners should be sure they are correctly executing a departmental duty" (Glastonbury et al., 1980, p. 3).

One of the legacies of child abuse inquiries is the increased concern for administrative clarity in non-accidental injury cases. In the famous Colwell case, in particular,

lack of clarity as to which of two social service departments was actively involved and responsible was a key criticism of the inquiry. Thus, the problem of child abuse for social service departments to some degree becomes defined as an administrative problem. Given this orientation, tragic incidents which occur may be regarded as a technical failure, a failure of administrative control which therefore reflects poorly on the competency of social service management. Management have stepped up administrative efforts to monitor non-accidental injury practice. The preoccupation with formal rules can, social workers felt, encourage an abdication of "professional" therapeutic goals:

This is the problem really, you could end up saying, okay, well, I've visited six times a week, which is what is required for this kind of case, and I've called these ten people and I've held this many meetings, and I've had supervision with my seniors so many times, therefore I'm clear, I'm okay. I went to court and I tried to get a care order, they wouldn't let me have it, so it wasn't really my fault. And no credence is given to the agonizing that went into deciding at what point is this child so seriously at risk that it's better to remove it, and can you actually make a relationship with these parents and try to protect this child. That kind of work is thrown out the window. And of course we feed into that because your own anxiety gets sufficiently great that you'll just do this very strict work and go by the guidelines, we'll be unprepared to take risks and the result of that formula is that families and children will suffer but we'll be okay.

For a start, there's been a proliferation of procedural manuals. I'm sure in every department in the country--but there's a danger of thinking that if you have these and people stick to them, that's enough. I'm not sure how much better people have got at helping these children, really, in spite of it all.

Rather, practitioners would prefer more clinical support and guidance from management:

Management should look more at training and support for social workers. I don't think that changing procedures changes a lot of things, more significant if you have inexperienced staff who are overloaded.

Shift in the nature of statutory practice

One of the consequences of this need for protection and the bureaucratic nature of management's response may be a shift from a therapeutic consciousness toward a bureaucratic-procedural consciousness in local authority social service departments.

It seems that at the moment it's all linked very much to bureaucracy and having meetings and putting people on lists and that is all very much about covering yourself, it's all very much about anxiety and you know press coverage and all the rest of it. But it is difficult for social workers to take risks unless there is a general sort of atmosphere within the department that you don't have to always react in that sort of bureaucratic way that you can act more imaginatively and maybe take some risks, but, you know, that is the ethos of the department and not just you doing it. I think that would take quite a lot of the anxiety out of it, whereas now you just feel that unless you fulfill all the bureaucratic requirements then you are really laying yourself on the line.

One worker felt that this emphasis may lead to a more ready use of Place of Safety orders, and consequently an increase in the number of children received into care.

I think overall ... as a consequence a lot more kids are in care than need be.

Social workers' practice, which goes beyond a simple application of rules, is undertaken at the social worker's risk, as this worker describes:

Management expectation of social work practice is to stick to the rules very rigidly in order to cover ourselves and therefore them; if a social worker made a well-founded decision to take a risk there wouldn't be any support for that if it went wrong.

Thus, some social workers feel there is a lack of organizational support for workers engaged in this high-risk area of practice.

Emphasis on procedures

Do procedure manuals help shape the nature of practice in non-accidental injury care and control situations? Does the preoccupation with following the formal written procedures for conducting a non-accidental injury case encourage a overly cautiously form of practice? These workers state:

If all you're going to do is march in and try to remove children at the slightest suspicion, then the potential for doing any kind of social work before an incident is gone.

Social workers want to cover in terms of procedures even when some procedures seem ridiculous, if not wrong, e.g., putting name on register can have no bearing on the nature of your practice with the family of itself; maybe it can be a let-out, you could think, they're on the register, I'm covered ... maybe stops you from doing as much as you would do.

Within Johnson's (1977b) framework, this procedural preoccupation highlights the technicality aspects of social work

activity as practice is subject to formal rules. Boreham points out that professions create an "aura of indetermina-tion" about their activities which is the basis of their resistance to bureaucratic rationalization and codification, i.e., their resistance to administrative authority (Boreham, 1983, p. 5). The "aura of indetermina-tion" within the social work profession in Britain was seriously compromised with the Maria Colwell Inquiry, which pinpointed technical administrative weaknesses in their assessment of the tragedy. These events, occurring as they did during a period when the welfare state was under attack promoted a questioning of the professional mystique and expertise of social work. Instead, social workers were being loudly and publicly doubted. The indetermina-tion/technicality ratio in non-accidental injury practice tilted toward greater technicality for front-line producers/practitioners. Management emphasis in child abuse cases becomes oriented to "detection" rather than to rehabilitation or prevention in a broader sense. What is the impact of this on front-line practice?

A consciousness of procedures and rules precipitated a dilemma for one worker, who was providing respite breaks for a mother in a non-accidental injury case. Aspects of "care and control" in social work practice, of course, often overlap, and workers are not always clear with clients or even themselves which aspect is predominating. This worker describes his grappling to make clear the distinction; although

respite breaks were an integral part of the "treatment" approach, given the statutory nature of the case and the potential court involvement, the "control" elements needed to be specified:

We have had a lot of dilemma in the group about how technically we would provide these breaks because originally it was felt that the children should not be received into care, that we would pay under Section 1 for the break each weekend for the prevention of reception into care for a short break and I felt that was wrong.

L.D. Why?

Because I thought it was dishonest, because if we needed to go to court we would use that as evidence to get a care order.

L.D. Do you mean you didn't plan to use Section 1 money in that way?

You can use it in that way but, basically, when the children are with the foster parent at the weekend we are legally responsible because they are with our foster parent and legally we should formally receive the children into care, place them there for the weekend and then discharge them again each time home; so that legally each time the borough is responsible as soon as the children go to the foster parent. But if you do that there is obviously quite a bit of anxiety for the mother in that. But my feeling was that we should, and that that was the honest way to deal with it, because even if we didn't actually receive the kids into care and if we just placed them and paid under Section 1 and didn't do the paperwork so that they were never technically received into care; if at some future date we went to court we would say that we had provided regular breaks for the mother and we would produce that as evidence against her. So I felt we should do it properly and that she should know that we were actually receiving the kids for the weekend and that if in the future things went wrong that she knew we would use that as evidence. That is what we have done but there was a lot of dilemma around that. I think the mother has found it quite a bit easier actually because she knows...

This case aptly illustrates the nature of defensive social work practice; the worker is actively providing a needed service but at the same time is also aware of the necessity to cover herself and her actions by following closely given procedures. In this instance the procedures around placement are pivotal and the decision is not based simply on what the mother may need, but rather on what the potential significance of using this respite resource may be according to the rules of fostering and involuntary placement. Using the care versus control distinction, respite breaks look like "care," but actually there is an element of "control" which the worker wanted to make explicit. At the same time, the client finds it "easier" not because she has got the service but because she has been made aware of the rules of the game.

Similarly, another worker describes a case which, once it was labelled non-accidental injury, developed a momentum of its own, and the worker found it difficult to impose another reality upon the situation, despite the fact that this might have made for a more successful outcome in social work terms.

Once it was labelled NAI it developed a momentum of its own. Perhaps if NAI had not been invented I would have considered letting the mother move the child again to another foster family and maybe the whole legal proceedings, in terms of the place of safety and attempting to get a care order, would have been unnecessary. Maybe I could have worked conjointly with the mother and it would have been less trauma for everyone, but, given NAI existed, I had no option really but to

call a case conference and try to exert some control over the child's whereabouts and mother's access. Things just spiralled from there and backfired in "practice" sense, as the court did not support the agency's application for a care order, and following this the mother's hostility really prevented any further involvement.

It is precisely the nature of this momentum which requires this worker to both cover herself and her actions while at the same time trying to maintain an active involvement with her client, despite the fact that it is not always possible to achieve this balancing act.

Technicality/indetermination and use of the NAI register

Social workers' use of the NAI register is another example of change in the technicality/indetermination ratio. The register is meant to be an indication of "grave professional concern" on criteria of emotional, physical, or sexual neglect or abuse. In reality, most often use of the register conforms to a legalistic model of burden of proof; i.e., only cases with concrete evidence of abuse are registered. This translates to cases of known physical abuse despite the other criteria. A senior explains:

... It is rare for children to be placed on the register for emotional abuse because it is so hard to prove. ... a lot of decisions about placing children on the NAI register are based, to a great extent, on whether it's an injury which could be proved in court.

Another worker was queried about this:

LD: Do you think most names that are put on the register are more sort of cases of clear-cut physical or sexual abuse?

Well, I think that most of them are probably to do with physical abuse, not necessarily completely clear-cut.

LD: But that is the suspicion of physical rather than, say, emotional, or ...

Yes, I think so, although obviously sometimes the two go together ... But it's the actual injury that actually precipitates something.

Physical abuse is concrete and easily observable, whereas assessment of emotional abuse requires a subjective and interpretive judgment. If a social worker failed to detect a case of physical abuse she would expect to be held responsible, both within her department and outside it. There is, therefore, enormous pressure to deal with physical abuse and the social worker is at pains to cover herself with such cases. These pressures are not present in the same way in emotional abuse situations because they are greyer and less concrete for everyone, including the media. Physical abuse cases therefore contain far greater danger for workers than do emotional abuse cases. The structure of defensiveness in child abuse practice is thus not so much tied to social workers' judgments of risk but with their fears.

In terms of the technicality/indetermination ratio, operationalizing of physical criteria conforms to conditions for technicality, whereas emotional criteria would fall in the area of indetermination, discussed later. Registration practice suggests a shift toward technicality, in part because of the role of the courts in child welfare practice.

The relationship of the court to emotional abuse is described by this practitioner:

You might know in your guts something is wrong with this child, he's being damaged all over the place emotionally. There's no point in saying that to the court, what they are interested in is, is the kid well fed, is he being abused physically, and leave it at that, and if he isn't well, then leave him where he is.

Registration can also be a means for workers to protect themselves to some degree. Registration practice provides evidence of this in the use of such mechanisms for the protection of social workers rather than directly in the interests of clients. Given the punitive nature of inquiries in child abuse tragedies, social service departments and social workers can understandably be tempted to use the register to protect themselves in the event of a similar occurrence. For example, social workers may leave a child's name on the register to protect themselves, rather than because the clinical situation strictly warrants it, as these workers respond:

LD: How is it to the social worker's benefit, though, to keep them on?

Well, it's just easier to leave them on, really, because if anything goes wrong and you've taken them off the register, you stand a sort of culprit, you haven't done your work properly.

I mean, part of it is to allay our own anxiety, putting kids on the register -- well, at least if you put them on the register, that's something.

This may occur despite workers' sensitivity to parents' feelings about being on the register:

... One of the bad things is that if you are on the NAI register, it follows you around, I mean that's a good and a bad thing, that's why you really need to take the kids off, if they don't deserve to be on, because it's something which is set against you, really. If you arrive in another borough and reports are flying around that your kids are on the at risk register, especially if you as parents don't feel they should be on, I don't think parents have any chance to appeal.

There is, however, at the same time evidence which counters this picture of a procedurally guided practice. We shall elaborate this aspect in a later section, when we examine elements which reinforce "indetermination" which practice contains.

Push toward concrete observable practice

One of the legacies of the frequent inquiries into child abuse tragedies is the perceived necessity to be able to justify (defend) professional decision making. This team leader describes the necessity to be able to explain one's actions:

... there is the necessity in risk situations to discuss it properly, record it properly, in other words, to cover yourself. I don't mean to cover yourself in a negative way but to actually make sure that in those sorts of situations with that sort of judgment being made that everything you discuss and everything you work out is actually there and can be seen and scrutinized. ... It probably tends to make me over-cautious about discussion around those situations and recording of discussion. So, at the end of the day, your decisions are actually based on things that can be seen and looked at.

However, the idea that with child abuse scandals and possible scrutiny of an inquiry, the defense of professional

conduct should be based on concrete and observable events and actions may have implications for the nature of social work practice. The traditional therapeutic model is very intangible. Yet social workers know that it would be difficult, for instance, to go to court justifying leaving a child in the natural family based on intervention that is insight-oriented. Statutory intervention, therefore, must be objectively perceivable and "rational" rather than, for example, a psychoanalytic assessment of "ego strength," to have credence with an outside inquiry or legal battle. This may heighten the "technicality" aspects of social work practice and enhance the conditions for outside direction and control over the nature of statutory practice.

Level of resources and practice options

A major element that bears on social work practice is the ability to tap resources for clients. Social work practice can be seen as a combination of both skills and resources, and one without the other diminishes its "helping" potential. This senior comments:

... some families get by ... because they have day-care provisions on the doorstep, and if that provision is absent, then I think the capacity of coping with a child is more seriously at risk.

He elaborates further:

I am aware of the number of families being supported by what is available to them -- resources. If those resources were not there, then we all know, the whole team would know, that we cannot foresee a situation where those children

would remain with their parents, because in terms of what is happening and in terms of predicting what will happen, we would fail in our duties not to remove these children, so I am very conscious that if there is a limit on day nursery places available, child minders available, or if things cannot be worked out because of insufficient resources, and that becomes more chronic and the waiting scale becomes a longer period of time, then I think we would be forced to, perhaps, taking children away from parents.

Another worker agrees:

... here, for instance, if your child goes to a child minder and you're a single parent or whatever, there are some categories that we can pay the child minder, so that's something we can offer ... Now, other boroughs don't have anything like that, so they are more hindered in what they can offer to people.

One of the striking characteristics of practice since the mid-seventies is the pressure on social services resources, which is tied to attempts cut back in public sector spending. Both the nature and level of resources available to workers in "helping" clients has a significant relationship to the construction of the nature of social work practice. Resources can act as a deterrent to the likelihood or necessity, from the worker's point of view, of having to exercise coercive "control" functions. This senior explains:

Within management response to all this, I think there is a distinct lack of imagination as to constructive ways that NAI can be looked at in terms of approach. In terms of experience and qualification of the right sort of people, we could recruit loads of local people who would be very good at going in and helping somebody who is going through a bad patch with the kids and actually going in there and doing the work and being paid for doing it rather than splitting the family up -- you know, kids one way, parents the other -- to actually put something in rather than come in and carve the thing up.

Another senior agrees:

It's very unimaginative intervention that we do. You couldn't really put anybody in with Mrs. X to help her out or to see what's happening or to provide somebody in the home. The only solution is to remove the child. That's the only solution we're given. So if somebody comes and says they've reached the point where they're frightened of injuring a child, all we offer is removal of the child or day care, and basically it's around removal of the child.

An overly cautious practice may, then, be encouraged where there is a lack of adequate resources to assist families in coping. Social workers are caught in the middle in these cases and feel they are being "used to hold onto things." This senior worker describes this:

I don't know ... what I am aware of is there is certainly greater stress and strain, greater turnover of social workers in these situations, and I think that is the way social workers are being used to hold on to things which they are not able to, they are not able to actually give respite resources to families.

He explains how this can have an escalating effect on social work interventions:

We are being used, the way social workers are being used is people are telling you that you have got to make this decision and this is the information we give you. If you are wrong, then you are not doing your job properly. And the kind of information and the kind of decision you have to take -- first all become one step greater because workers can say, okay, I can't help this family, but perhaps I can use a day nursery place or something else that is needed and it is not available ... Do I then decide to remove the children ... So it's a bigger step in the position they take.

A scarcity of resources means that workers have fewer

practice options. Further, where needed resources, such as day nursery places, child minders, and financial assistance, are lacking, the likelihood of coercive intervention may be exacerbated.

In an environment of chronically scarce resources, family supports come to be provided in a way that pathologizes clients, because only the most needy and desperate high-risk clients will be successful in the competition for scarce resources. In this way the language of pathology is securely linked to material need, as this worker says:

The whole problem around resources, really, is that any resources that are available are always available in a way that pathologizes the family, and until society's views about child-rearing change drastically, I can't see that changing. Because even if you get money for more resources, there are going to be certain sorts of resources given to certain sorts of people, and those people are going to be labelled as certain sorts of people.

The implication of this in child abuse cases is that "abuse" comes to be associated not with the absolute lack of certain material resources such as adequate shelter or parenting supports, but rather will be looked upon as an individual "sickness" or pathology associated with high risk to a child. Despite worker motivation to get the needed resources, they collude in this stigmatizing process, as this interchange between participants in a group interview shows:

Do you mean we would actually write on a nursery nomination form that the child is at risk in or-

der to get the place even though the child wasn't? Because I don't think we do that. Do we? I don't.

Not in so many words. But there's all the connotations of the words "at risk," isn't there? Because a lot of children are at risk in certain ways, and maybe we'd write that, but there's this sort of totally emotional reaction to those two words. But perhaps we do unconsciously use that emotive reaction sometimes.

I would be a liar if I said I hadn't made some half-untruths to day care in order to get places. It is an awful scramble, and the social worker always has the dilemma of working with the resources that are there and, at the same time, campaign for better resources, and usually the campaigning never gets done.

There is an interesting tension here between "working the system" to squeeze resources and never having the time to actually campaign to augment the general level. Social workers may know that the way resources are handed out is bad for clients, but these "carrots" ensure that they make the system work and this saps time and energy to pressure for alternatives. A front-line practitioner expresses this:

The converse of that is that if the work is preventative rather than simply at the crisis, where an injury has occurred, you need the resources before it reaches that point. Areas like housing and "under fives" play a large part, in my opinion, in our NAI work, and because we can't alter any of the basic systems we just end up dealing with the crisis each time.

Labelling of non-accidental injury cases can then be part of a negotiation for resources. This senior describes that:

[If a kid is on the register] ... I think they are more likely to get a day nursery place ... I mean, you can use it if you're trying to, I sup-

pose, get the housing department to rehouse them, you can kind of use that ...

Another worker commented in terms of negotiating for resources:

I think it's probably true that in some situations there is slightly less difficulty in getting hold of resources if one of the reasons you can give for wanting them is that this is a child whose name is on the at risk register. I think people are less likely to deny you resources, i.e., managers in this agency, and possibly in other agencies too.

Clients, of course, also may be well aware of how the resource system works and may be pushed to behave accordingly. These workers are cognizant of this:

The clients also know that that's the way to do it, and they'll come in and say those words to you: "I will leave my child here if you don't ...

... which actually some of them do do ...

Last week you were on duty and a mother came in and said, "Well, you look after him."

One worker recounted how several mothers had threatened:

... If I don't get a place in the nursery, I'll batter my kids.

This complicated relations with clients, as this worker's comments indicate:

I'm tired of all those mums presenting themselves as batterers and incompetent mums, they're not, they just know how to work the system.

I mean, you say to a mother, well, I'm sorry, I know you're a single mum, I know you've got a job to go back to, but ... I'm afraid the only kids that can be guaranteed a place is if the mother's a heroin addict. I had this mum who was an alcoholic and who wasn't even figured. And then

there's this poor mother who wants to get out to work and is listening to my problems about getting a mum who's an alcoholic a place in a day nursery. She doesn't want to hear all this, she just wants her kid to get a place. And then they say, "Are you saying I've got to batter my kid to get a place in a day nursery?"

Everyone interviewed was aware that there are likely to be no greater resources forthcoming with which to tackle the problem of violence within families. This worker expresses his frustration:

I am very disappointed that the response from management has been procedural, it hasn't had anything to do with resources, nothing to do with day care, nothing to do with reasonable housing, nothing to do with looking at why people end up in situations where they just cannot cope and, actually, looking at the broad political sense or narrow political sense of local resources. There has been none of that, they can all set wonderful registers ... you are not actually spending money to do that, you can send a few memos around, a few middle-management twitter about. It doesn't actually cost you anything, but you look as though you have done something when you have actually not done anything.

The quality of social work service that can be offered has a direct relationship, then, with the level of resources. Where resources are tight, this creates added pressure on social workers and narrows the practice options available. This may engender a more coercive and selective practice in high-risk areas such as child abuse.

Several factors which may encourage an overly cautious and bureaucratic practice in the area of child abuse have now been analyzed. In Johnson's (1977b) framework, the tendency for a welfare practice to become preoccupied with formal

rules and procedures in order to reduce risk heightens its technicality aspects. This enhances the possibility of external intervention and control over definition of what welfare practice should be. Since the mid-1970s, and particularly since 1979 under the Conservatives, the general conditions for welfare practice have been very unfavourable. This needs to be taken account of in any analysis of practice behaviour.

The Tory attack on the welfare state, coupled with the rising number of casualties of an economic crisis, have meant that it is harder to be a social worker in the 1970's and '80's than perhaps it was in another period. But these pressures do not necessarily have a direct and predetermined impact at a specific practice level. As argued in the last chapter, an element of uncertainty remains in social work, as in other occupational practices. This space means that social workers must exercise discretion and are active in contributing to a definition of what their practice will be. Social work practice, then, does not simply passively reflect, at a micro level, the imperative of changes in the macro economic, political, or ideological spheres; rather, there remains a certain "margin of manoeuvre" which social workers experience and can exploit.

It is necessary, therefore, to examine the other side of the dialectic between control and autonomy by identifying what aspects of the micro practice level contribute to the

existence of discretion. What acts against this construction of a rule-guided social work practice. What pushes back against this "determination"?

SOCIAL WORKERS' MARGIN OF MANOEUVRE

Reinforcement of indetermination, or discretionary aspects of social work practice

We now need to consider empirically those aspects of the professional organization of knowledge and practice which act as a barrier to technicality aspects and which, therefore, constitute a resistance to bureaucratic authority (resistance to proletarianization). These aspects compose the indetermination side of the technicality/indetermination ratio. The data can be analyzed to see if and how social workers experience autonomy and discretion (uncertainty). What evidence is there of a practice that is discretionary and risk-taking? As noted in the last chapter, there is not necessarily a direct relationship to a set of rules and procedures and workers' adherence to them. Rather, the necessity of interpretation and the possibility of modifying procedures supports the indeterminate nature of much social work practice.

Discretionary actions in the interpretation of rules

Despite the desire to reduce risk and discretion by introducing formal procedures for handling of non-accidental injury cases, the necessity for workers' judgments and inter-

pretation of rules is inherent in day-to-day practice situations. In the words of this team leader:

However much you try to standardize a procedure, people's judgment about where that procedure is applicable will always vary, and some people philosophically will do their best to keep everybody off the register and some people will say that everybody ought to be on the register. Some people will just forget to take them off, and so it isn't a foolproof way of making sure that that is the hard core of real problems at all.

Similarly, this worker states:

I suppose the only purpose it serves when you have procedures is that it does help you to sit down and think and you know you've got to collect your facts, and it's an incentive as such. But I don't know how it safeguards the social worker on the front line or what she does with the family, or does not, actually.

Another front-line worker comments:

... And that is my frustration, you know you have these procedures but unless you've got good practice to go with it, it's meaningless.

LD: So despite the procedure you have an element of individual judgment.

Yes, that's right.

Workers recognize the necessity of exercising judgment. This worker's comments on an NSPCC officer's practice make it clear that "following orders" is not a sufficient excuse for "bad practice":

Well, I don't think there's any procedure which says you have to strip-search children. It's the interpretation, isn't it. 'Cause I don't think he was following it to the letter 'cause I'm sure the NSPCC works with families the same way that we do, otherwise he's just acting like a policeman. ... I don't think you can hide behind procedures ...

Discretion is built into the structure and organization of social work practice. For example, the "unpredictability" of court support for social work requests heightens "uncertainty," as this senior explains:

It is a calculated risk to place a kid back at home that has been battered, it's actually a calculated risk, and even a worse risk, in my opinion, to go to court and ask for a care order when you are not certain whether you are going to get one or not because you have really blown the thing wide apart by then and it's a calculated risk, you know, and you may be risking somebody else's life, it's very difficult.

A front-line worker agrees:

No, and if I do that [go to court] I destroy any relationship I had with the mother to begin with, and it would make it impossible for anybody else from social service to go in. So unless I'm pretty sure I'm not going to risk it. There's that to consider to.

Similarly, the subjective interpretation of what constitutes "grave professional concern" in non-accidental injury cases requires workers to exercise judgments. This senior says:

At the end of the day it is the kids that are important -- one takes calculated risks if one is confident about the situation, but at the end of the day it is the child that is our responsibility ...

A major difficulty of "care and control" decision making is that the majority of non-accidental injury situations are not clear-cut and obvious, but rather fall into a grey area where it is difficult to assess the degree of risk present:

And so you're not willing to act at this point ... 'cause it's too grey because sometimes it's all right, and 'cause you doubt the alternatives are going to be any better.

The uncertainty surrounding these cases exacerbates the risk yet inhibits a clear direction for intervention. In these borderline cases, workers must necessarily make judgments and court risk. This worker describes this:

... And just waiting to see what happens until the next episode or crisis and you hope it's not going to be worse than the last one. But she's so fragile, you talk to her and you think if you just push her a bit far that she'll collapse mentally ...

LD: ... is your feeling that the kid is better off with her? Was that the feeling of the case conference as well?

I think you get into the grey area that you were talking about. It's a very difficult decision to make, obviously the child could be doing much better if the mother wasn't what she is. But it's a difficult decision to make that you take the child into care and you place him somewhere. I'm really not convinced one way or another.

This limbo can continue indefinitely unless there occurs some conclusive event which may swing a decision one way or another where the worker feels she has to choose between the parent and the child. She continues:

... But I think when it came to the crunch, I mean, I try very hard to keep them both in focus, obviously, when I go there ... but it comes a point when you see her going quite paranoid. You think, my God, what is this child experiencing?

LD: So, in other words, a crisis would tip the balance, then, because obviously to take the kid would probably cause a deterioration in her, wouldn't it.

That's right, yes.

Criteria of emotional abuse and discretionary practice

A fascinating example of the gap between formal procedures and structures and the reality of social work practice is shown in the following comments on the difficulty of operationalizing the criteria of emotional abuse and neglect despite the fact that these are given a central concern in the child abuse manual and in the estimation of workers themselves. A social worker reflects this feeling:

I think that the emotional abuse is recognized as the most difficult and probably the most damaging ... It's also the most difficult to pin down, I think. ... It's the most difficult to prove and I think it really is the most difficult for the child to cope with.

The area of emotional abuse is not operationalizeable despite formal criteria in non-accidental injury cases in terms of registration and statutory action. Thus, emotional abuse cases are least subject to technicality. Instead, risk taking is built into it both through social workers' estimation of its importance, and also because concrete evidence needed for statutory action is often lacking. Yet social workers must continue to carry on a practice with these cases, as this front-line worker describes:

... If you had a case of emotional abuse, I mean, it's hard to think how you would identify a particular incident ... that actually precipitated a conference ... I mean, you can often have a situation where a child has been just so deprived for so long, where the sort of rejecting attitude of

the parent you can see the kind of effect that that is having on the child, how do you actually prove that and kind of quantify it. And that can go on for ages. ... In a court of law having to produce proof, which obviously is very difficult to do in a situation of emotional abuse, yet anyone can see a broken arm, but a sad and unhappy child who is getting nothing, how do you show that -- failing in relationships, failing at school, undersized, and just miserable ...

Further, because emotional abuse is such a fluid category, the distinguishing features of a situation which would indicate the need for putting a child's name on the NAI register become blurred, and this adds to the "uncertainty" of practice, as this senior describes:

Well, I could have thought we could put more or less every kid that we work with on the register if we had kind of emotional neglect. I mean, I consider that's a very serious thing that we have to work with, but I can't really see how putting a child on the register is going to help.

As this worker has identified, emotional abuse criteria seem very difficult to operationalize, particularly in relation to the court. Workers do not expect to receive support from the courts for their concerns around emotional abuses:

It's on a different level altogether. And it's something you consider if you want to take a case to court. You might know, in your guts, something is wrong with this child, he's been damaged all over the place emotionally, there's no point in saying that to the court. What they're interested in is, is the kid well fed, is he being abused physically, and leave it at that, and if it isn't, well then, leave it where it is.

Statutory social work practice in this area is, thus, surrounded by the tension between aspects of technicality and

indetermination: situations which can be subject to rules and procedures and those which cannot. This senior explains this:

LD: So then there are some situations where social workers can't act or at least there's some kind of barriers to acting -- legal evidence, that kind of thing.

That's really why I get so angry when I read these things in the newspapers about social workers being criticized, criticized is putting it mildly, either for taking kids away or for not taking them away. But if we're sticking with taking them away, I mean, we are prevented by, what you need is evidence, and there again I feel in conflict because I think it's right, because if you were just to get up and say, you know, this mother emotionally neglects her children, therefore we want a care order and the court were to give it ... I mean, you could level that against anybody, 'cause I mean, there are boroughs where children are removed, I think horrible things do go on because, I think back to when I was a student, it's not that many years ago, in 1974, when I was forced to receive a toddler into care because the mother was homeless. Well, there was absolutely no reason why I should have done that, but I was just acting under instruction and I thought, well, if they say this is what I must do, I must do it.

She continues, however, to insist:

But we would never do that here, we'd never do that in any of the places I've worked in. If someone comes in and says, take my kids into care, we'd say, no, why? Okay, what can we provide? We wouldn't just say, oh, sign on the dotted line, which is what some places do.

This suggests that despite the increasing constraints on social work practice, it is still an active practice and does not simply reflect a predetermined, unquestioning technical activity. Moreover, because the technicality aspects in

cases of emotional abuse are not predominant, the bureaucratic authority is difficult to invoke. Instead, social workers must rely on the traditional casework approach of juggling care versus control. This means that indetermination aspects are emphasized, which, in turn, provides the opportunity for a de-escalation of statutory action of an intrusive, coercive nature, as the following interchange with an area team leader on "grey area" cases suggests:

LD: In cases where you're not sure what is going on, it's just really messy, and you don't really have enough information or evidence to act ...

Can I just cut in there, because you used the word "act" which I think is stopping people to act. You see, social workers and most people are assuming that "acting" means calling the conference and taking the child away or something. I think part of acting, for me, would be to tell the family that you are not sure about this and you are not satisfied with that, share it with them. I think that is acting, saying, look, I've seen these bruises on the child, you've given it these bruises, and I am worried. You see, I think the social worker should do that anyway as soon as they see, instead of coming to me and saying, what should I do, they should act ... but because they have NAI case conferences and things in their mind all the time they do miss these things.

Modification of rules

Another factor which supports the indetermination side of welfare practice has to do with the process of active interpretation and modification or alteration of procedures and rules by practitioners. Interviews provide evidence that social workers modify and incorporate procedures to conform to social work ideology and norms. The margin of manoeuvre

which constitutes workers' discretion permits this. For instance, in the decision as to whether to put a child's name on the register, this senior worker says:

Physically and emotionally, we looked at both aspects and it was felt that the kid was emotionally at risk and was physically at risk. But it also looked at in terms of whether there was any advantage to the work with the family with the kid being on the register. In other words, was the situation going to arise where being on the register would help the kid, and in that particular situation it was felt that was not the case and that the kid would not benefit particularly by being on the register, so the kid did not go on the register.

LD: That is interesting, because as far as I know the criteria for the register are that if you feel the kid is at risk as to its physical and emotional and sexual welfare, so according to the procedure the kid should have been on the register, but the group, from what you are telling me, is interpreting procedures or modifying procedures as they go along in the process of doing the work.

Rather than simply following laid-down procedures, for example, to register a child who falls within the criteria stipulated in the policy and procedures handbook, the decision to register or not may be subject to an assessment of the likely benefit or outcome of this action, as the following description shows. This senior was about to respond automatically to the formal procedure, but was persuaded by other conference participants to exercise discretion and not register the case:

And, funnily enough, we had this quite large NAI case conference and I was chairing it and it came to the bit about the register and I said I thought the kids should be on the register and

there was silence and nobody else in the case conference, including the police, wanted the kid on the register, and I thought, God, what have I come to, and that was a response to anxiety about procedures that at least if the kid was on the register then we would sort of cover, we had done that bit of it. I was persuaded by the other workers that it was nonsense, that the kid shouldn't be on the register and I was quite rightly persuaded that way ...

So a modification of the rules occurs in actual practice. Another example of this rule-bending may occur when there is a discrepancy between the "casework relationship" as perceived by welfare workers and conformity to the formal procedures. In this case, there was conflict around the decision to inform parents of the registration of their child on the NAI register. It is stipulated in the handbook that parents be informed unless "there are exceptional reasons for not doing so" (Appendix C, 9.1.4). In this situation, the senior states her agreement with this rule:

I think a family has the right to know their kid is on the register.

LD: But your client wasn't told?

The senior justifies this:

If we had actually come in and said that we were at the point of making a delicate arrangement between receiving the children into care and being placed with the sister, which was difficult enough to achieve and involved the mother placing a lot of trust in us; I think the final straw would be that as far as the agencies are concerned you have sustained non-accidental injury to your children.

LD: But that's exactly what everybody was thinking.

Absolutely.

The decision of the conference to put the kid on the register and not tell the mother is rationalized by a "situated account" of the circumstances surrounding the action taken. This alteration of the formal rules is informed by other guides to practice. Rules, for instance, may be adapted to suit social work ideology, for instance, in respect to social work "knowledge" of a family. This team leader explains this in relation to registration practice and initiating case conferences:

... The decision on whether the child goes on the register or not is actually made by individuals who are present at that conference. ... It does vary according to whether a situation was already well known or not. I think one takes risks with a situation where one has obvious confidence about the knowledge that one has about a family which one wouldn't take in an unknown situation. But if it's a family that has been worked with a number of years and where there is real knowledge within the team about the way that family functions, and if something happens within that context, then you will make an informed judgment about conferencing around all the different factors, whereas if it is something that comes in out of the blue from a school, clinic, or whatever, where it is a prima facie non-accidental injury or neglect and we know nothing about it, then we would immediately call a conference. The level of risk-taking varies according to the level of knowledge.

Another indication of modification of procedures occurs when workers, faced with a discrepancy between casework values and administrative/bureaucratic exigencies, try to resolve the conflict through an incorporation of management structures into their clinical approach. This undermines the

influence of technicality aspects as procedures come to be utilized within a casework discourse. This worker states:

... People should be better at getting kids off the register, I think there's a tendency that once they are on, to leave them on, oh, you know, we might as well leave them on, but it's for our benefit, because it can be a tremendous boost to the parents if you say I've actually taken your kids off the register, the circumstances are no longer the same, so now they're off the register.

Another worker says, in relation to informing parents around registration for child abuse:

If you're doing that, then most people will have some questions and you've got to be able to explain to them what the register is and what the implications are, what it involves and, as I say, in the context of this you might talk about some of the benefits to them of actually having their child's name on the register, and some people can see it that way.

While another says:

I suppose for some people, I mean, if that's the case, if you have actually injured the child, in some ways it might even be for some people a relief to feel that their child's name is on the register, because if they find it difficult to ask for help, it gives them a certain degree of protection in that they know people are aware of the difficulty they have in handling their child and that maybe they can be saved from what they don't want to do. So I can see some situations where the parents might see it as a good thing, but I would think, overall, most parents probably don't.

A senior comments:

I think from a parent's point of view, I think the way I would try and sell it is that it is a safeguard, that we do take the situation very seriously ... and that we're prepared to offer whatever we can in order to help them. So that can be seen as one of its purposes.

LD: To sort of make official the concern?

Yes, well, official, yes. I suppose official, but it's taking it seriously, really. ... For instance, where a nursery place might be more forthcoming, because the child's name is on the register, which otherwise might not be. I think in some situations you might possibly, in the context of explaining to a parent that their child's name has gone on the register, explain some of the benefits that there could be in this.

SUMMARY -- DEFENSIVE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

In this chapter some of the conditions which promote a bureaucratic and overly cautious orientation in non-accidental injury practice have been identified. At the same time, we have considered some of the elements which indicate the indeterminate nature of practice which denote an inherent element of discretion or autonomy in casework situations.

There are thus inevitable barriers or limits to the possibility of rule-determined social work practice. Even in statutory non-accidental injury work, a fixed or "determined" practice does not exist; social workers cannot simply follow rules. Given this margin of manoeuvre, it is intrinsic to social work practice to act, and acting cannot be spelled out in advance by external mechanisms. Rather, social workers are active agents in the construction of their day-to-day practice. Yet because the current climate for practice contains many constraints, and given the intense degree of anxiety which surrounds child abuse work, this discretion can be experienced as highly uncomfortable. There are thus problems with the notion of individual autonomy for workers. Rather

than upholding this professional principle (and viewing management intervention as a form of unwanted control), workers are seeking some measure of support and protection in carrying out their jobs.

The traditional professional model of individual professional autonomy cannot adequately meet the present needs of social workers for protection and support. It is not sufficiently powerful to withstand the attacks on social work or to provide immunity from anxiety and risk. On the other hand, we have seen it is not feasible to simply try to orient practice to simple bureaucratic exigencies. Although formal procedures and management structures can be experienced by workers as a necessary support in providing, to some degree, a map for action and a defense against public criticism, the reality of day-to-day case situations means that workers do have discretion whether they want it or not.

Moreover, if the margin of manoeuvre remains in practice, social workers can be criticized for how it is exercised. The question remains for social workers as to how they can positively use the power they do have, while remaining vigilant to the real need to cover and protect themselves? How can they get the kind of support and protection necessary in doing this kind of work without resorting to a practice that is mechanical and violates their own norms of what constitutes "good practice." How can social workers be actively defensive?

Workers need to struggle for structure and support in their practice and against excessive bureaucratic control. This is the intrinsic dilemma which a defensive social work practice stems from. Is it conceivable for workers to break out from this contradiction? To do so, they must look outside of the existing hierarchy within social service structures toward their immediate work team and peers. A reduction of individual autonomy would not then translate into heightened management control over practice. Instead, a decrease in individual autonomy might be accompanied by an increase in peer or team responsibility and support. The immediate work team would thus explicitly and consciously recognize the need for structure and support. This entails an ongoing resistance to the individualization of both workers and clients which attends much practice. Such a strategy for limiting individual autonomy and providing structure and support to workers allows the possibility of a more democratic social work practice. For this to be successful, welfare workers need to analyze both the constraints and the space contained in their practice. Such an analysis will make clear the possibilities for action, which is a necessary first step toward establishing a coherent direction for practice.

Another important aspect of a strategy to move welfare practice forward is to understand its interactive relationship to wider struggles over welfare issues and politics.

Social workers can then try to connect their practice to movements which can defend and expand welfare on a political level. With a clearer focus and direction to their practice, welfare workers may then be capable of moving, when the time is right, from a defensive to an offensive strategy for change.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS TO THE THESIS

The conclusions to this thesis can be discussed in at least three different areas: empirical, theoretical, and methodological. Although it is difficult to treat these in discrete terms because of the interplay and overlap between them, I will nonetheless attempt to draw some conclusions in each of these three areas.

EMPIRICAL CONCLUSIONS

The major empirical conclusion that needs reiterating is that welfare practitioners maintain a certain autonomy in their labour process. Even in the highly prescribed practice area of child abuse, discretion is clearly evident. This research, then, shows that despite a proliferation of procedures and structures management control in social work is not as pervasive as we might be led to believe; further, it is clear that there are limits to this form of control over what is essentially a "practice" and therefore an activity.

We saw in Chapters Five and Six the impossibility of completely subjecting workers' practice to a set of rules and procedures. Indeed, social workers' accounts of their cases indicated that such rules and guidelines are only marginally related to the often chaotic reality of practice. This level of chaos and uncertainty is exacerbated by the predominance of "grey-area" cases in child abuse work, where the degree of risk to a child is difficult to assess or predict. Thus, some workers could remain relatively unaware of management attempts to direct practice and diminish autonomy. We also understand the intrinsic necessity for judgment and interpretation, even in situations meant to be covered by rules, for example in the handbook stipulation to put a child's name on the register in cases of "grave professional concern." This "margin of manoeuvre" that social workers have can help explain why they feel a responsibility for events, seemingly beyond their control, concerning their individual clients. If they had no margin of manoeuvre they would not feel, nor could they be made to feel, in any way anxious or responsible for their clients' welfare.

The anxiety surrounding this kind of practice also helps clarify practitioners' experience of supervision and their immediate management structure. Not only can it not be seen as analogous to the foreman on the factory floor, it is even seen as a potential source of support and protection.

This raises a second major point that needs emphasis in these conclusions, the ambivalent relationship social workers

have to their autonomy. This ambivalence is understandably intensified in a period such as the late 1970s and early 1980s, where the conditions for practice are somewhat arduous, both in terms of potential demand on services, increasingly fraught social relations, and also considering the hostile political climate. Moreover, these conditions for practice are set against a background of a series of child abuse tragedies and the spectre of a public whipping. Yet, as we have analyzed in Chapters Two, Three, and Four, the institutions, policies, and practices in child welfare work were constructed within a social-democratic framework and reflect these assumptions and contradictions. Further, the contradictions of the family and the state's relationship to it continue under Thatcherism, despite pressure on resources and ideological attacks on the welfare state.

Both the legislative and policy frameworks governing state intervention and the reality of practice itself reflect a constant compromise and tension between care and control elements. The contradictory orientations of justice versus welfare, i.e., a judicial versus a rehabilitative or welfare approach, leave workers without clear guidelines to orient their practice. In the area of child abuse practice, social workers are further caught between contradictory ideologies we hold concerning families and children. On the one hand, we think that families are a good thing and that children belong with their parents, while on the other we think that

children have rights and that we have a responsibility to protect them.

Social workers' practice takes place within these contradictions. We should thus not be surprised that being a social worker is also experienced as highly contradictory and that exercising discretion is perceived as highly uncomfortable and sometimes even dangerous.

The profession's claims to be able to do something about child abuse and workers' feeling that they ought to be able to "help" are consistent with a social-democratic ideology and response to social problems. Despite the structural conditions that give rise to this and other "social problems," the therapeutic casework model continues to be dominant. Welfare workers and their clients continue, therefore, to have an individualized experience of welfare institutions and practice.

The data convey the overwhelming impression of social workers' emotional anxiety and stress in this area of practice. Social workers are, understandably, looking for guidance and direction. Workers, however, were not satisfied with management initiatives in the area of child abuse; in particular, they were characterized as both too distant and too bureaucratic. Management structures are only indirectly related to the disorder and confusion of actual day-to-day practice. Although social service management may be trying to exert some control over child abuse practice and to

diminish individual autonomy, and while workers may actually desire this, discretion remains. Given this, social work management has a responsibility to respond to its workers' needs for both structure and control, while also recognizing the intrinsic necessity for workers to act. This suggests the necessity of exploring alternative forms and structure for welfare practice.

The recent initiatives around decentralization in some London boroughs will perhaps offer some potential avenues for diminishing the highly individualized nature of practice. A very decentralized structure, offering multidisciplinary services, may provide the conditions for a more collective approach to the difficulties practitioners and clients are experiencing. It might be easier to see, for instance, that the rate of non-accidental injury intake noticeably increases at certain times, such as during school holidays. Decentralized services may allow a heightened awareness of the interaction between social conditions and individual experience. This, in turn, may engender more imaginative and creative approaches to issues such as child abuse. A local authority might, for example, explore ways in which child care supports might be intensified during certain periods. Through a decentralized service structure, which is subject to some form of democratic community control, it might be easier to involve community residents in creatively responding to identified community needs.

This research also suggests that other changes in the direction of a dilution of individualized practice should be considered. These might include, in child abuse work for example, involving clients in case conferences. This action would be congruent with espoused social work values about client self-determination; it may, as well, reduce the distance between professional experts and the subjects of their deliberations. For conference participants, clients' presence may help balance an overly cautious practice; or, if indicated, it may more clearly reveal the necessity of immediate and decisive intervention.

There are other areas where an increase in client and community involvement and a concomitant decrease in social workers' responsibility might be contemplated, for example in formulating policies on intake practice or on resource distribution. The research data also suggested the potential benefits of expanding a group supervision model in terms of building team solidarity and a sense of "corporate responsibility" for events in their area. The group supervision model did seem to meet, to some extent, workers' desire for structure and support, while still acknowledging the individual margin of manoeuvre workers exercise and thus the responsibility they carry.

Other initiatives in restructuring welfare practices and services should be assessed within this knowledge. As well, both the anxiety and the complexity of many practice dilemmas must be treated seriously in any contemplated changes.

The analysis, in Chapters Two, Three, and Four of the broader political and economic context indicates that structural forces play an important part in constructing welfare workers' experience. The practice of social work in child abuse cases is shown in this research to be an eminently understandable yet profoundly contradictory experience, one which tells social workers that they have a responsibility to protect children but which simultaneously demonstrates that they can actually often neither predict nor prevent many incidents. Moreover, in the current context, where social-democratic welfare institutions and practice are under threat, to be other than anxious and defensive would be to exist in isolation from reality.

These findings hopefully convey to those committed to progressive welfare reform an appreciation of the complexity of statutory welfare work. To those whose view of social workers as able to effect change simply by virtue of their training and expertise, this evidence points to the importance of forces beyond themselves and their individual clients. Yet this research at the same time points to the structured but real autonomy that state social workers do exercise, which practitioners themselves and those who design policy and practice guidelines must recognize. For unless this is consciously and explicitly acknowledged and accepted, the impetus for actively constructing alternative practices is lost.

This method of approaching the study of state labour processes has allowed us to grasp welfare processes as a practice that exists neither apart from, nor determined by, but in an interactive or dialectical relationship with broader political, economic, and ideological forces.

Because it is a practice, social work cannot be viewed or analyzed as a static or rigid phenomenon. Rather, it needs to be understood as an activity which connotes movement, and thereby contains the seeds or possibility of change.

THEORETICAL CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical starting point for this thesis was an attempt to elaborate Braverman's theory of the capitalist labour process by applying it to state welfare work. The subsequent theoretical road travelled can only be understood by this beginning. As described in the first chapter of this thesis, it became apparent to me in the course of this study that Braverman's thesis not only could not be supported in relation to state welfare, as the tenets of the proletarianization thesis were refuted by the empirical data; but, further, Braverman's whole theoretical approach simply could not cope with the understanding of welfare labour processes that the interview data were generating. This raises questions about the theoretical soundness of Braverman's analysis not

only in relation to state welfare workers, but also raises doubt as well about the adequacy of his thesis in relation to the labour process of the manufacturing workers he was concerned with. These issues suggest that a whole reappraisal is necessary of what are an appropriate and relevant theory and methodology for understanding labour processes and welfare practices.

During the process of this research, there was an important methodological challenge that eventually led to a break. This, in turn, allowed the theory to be challenged. As described in the methodology chapter, this break occurred at the point of contact with the empirical world, when it became obvious that Braverman's thesis did not fit with the nature of the empirical world being reflected through the social workers' accounts. This will be returned to in the next section, on methodological conclusions; however, it is important to bear this process in mind in a discussion of theoretical conclusions that can be drawn from this thesis.

Theories of the labour process

As we saw in Chapter Two, Braverman's thesis can be criticized in its own terms because of the primacy he gives to capital in shaping the labour process. The labour process is not conceived as a terrain of active class struggle, but rather represents a battle already won by capital through an inexorable process of deskilling of labour. This type of

analysis has been criticized as determinist and top-down because of its a priori assumptions about the capital accumulation process. Moreover, the economism of such labour process theories results in an exclusive emphasis on production relations, and thus limits an exploration of the relationship between changes in labour processes and wider political and social antagonisms beyond the point of production. These theoretical deficiencies proved fatal to a requisite theoretical exploration of state welfare processes.

In attempting to apply an economistic labour process theory to an analysis of changes in the organization of work in the state sector, I found that it was soon obviously necessary to extend the theoretical focus from capital-labour relations to include a consideration of the state. Initially, the question of significance for the shaping of labour process of their occurrence within the non-profit state sector was raised. The question I was raising was whether we could make the same theoretical presumption as to the basis for the necessity of management control over the labour process in this non-profit sector. In other words, could the link be maintained between labour process and capital accumulation process in the state sector. This path proved not too fruitful. Partly because this approach retains an economism, the focus is simply extended to identifying conditions in the state which might give rise to a fiscal crisis, and therefore a theoretical rationale on economic grounds for the proletarianization of state workers.

Because, however, the labour processes concerned workers engaged in welfare institutions and practices, it was vital to move beyond an economistic framework to include an analysis of wider political and ideological terrains. This expansion, however, implies using a theoretical model of hierarchical levels between economic, political, and ideological categories. Although specifying the nature of relations between these is the object of much theoretical work within marxism, these lines of inquiry did not seem to promise a more precise focusing on the experience of welfare practitioners. I argued, in Chapter Two, that the relationship between strategies of accumulation adopted by capital and the wider ideological and political context needs more specification in order to grasp state welfare processes. However, perhaps the mechanical and static quality implicit in this theoretical model hinders an illumination of an area of state activity which is essentially a practice, as in the case of social work.

While, from another theoretical perspective, the Poulantzian concept of relative autonomy of the state within the political sphere does offer more movement, and therefore has more potential to cope with a welfare practice activity. However, this research suggests that within a practice activity, an intrinsic and inevitable autonomy exists. This finding, albeit about one particular area of state functioning, does imply that even the concept of a relative autonomy is

not a precise fit with at least this area of state activity. Given this, it becomes clear that we certainly cannot conceive of the state as a single or unified entity.

The knowledge base generated around welfare labour processes in this thesis also has implications for the significance of much theoretical work on class position and locations. This debate seems tangential in relation to state welfare workers and their labour process. Pursuit of the question of the objective class designation of these workers would not seem a profitable avenue to deepen our understanding of their labour process experience. We could explore whether they should be seen as members of the working class by virtue of the economic criteria of having only their labour power to sell; or whether they should be thus excluded by virtue of performing unproductive labour; and, moreover, considering whether political and ideological aspects of their class practice requires their designation as part of a new petty bourgeoisie. Yet despite the complexity of these questions, debates, and distinctions, they appear to be of limited utility in explaining the micro experience of welfare processes and practices.

Social work is an activity that takes place through a continual process of small-scale and largely face-to-face interactions both between clients and workers and among workers themselves. The theoretical categories around class theory are perhaps both too large and too distant from this

level of activity to have a direct explanatory usefulness. Yet the theoretical path followed in this research itself presented many difficulties. There is a problem of contamination in attempting to debate with and refute theoretical approaches which one essentially finds ill-suited to the problematic. For example, I have argued with theoretical approaches which see welfare work simply as part of the reproduction of the social relations of capitalism. The difficulty with, for instance, refuting Parton's analysis of a coercive shift in welfare practice tied to wider rightward ideological shifts is that by accepting to argue on this terrain one runs the risk of validating the use of such concepts as "policing" and "social control." These concepts, while seductive, under sustained scrutiny risk non-explanation and incoherence. As Stedman Jones (1977) has noted, the problem is a conceptual one in that the theoretical antecedents of these terms are found within a functionalist marxism. On the other hand, while these theoretical approaches remain characteristic of much of the Left's analysis of welfare, it is politically important to debate their claims. Yet it is equally necessary to move beyond these debates.

In the area of state welfare work, at least, the conceptual instruments which stem from the theories of Braverman and Hall and Parton proved inadequate both in posing the right questions in relation to welfare processes, and subsequently in resolving them. In the chapter on "defensive

social work practice," I tried to leave that theoretical ground and move toward a more dialectical analysis of welfare labour processes. This approach at least allows us to capture the movement in welfare labour processes, in particular the dialectic between discretion and control that workers experience.

One form of dialectical analysis may give primacy to the fundamental contradictions which stem from the capitalist mode of production. This form of analysis, however, leaves little room for investigating other social antagonisms and conflicts, for example around gender and race. In our case, the conflicts around welfare and politics of the family are given short shrift. Another approach to a dialectical analysis, according to McIntosh (1978), is to counterpose working-class struggle to ruling-class efforts in the explanation of specific outcomes. The difficulty with the latter approach is that it assumes an integrated totality; all outcomes are explained as the product of class struggle. Even in a dialectical theoretical approach, this totalizing aspect is thus present; everything is accounted for in terms of class struggle. If it were not for the duality contained in the concept of class struggle, this might be seen as simply the reverse side of a functionalist marxist approach, where everything is explained as meeting the needs of capital. While a dialectical approach has the merit of introducing contradiction and movement into our analysis of state labour

processes, this theoretical course does not necessarily provide the tools to adequately theorize contradictions and politics around, for example, gender relations, the family, parenting, and other social care relations. This intimates that an alternative theoretical path might be more fruitful for future investigations into statutory welfare practice around children.

Given that theories of the labour process have historically concerned men and men's work, we should perhaps expect that these theories do have problems in analyzing an arena of social reproduction which has historically concerned women. "Women's work" in social care roles cannot be theorized in the same way as we can theorize producing cars. The theoretical examination contained in this thesis reveals a perhaps surprising absence of women or gender as a category of analysis, given that social work is predominantly about women, both in its practitioners and in the objects of its efforts. Yet "women's work" in social reproduction is generally absent as a category of analysis with labour process theories. Male analyses of "labour" have traditionally understood this category within male terms, i.e., involving "male work," which is paid labour. Thus, paid labour has been treated as a major, important activity, and therefore has been the object of much theoretical analysis.

However, what needs to be addressed theoretically in the area of welfare and related "women's work" is perhaps a cate-

gory such as "social care" activity. "Care" as a category would cut across the traditional conceptual divisions and categories, and could include paid labour, unpaid domestic labour, and "love" or "duty." It is thus possible that in understanding what welfare work is about, the category of work itself is not theoretically helpful.

METHODOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

These comments will reflect on the process of a developing relationship between the researcher's theoretical ideas and the empirical world she is studying. In this thesis, I began with a methodology which saw the world of theory as dominant--a methodology which turns to the empirical world almost solely for verification (or at best to create some minor change in the theory). My initial methodology involved researching into the world of welfare practitioners through the method of interviews with social workers. I hoped to find, through their words and accounts, support for my theoretical preconceptions. In this way, the thesis began as over-theorized. While it was possible, within my initial methodology, to see the theory as validated, i.e., to selectively choose appropriate validating data, for me it became apparent that the theory I was using could not cope with the nature of the data being generated.

Others have realized the different ways in which the relationship between data and theory develop. Glaser and Strauss, for example, might have been able to predict this, and would have advocated a different methodological ordering, one in which data are accorded an a priori position, and theory is subsequently generated from them. But, as I argued in Chapter One, although this reversal represents one alternative to a positivist methodology, it simply recommends a reversal of the order between theory construction and empirical data. However, as my experience shows, the process of constructing empirical sense is much more complex than this formulation implies. It involves at least some preconception, given that researchers are not blank slates as they approach the world to be studied. Methodologically, it would seem unlikely, even if it were thought desirable, to strive for a pure reversal of the positivist method which simply puts empirical data first, as Glaser and Strauss advocate. Within my own research process, my methodology itself moved to one which gave the empirical data more and more space. While the initial task of these data in my original methodological approach was to support the theoretical explanations which had been formulated around contemporary state social work processes; in the next stage, the data contradicted the theory. This, in turn, created a methodological crisis which was resolved by seeing theory as much more dialectically involved with data, and not as a set of deterministic explanations.

The last chapter of the thesis on defensive social work practice represents a third stage in the theory-data relationship, where an attempt is made to develop a tighter tension or more dialectical relationship between these. A dialectical analysis allows us to capture a duality of experience, for example, in social workers' experience of management structures as both supportive and controlling.

In terms of methodology, however, on balance the thesis ends up as over-empirical since it did not fully construct this third methodology. If the constraints of producing a thesis as a product of this research, in particular the constraint of a deadline, were absent, perhaps this last chapter on defensive social work practice would have been a promising starting point for this research, as it represents the closest tension between theory and the empirical data.

Reflection at this point can reveal two things: first, why the initial methodology which gave such primacy to theory was adopted; second, why certain theories initially held such an attraction for this particular researcher within the first methodology. The attractiveness of the thesis of management control over labour processes lies in my particular biography as an ex-social worker with conflicting attitudes toward my own practice experience. Social workers, myself included, often do not speak of their work in positive terms at all. Certain elements of a statutory social worker's role are uncomfortable and unpleasant to perform. Statutory practice,

in particular, puts workers on the front lines of much human misery and of efforts to direct and control behaviour. Workers often feel that "they should be doing more." A theory which says "it is not your fault, your own behaviour and practice are controlled," such as the proletarianization thesis does, is quite welcome in this context as a way of diminishing the contradictions inherent to social-democratic welfare practice.

My role as researcher presented me with another contradiction. On the one hand, I was an ex-social worker, feeling somewhat identified with the research informants and certainly emotionally committed to not attacking social workers; and yet, on the other hand, this was weighing against a more general feeling that a critical examination of present practice was necessary. This suggests another clue as to why the specific theoretical explanation of increasing managerial dominance over front-line workers (as I used to be) was attractive to me. Such a framework had the potential, it seemed, to soften this tension by allowing me to be sympathetic to front-line practitioners, while still leaving room to be generally critical. Thus, there was an important emotional/biographical aspect to the initial theoretical approach.

This also has methodological implications. If the methodological process began as over-theorized, this might partly be explained in the context of a female former practitioner

who becomes an academic researcher in an institution where theory is hegemonous. Theories are like fig leaves to the novice female academic. Moreover, in setting out to do research in an empirical setting, not dissimilar to my own past work settings, I also felt the need to create a distance between myself and my past, or between myself and my predominantly female social work informants. I felt I needed this distance in order not to drown in their words, i.e., to be seduced back into a social worker's perception rather than what I hoped was an "academic" theorist's perception. This problem in field research has been called "going native" and is usually associated with participant observation methods. In this research, I conducted one-off interviews with all informants and held two group discussion sessions. This could be seen as quite a positivist and hands-off approach in that I was taking up a role of outside observer rather than becoming more directly engaged. However, the process of discussing specific cases on a one-to-one basis with workers did fully "involve" me as a past practitioner, and inevitably brought echoes of my own practice, which prompted an identification with that world. This precipitated an internal tug-of-war between the outside academic researcher and the identifying former social worker. It was difficult to get the right tension in the dialectic between these two roles and histories. The construction of empirical sense in this research was, however, informed by this oscillation. This

aspect of my methodological approach can be understood as me trying to make sense of my own professional social work experience in the field. In the course of conducting the interviews, I was drawn in and out of the practice world and in and out of the world of theories which try to analyze the former. This movement back and forth in the development of the relationship between theory and data was punctuated by several internal questions I was posing, such as, can these workers do anything, what are their constraints, what is their margin of manoeuvre, do they recognize it, are they using it. This was a particular way of entering into an engagement with the theoretical framework I was initially committed to around Braverman; and, in fact, I found it to be at odds with both his thesis and his methodology. The form of inquiry I undertook implies a different perspective as to what counts as knowledge.

Methodologically, Braverman's work is totally theoretical, the concepts are preformed, and they exist in an a priori relation to each other. In attempting to apply Braverman's concepts to a social work context, I chose a methodology that was incongruent with his approach. My methodological process involved me in talking to people in order to develop a closer understanding of their experience. During the course of this contact, a methodological break occurred in which the empirical world took on increasing importance. This subsequently allowed a shift in my relationship to the

theory, and the thesis became more an exploration of the limitations of both the original theory and its methodology.

This raises important epistemological issues on the relationship between theory and methodology. A conscious theoretical analysis brings something to the empirical world, and is crucial because without this we risk a simple, untheorized description of an empirical reality. Yet a theorized account uninformed by a relationship to the empirical world remains abstracted. It is therefore important to dialectically relate these. This holds especially for a research study, such as this one, where the object of the study itself is a practice. The initial methodological process of this thesis saw theory first, and a subsequent focus on empirical data. I learned from this process that a more dynamic and tighter relationship between these is crucial to a fuller understanding of both. They need to interact dialectically so that both can inform and reform each other. A tighter dialectic in this research might have been produced in a number of ways. For example, rather than relying on social workers' accounts of their practice experience, different and more direct methods of gathering data might have been tried, for instance I might have been hired as a social worker and conducted an empirical inquiry through my experience and that of my peers. This would have put me at the closest possible range for understanding and analyzing social workers' experience of their labour process. Alternatively, I might have

involved and reinvolved the informants more in the process of constructing empirical sense and producing an analysis. I might have offered for feedback my initial impressions and analysis of their words and encouraged subsequent discussion.

It is likely that such methods would have generated a more interactive relationship between the theoretical framework and the empirical data, as well as potentially between theory and social work practice. These methods, however, do present other difficulties; in particular, they would have involved a much greater time commitment than I was willing to make to that part of the research process. Moreover, given the way the research process unfolded, I probably would not have had the methodological confidence to try these more "hands-on" methods until after I had started the interviews and became aware of the fine detail of the data I was getting, in part because of the emotional sensitivity of reflecting on one's own practice. I did not expect this nature of data, and, in retrospect, one-off interviews are a rather distanced method for getting at this. I think that the reason I got as close as I did can be attributed to a common social work history, and thereby the capacity to share the language and culture to some extent, despite my foreignness on other counts, as a Canadian academic researcher.

This raises the very general issue of the purpose and form of social research. In this case, the product of the research had to be a thesis. In other circumstances, the

object or product might be, for example, to better understand or to change some aspect of social work practice. Given that here, the task of the researcher was to produce a thesis, certain methodological constraints are apparent, one of which is, of course, time; others might turn on the fact of academic valorization of only private ownership of a piece of knowledge or work which might make problematic a more democratic engagement within a research process or product. The social relations of a closer relationship between researcher and subjects are thus restrictive when the product of research is to be a thesis, although it should be recognized that the margin of manoeuvre available to me in this exercise was not tested, so the boundaries of this kind of research are not clear. As with other intellectual areas, all of this is much clearer after the work has been achieved.

Theory-practice issues in welfare

Marxist functionalist critiques of state welfare have viewed welfare services and structures as ultimately serving the needs and interests of capital. The politics which can be derived from this theoretical position are characterized by anti-statism and utopianism. This offers little useful political strategies for welfare workers. Instead, welfare workers are made to feel only negative practice can occur within the state sector, at least within a capitalist society. At the moment, in Britain and elsewhere, there is a

battle going on between left and right for welfare. The left can no longer afford its traditional theoretical critique of welfare at a time when welfare workers need to be focusing on the potential for a more progressive practice. My thesis has tried to confront directly the determinist left's theoretical understanding of one area of welfare state functioning. It is necessary and important to question these theoretical approaches from the left precisely because they abandon, in practice, the terrain of welfare and thus leave it open to attack and reclamation by the right.

If welfare workers and others are to change the way welfare structures are experienced, we must first understand these, not only in general terms but in specifics, at the level of particular experience. This research has tried to contribute to such an understanding in the area of child abuse practice. Thus, the methodology and theory I have moved toward are ones which want an understanding of action and experience within a relationship to a wider set of institutions and social relations. Methodologically, this thesis has opened a few doors toward understanding the nature of statutory welfare work. This was done in two ways, first by confronting determinist theses and methodology with a moving practice reality that is, itself, constructed by a complex of interactions and relationships. In that confrontation, I realized that it was necessary to move toward a different way of approaching and conceptualizing state welfare--as a prac-

tice. The last chapter, on "defensive social work practice," represents this attempt specifically, by trying to capture a dialectic between autonomy and control in child abuse work. A linear or deterministic framework is precluded in grasping the nature of welfare labour processes. A dialectical analysis is the nearest methodological approach that can take account of the process of interactions and movement within a practice.

If I were to begin this thesis again, I would adopt a more dialectical methodology from the start. Within this, I might also consider different theoretical perspectives in relation to welfare labour processes. In hindsight, I think it would be fruitful to confront the overwhelming presence of women, both within social work as an occupation and also in the nature of social workers' function as "women's work" in terms of nurturing, care-giving, servicing, and so forth. It might be profitable to examine the literature on social reproduction and domestic labour. However, a feminist analysis of the sexual division of labour has yet to be integrated within a marxist analysis of the labour process. A more useful starting point for research might therefore be to methodologically try and bring these questions closer together through an empirical bridging. Social workers and their practice could be examined both in terms of labour process experience and also the experience as women themselves involved in reproductive work outside the waged labour rela-

tion. The boundaries set up by such productionist categories as productive versus unproductive labour would have to be jettisoned, at least empirically. It is possible that this avenue of inquiry may produce a clearer illumination of what welfare work is and how it is carried on.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE -- SOCIAL WORKERS

1. Can you take me through a specific NAI case from point of allocation to present status (preferably grey-area case).
2. Were you given special preparation for working with families and children at risk of NAI?
If yes, what form did it take.
3. Can you briefly tell me why you work with NAI cases.
4. Do you feel differently about doing NAI work than other work with families?
If yes, what contributes to the difference.
5. Can you tell me something about the register?
 - criteria for inclusion
 - effectiveness of
 - purpose of
6. How do you react to press/media stories about social workers placing or failing to place kids?

Do you think close media coverage has affected social work practice?
 - your own practice
 - management initiatives regarding practice
7. What is your social service department approach to NAI cases?
Probe: structures/procedures
 - a) SSC
 - SSD - Area Director, Area Review Committee
 - ATL
 - Senior
 - Social worker
 - role of various levels of structure
 - what about Area Review Committee
 - b) Where does NAI policy come from?
 - Area Team
 - SSC
 - ARC
8. Do you think the current NAI policies and procedures are appropriate/effective approach to this area of social work?

INTERVIEW GUIDE -- AREA TEAM LEADERS

Structure

1. Team leader position is interface between area team practitioners and administrative headquarters; last of managerial ladder with "feel" for practice:

- a) What are the various levels in structure above ATL position?
- b) With what level is there most frequent interaction and of what nature--for positions both higher and lower in the hierarchy:

Relationship to:

Basic-grade social worker
seniors

King Street:

- Principal Officer
- Assistant Director of S.S.
- Director of S.S.
- NAI Coordinator
- Finance
- Social Service Committee
- Councillors (effect of political orientation, e.g., SDP-Left Labour; do councillors intervene; professional defensiveness)
- Outside agencies (e.g., demands on team)

- c) Team Leaders Meetings: purpose--decision making, consultation, policy making; attendance; who sets agenda

NAI

1. What is your social service department approach to NAI cases? Role of various levels of structure in relation to NAI?
2. Where does NAI policy come from: Area Team, SSC ARC?
3. Do you think the current NAI policies and procedures are appropriate effective response to this area of social work?
4. What changes could you recommend in this area?

5. How do you react to press/media stories about social workers placing or failing to place kids? Do you think close media coverage has affected social work practice:
 - team approach
 - higher management initiatives
6. What happens when something goes wrong in an NAI case?

Information systems and work relations

1. Bringing policies, procedures, etc., down the structure and bringing information, feedback from team level up the structure--in literature this role has been identified as pivotal and difficult in being caught between conflicting demands, how do you handle this?
2. How do you attempt to ensure your team is in good shape, e.g., people getting on together, how do you deal with problems, disputes?
3. At team level often priority is clinical over administrative tasks, is this noticeable in your team? Do you have to "nag" to get compliance with administrative tasks? E.g., are you responsible for overseeing that filling in of forms, recording, collection of statistics for head office is accomplished?

General

1. Is there an effort to retain or devolve power in some areas from head office to team level and how is this accomplished? E.g., foster parent enhancement.
2. Decentralization plans of council: are you involved; views on; implication of plan for team leader's role.

Resources:

- Staff: Who controls number and disposition of staff positions?
 Does ATL or team have choice of who to hire and fire?
 Freezing of post: what happens to statutory cases and unassigned cases?
 Performance evaluation of staff--what is ATL role?
- Budget: Control over monetary and other benefits, e.g., telephones
 Can ATL adjust internal budget allocations once global amount determined, e.g., storefront--what levels need to approve?

APPENDIX B

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE BOROUGH¹

General Characteristics

The borough studied is described in a 1982 Development Plan as follows:

a typical Inner-City area, characterised by outworn buildings, a rapid drop in population, a loss of jobs, and a decline of services (such as local shops and schools). Housing conditions are far from adequate, ... recreational facilities are lacking, and the area suffers from heavy through traffic. (BDP, 1982)

High unemployment and low incomes mean that the "borough contains a disproportionately high number of people in need of care and support" (BDP, 1982). According to the Department of Environment's own figures, this borough is the seventh most deprived inner-city area in England, and the fifth most deprived where housing is concerned.

¹ The information in this appendix comes from two sources. The first is the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Monitor and Small Area Statistics for Wards. These data are based on the 1981 census. This source is referred to as: OPCS & SAS. The other source is the 1982 Borough Development Plan, referred to as: BDP, 1982.

Demographic Profile

The 1981 census gives a population of 157,522 for the borough. This represents a 20.4% decline since 1971, when the usually resident population was 197,916. This population decline is the fourth highest in Inner London for this period (OPCS & SAS; BDP, 1982).

TABLE 1
AGE STRUCTURE

	1971	1981
Under 5	15,300	8,958
Aged 14-15 (1971)	27,000	
Under 16 (1981)		29,278
Over 65	25,100	22,997

(OPCS & SAS; BDP, 1982)

Changes in the age structure of the population shows a decline of very young children. The elderly population has also declined slightly. This population, however, suffers from low incomes and poor housing conditions, and thus represents quite a demand on borough resources and services (BDP, 1982).

Ethnic Population

According to OPCS & SAS, the percentage of residents of the borough born outside the U.K. is 24.8, and the percentage of residents in households where the head of the household was born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan is 16.5.

Social Structure: 1966 to 1978 (BDP, 1982)

TABLE 2
SOCIAL STRUCTURE: 1966 TO 1978

Socioeconomic grouping	1966 (%)	1971 (%)	1978 (%)
Employers; managers; professional (SEG's 1-4)	8.2	11.0	11.5
Junior and intermediate non-manual (SEG's 5, 6)	20.7	24.5	27.2
Foremen; skilled; manual self-employed (SEG's 8, 9, 12, 14)	35.2	30.5	30.4
Personal service; semi-skilled (SEG's 7, 10, 15)	21.6	21.5	19.3
Unskilled; armed forces (SEG's 11, 16)	14.1	12.4	11.5
TOTAL NON-MANUAL	28.9	35.5	38.7
TOTAL MANUAL	71.0	63.4	61.2

Sources: Census 1966 and 1971; borough Social Survey 1978

(Refers to all economically active or retired heads of households, excluding those whose occupation was inadequately described.)

Between 1971 and 1974, there were also indications that the borough had an increasing proportion of people on low and insecure incomes, although the latest Social Survey (1978) shows that this proportion has stabilized. At that time, one third of heads of households in the borough had annual incomes at or below £2,000, while 67% of households earn less than £8,000 per year (R. Protz, New Socialist, no. 22, December 1984).

The borough Social Surveys in 1974 and 1978 have also identified a disproportionate number of handicapped and elderly who live in inappropriate housing, and single-parent families without access to child care or adequate recreation facilities.

Unemployment

According to the 1981 Census, unemployment in the borough is running at 20.9%. This breaks down by sex as follows: 14.1% men, 6.8% women (OPCS & SAS).

Housing

According to OPCS & SAS, the percentage of housing occupied by the owner is 16.9%; the percentage of Council tenancies is 55.6%; and the percentage of private or housing-association dwellings rented is 27.5%. One in three households has a car.

Housing Costs and Household Incomes

One of the most important influences on the availability of housing in the borough to households is its cost. In 1978, the borough Social Survey showed that half of Council tenants were in various manual occupations and that about the same proportion had incomes of less than £40 per week (BDP, 1982).

The percentage of pensioners living alone is 37.4. The percentage of households not in self-contained accommodation is 8.5; with more than one person per room, 6.3; and lacking or sharing use of a bath, 10.0. Four percent, or 2,500 households, are headed by single parents (OPCS & SAS).

Community and Social Services (BDP, 1982)

Community Services

Community services such as health centres, hospitals, community centres, social services day centres, and residential care make a wide variety of demands for land and buildings in the borough. In an inner urban area these services are particularly important, and demand is likely to be greater than elsewhere. For example, poor quality housing and the other symptoms of inner-city decay are likely to make heavy demands on the health services. Similarly, the high incidence of single-parent families and residents on low incomes will increase demand for day care for the under-fives and other services.

Powers and Resources

Provision of the various social services is made under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970, various Children's Acts, the National Health Service Acts, and so on. Capital expenditure for social services and health is tied closely to the national economic climate and is ap-

proved in the short term by the Department of Health and Social Security. Recent financial cutbacks have restricted spending, while health budgets have additionally suffered from reallocation of resources away from Inner London to other parts of the Health Region. Further cutbacks seem likely, though some additional Inner City Partnership money is being allocated to this sector. Overall, it seems clear that financial resources within the Plan period will be insufficient to remedy the presently identified deficiencies in buildings and services.

Many social and medical problems are created and exacerbated by the economic and social circumstances surrounding them. Poor housing, unemployment, low incomes, lack of opportunity for recreation, loneliness, and other such factors are likely to create stress for individuals or families.

Social Services for Children and Adolescents

The Council wishes, where possible, to avoid placing into residential care children in trouble and children whose parents are unable to look after them properly. Instead, the Council favours the use of foster homes, intensive social work support with the family, and the development of intermediate treatment for young offenders. The demand on land for homes (except to replace existing unsatisfactory provision) is, therefore, small.

The fall in the number of children and young people over recent years has not been reflected by a decrease in the need for social work with children (the largest category of social workers' caseloads). The Council is therefore conscious of the need to provide land and buildings for youth projects, intermediate treatment centres, employment projects, open space, and hostels for young people.

Policies Relating to Day Care for Children under Five

Special day provision for under-fives is made available to assist the development of the child, to help working mothers or incapacitated parents, and to extend relief to mothers from looking after children all the time -- particularly those living in flats and overcrowded conditions.

There has been a steady drop in the number of children under five because of the fall in the birthrate and the overall movement of people out of the borough. There were some 15,300 children under five in 1971; by 1981, the figure was in the region of 9,000. However, this decline is expected to come to a stop and there may well be a slight increase in the number of under-fives during the 1980's. Day provision for under-fives has been given considerable priority since 1971, both by the ILEA in providing places in nursery schools and nursery classes, and by the borough Council and voluntary organizations in the provision of day centres and playgroups. Considerable attention has also been devoted to improving the

range and quality of care; including training and registration for child-minders, promoting links between nursery classes and day centres, establishing toy libraries, and developing one o'clock clubs, mother and toddler clubs, and so on.

Demand for all day care is high in the borough because of the large number of mothers of children under five who have jobs (25% in 1971), and because full-time nursery education only operates on a short day (nine o'clock to four o'clock) and does not operate during the school holidays. Many mothers rely on unregistered and untrained child-minders, or are unable to work because they do not have somewhere suitable to leave the children.

Resources: Finance (BDP, 1982)

Introduction

The Town & Country Planning Act, 1971 (as amended) and the Advice Notes issued by the Department of the Environment required that consideration should be given, during the preparation of Local Plans, to the financial resources likely to be available for implementing the proposals. In formulating the Plan, therefore, proposals were related, wherever possible, to the Council's capital programme and those of other public authorities.

When the Plan was originally prepared in 1978, it has been assumed that the resources available to the Council would increase in line with the broad projections set out in the White Paper "The Government's Expenditure Plans, 1978-79 to 1981-92" (Cmnd 7049) and that resources would remain at that level for the remainder of the Plan period. However, it was recognized in the Written Statement (as revised in 1979) that there could be reductions in public expenditure following the change of Government in May, 1979.

There have, in fact, been considerable reductions in public expenditure since 1979, and local government has borne by far the largest proportion. It is inevitable that the phasing of Plan implementation will be affected by this.

The remaining sections in this chapter will consider the prospects for economic growth and public expenditure, together with the level of financial resources likely to be available to the Council over the remainder of the Plan period. The new system used by the Government to control the capital expenditure of local authorities is also discussed.

General Economic Prospects

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is perhaps the most commonly accepted measure of national economic performance, and is therefore a useful indicator for assessing the long-term availability of public sector resources.

While a general trend in GDP growth can be recognized over a period of time, the level can vary considerably from year to year. For example, while growth averaged 1.9% between 1970 and 1979, GDP increased by 6.5% in 1973, but fell by 1.5% in the following year. Long-term economic forecasts are, therefore, usually inaccurate, but nevertheless can still serve as a broad assessment of future economic activity.

Since the publication of the Written Statement, there has been a serious reduction in economic output. GDP growth was around -2.5% in 1980, and -3% in 1981 (mid-year figures). However, most forecasters are anticipating some recovery during 1982, with GDP growth of 1%, and this level may be maintained during 1983. It is difficult to assess the likely level of growth beyond this point; a continuation of the trend over the last decade would imply a long-term trend of around 2%, while a return to the average post-war growth rate would produce average GDP growth of between 2.5% and 3%. At the present time, it does seem unlikely that such a growth rate could be sustained over a long period.

Prospects for Public Expenditure

The amount of total national financial resources available to the public sector is dependent upon Government policy decisions. The Government's economic strategy has been to reduce public expenditure in real terms, and this is illus-

trated in the table below, which shows figures for public expenditure in 1981/82 as contained in the last White Paper on Public Expenditure produced by the previous Labour Government (Cmnd 7439, January 1979) and compares them with figures from the most recent Conservative Government White Paper (Cmnd 8175, March 1981). All figures have been revalued to the same price base (November, 1979) so that the comparison can be made in real terms, i.e., discounting the effects of inflation.

TABLE 3
PUBLIC EXPENDITURE PLANNED FOR 1981/82
(November 1979 prices)

	Labour Cmnd 7439 (£m)	Tory Cmnd 8175 (£m)	% Change (%)	Proportion of total reductions (%)
Central government	59,606	58,655	-1.6	21.9
Local Authorities	22,390	19,200	-14.2	73.5
Public corporations	1,328	1,130	-14.9	4.6
Total expenditure on programmes ¹	83,324	78,985	-5.2	100.0

¹ This excludes expenditure on contingency reserve and debt interest.

The table illustrates the changes that have been made since 1979 to the level of public expenditure planned for 1981/82. The figure of £78,985m actually represents a reduction of 1.1% on the estimated out-turn for 1980/81 and Cmnd 8175 plans further cuts of 2.6% and 2.2% in 1982/83 and 1983/84

respectively. There are currently some indications that the level of public expenditure for 1982/83 may be higher than planned in Cmnd 8175, but this will not be confirmed until the next White Paper is published. In the longer term, however, it is unlikely that restrictions in public spending will be eased until the economy becomes stronger.

Prospects for Local Authority Expenditure

Table 3 shows that local authorities have borne proportionately more of total planned public expenditure reductions than central government. Furthermore, Cmnd 8175 indicates that over the period 1975/76 to 1981/82, total expenditure by central government has increased by nearly 8% in real terms, while total local authority expenditure has fallen by 21% over the same period.

The main impact of the local authority reductions has been on capital expenditure. Since 1975/76, this has fallen by 60% (30% since 1979/80), most of the reductions having fallen upon housing investment.

Cmnd 8175 gives some indication of total local authority expenditure for 1982/83 and 1983/84:

	<u>Current expenditure</u>	<u>Capital expenditure</u>
1982/83	-1%	-3%
1983/84	-.5% - -1%	-4%

These figures exclude the housing programme, for which the White Paper gives no breakdown after 1981/82. Total housing

expenditure is planned to fall by 29% between 1981/82 and 1983/84.

Since the publication of Cmnd 8175, the Government has decided to change its assumptions about local authority expenditure, and the Rate Support Grant Settlement for 1982/83 assumed a higher level of current expenditure than originally planned. It seems certain, however, that local authorities will still be expected to make real terms reductions in expenditure in the short to medium term.

The position with regard to capital expenditure is worsened as a result of the control system introduced by the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980, which has operated for the first time during 1981/82. By means of this new system, the Government is able to control local authority total capital expenditure even more than with the previous system, and now the scope for authorities to supplement government allocations by using local resources is limited. This will further restrict local authority capital investment over the Plan period.

Borough Council Capital Expenditure

Housing. The Council's Community Plan (1976) and Capital Programme Reviews (1978 and 1979) set out the strategy required to deal with unsatisfactory housing in the borough during the 1980's. The Council has submitted this strategy to the Government each year as the basis for its request for

capital funding -- that is, the Housing Investment Programme. These requests were met with substantial allocations for 1978/89 and 1979/80 but since then the allocation has been halved in real terms:

1979/80	£79.4m
1980/81	£58.3m
1981/82	£37.7m
1982/83	£37.0m (at 1982/83 out-turn prices)

The general effect of these reductions in resources has been to depress expenditure on home loans, grants to housing associations.

Total capital expenditure in 1982/83 on housing is planned to be around £46.8m, after allowing for certain types of supplementary financing which can be used in addition to the basic HIP allocation. On the most optimistic assumptions, it is unlikely that expenditure in future years would be any more than the 1982/83 level, in real terms, at least for the medium term.

Social Services. It was assumed in the earlier Written Statement that expenditure on Social Services would continue at around £700,000 annually. Although expenditure for 1981/82 will be only around £200,000, it is planned to spend somewhat more than this in 1982/83, although still at a lower level in real terms than the level assumed in the Written Statement. It is also unlikely that there will be any real terms growth, in the medium term at least.

Recreation. The proposals set out in this Plan to improve recreation provision are likely to require total capital expenditure over the Plan period of approximately £14m (at 1981 prices). On the basis of the likely level of spending in 1981/82 and 1982/83, and the guidance contained in Cmnd 8175, the total recreation expenditure is now likely to be about £7m (also at 1981 prices) over the Plan period, but this level could be doubled if the Urban Programme continues throughout the Plan period.

Other Services. This category includes employment, town centre redevelopment, environment, traffic management, and so on. Significant capital spending by this Council in the first two of these categories seems unlikely, as the Council is relying principally for implementation by the private sector. With respect to environment and traffic management, a requirement of some £8-9m over the Plan period would be necessary to maintain present programmes. As with the recreation programme, this could only be achieved by a continuation of the Urban Programme throughout the Plan period.

Urban Programme. Inner City Partnership resources are important for three distinct areas of Plan implementation: 1) action to regenerate the economy and create employment; 2) action to improve the physical environment; and 3) action to improve leisure and recreation. The Partnership Programme for 1979/80 to 1981/82 assumed annual allocations of £1m for these activities, and present indications are that the cor-

responding figure for 1982/83 will be much higher than this, at around £3.3m. This is clearly a very important source of resources for Plan implementation.

Total Council Expenditure. The table below sets out for each of the main service areas the resources which are likely to be needed to implement the Plan proposals and compares this with the resources which may be available. The resource requirements have been estimated by calculating the likely costs of all the specific proposals and needs identified in the Plan. Where no specific targets have been included a continuation of present spending has been assumed. With respect to housing the figure is based on recent HIP "bids" and on the assumption that this broad level of spending will be required throughout the Plan period, if the Council's objectives are to be met.

TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS
AND RESOURCE AVAILABILITY
(at November 1981 prices)

	Resource requirements	Resources likely to be available			Shortfall
		Main programmes	Partner-ship	Total	
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Housing	700	414	9	423	277
Employment,					
Traffic and					
Environment	16	3	13	16	--
Recreation	14	7	7	14	--
Social Ser-					
vices	7	3	4	7	--

The main problem area is housing, where there appears to be a very significant shortfall between the funds needed and the funds likely to be available. The consequences of this could be very serious, with a possible deterioration in housing conditions leading to a renewed demand for slum clearance and new development (although this could be inhibited by the likely lack of suitable land for new housing). Changes in housing needs are, of course, very difficult to predict and must therefore be kept under review. In particular, the forthcoming results of the 1981 Census may indicate some changes in likely housing requirements.

In the non-housing field resources appear to be adequate to meet the requirements of the Plan. However, it should be noted that Urban Programme resources will be of crucial importance for the implementation of policies in these areas, particularly in respect of Employment, Traffic, and Environment.

The availability of capital resources does not necessarily imply that such resources would actually be used. Capital expenditure has revenue expenditure consequences, not the least of which is debt charges. Debt charges already form a high proportion of the Council's total revenue budget, and this position will have to be closely monitored. All decisions regarding capital expenditure will have to be made in the light of the particular circumstances at the time in question.

Private Sector Capital Expenditure (BDP, 1982)

There appears to have been a significant decline in the amount of private sector activity during recent years and the rapid rise in building costs, and high land costs, relative to rents, is likely to continue to hold down private investment.

The assumptions made in the Council's recent Capital Programme Review are that the private sector will be principally responsible for investment in the industrial, commercial, and shopping fields, and the Plan makes several proposals, where it is hoped to secure the cooperation of private investors. The level of private sector investment required is, however, considerably in excess of present levels in all the sectors.

In the industrial sector it is evident that nothing like the private investment required to support full employment locally is taking place. Using the rather crude proxy of planning applications for new and improved industrial floor-space; development pressure seems to be increasing, but as yet the pressure is not being translated into actual investment (implementation of only 40% of applications made two years ago has commenced). Something in the region of £60 million is required in the next five years, and past trends suggest that actual investment has been about half this level.

The investment which would be involved in the revitalization of the main shopping areas is of the order of £50-70 million to make full use of the development potential and capacity in these areas. Private investment in the shopping sector appears to be well below that needed to sustain existing service levels.

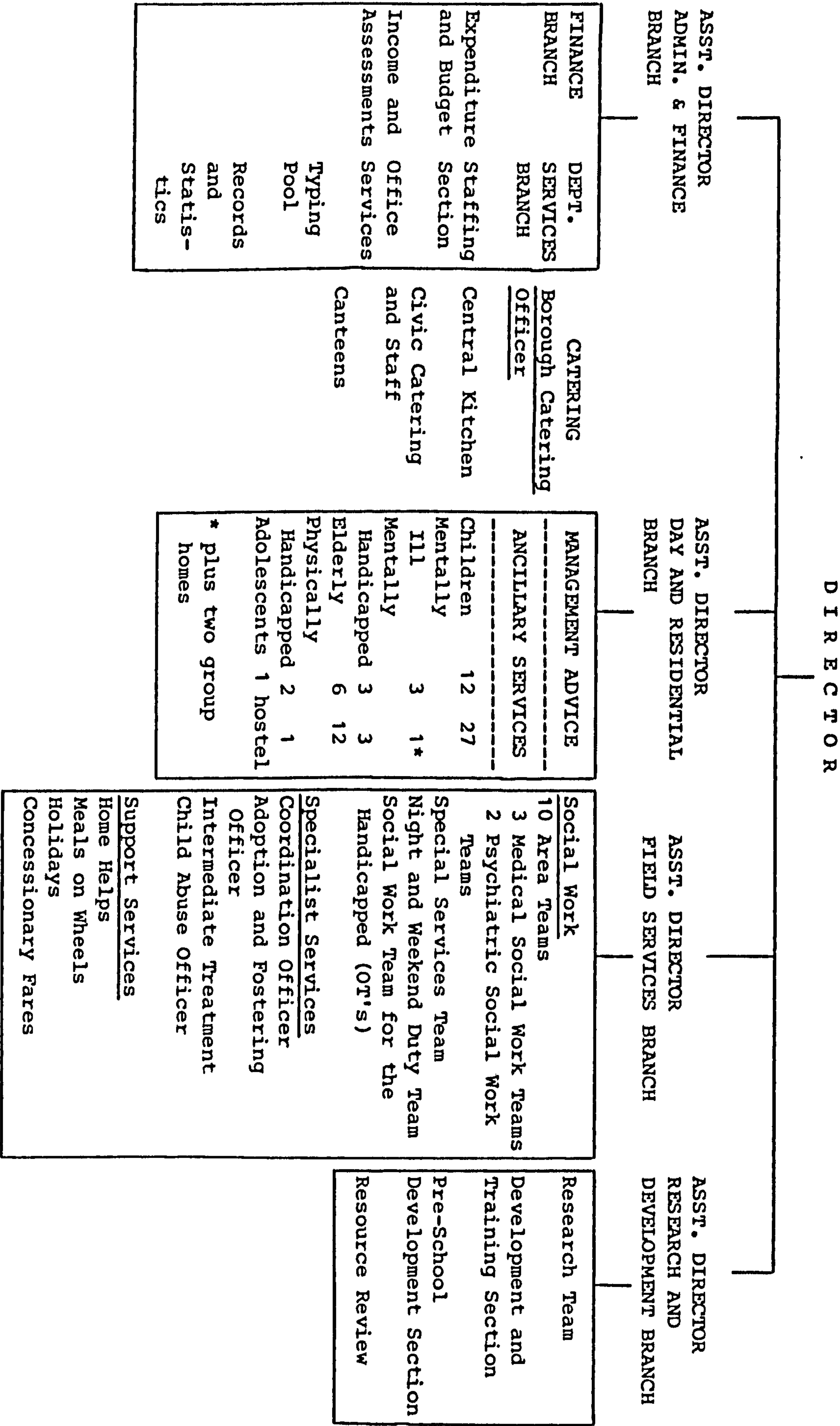
There is little this Plan can do to alleviate the serious lack of both public and private capital, particularly given a major long-term recession. The reduction of blight, the promotion of Areas of Opportunity, and the relaxation of zoning controls, if actively publicized, may marginally help to attract investors.

APPENDIX C

BOROUGH POLICY AND PROCEDURES RELATING TO CHILD ABUSE*

* Extracted from Borough Handbook on Child Abuse Policy and Procedures, May, 1982

ORGANIZATION CHART OF SOCIAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT



(Source: Research Department of Borough)

Immediate action

5

- 5.1 IN ALL CASES OF CHILD ABUSE IT IS VITAL TO TAKE ACTION TO SAFEGUARD THE CHILD
- 5.2 This action will vary according to the identity of the person whose suspicion is aroused, and the circumstances of the child, but it is essential to consult with a senior colleague.
- 5.3 GENERAL PRINCIPLES
- 5.3.1 In the case of suspected child abuse, the child must be fully examined by a doctor (i.e. a school or clinic doctor, General Practitioner, or hospital Casualty Officer) as soon as possible.
- 5.3.2 If the doctor confirms the suspicion of child abuse, the child should be admitted to hospital:
(a) for safety and (b) for full investigation
- 5.3.3 Admission to hospital should as far as possible be done with the co-operation of the parents and without antagonising or accusing them.
- 5.3.4. In the event of a situation arising where any person wishes to withdraw the child from the care of the hospital, an approach should be made directly to the Hospital Social Work Team by contacting the Principal Social Worker or her deputy or a Senior Social Worker.
- 5.3.5 To provide similar protection in other circumstances, an approach should be made directly to the Social Services Department (by contacting the Area Team Leader or a Senior Social Worker of the area team concerned) or, when necessary, the N.S.P.C.C. or the Police, to OBTAIN A PLACE OF SAFETY ORDER.
- 5.3.6 In both circumstances outlined above, OUTSIDE NORMAL OFFICE HOURS, reference in the first instance, should be made to the OUT-OF-HOURS SOCIAL SERVICES DUTY TEAM (telephone HOSPITAL BED BUREAU on (after 6.00 p.m. during the working week).
- 5.3.7 The evidence of information may indicate to the Social Worker and his/her senior colleagues that it is not appropriate or possible to refer the child immediately to the hospital or to remove to a place of safety, but there may be a suspicion that there is physical or emotional abuse. In such circumstances, a case conference should be called.
- 5.4 THE POLICE
- 5.4.1 The police have an important role to play in child abuse procedures. This is both because of their investigative responsibilities and because of the information they may have available on children and families.
- 5.4.2 Whenever actual or suspected non-accidental injury has occurred the police, through the appropriate Juvenile Bureau Officer, must be contacted without delay for consultation about the immediate action and an invitation to the case conference.
- 5.4.3 All contact with the Police will be to Police Station, (telephone). During normal office hours notification will be to the Juvenile Bureau. Outside office hours notification will be to the Station Officer who will contact the Late Duty Detective Inspector who will make all necessary enquiries and inform the Detective Superintendent.

Notification

6

TO SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT - FIELD SERVICES BRANCH

- 6.1 All notification and referrals regarding suspected child abuse shall be by telephone and confirmed in writing to the appropriate area team office.
(see list in Section 16 and map at cover).
- 6.1.1 A copy of all notification and referrals must be sent at the same time to the custodian of the Register, i.e. to the Child Abuse Co-ordinator at Social Services Department Head Office,
(telephone _____)
- 6.2 Notification and referrals received at Head Office will be forwarded by the Child Abuse Co-ordinator or the Assistant Director (Field Services) to the relevant hospital or area team.
- 6.3 When a notification/referral has been received in the area team office, the Area Team Leader or Duty Senior Social Worker will ensure that any further preliminary investigations are made. The ATL or Duty SSW will then decide whether an initial case conference should be held and will notify the referring agency or person accordingly.
 - 6.3.1 If the conference is not to be held, the referring source must be informed in writing with a copy to the custodian of the Register.
 - 6.3.2 In the event of strong disagreement about the need for a case conference the matter should be referred to the Assistant Director (Field Services) for a final decision.
- 6.4 Hospital based social workers are likely to receive information direct from medical staff. In all cases the Hospital Principal Social worker will follow the same procedures laid down for area teams and will also inform the Area Team Leader or Duty Senior Social Worker.

Case conference

.7

IN THIS MANUAL THE TERM 'CASE CONFERENCE' REFERS TO CONFERENCES CALLED UNDER THE AREA REVIEW COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

7.1 CRITERIA The following cases should be the subject of a formal case conference:

A PHYSICAL INJURY

All physically injured children under the age of 17 years where the nature of the injury is not consistent with the account of how it occurred or where there is definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted (or knowingly not prevented) by any person having custody, charge, or care of the child. This includes children to whom it is suspected poisonous substances have been administered. Diagnosis of child abuse will normally require both medical examination of the child and social assessment of the family background.

B PHYSICAL NEGLECT

Children under the age of 17 years who have been persistently or severely neglected physically, for example, by exposure to dangers of different kinds, including cold and starvation.

C FAILURE TO THRIVE AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE - (See also APPENDIX 'A')

Children under the age of 17 years:

- (i) who have been medically diagnosed as suffering from severe non-organic failure to thrive; or
- (ii) whose behaviour and emotional development have been severely affected;

where medical and social assessments find evidence of either persistent or severe neglect or rejection.

D CHILDREN IN THE SAME HOUSEHOLD AS A PERSON PREVIOUSLY INVOLVED IN CHILD ABUSE

Children under the age of 17 years who are in a household with or which is regularly visited by a parent or another person who has abused a child and are considered at risk of abuse.

In the case of persons released from prison who had been convicted of certain offences against children in the home - see APPENDIX 'B'.

E SUSPECTED OR ACTUAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Children under the age of 17 years who have been sexually abused or where there is a strong suspicion that sexual abuse has taken place; where it is known, or strongly suspected that the abuse was inflicted by any person having custody, charge or care of the child.

7.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE CASE CONFERENCE will be:

- 7.2.1 to share amongst people concerned all the information available at the time concerning the family and the child/children;
- 7.2.2 to decide what immediate action is required;
- 7.2.3 to agree a long term plan if appropriate and possible to do so.

7.3 CONVENING THE CASE CONFERENCE -

- 7.3.1 Any agency participating in the Area Review Committee which is first aware of circumstances surrounding a child which cause concern or suspicion of abuse, should be responsible for the initial investigation and obtaining a medical examination where appropriate, and involving or notifying the parents, except I.L.E.A. whose procedure is set out in Appendix 'C'. The initiating agency, before proceeding to convene any case conference, should discuss the case with the appropriate Social Services Department Hospital or Area Team.
- 7.3.2 Before an initial case conference is convened an enquiry should be made of the CHILD ABUSE REGISTER (by telephoning the custodian of the Register
to establish whether the family is known, missing from another local authority area, whether a child has been the subject of a previous case conference and a key worker appointed. Normally, the key worker or his/her supervisor should convene further case conferences. It follows that the key worker should always be kept up-to-date by other agencies involved with the family. However, any agency may convene a case conference if, after discussion/consultation with the key worker/supervisor (senior social worker/area team leader in the case of the social service department) such an agency is still concerned for the safety of the child.

8.1 It is emphasised that the membership of a case conference should include persons of sufficient seniority to act on behalf of their agencies as well as persons involved or potentially involved with any individual child.

8.2 Representation should be kept to the minimum necessary and normally be comprised of one or more of the following:

HOSPITAL STAFF

Consultant, Senior Registrar, other involved Medical Officers as appropriate.

Principal Social Worker or Senior Social Worker who will attend with the Social Worker concerned where a social worker is already involved.

Midwife, Ward Sister (when the conference is held in hospital).

GENERAL PRACTITIONER

should always be invited to attend. A Senior Medical Officer or Senior Officer of the Social Services Department should contact a G.P. who is unable to attend, for any vital and relevant information to be shared with the case conference. A note should be included in the minutes that this has been done.

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Senior Medical Officer, Senior Nursing Officer or Nursing Officer, Health Visitor, School Nurse. When necessary, the Principal Physician in Child Health should be consulted as to the appropriate representation.

SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Field Services Branch should be represented by a Team Leader or Senior Social Worker or other Senior Officer authorised to represent the Branch. who will attend with the Social Worker concerned, where a social worker is already involved.

The Child Abuse Co-ordinator, based in the Field Services Branch at SCD Head Office

must always be notified of every case where a case conference is being called and, if possible, should attend as liaison of the Area Review Committee. The CA Co-ordinator will also advise on any other related matters.

The Day and Residential Branch

Children Day Centres should be represented by the Organiser or Deputy Organiser.

Residential Establishments for Children should be represented by the Superintendent or Deputy Superintendent.

Senior Management Advisers or Principal Management Advisers should be invited as appropriate.

LEGAL DEPARTMENT) HOUSING DEPARTMENT)

Representatives will attend when invited if considered appropriate.

I.L.E.A.

Representatives should be invited to attend if children between 3 and 17 years are involved. Please contact a Senior member of staff.

N. S. P. C. C.	should be invited to attend if already involved in the case.
PROBATION SERVICE	will be invited as appropriate and where already involved.
POLICE	the Care Officers from the Juvenile Bureau should always be invited to attend.
FAMILY SERVICE UNIT)	
FAMILY WELFARE ASSOCIATION)	representatives will be invited to attend
ELFRIDA RATHBONE COMMITTEE)	as appropriate and where already involved.

8.3 EVERY CASE CONFERENCE MUST CONSIDER WHETHER ANY OTHER AGENCY NOT REPRESENTED AT THE CASE CONFERENCE (BUT A MEMBER OF THE AREA REVIEW COMMITTEE) SHOULD BE NOTIFIED.

8.4 Guidelines for Confidentiality

- 8.4.1 Only agencies represented on the Area Review Committee may attend child abuse case conferences. These agencies are fully aware of the confidential nature of discussions at such case conferences. If another agency, such as a voluntary organisation, or private individuals (e.g. parents, foster parents, or other persons caring or concerned for the child/family) have an important contribution to make to a child abuse conference, this information should be discussed separately with the appropriate agency (e.g. Social Services Department or the Health Authority) whose representatives will then have the relevant information to share with the conference.
- 8.4.2 Copies of minutes of case conferences should not be made available to other agencies or individuals not represented on an Area Review Committee and this rule should in no case be waived except with the agreement of all agencies' representatives participating in the case conference.
- 8.4.3 It is emphasised that minutes of a case conference should be sent, in the first instance, to the Head or Senior Officer of the agencies represented at the case conference (for the attention of the representative(s) who attended the conference).
- 8.4.4 A copy of the minutes of the case conference should always be sent to the Child Abuse Co-ordinator (who is the custodian of the Child Abuse Register for the London Borough Social Services Department Head Office,

Responsibilities of the Initial Case Conference

9

THE CHAIRPERSON SHOULD BE A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE AGENCY CONVENING THE CASE CONFERENCE AND SHOULD BE NAMED AT THE START OF THE MEETING

* Guidance to the Chairperson and other participants as to the conduct of the conference is set out in detail in Appendix H.

9.1 Check Reason and Source of Notification/Referral.

9.1.1 Examine the available information.

9.1.2 Decide on what action is required in the best interests of the child.

9.1.3 Decide on registration of the child.

9.1.4 Designate a key worker who should normally inform parents about the inclusion on the register unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so. If the conference decides not to tell the parents, a full record of the reasons for this decision should be included in the minutes.

9.1.5 Consider whether any agency not present should have been invited.

9.1.6 Consider whether other children in the family are at risk of abuse.

9.1.7 Decide the date, time, and venue of the next conference.

9.2 A positive decision or decisions must be taken regarding next action. This may include consideration of the following examples of course of action.

* Referral to hospital or general practitioner.

* Remain at home or return home with planned help to the family.

* Reception into care at parents' request in order to provide relief from strain in a difficult family situation.

* Police investigation.

* Action to bring the child before a juvenile court with a view to recommending a court order committing the child to care or interim care or placing the child at home under a supervision order.

9.3 It may well be that a stalemate is reached where it is not in the interests of the child to be home but where the parents will not agree to reception into care and there is insufficient evidence for court action. In such a case particular importance must be attached to the supervision and help which can be given by schools, day nurseries, playgroups, clinics and supportive work to the family and to the role of the general practitioner. A short period of residential care may be acceptable to the family.

9.4 The decision to include a child's name on the Register is the responsibility of the Initial Case Conference and is evidence of grave professional concern. If insufficient information is available at the Initial Case Conference for this decision to be made, it may be deferred until the first review conference but not later.

9.5 KEY WORKER

- 9.5.1 If the decision is to place the child on the Register, one person must be appointed as the key worker who will be responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the other persons in direct contact with the family. The key worker will also ensure that the decisions and recommendations of the case conference are implemented and notified immediately to all other members of the case conference.
- 9.5.2 The key worker acts as a focal point for co-ordination and communication about the case. This is usually the main person working with the child/family as part of his/her normal duties.
- 9.5.3 The key worker can be a person from any agency represented at the case conference but, where this is not a social worker of the Social Services Department, a liaison officer in the area team or hospital social work team should be designated for the case. This officer acts as a link with Social Services and facilitates any necessary statutory action.
- 9.5.4 When informing parents about the inclusion of their child's name on the Register, the key worker should explain the nature of information held on Registers, who has access to the Register, the purpose for which it is held and the arrangements for de-registration.
- 9.5.5 In the event of the child/family moving out of or to a new address in the Borough, the key worker must notify the custodian of the Child Abuse Register so that information on the Register can be updated. It is also the duty of the key worker to notify the Local Authority Social Services Department of the area to which the child/family have moved. (See also section 11).

9.6 POLICE

9.6.1 The initial case conference is reminded that in all cases where there is evidence of a criminal offence the police must be informed immediately. The police cannot refuse to investigate an allegation but may decide on the evidence not to prosecute (except where there is evidence of child sexual abuse).

9.6.2 Any decision by the police to commence enquiries should be notified to the Director of Social Services via the supervising ATL/SSW/FSW where the area team or hospital team is the convener/key worker of the case.

9.7 The case conference shall also consider the whole family with reference to the siblings and any other children (e.g. fostered or daily minded).

9.8 If the child is placed on the Register, the conference must decide when the next case conference shall be called. In any event, this must be within the next six months. An earlier conference can be requested by any person involved at any time through the key worker. Responsibility for ensuring this will rest with the key worker's supervising Senior Officer; in the case of the Social Services Department, responsibility rests with the supervising Senior Social Worker/Area Team Leader or Principal Hospital Social Worker. *

9.9 Conference decisions/recommendations must be acted upon immediately. Everyone invited to the case conference must be notified by the key worker of important decisions/recommendations which cannot be implemented.

9.10 Whilst the case conference cannot commit the Social Services Department to any particular form of statutory action, it is most important in normal circumstances that the Department should comply in detail with the decisions/recommendations of the case conference. The decision for the Social Services Department to deviate from the recommendations of the case conference must only be taken by the Assistant Director (Field Services) or the Director of Social Services. *

Review Case conferences

10

- 10.1 The date of the next case conference will have been determined by the initial or previous case conference. Review case conferences should be held at intervals not longer than six months, while the case is active on the Register.
- 10.2 The purpose of review case conferences is to ensure regular assessment of the child's family environment, the continued relevance and efficacy of agreed plans of action, the continuing need for inclusion of the child's name on the Register, and the accuracy of information held on the case file and the Register.
- 10.3 If a child is made the subject of a Care Order, or is received into care, then as long as there is a likelihood that the child will return to its parents, either for holidays or Home-on-Trial, his/her name will not be removed from the Register but will be placed in the inactive section. The normal six-monthly statutory review will thereafter incorporate the review case conference and will be carried out in accordance with the procedures set out in this manual, i.e. all relevant agencies should be involved in the review.
- 10.4 Should a child be fostered and placed outside the London Borough a case conference should be held to decide upon future review arrangements.
- 10.5 Should a child be placed for adoption, and whenever any child on the Register attains the age of 17 years, then a review case conference should always be held to consider de-registration.
- 10.6 Form APC/CA/3 should be used for child abuse review conferences on children who are not in care. For the normal six-monthly statutory review of children in care, use Form SS/FS/205.

Transfer of cases

11

11.1 It is of the utmost importance that the supervision of children on the CHILD ABUSE REGISTER is at all times the responsibility of a clearly identifiable Key Worker and that such responsibility is only transferred in accordance with the following procedures:

11.1.1 If a child moves out of the Borough, the key worker shall immediately telephone the receiving Local Authority, and also give full and written information without delay, and shall so inform the Custodian of the Register and members of the case conference. When the receiving Borough has accepted responsibility for the case, it shall be removed from the outgoing Borough's Register and if appropriate held on an inactive card.

11.1.2 Any child transferring into the Borough who is on another Authority's Child Abuse Register shall be placed automatically on the receiving Borough's Register. A case conference should be held as soon as possible and the previous worker should be invited to attend. Meanwhile, it is the responsibility of the receiving Area Team Leader or Hospital Principal Social Worker to name a worker until the case conference designates a key worker.

11.1.3 Any child on the Register moving within the Borough to another Team's area will remain the responsibility of the original Area Team and the original key worker unless a properly constituted case conference decides otherwise.

12.1 PLACE OF SAFETY ORDERS

12.1.1.

What is a place of safety order?

A child who is known or suspected to be suffering from abuse may be removed immediately from his home or any other place where he is at risk by means of a place of safety order. An order may last up to 28 days. A place of safety is a community home provided by a Local Authority or a controlled community home, any Police Station, Surgery or other suitable place, the occupier of which is temporarily willing to receive a child or young person.

12.1.2.

Who applies for the order?

Anyone may apply for a place of safety order, but usually the application will be made on behalf of a Local Authority, the N.S.P.C.C. or the Police (See 5.3.5).

12.1.3.

Who makes the order?

A place of safety order may be made by any Justice of the Peace at any time, but if a Juvenile Court is sitting it is preferable that the application should be made to a Justice of the Peace at Court. The Police have powers to remove and detain a child at risk which do not require an application to a J.P. (See 12.1.5. below).

12.1.4.

What information will the J.P. require?

The child and his parent are not involved in the application but the person making the application must appear before the J.P. The applicant must provide sufficient documentary or oral evidence to satisfy the J.P. and there is reasonable cause to believe that one of the primary conditions (a) - (f) in 12.2.2. below exists.

12.1.5.

What powers do the Police have to remove a child to a place of safety?

A Police Officer may detain a child for up to 8 days if he has reasonable cause to believe that one of the primary conditions (a) - (f) in 12.2.2. below exists.

A Police Officer may be authorised by a warrant issued by a J.P. to enter any building, by force if necessary, to search for a child and remove him to a place of safety.

12.2 CARE PROCEEDINGS

12.2.1.

How do Care Proceedings start?

If the child needs to be kept in care longer than the period of the place of safety order and his parents do not agree to voluntary care, it will be necessary to obtain a Care Order from the Juvenile Court. The application for a Care Order should be made before the place of safety order expires. Written notice of the application must be given to the child and his parents (and to the Local Authority if the application is made by the N.S.P.C.C. or the Police). Where there is no immediate crisis, care proceedings may be started without a place of safety order first being obtained. The Legal Department should be contacted without delay for advice on evidence, preparation of the advice and arranging the Court Hearing.

12.2.2.

What must be proved?

There are two stages in proving the case for a Care Order or Supervision Order. Firstly one or more of the conditions (a) and (f) must be shown and exist. Secondly the child must be shown and be in need of care and control which he is unlikely to receive unless the Court makes an order in respect of him. The conditions are:

- (a) his proper development is being avoidably prevented or neglected or his health is being avoidably impaired or neglected or he is being ill-treated; or
- (b) it is probable that the condition set out in the preceding paragraph will be satisfied in his case having regard to the fact that the Court or another Court has found that that condition is or was satisfied in the case of another child or young person who is or was a member of the household to which he belongs; or
- (bb) it is probable that the condition set out in paragraph (a) of this Sub-Section will be satisfied in his case, having regard to the fact that a person who has been convicted of any offence mentioned in Schedule 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (offences against children and certain sexual offences, murder, manslaughter) is, or may become, a member of the same household as the child; or
- (c) he is exposed to moral danger;
- (d) he is beyond the control of his parent or guardian;
- (e) he is of compulsory school age within the meaning of the Education Act 1944 and is not receiving efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude; or
- (f) he is guilty of an offence, excluding homicide.

AND also that he is in need of care and control which he is unlikely to receive unless a Court makes an order under Section 1 of the 1969 Act in respect of him.

12.2.3.

What orders can be made?

If the case is proved the Court must, if it thinks fit, make an order. The order will usually be a Care Order or a Supervision Order. If the Court is not in a position to decide what order, if any, ought to be made, it may make an interim order for up to 28 days. An interim order will usually be made where there is insufficient time to hear all the evidence or further information is required. Unlike place of safety orders more than one interim care order can be made. The effect of a Care Order or interim Care Order is to transfer the parental rights in the child to the Local Authority.

12.3 EVIDENCE

Care proceedings are governed by the criminal rules of evidence. This means that evidence to prove one or more of the conditions in 12.2.2. must be given orally under oath by a witness who has personally observed the facts he is describing. The only exception to these rules which is relevant to the child abuse procedure is that a certificate signed by a registered Medical Practitioner describing a person's medical condition is admissible. Hearsay evidence is not admissible: thus, for example, a Social Worker may not give evidence that a neighbour told him that he saw a parent hit his child - only the evidence of the neighbour is admissible if the Social Worker did not see the incident.

A witness may only refresh his memory in Court from notes made at the time of the events which he is describing. It is therefore most important that notes are made as soon as practicable after each incident which may become relevant in future proceedings.

12.4 WARDSHIP

Wardship may be an alternative to care proceedings and is particularly useful in preventing anticipated child abuse. A child can be made a Ward of the High Court swiftly on the application of any person with an interest in him. The criminal rules of evidence do not apply (a certain amount of hearsay evidence may be admitted) but Wardship is not a substitute for lack of evidence. The High Court is concerned with deciding what is in the best interests of the child and is not confined to the conditions in 12.2.2. The effect of Wardship is to vest in the High Court all the parental rights in the child until he is 18 or the Wardship is discharged. The Court has wide powers to order where and with whom a child should live, who should have access etc. The evidence required by the High Court may therefore be different to the type of evidence needed for care proceedings. For example (the most common situation where Wardship proceedings are started by the London Borough) a mother may be clearly incapable of caring for her new born child, but the child has not yet left the maternity hospital. As the child has not been harmed, none of the conditions for care proceedings in 12.2.2. can be satisfied, but the child can be made a Ward of Court on the basis of evidence of the mother's incapacity and the anticipated harm to the child.

- 14.1 The purpose of the Register is:
 - 14.1.1 to safeguard children
 - 14.1.2 to record information
- 14.2 A single Child Abuse Register shall be kept for the London Borough . Case Conferences will consider placing on the Register any child or young person under the age of 17 years who falls within the criteria A B C D E as set out in Section 7 of this Manual.
- 14.3 The Register will be limited to the geographical boundaries of the London Borough .
- 14.4 The following details should be included:
 - 14.4.1 Child's full name, known aliases, known addresses, sex, date and place of birth.
 - 14.4.2 Full names (including maiden name) known aliases, dates of birth and addresses of parents or others caring for the child; the name and address of any other adult members or of regular visitors to the household, together with details of their relationship to the child, if this information is known.
 - 14.4.3 Full names, dates of birth and sex of other children in the household.
 - 14.4.4 G.P.'s name, address and telephone number.
 - 14.4.5 Child's school, playgroup, nursery or child minder, if any.
 - 14.4.6 Reason and source of referral; nature of injury or abuse and by whom inflicted, if known.
 - 14.4.7 Date of Registration (i.e. date of decision and recommendation of case conference).
 - 14.4.8 Name of key worker and his/her agency, including address and telephone number.
 - 14.4.9 Names and telephone numbers of other agencies involved.
 - 14.4.10 Note of any enquiries to the Register
 - 14.4.11 Date of the next review conference
 - 14.4.12 Legal status of the child and location, if not at home or at known address.
 - 14.4.13 Whether the parents or persons caring for the child have been informed of the registration.

14.5 REGISTRATION

- 14.5.1 A case will only be entered on the Register after a case conference has been held and a decision/recommendation made to place the child's name on the Register.
- 14.5.2 The only exception to 14.5.1 above, concerns cases transferred from the Child Abuse Register of other local authorities - see Section 11 para. 11.1.2 of this Manual.

14.6 Notification/referral details shall be entered on the Register as soon as information is received. All workers and agencies should notify any changes in this information to the key worker who, in turn, will notify the custodian of the Register, so that the Register may be kept up to date.

14.7 ENQUIRIES TO THE REGISTER

- 14.7.1 The Register which is maintained by the Social Services Department will be retained in the custody of the Child Abuse Co-ordinator, at SSD Head Office, [redacted] Telephone enquiries should be made to [redacted] In the absence of the CA Co-ordinator, enquiries should be addressed to the Assistant Director (Field Services), [redacted] Where the enquiry is written, it should be marked for the attention of the AD/FS.
- 14.7.2 Information held on the Register will be strictly confidential. As advised by DHSS - LASSL(80)4 para. 4.1 a record will be kept of all enquiries; information will only be supplied to authorised enquirers. As a safeguard to confidentiality a ring-back procedure will be used.

14.8 OUT-OF-HOURS ACCESS TO REGISTER

- 14.8.1 The Out-of-Hours Duty Team of Senior Social Workers have access to the Register under arrangements made with the Child Abuse Co-ordinator. Enquiries concerning the Register, outside normal working hours, should therefore be made via the Bed Bureau at the [redacted] Hospital (Telephone [redacted] to the Out-of-Hours Duty Officer.

14.9 DE - REGISTRATION

- 14.9.1 A child's name may be removed from the Register when the child is no longer regarded as being at risk of abuse. The decision to do so, whatever the circumstances, must be taken by a review case conference - see Section 10 of this manual.
- 14.9.2 When a proposal to remove a child's name from the Register is to be discussed, the key worker/convenor must give adequate notice to all agencies involved, and to the custodian of the Register. If any agency is unable to attend the conference they must indicate their views on this proposal in advance, by telephoning or writing to the key worker/convenor who should ensure that the decision of the case conference is communicated to all agencies originally involved, and to the Register holder.
- 14.9.3 Removal from the Register should not of itself be regarded as grounds for any reduction in professional involvement with the child/family or for destruction of individual agencies' records.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Report of a Sub-Committee of the Executive Committee of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Section of The Royal College of Psychiatrists.

POINT OF REFERENCE D.H.S.S. Circular LASSL (80)4 - HN(80)20 - 2.2 c (ii) - a new category is to be included in Child Abuse Central Register Systems - "Children under the age of 17 years whose behavioural and emotional development have been severely affected and where medical and social assessments find evidence of either persistent or severe neglect or rejection." :

Previously the legal framework for considering cases of "emotional abuse" lay in a section of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, where grounds for a Care Order in respect of a child can be 1(2)(a) "his proper development is being avoidably prevented or neglected, or his health is being avoidably impaired or neglected, or he is being ill treated."

- BRIEF
- (1) To consider the implications of the new category in relation to the practice of child and adolescent psychiatry.
 - (2) To attempt to define the concept of emotional abuse and the threshold beyond which concern should be expressed.
 - (3) To recommend a code of practice for child and adolescent psychiatrists.

RESPONSIBILITIES WITH REGARD TO AT RISK REGISTER SYSTEMS

In many, if not all cases of physical abuse of children, there is also emotional abuse, and in some families one child may be physically abused whereas another child is emotionally abused. The new category is potentially helpful in dealing with the wider concept of abuse.

In the period following the enquiry into the death of Maria Colwell inclusion of children on a register was frequently done in an uncritical way, with no set time limit. The work of the Area Review Committees then led to refinement and limitation of criteria, anxiety diminished, and more effective use of registers developed, with monitoring and with criteria for removal of families from registers. The problems of confidentiality and legal rights of parents as well as children have been openly and constructively discussed. The work of Area Review Committees has been subject to local variations because of differences in their composition and differences also in the communities they serve.

It is not known to what extent child psychiatrists may already be represented on Area Review Committees. If children who are victims of severe emotional abuse are to be helped by at risk procedures, then active involvement of child psychiatrists in local committees is essential.

PROBLEMS OF DIAGNOSIS

Child psychiatric disorder has a variety of antecedents and there is no picture pathognomonic of emotional abuse. It is necessary for diagnosis

to have knowledge both of the child and the family and establish a connection between the child's state and the parents' behaviour.

"GOOD ENOUGH" PARENTING

Very few parents, if any, can meet all the needs of all their children all the time or refrain from ill-timed, inappropriate responses to children. Most parents can be expected to achieve parenting which does not impede or seriously damage development. In the vast majority of situations it is clear that a child being reared in his family is faring better in terms of happiness and human development than a child reared in an alternative setting, such as, a children's home.

Parent care and child rearing practice should be seen not as an ideal and needing to follow one particular pattern, but in terms of being adequate for a particular child.

Some children are undoubtedly more difficult to manage by virtue of their temperamental characteristics. Certain other factors may jeopardise a child's status in the family, such as, prematurity, physical abnormalities and chronic illness, brain damage and intellectual impairment. Emotional abuse may be more damaging to a child with other problems to contend with than it would be to a normal child.

Basic needs can be simply listed:-

1. Physical care and protection
2. Affection and approval
3. Stimulation and teaching
4. Discipline and control which are consistent and age-appropriate
5. Opportunity and encouragement gradually to acquire autonomy

Neglect may be seen where some or all of these areas of basic need are not attended to.

Rejection implies negative attitudes and practices in relation to the basic needs. It is manifest in threatening or abusive communications and deliberate withholding of approval, attention and affection. A label of cruelty might be applied in some instances, particularly where belittlement, morbid teasing and constant punishment takes place.

Parental behaviours can interfere seriously with the self-esteem and movements towards competence which are part of a child's growth. These behaviours include over-protection and exploitation by the parents for their own emotional needs and exploitation sexually and/or commercially.

INVESTIGATION

Examination of children should always be accompanied by observation also of family relationships. A child who is not in his own family must be

observed with his substitute caretakers.

Examination of family functioning calls for experience and skill. Attention needs to be focussed particularly carefully in certain circumstances:

- (1) Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups: Customs, attitudes and practice with regard to child rearing may be less familiar to the observer and hence more difficult to evaluate.
- (2) Situations of Multiple Caretaking: It is particularly important to evaluate whether the attachment needs of children are being adequately met.
- (3) Severe matrimonial conflict: Issues include the witnessing of violence and the involvement of children as go-betweens and hostages by the protagonists. Stress on a child can be severe without apparent marital breakdown and can persist after dissolution of a marriage because of continued conflict.
- (4) Psychiatric Disorder in Parents: Psychosis: Where parents are caring for children, involvement of children in delusional systems may have important implications.

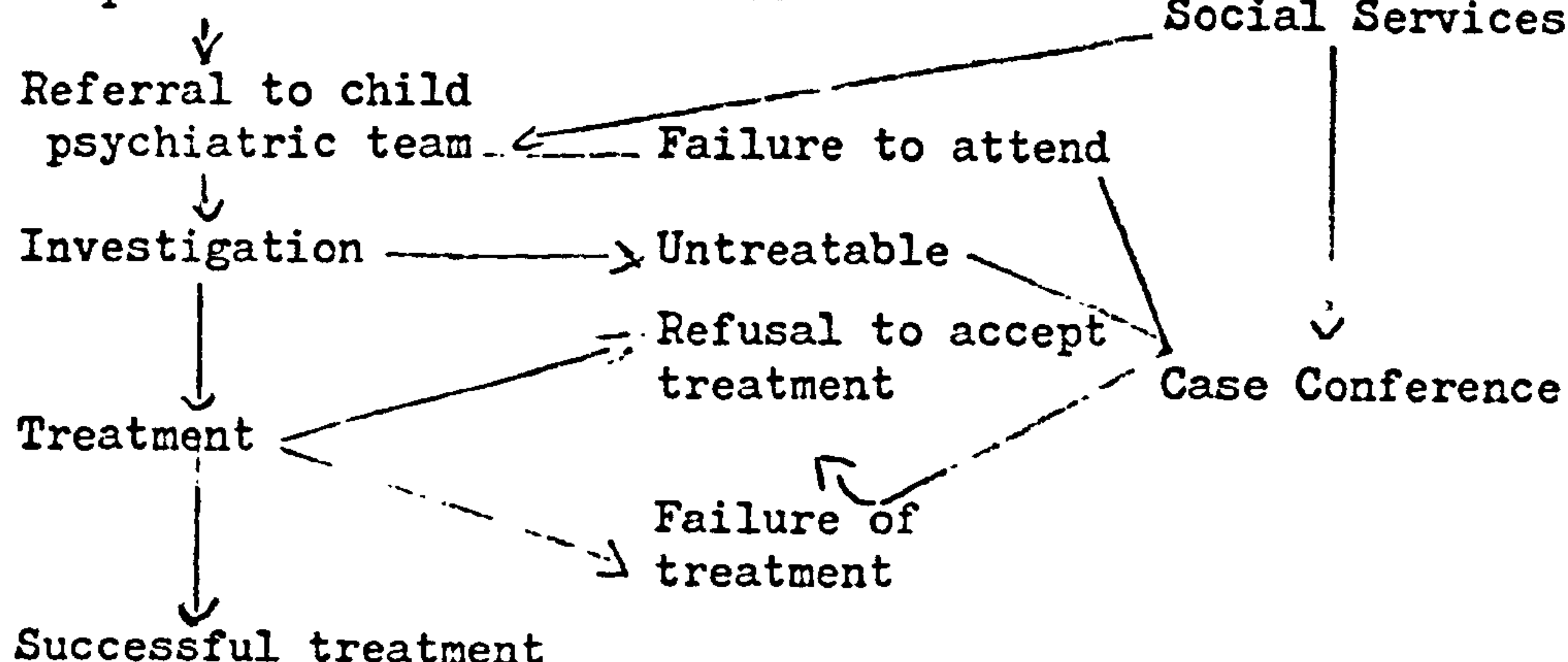
Depressive Illness: Where illness of a mother caring for her baby is prolonged and severe it must be determined whether or not the baby's needs are being met, particularly in relation to affective contact, stimulation and communication.

Personality Disorder: The extent to which a parent can exert consistent care and control and the effects of repeated threats and other acting-out behaviour on children must be evaluated.

PROCEDURE

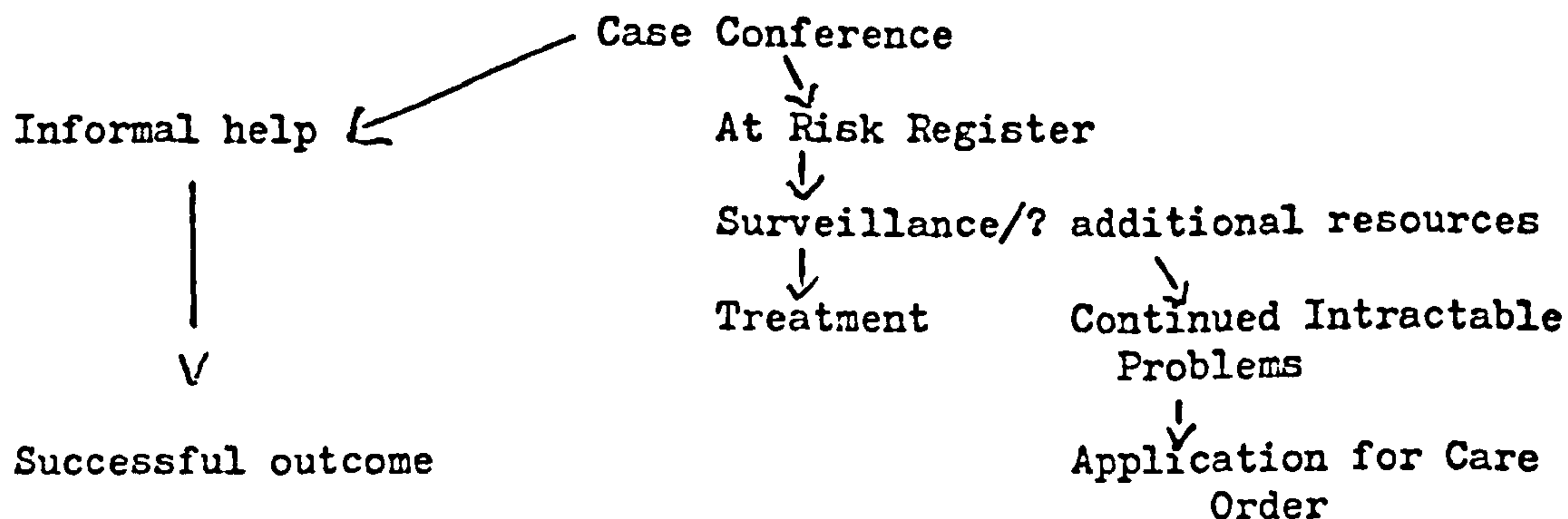
The emphasis is on successful treatment of the family, when possible.

A. Suspicion and emotional abuse



The case conference is held when effective help cannot be given to the family.

B.



/ CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

1. The diagnosis of emotional abuse is difficult
2. The proof of emotional abuse is even more difficult
3. Investigation is called for where there is suspicion of emotional abuse
4. Child psychiatrists will be needed in the evaluation of such cases
5. Where treatment refusal and treatment failure occurs, child psychiatrists have a responsibility to initiate action with regard to case conferences etc.
6. Child psychiatrists should be represented on each Area Review Committee

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PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

A. SHARON aged 14

1. Alert: Poor school performance and misery noted by school. Parents advised to see their general practitioner
2. Referral by G.P. to Child Psychiatric Team
3. Investigations, including diagnostic family interview, reveal scapegoating, constant denigration and refusal to allow child to have social contacts outside school hours
4. Parents refuse family therapy and will not bring Sharon to clinic
5. Case conference - suspicion of emotional abuse confirmed. General Practitioner's information reveals long-standing and apparently intractable personality problems of parents. Local Social Worker appointed who is able to visit regularly. School undertake to bring Sharon for individual treatment, to which parents agree, provided they do not lose time from work.
6. Informal agreement reached - At Risk Register not used
7. Continued monitoring by school, visiting Social Worker and Psychiatrist seeing Sharon. Scapegoating diminished. Happier, more normal life for Sharon.

B. CAROL aged 6

1. Alert by G.P. after mother's frequent complaints about Carol. Home visit by Health Visitor increases concern
2. Referral to Child Psychiatric Team
3. Investigation: Carol's fearful, silent and watchful behaviour in presence of mother noted
Carol's normal, happy behaviour in school, with father and with friendly adults noted
No evidence of physical abuse or of neglect
Mother's own ill treatment at hands of her mother whom Carol resembles
Mother seen to function normally with both boys in family.
4. Treatment offered:
 - (a) Family therapy greatly increased mother's hostility and Carol's fear
 - (b) Individual psychotherapy offered to mother in Adult Psychiatric Department

5. Failure of treatment
6. Case Conference: Decision to place Carol on At Risk Register and to provide intensive social work support to mother, father and family in home, a scarce resource locally, in addition to work of child psychiatrist
7. Carol sent to Neighbours and brought home and punished after she had settled down, being punished for being happy away from home. The problems persist and are intractable
8. Care order applied for. Carol placed with foster parents and allowed to stay there.

C. ANNE aged 4

1. Alert: Request by mother for Anne to be taken into care under Section 1, i.e. voluntarily
2. Anne seen to be almost mute, very limited in social development although physically well
3. Social Workers referred child to Child Psychiatrist asking if she was autistic
4. Investigations reveal Anne's potential to socialise normally and mother's severe personality disorder noted
5. Rapid improvement in care of foster mother
6. Parental rights assumed by Local Authority. Anne remains with foster mother who hopes to adopt her.

NOVEMBER 1981

LONDON BOROUGH

AREA REVIEW COMMITTEE (CHILD ABUSE)

CASE CONFERENCES Guidance to Chairpersons and other participants
as to the conduct of Child Abuse case conferences
and use of format for minutes as set out in Form ARC/CA/1

1. The Chairperson should be a Senior Member of the agency convening the case conference and should be named at the start of the meeting.
2. The Chairperson should be familiar with the Policy and Procedures of the Area Review Committee as set out in the Child Abuse Manual.
3. His/Her first task is to ensure that every person present is accountable to a proper authority and that the presence of everyone is necessary. Students may be allowed to attend by previous arrangement with the Chairperson. The official minutes taker should be named.
4. Every person present at the case conference should be properly introduced. The first opportunity should be taken to introduce late arrivals.
5. The reasons for calling the case conference should be explicit and understood at the outset by all the participants. Minutes of any previous meetings should be presented.
6. The need for an economical use of time should be remembered and a time limit set for the end of discussion to allow sufficient time for recommendations to be made and tasks assigned to various agency representatives liaising with the 'key worker' appointed or identified.
7. Where the family is known to a particular agency or social worker it is appropriate that this representative should briefly describe the family background and bring the conference up to date with the current family situation. Full names of members of the family should be used to enable everyone present, including the minutes taker, to follow the discussion.
8. The Headings on Form ARC/CA/1 are suggested as a guide for the Chairperson and Minutes Taker for the conduct and recording of the conference.
9. The Chairperson should ensure that every member is given the opportunity and encouraged to contribute, to express anxiety, and share his/her concern.
10. It is expected that the Chairperson, where possible, will assist the conference and minutes taker by referring to information considered vital, requesting explanations of medical terms, specialised jargon and legal aspects not clearly understood.
11. The case conference should consider the questions of attendance of those persons who should have been present but did not attend. They should be invited to attend any reconvened meeting or requested to forward a written report which should be considered by the case conference.
12. The Date, Time, and Venue of any further case conference should be clearly specified. The conference may accept that an agency represented will not be involved in future meetings having clearly stated the reasons for such a decision.