CLASS AND PARENTING IN ACCOUNTS OF CHILD PROTECTION: A DISCURSIVE ETHNOGRAPHY UNDER CONSTRUCTION [1]

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Abstract

In this paper, the idea of ethnograpies of hegemony is taken up as a reflexive orientation in research which addresses the complexity of forms of domination in late modern society also by trying to come to terms with the situatednes of interactionally-established interview data. Following a number of methodological remarks on the establishment of a 'native point of view' as well as a number of observations on the data trajectories (tribulations and triangulations) which mark this particular discursive ethnography, the analysis goes on to concentrate on the ways in which case categorisation is 'spoken' through social class in one particular account of child protection. As an exercise in 'classifying the classifiers' (Bourdieu 1992: 242) [2], the analysis highlights how professional and private talk about social problems is implicated in class-based subjectivities and involves (displaced) representations of class? However, much depends here on what we mean by 'class' when referring to a contemporary context such as the Flemish/Belgian field of child protection. If hegemony then counts as a historicising interpretative move which highlights <a> the interwovenness of domain - and profession-based discourses of social problems with discourses of class and <b> the contextualisation of particular sense-making repertoires, then it is just as much about the situational contingencies under which class and domination becomes speakable in a particular way. This, I suggest, is where ethnography becomes all-important - as an investigative strategy and as an epistemology of dialogic engagement with social theory and contemporary analyses of the late modern world.

Keywords: Class, Discourse and the professions, Ethnography, Hegemony, Interviews

Interview 3: 00:20 → 00:34

FD: dat is nogal veel hoor . dat verhaal [I: ja] 'k zou trouwens niet weten waar da'k moet beginnen [I: ja ja] . u kan misschien best wat vragen stellen . dan komt dat er toch van hé

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[2] Quoted in Reay (1998: 266).

[I: ja] en als ge denkt da'k iets vergeet zegt u het maar hé

(Translation: That's rather a lot the story [I: yes] anyway I wouldn't know where to begin [I: yes yes] perhaps it is best if you can ask me some questions then it happens anyway doesn't it [I: yes] and if you think that I am forgetting something just tell me.)

This paper is about situated accounts of child protection in Flanders/Belgium. Its focus is on how parents handle 'spoiled' [3] identities when care of their child(ren) is, often temporarily, provided outside the family. Its key aim is to arrive at an understanding of the situatedness of such accounts along four dimensions: (i) as accounts which are character-oriented narrations in which parents do self/other-characterisation work focusing on the identification and interpretation of problematic situations, events and personality traits as well as respond to professional and institutional categories of care and protection, (ii) as accounts which have been occasioned and established interactionally in fieldwork which relies on interviewing as its principal technique, (iii) as accounts which have been made available in particular data trajectories which follow paths of institutional and organisational decision-making and, (iv) finally, as socio-historically positioned/positioning practice in which social class and social classification plays an important role. It is within the scope of qualitative enquiry simultaneously afforded by these four formulations that I wish to situate the programme of 'ethnographies of hegemony' which I share with the other contributors to this special issue. This paper has also been written *medias in res.* In some respects this has been a deliberate choice, with an eye on an ethnographic programme which ultimately considers closure to be problematic. In other respects, this choice has been necessitated by unexpected circumstances, because the academic event which occasioned the first version of this paper[4] came at a point in the research process where far less "advance" has been made than I had originally anticipated, putting me into a position where I had to deal more fully with an incomplete set of data, a range of emerging 'rich points'[5] and an array of unsettled observations than I would normally be prepared to at this stage in a research project. By seeing this as an opportunity to actively take on board in the analysis the imprints made by fresh steps into a professional field of practice, I hope to undo a disadvantage (this is the disclaimer part). Under these circumstances, it should not surprise the reader that my actual point of departure will be both methodological and epistemological.

1. Interview data and the construction of a native point of view

My starting point is a classic ethnographic assumption: Truth is in 'the native point of view'. I think this is a useful starting point because it is an epistemological orientation which, together with the development of the principal techniques of 'interviewing' (F.

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[3] The term derives from Goffman (1963).

[4] This paper was first presented as part of the colloquium "Ethnographies of Hegemony" during Sociolinguistics Symposium 14 (Gent, April 2002).

[5] Agar (1996: 31ff.).

Boas) and 'participant observation' (B. Malinowski), has deeply influenced the ethnographic tradition⁶. The 'native point of view' has also undergone transformations, revisions and adaptations in the course of anthropology's history (to name just one shift: From encyclopaedias of insider knowledge to studies of everyday practices). Critical ethnographic work of recent decades has, among other priorities (e.g. inequality, power, hierarchy and social privilege), also emphasised the constructed nature of the 'native point of view'. Charles Briggs's (1986) book *Learning how to ask*, can be situated in this tradition and since I mainly rely on interview data in this study, a digression in this direction is not really out of bounds. Briggs argues the need to uncover the interpretative biases which result from a lack of familiarity with native communicative repertoires (incl. how these infiltrate the interview) and a failure to see the many 'strings attached' to an unreflexive adoption of the interviewing framework (e.g. how power is embedded in the data, the blinding effects of routine decontextualisations of responses, etc.). Briggs's advocacy is one of methodological sophistication: Chapter 5, titled 'Listen before you leap', focuses on proposals for incorporating the study of native meta-communicative repertoires into interview-based research. One way in which to read Briggs's book is thus to see it as saying: If we can improve our skills at interviewing and analysing the data obtained as a result, we will be able to "reveal" and "see the real". This is a laudable tenet in Briggs's book, but it is not entirely unproblematic. The impossibility of an un-constructed perspective casts doubts over the possibility to ever arrive at a 'pure' native point of view. Moreover, such a revelatory teleology also sits rather uncomfortably with critical ambitions in research, because these bring within sight the possibility (some will add: The ethical obligation) of having to deconstruct the native perspective for what it articulates inadvertently or fails to articulate, in an effort to address some of the consequences and implications of practices for all concerned (i.e. within and beyond the population studied). One can express such a critical orientation in terms of a shift from the question "what do practices *mean* to those who use them?" ⁷ to "what do practices *do* to communities of (other) users?". Although "do" and "mean" have become quite interchangeable in a context of studying language use as social practice, there is an extra dimension in the second formulation. In Thomas's (1993: 4) diction, it goes as follows: Whereas conventional ethnography asks what is and speaks for its subjects, critical ethnography also asks what could be and seeks to speak on behalf of its subjects to others involved. Together, the two formulations also repeat the by now well-established shift which, in diverse ways, prioritises 'contact' and problematises taken-for-granted assumptions about a bounded, intra-group perspective (see e.g. Collins 1999 on reorientations in linguistic anthropology). What's more, the theme of "hegemony" which I introduced in my opening paragraph brings within view not only representations of the dominant/dominated. At the same time, when taken in Williams's sense (Williams 1973), it will be about selectiveness, the saturation of consciousness, structures of feeling and this includes processes of channelling

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⁶ See also Fontana (2002: fn. 1) on participant observation and in-depth interviewing as deeply intertwined in ethnographic enquiry as early as Malinowski's fieldwork in New Guinea.

⁷ Hymes (1980: 27).

and containment in the distribution of alternative views. Why would the 'native point of view' form an exception here? There is no reason to assume it does. So, although the emancipatory ambitions of critical ethnography will at times be about taking sides, more often than not it will not be translatable into clear-cut binarisms (lending legitimacy to one side, deconstructing the other) and this is especially so in research contexts, like my own, where the discursive ethnographer's concern is both with clients' and practitioners' constructions of reality in an institutional domain of practice - their experiences, needs, etc. as felt and formulated, while lacking a finalised analysis in terms of how these feed on and feed into wider-ranging interests, dominant socio-cultural tendencies and shifts within these. Nor can critical goals any longer be rendered unequivocally as radical activity liberating subjects from constraints in an absolute way - partly because the realisation of such goals will always have consequences for others in ways not foreseen by the research (quite independently from this latter observation, three decades of Foucauldian thinking in the social sciences should have cured anyone from an unmitigated belief in the possibility of progressive enlightenment). Therefore, one of the challenges faced by critical ethnographers is that of simultaneously maintaining a sense of necessary and consequential critical leverage and reconciling this necessity with the fundamental integrity which ethnography grants its subjects of enquiry (as a rich source of knowledge and heuristics, as a legitimate perspective, as a partner, as an interlocutor and as a teleological perspective in research; cf. Hall & Slembrouck 2001: 146-147; White 2003). In that sense, one can see now how Briggs (1986) must almost by necessity walk a tightrope, heeding the gravitational forces at both sides: One on side, there is the pull towards total relativism and fragmentation which renders the ethnographic project - and the native point of view, with it - void; on the other side looms a kind of Platonic non-constructivism which says that if we could only fully understand the contingencies of "reflection" (think of the "cave"!) we can access the "reality" mediated by it. In line with this balancing act, a social-constructivist lead will tend to advance the idea that 'nativeness' is not a state that can be uncovered in a stable or final form, but that instead its very surfacing and its claims to truth and credibility are socio-historically and situationally contingent - it is always itself the result of local interactional work which is shaped by (and shapes) broader socio-historical forces.[8] The 'native point of view' can thus be thought of as something which will be displayed under specific conditions, i.e. in meta-contexts which are usually 'staged' in one way or another and which may well be experienced as examination and assessment (e.g. research interviews), and, quite often too, the formulation of such 'a native point of view' will be invested with considerable rhetorical effect and interestedness - a generalised speaking on behalf of 'people like us' and with symbolic value for audiences beyond the immediate participants[9]. Echoing Parton & Turnell (2003), we are therefore not simply on the terrain of situated representations of, in my case here, damaged parenthood, professional child protection work, etc. but rather that of the rhetoric of representations, in the sense that speakers/interviewees want to be believed, their versions aim to persuade and move people

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[8] Cf. Bourdieu (1984: 128ff.).

[9] See Briggs (2002: 914) on interviewees' imaginings of future texts and audiences.

into action or stop them from acting, enable change or do just the opposite.[10]

My enquiry is into sets of intertwined 'native points of view': The self/other-perceptions of parents whose children have been removed from the family for a limited period of time and the self/other-perceptions of professionals (counsellors, social workers, child psychologists, etc.). Within the field of practice, the two cannot be separated out: They are best viewed as relationally implicated and mutually constituting - if only up to a point. Moreover, one must immediately add here the rather important question: Does a community of parents actually exist? The very use of the term 'membership' poses serious problems. Positive subscription to group membership is clearly ruled out and 'membership' originates in individual contact with the institutions of youth protection and care. The parents are a 'group' in so far as their identities are constituted by a field of institutional and professional practice, and, although they are being talked about as a group-like entity (by professionals, within policy documents, by the media, in research, etc.), contacts among individual parents are virtually absent. A not-unimportant dimension of institutional deontology is that, at all times, the confidential and private nature of the institutional contact with the parents/children must be safeguarded (labelling and stigma are already so hard to avoid as it is).[11] Of course, when it comes to the 'community of professionals', the risk of "ethnicising/tribalising" the population(s) under study is considerable too, but the overall picture is nevertheless a different one. One can certainly entertain in the ethnography the various assumptions that follow from the intensive intra-institutional and inter-institutional networks of mediation, coordination and follow-up which play a role in the provision of social care and protection, as well as take on board that these professionals subscribe to practices which lend meaning, order and a degree of positively-motivated membership to their professional communities.

Now, introduce the discursive ethnographer and one is faced with an interesting case of triangulation in the study of event-based perceptions, narrative versions and accounting repertoires - involving professionals/practitioners, parents and the ethnographer. What is somewhat special about this triangulation (but it is not hard to come by other contexts where this is also the case) is the pivotal position of the institutional agents. This is so because the researcher's access to the parent population is mediated by the same institutions which regulate the field of practice. One upshot of this is rather obvious: It is not possible to separate a narrative or other analysis of the parental accounts from an enquiry into the conditions and trajectories under which access to these accounts had to be negotiated, the circumstances under which these accounts were being recorded, are being represented and talked about. Expressed in a tradition of 'natural histories of discourse' (Silverstein & Urban 1996 (eds.)), this is in part a matter of developing a reflexive sensitivity towards (a) how the dialogues in the field of practice extend into the interactional contexts of doing research and (b) the detection of layered constructions of social reality in the multi-voiced and multi-accented dialogisms of representation. Both can be understood as processes of

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[10] Cf. Bourdieu (1977).

[11] There also are a few self-help groups, but parents feel inhibited to join. See e-mail Piet Verdoodt, social worker at VCK Gent (25/03/2002): *"Tegelijk is meestal de problematiek te zwaar, wat zeker ook een drempel is om naar zo een groep te gaan"* ('At the same time, the problem situation is usually too serious and this is certainly a barrier [for parents] to join such a group').

entextualisation and (re)contextualisation (Slembrouck 2001: 51). Stated simply: Any answer which is given to a question such as "what was the problem?" (as answered by the parents, the professionals or even by the researcher) is bound to reflect a state of play in a series of "next turns". Echoing Voloshinov (1973), such an answer counts as a response along fundamentally social horizons of reception and, echoing a conversation analytic principle, such an answer can also be interpreted as sequentially implicated within and across stretches of occasioned talk[12].

The imperative to draw into the research an enquiry into the conditions and dynamics of access is also a sensible one from the point of a view of an ethnography of hegemony: Do conditions of access remain unaffected by the workings of hegemony? As hegemony is about dominant representations in a particular field of practices, it must also be about the distribution of perceptions of dominance - in the sense of where, when and how dominance becomes perceivable. And this is where another substantial contribution made by Briggs (1986) can be situated: While highlighting the theoretical underpinnings of the 'mundane' terrain of skilled research methodology, the book also contains a number of (Foucauldian) hints in the direction of treating interviewing as an epistemological regime and as a regulating expressive economy in the distribution/circulation of social data and knowledge in the contemporary era[13]. Positioning vis-à-vis this economy (e.g. willingness to participate) and apparent (in)adaptability (e.g. signals of reluctance, brevity or eagerness to answer questions in detail) are important points of attention within any study which relies on interview data, as a marker of (in)equality in the distribution of discursive resources and as indexing who will be heard at all or heard in a particular way (see also Blommaert 2001: 20ff. on 'forgotten contexts').

While making this observation, I also want to stress in more general terms the need to look at forms of social organisation and regulating processes (organisational, discursive, other) which accompany the (re)contextualisation and entextualisation of the researchable

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[12] Part of my point here is that the scope of one of the most important insights from conversation analysis, viz. that actors, in the course of interaction, display to each other their understanding of what they are doing (cf. Goodwin 1990; Hanks 1996: 218) should not be restricted unnecessarily to immediately adjacent turns in a singular stretch of talk. The insight is equally relevant for (and can be extended to) an analysis of reformulations which attend to what was exchanged earlier in the talk, uses of reported speech, allusions to previous conversations with others, etc. See also Maybin (1999) and Slembrouck (2002) for a fuller argumentation of this point.

[13] Note that the scope of this question is better not restricted to the domain of social science. It also pertains to the mass-mediatisation of spoiled identities in television talk shows, in news broadcasting, in confession-oriented documentaries, etc., while some social scientists are still under the illusion that what they do is something completely different from and remains unaffected by these late modern conditions. Of course, my point here is not that academic practices and media practices are simply interchangeable; instead, it is about how two types of practices may have become interdependent in ways which may substantially affect conditions and negotiations of access (e.g. lay and professional perceptions of academic research as sensationalist prying into private lives may well have to do with repeated exposure to mass-media practices; conversely, academic involvement has in some cases lent respectability to the mediatisation of lifeworld experiences using mass-media channels, etc.). Another important point of attention (see Briggs 2002) is the contrast between the apparent equality in the production of public opinion suggested the widespread use of interview data and the one-sided control exercised by researchers and media personnel over the contextualisation of interview data (circulation, distribution, framing).

utterance and which may (but need not be) couched in a discursive trajectory. In a number of publications, Cicourel observes how "[medical] care is constrained by and facilitated by its relationship to loosely coupled organisational or institutional arrangements" (1999: 183). This observation can be applied reflexively, if one replaces "care" in the quotation by "the researcher's access to the 'facts' and constructions of care"[14]. In short, the general question here is: Under what sort of conditions does the researchable utterance about child care/protection and spoiled parent identity become speakable and analysable? An answer to that question will include, quite expectedly, references to the meta-discourses and speech events which surround and regulate access to the researchable utterance (e.g. pessimistic predictions voiced by child care practitioners about how difficult it will be to persuade parents to be interviewed; discussions about desirable and legitimate pretexts that can(not) be used to contact potential interviewees on behalf of the researcher, etc.). Not so straightforward on the other hand is the need to develop a sensitivity towards "phatic" conditions of access which index an organisational ethos, practical rationalities, etc. One can expect a certain amount of iconicity between situations where it is the researcher and where others (e.g. clients) contact or visit the institution and below I discuss how this is the case in this research project for the local institutional politics of waiting rooms and of (not) being put through on the phone.

Continuing on the theme of iconicities which play a role in linking up a reflexive understanding of the inward-looking gaze (into the research process) with the subject matter of the outward-looking gaze (towards society), I am also reminded here of an important, more general point voiced by Heller (2001: 213), which underscores one of the pitfalls in much critical language-focused research. Talking of the specificity of sociolinguistics - as social science and as a form of social theory - Heller argues that "[…] it problematises language as a form of social action which needs to be understood in its own right, albeit linked to other forms of social action (and social organisation). That is, language is not transparent, nor simply a reflection of social organisation or social processes; it is one of many elements of social process, and a particularly important one, given its centrality in the social construction of meanings." I am in full agreement with the final part of the quotation, but the phrase I want to stress here is: "linked to other forms of social action (and social organisation)". How is such linkage to be understood? Certainly not in terms of a total and exhaustive mapping which either renders 'language' or 'other forms of social organisation/action' redundant. At the same, I would add: Allowing sufficient independently established viewpoints of enquiry so as to explore which interdependencies between forms of social action/organisation are in place. Premature closure on the nature, direction and precise "mutualities" of such interdependencies hardly makes sense. This is also a point I will return to below in sections 4 and 5.

2. A few observations on actual data trajectories

Two types of institutions have so far played a direct role in regulating access to the parents

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[14] See also Garfinkel & Bittner (1984).

and their accounts. There is the VCK[15] East Flanders based in Gent - an emergency centre with a multi-disciplinary team (medical, child psychology and social work) and a mission formulated in terms of child abuse (it was also my initial point of entry for this research project). Next, there are five district-based CBJs[16] - these are local standing committees, attached to which is a permanent team of counsellors (social workers and/or trained educators[17]). Their mission is formulated in terms of problematic parent/child relationships[18]. CBJs mostly act on referrals (e.g. unlike the VCK, they do not respond to anonymous calls). The events of access have to be situated in a period of roughly 9 months, with a limited number of recorded interviews with parents so far as a result and quite a number of institutional *rites de passage* which I had to go through 'in the interest of the client'. The range of questions prompted as a result includes: How do organisational values and routines (in contacts with clients) extend into the contact with the researcher? What do the data trajectories tell us about the selection of potential interviewees by the institution and the further self-selection of interviewees? Why exactly is it difficult to exclude my own position in this network of relationships (and the academy which I represent) from the dynamics of access, incl. how did the researcher present himself? Is the interviewing seen as interfering with the provision of care and protection? Are there any prevailing perceptions about the interviewer's role identities and the purposes which the interview will serve? Etc. The answers below are necessarily partial and incomplete.

Starting with VCK Gent, after six months divided more or less equally between a period of relatively slow progress in negotiating the centre's cooperation (this included initial contact on the phone, meeting the team director, two team meetings, submitting and revising a letter that could be shown to the parents) and a 3-month period in which the centre was contacting parents, it transpired that all in all only 10 parents had been contacted and none had agreed to be interviewed (as had indeed been more or less predicted by the centre's director). His advice was to try now with CBJ1. First contact with the leading counsellor of CBJ1[19] immediately resulted in a flat 'no' but there was a subtext of 'ask higher up and then we'll see'. About thirty minutes later in a second phone call, now with the director of the national department[20], the answer became 'the more research is being done, the better' with an attendant message that I could quote the director in a second attempt with CBJ1 (but I couldn't get his positive recommendation in writing). Renewed contact (still on the same day) with CBJ1 resulted in a commitment to put a research note

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[15] VCK = *VertrouwensCentrum voor Kindermishandeling* - which one can translate rather freely as 'Child Abuse Call Centre' (*Vetrouwenscentrum* = a place where one can speak confidently and confidentially).

[16] CBJ = *Comité Bijzondere Jeugdzorg* - which can be translated as 'Committee for Special Youth Care'. 'Special' is here being used as in 'special needs'). These committees are often confused with the social service departments of the juvenile courts.

[17] In Dutch, *opvoeders*.

[18] In Dutch, *problematische opvoedingssituaties*.

[19] In Dutch, *leidend consulent*.

[20] In Dutch, *de nationale afdeling* (Flemish government).

which I was to produce on the agenda of the committee meeting but eventually (after further delays), the local committee's decision was negative. Two reasons were invoked (on the phone, not in writing): (i) the research offers no surplus value for counselling or therapy in individual cases, (ii) asking clients to be interviewed will increase stigma.[21] Both stated reasons make the point that, for CBJ1, there can be no ethnographic *carte blanche*. Instead, legitimate entry in this field of practice requires one to bring something very specific which will be beneficial to the client population.

The two reasons cited immediately above are also related to the overwhelming importance attached to privacy and confidentiality in the domain of child protection and care. Note first the national director's privacy-advice: (i) No databases of client names/addresses can be compiled at any one time. (ii) Anonymising the data offers a sufficient guarantee to preserve the confidential nature of the recorded interviews. Therefore, in this particular case, the national director felt, there is no need to submit an application to the privacy commission. One of the immediate consequences of the privacy-advice is that the CBJs had to contact potential interviewees on my behalf. In addition, one can note how both the VCK and the CBJs breathe confidentiality in their organisational routines. For instance, the door of the waiting room is always shut immediately/completely after someone is led into the room, so that traffic in the lobby is kept from view (this rule was also applied when I visited the centre). At all times, counsellors cannot be interrupted while they are on the phone or when they are talking to a client in their office (e.g. phone calls will not be put through; someone else cannot enter an office when a client is in there). Secretaries also do not enquire into the nature of your business when you announce yourself at the door intercom or after you have been let in; they will only ask for your name and who you need to see. None of these institutions have 'open door'-access.

By the time CBJ1 communicated its refusal to cooperate, I had already contacted the four other CBJ's in East Flanders. Two of these agreed to cooperate and made the decision at team level[22]. During my meeting with the staff of CBJ2, the same question surfaced: Apart from an academically-motivated concern with accounting practices, discourse and identity, what will the research yield and what will it be used for? However, in this case the footage was that this was a question which the parents would be likely to ask and that it might be easier to persuade them to agree to an interview if a very specific answer could be given. Both CBJ2 and CBJ3 agreed to cooperate and they also concluded that I was not likely to find many parents prepared to be interviewed.[23] At the time this

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[21] Additionally, in what amounts to a repeat of their first cycle of decision-making, the leading counsellor reported that the committee had sent a request for advice higher-up to the national department and that it would reconsider its decision, if that department responded in favour of the district committee helping the researcher. I haven't heard from them since.

[22] Unlike in CBJ1, the research proposal was not discussed at committee level.

[23] CBJ3 deferred its decision until after consultation with CBJ2 about the outcome of their team meeting. The two remaining committees (CBJ 4 and 5, they are smaller units) are headed by the same person: My request/research note is still to be discussed at team or committee level and so far the leading counsellor hasn't responded to my sporadic calls to the centre to find out about any progress.

paper was presented for the first time (April 2002), there had been three interviews with parents in district 3 and two further interviews were lined up in district 2. Interviewee 1 is a lone mother with a small child in foster care. Interview 2 is with a couple with an adolescent daughter who had just returned home after a two-month stay in residential care. The third interviewee is a lone mother with an adolescent son in post-residential care. So far in the sample, each of the parent-interviewees has been in higher education and they either have clerical or professional jobs: An (unemployed) computer analyst in a council flat (interview 1), a civil servant and a school teacher in a more affluent social housing estate (interview 2) and a secondary school teacher (interview 3)[24]. Is this a trend which will be confirmed by the next interviews? If so, why and how does this filtering occur? Does it mostly tell us something about the parents who had been contacted by the committee - its own cost-effective way of selecting feasible interviewees? Or does it mostly tell us something about the kind of parents who can be found prepared to be interviewed? It could be both. Quite interestingly, so far each of the interviewees have agreed to be interviewed a second time in a year's time.

According to Dingwall (1997: 56-57), interviews are contextually-produced accounts not only because there is an interactional pull towards accomplishing a shared and coherent sense of reality. At the same time, interviews count as "situations in which respondents are required to demonstrate their competence in the role in which the interview casts them". At this point it is useful to turn an analysis of the role of 'pre-textualities'[25] in contacting the parents. My letter of introduction, while stressing my academically-motivated independence from the youth/child care committees, outlines that the research is about how parents see themselves as parents and it also includes an anonymity clause (all of this in Dutch plain to the best of the researcher's abilities). In the first interview (the computer analyst), I learned after the minidisk recorder had been switched off that there was a preceding history of domestic violence which the interviewee had left outside the narrative account. Interestingly, just before interview 2, it transpired that the couple thought they would be interviewed about their experiences with the CBJ and not so much about their own parenthood. As can also be seen below, their experiences with the CBJ and the residential home continued to frame their account (even after the 'misunderstanding' had been cleared). Both details tell us something important about the data trajectories and are important for an accurate contextualisation of the interview data. The first detail (interview 1) is about narrative boundaries of one kind: What constitutes a unit of narration for a particular interviewing occasion which announces itself as concentrated on parenthood. Shame-facedness perhaps offers itself as a plausible explanation for the exclusion of an episode from the narrative (but note how, in contrast, the counsellor saw this episode as

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[24] The third interview was conducted in Gent, as the parent made a stop-over on the way to district 3 (she now lives some 60 miles away).

[25] My use of the term 'pre-textualities' is intended to reflect a concern with 'pretexts' (reasons invoked to justify the occasioning of an interview) while raising the issue how their expression/interpretation precedes and plays a role in shaping the production of the 'bigger' text of the interview. In that sense, they count as contextualisations.

defining for the mother's present situation [26]). The second detail (interview 2) is about thematic coherence which structures the story-telling and also in this case it is not unreasonable to conclude that face-related concerns are in the foreground: A thematic focus on the CBJ and the residential home may have made it more acceptable for the parents to tell their story; accordingly, one can interpret it as a particular "line" (Goffman 1967) which is being adopted, especially by the father. At this point it is also worth going back to the motto at the beginning of this paper. It is cited from interview 3. Apart from making the point that a narrative turn is inevitable even when the interview talk is organised around questions (see also Holstein & Gubrium 1995), the parent's preliminary remark foregrounds inevitable selectivity in two ways: There is so much to tell and she feels more comfortable to let the researcher's agenda direct the course of the talk. These parents see themselves as being tested: Not just as parents but also as interviewees (Hall & Slembrouck 2003). In each of these cases, it should also be clear: The interviews do not give one thé story of these parents and their families.

I will now concentrate on interview 2 and focus on the parents' analysis and explanation of what caused a crisis in the relationship with their adolescent daughter. This will include how they see their daughter's case as being of a particular type which can be 'rated' among other cases they encountered during the period of care. What's more, in more than one respect, case categorisation in this account appear to revolve around social classification.

3. Interview 2 (18/03/2002) - The sharp elbows of the educated middle classes

First, some background details: Sara, just over 18, has just returned home after two months of residential care in a COOO[27] called *De Eik* ('The Oak') in district 3, following a troubled period of truancy, spending several nights away from home, while for the third time re-taking a year at school (and having moved from grammar school to vocational education). Sara is an adopted child (she spent her first 16 months in an institution). The family lives in a more recently-built and more affluent part of a social housing estate in the district's central town. The father volunteered the information that he has a university degree in political and social sciences and has a job in Brussels as a civil servant in the federal administration. The mother teaches in a teacher training college. The father does most of the talking. The mother speaks much less but the nature of her contributions substantially affects the direction of the talk: She brings about a number of topic shifts, she fills in important qualifying detail, toning down negativity or drawing attention to markers of positive change. It is not easy to complete the picture as to why the father takes on the role of 'primary interviewee' and the mother comes in as a complementary, corroborating and at times competing, voice. There are a few details which hint at a reluctance to be drawn fully into the interview frame: (i) after I had cleared the misunderstandings about what the

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[26] Interview with Jan Cloosters, counsellor for CBJ3 (26/03/2002).

[27] COOO = *Centrum voor Onthaal, Observatie en Oriëntatie* (Centre for Reception, Observation and Orientation).

interview will be about, the mother remarks *"ik wist van niks hé"* (03:22, 'I didn't know about any of this'), but it is not clear which aspect(s) of the preliminary negotiations she refers to (immediately after this, the father reiterates his remark that he thought the interview would be about their experiences with CBJ3). A few moments earlier the parents had already been asked which format they preferred ('researcher asks questions' or 'the parents just tell their story'). The father now responds: *"misschien is 't makkelijker als u wat gerichte vragen stelt"* (03:35, 'perhaps it's easier if you can ask us a few pointed questions'). Immediately after that, the mother invites the father to initiate with a narrative: *"desnoods gewoon de feiten de feiten die hem voorgedaan hebben . en dan vragen . begin jij maar"* (03:40, 'perhaps[28] just the facts the facts which have occurred and then questions . why don't you start').

A first observation which can be made is that the parents' account does not revolve around (and doesn't even mention) intervention as intrusive or as an imposition on the family. Instead, the prevailing view is that they had to stage and coordinate the intervention themselves. Asked how they got in touch with the CBJ, the response was:

Excerpt 1[29] - 17:30 → 19:01

[lange pauze, terwijl drankje wordt uitgeschonken]
I01:   bent u zelf gaan aankloppen bij het comité bijzondere
        jeugdzorg of
V01:   ik had vooral
I02:   is dat een doorverwijzing geweest
V02:   euh vroeger al contact opgenomen met wat de
        mogelijkheden daar waren . dat ook euh ja aan de
        schoolpsychologen gezegd zo dat (we)daarmee speelden .
        en dan hebben zij op een bepaald moment gezegd nu wordt
        het teuh teuh bont te grof laten we maar 'ns ne keer euh
        zien wa mogelijk is en dan euh en [M tegen jongste
        dochter: Kaatje . kan jij nog 'ns fruitsap halen]dan
        hebben zij contact opgenomen met het CLB ah [lachje
        omdat hij de afkorting weer 'ns verkeerd uitspreekt] het
        comité bijzondere jeugdzorg. eum . maar goed . de koe
        bij de horens vatten zat er eigenlijk niet in . en dan
        heb ik euh ZWAAR getelefoneerd bij één van de
        administratieve medewerkers van het comité om die
        inspanning te doen om die drie partijen samen rond tafel
        te krijgen . dus da was echt van euh een . dat heeft me
        toch wel een tiental telefoon_ telefoontjes gekost bij
        wijze van spreken om te zeggen van diene dag bij die man
        in dat bureau komen die en die personen ja goed tegen
        dat iedereen daarvan op de hoogte was dus . heel euh ja
        . [I: uhum] het was misschien wat buiten hun

___

[28] The mother's use of 'desnoods' signals a suggestion, but its pragmatic value is also one of 'should events take a turn which lets us no other choice'. However, to translate it here as 'if you insist/if this is what is required' would be over-marking that value.

[29] Full translations of the transcribed excerpt are in the appendix.

gebruikelijke werkwijze of buiten hun gebruikelijke kanalen . [jongste dochter zet brik fruitsap op tafel] bedankt

M01: bedankt

V03: buiten de gebruikelijke kanalen . dat dat allemaal verlopen is . maar goed . we hebben euh er is misschien van ons uit ook wat druk rond geweest om het snel te laten gaan

I03: uhum

V04: dus euh van_ vandaar ook een actieve opslag om die mensen die drie samen te krijgen die drie groepen . allé school de Boterhoek[30] comité

I04: uhuh

Here the father mostly stresses how the parents took the initiative and it took considerable effort to get their problem on the agenda of the CBJ. A few minutes later I learned that 'there had been no other option' and that the precise timing of the period in residential care was a matter of strategy:

Excerpt 2 - 20:43 → 21:33

I01: vindt u ergens dat u ergens in als u die verschillende instellingen daarbij betrokken geraken dat u ergens controle verliest . of dat u uiteindelijk dan toch

V01: nee . controle verliezen niet . want ik heb zelf zwaar 't initiatief genomen [I02: ja] . maar weinig weinig begeleiding . weinig terugkoppeling eigenlijk hè .

M01: maar 't was ook ontzettend KORT hè

V02: ja ja

M02: 't was geen twee maanden

I03: ja ja

M03: maakt dat da

V03: 't is zo snel gegaan . 't is voorelijk zo snel gegaan omdat we d'er nog wilden van profiteren van die maanden dat Sara geen achttien werd want . als we de tijd hadden laten tikken . dan zou dat in ieders nadeel zijn geweest . dan zou ze achttien geweest zijn en gezegd hebben [klapt in handen] deur toe gedaan ik ben achttien ik ga weg of

M04: en nu heeft ze eigenlijk zelf een rustpunt gevonden

V04: ja . of dat ze dan in het volwassencircuit zou terechtkomen . als ze achttien is hè

I04: ja

Asked about a sense of having lost control over the situation, the father stresses again how the parents took the initiative, but there was a lack of feedback and guidance during the procedure. The mother concedes that it was a short period anyway, after which the father adds that it was important to intervene before Sara turned 18, as else she could have just

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[30] The psycho-therapeutic centre referred to here is a CGZ (*Centrum voor Geestelijke Gezondheidszorg*, lit. 'Centre for Menthal Health Care'). It is commonly known in the area by the name of the street where it is situated: *de Boterhoek*.

left the house to go and live on her own (V03 and V04). This frames the intervention in legalistic terms and provides one of the many indices of a high degree of institutional literacy: Accurate references to role relationships and to categories and types of care - e.g. *"kamertraining"* ('room training'), *"begeleid wonen"* ('guided independent residence), etc.; the father's mentioning that he is well-familiar with social legislation as part of his university education; explicit paraphrases of very specific pieces of legislation as well as references to the parents' experiences when adopting the child sixteen years ago. In both excerpts, the voice of the father can be seen to be talking as someone who knows all about and is routinely familiar with discourses of institutional management - for instance, *"ZWAAR getelefoneerd bij één van de administratieve medewerkers van het comité om die inspanning te doen om die drie partijen samen rond tafel te krijgen"* in excerpt 1 (V02, 'did some HEAVY telephoning to one of the administrative staff of the committee to make the effort to get these three parties around the table'), *"buiten de gebruikelijke kanalen"* and *"er is misschien van ons uit ook wat druk rond geweest om het snel te laten gaan"* in excerpt 1 (V02, 'outside the usual channels' and V03, 'perhaps there was also some pressure from us to move fast on this'); see also in excerpt 2:   *"of dat ze dan in het volwassenencircuit zou terechtkomen"* in excerpt 2 (V04, 'because then she would have to be treated as technically an adult'). The picture is that of a 'professional client' (Sarangi & Slembrouck 1996: Chapter 6) with access to pieces of expert knowledge and equipped with an active orientation to the 'bureaupretations' which steps in an institutional procedure will receive.

Other fragments in the account stress a lack of active input, efficient coordination and reporting back by the CBJ and the residential home (see also V01 in excerpt 2 above - 'little little guidance little feedback actually' - and V05 in excerpt 5 below). References are made to institutional hiccoughs, hinting at a less than perfect management of the case: The staff in the residential home was not aware at first that the CBJ's brief was one of *"observatie"* ('observation') rather than the more minimal *"onthaal"* ('reception'). The staff's hesitancy to comply with their request to do certain psychological tests[31] is said to have influenced their daughter's decision not to take these tests, but just before she returned home the resident psychologist admitted that these tests would have been useful. These details also underscore the extent to which the account is constructed around the intervention (failing to) meet(ing) the parents' self-perceived needs, including especially recounted instances where the institutions (failed to) manage(d) a set of relationships efficiently. The third excerpt which I have selected came somewhat earlier in the interview: Again we hear the parents speak in a consumerist mode, but here this results in a classification of their daughter's case.

Excerpt 3 - 14:40 → 15:33

V01:   goed   .   wat   wel   positief   was   .   we   zijn   dus   ne   keer   vlak
       voor   de   kerstvakantie   èh   toen   de   beslissing   was   genomen
       en   waar   dat   die   euh   opname   zou   doorgaan   De   Eik   ne   keer
       gaan bezoeken
M01:   ja da was eigenlijk positief
V02:   dat was dan positief dat je wist van tiens allé

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[31] Referring to a problem of bonding during the child's first sixteen months of her life.

M02: waar zit zeuh
V03: waar we terechtkomen
M03: met wie komt ze in contact
V04: eh
M04: eh
V05: ik denk dat het voor haar ook een beetje een shock is geweest deuh . wat ze daar heeft meegemaakt . afgezien heeft euh . jongeren die geboeid binnengebracht worden euh . een aantal maanden daarvoor een zelfdoding . euh gasten die zwaar verslaafd zijn . ouders die NOOIT om hun kinderen omkijken terwijl wij d'er toch achterstonden d'erbij waren [I02:ja]die daar zaten pff [afstand nemend] niks contact nog met de ouders dus ik denk da wel een beetje . licht heeft doen . een klein lichtje heeft doen [ironisch lachje]
M05: maar nu zijn wij nog altijd bezig met therapie hè

Weighing their experiences with the institutions involved, the father notes on the positive side that the three of them could visit the residential home beforehand and see what it was like. It is added immediately that the short period in residential care (where Sara was faced with a number of unpleasant experiences - see *"afgezien heeft"* ('suffered')) sobered her up and made her realise both, that there is a world out there in which she does not belong, and conversely, that things at home were therefore not that bad (see *"een klein lichtje heeft doen …"* ('had made her realise one or two things'; lit. 'switched on a little light'). Particularly salient here is the contrastive formulation in: *"Ouders die NOOIT om hun kinderen omkijken . terwijl wij d'er toch achterstonden d'erbij waren"* (V05, 'parents who never turn around to look after their children, while we were there and did continue to support her'). The list of 'sobering experiences' therefore offers a set of social classifications which the parents consider to be outside the scope of this particular family context and its specific problems: Youngsters who were brought in handcuffed, one suicide a few month earlier, cases of heavy addiction, youngsters abandoned by their parents.

     A similar exteriorating formulation occurs in the next excerpt, when a description is given of the kind of friends which Sara was mixing with. This occurred in the interview account at the point where the parents were talking about an alternative but unworkable solution which they considered at one point, viz. to have Sara stay with friends/relatives for a while.

Excerpt 4 - 22:45 → 24:25
     [na lange stilte]
M01: we hebben nog wel voorgesteld om haar bij familie te zetten en zo èh omdat Stan bij vrienden of bij familie
V01: da was na dien eerste keer weglopen euh da ze daar nie in dinge wilde naar dat crisisopvangcentrum in Mechelen . en toen (is er) nog efkes gedacht bij vrienden maar da en bij bij familie maar dat wilden we die familie nie aandoen en bij vrienden maar dan is ze wel die eerste twee nachten of zo geweest bij Hilde haar vriendin [M zacht: mm] gaan slapen hè en die mensen en die mensen vielen eigenlijk ook wel steil achterover . euh dus eigenlijk was da ook wel geen oplossing hé dan is ze terug naar huis gekomen dan is 't daarna veertien dagen

later of drie weken later dan weer euh da ze vier dagen
achter elkaar weg was da was die periode zeker [M heel
zachtjes: uhum] en eindeloos spijbelen op school [lange
pauze] plus in euh ja en wat er nog wat er nog bijkomt
en wat ons bezorgd maakt is dat ze dus in eun
vriendenkring zit van tussen aanhalingstekens zware
gevallen hè [I: uhum] dus euh jongeren

M02:   hoewel we dit nu wel de laatste tijd nie meer weten hé
V02:   [nu weten we 't nie meer hè   alhoewel]
M03:   [nu zit ze er nie meer zo in hè   ]
V03:   wablieft . ja maar 'k denk dat zeuh met Sarina is ze
toch nog of wie was 't naar Aalst getrokken euh [ze zit
altijd in een groep van euh]
M04:   ['t is niet meer
intensief zo]
V04:   ja ja maar ze heeft nu een stevig lief . allez   we
zullen zien [relativerend lachje] . eum . en euh . die
is wat serieuzer dan zij . en die tempert ze zowat hè [M
heel zachtjes: eum] euh . ja
M05:   hij moedigt z'ook aan hè . om om wat beter te werken op
school
V05:   [na lange pauze volgt] ja [klopt een paar keer op tafel]
hout vasthouden
I01:   mhm ja natuurlijk   mhm
M06:   't is afwachten

The classification comes in a series of discrediting attributions. V01 recounts an unsuccessful attempt to let Sara stay at a friend's, but it soon became clear to her friend's parents what Sara was really like (it is implied: 'It wasn't just us'). Another spell of spending successive nights away from home follows and truancy seemed to go on endlessly. On top of that, there is the circle of friends. Note in particular here the use of *"zware gevallen"* ('hard cases'): *"En wat er nog bijkomt wat ons bezorgd maakt is dat ze dus in euh een vriendenkring zit van tussen aanhalingstekens zware gevallen hè"* ('and on top of this what worries us is that she is erm in a circle of friends with between inverted commas hard cases'). This excerpt also provides another instance of the mother's active role in bringing about topic transitions and in providing qualifying detail which puts Sara is a less negative light. Even though it is the father who gives the full details about the alternative and why it did not work out, it is the mother who launched the topic (M01, which comes after a long pause). Note, in addition, turns M02 to M05. Each of these turns tones down Sara's present involvement with the undesirable group of friends. M02 is a disclaimer: 'Now we know longer know do we' and the father expresses agreement (V02). The other two turns (M03 and M04) claim less intensive involvement, but here the father disagrees *"z'is altijd in een groep van"* (V03, 'she's always in a group of'), and, immediately before that, *"alhoewel"* (V02, 'not so sure', responding to M03). One may even read M04 as stopping the father from providing more specific details. M05 reveals another aspect: Although it is the father who shifts the topic to the new boyfriend and his moderating influence (*"tempert haar wat"* (V04, 'has a moderating effect on her')) - now aligning himself with the mother's observation that the contact with the group of friends has become less intensive - it is the mother who turns the boyfriend's role into one of positive encouragement: *"hij hij moedigt ze ook aan hè. om om wat beter te werken op*

school uhum" (M05, 'he also encourages her to perform somewhat better at school').
Compare also with M04 in excerpt 2: *"en nu heeft ze eigenlijk zelf een rustpunt gevonden"*
('and now she has at last found a breathing-space').

Before we can discuss in detail the relationship between the two moments of
exteriorating classification in excerpt 3 and 4, we need to look at a third occurrence in
excerpt 5 below. This is my final excerpt from the interview with the parents. We are back
in the consumerist mode: The talk here revolves around resources (giving explanations for
why services were less than optimal) and the impression the parents had that their problem
was treated as a 'luxury problem' by the committee and the staff at the residential centre -
a point developed in comparison with other residents in the centre.

Excerpt 5 - 28:49 → 30:32

V01:   dus ik kan me voorstellen dat die onderbemand zijn
       hoor 'k bedoel
M01:   maar jij wel ook zo allez het gevoel hadden van ja ons
       Sara was nu niet zo'n groot allez voor ons op da
       moment wel een groot probleem maar als ge dan die
       andere gasten in die Eik ziet (h)adden wij het gevoel
       dat euh dat ze 't beschouwden als voor ons een
       luxeprobleem [I01: uhum]. hé
V02:   ja
M02:   d'andere ja da waren euh dan duidelijk veel hardere
       problemen dan d'onze maar èh [vraagtoon]
V03:   da da voelden ik zeker bij die mensen van De Eik . hè
I02:   dat je ergens niet als gezin eigenlijk tot hun laten
       we zeggen hun prototypische . publiek behoorden
V04:   eum bij ons was 't een probleem van gezag en toekomst
       van Sara en (niet) naleven van afspreken en 't mileu
       waar ze in zat terwijl de jongeren waar ze daar mee
       werd geconfronteerd euh d'er al wat meer hadden
       meegemaakt dan zij [I03: mm] en .
M03:   inderdaad een zwaardere problematiek hadden
05:    ja . ja ja [I: mm]anders 'k kan me dan voorstellen dat
       ze binnen de Eik zeggen goed ok d'anderen eerst [I04:
       ja ja] . hoe ze daarin de besluitvorming euh hoe daar
       de besluitvorming verloopt heb ik geen enkel idee
       [I05: mm] hoe ze hun beleid daar uitstippelen weet ik
       niet . hè . w'ebben d'er ook altijd ofwel
       maatschappelijk assistent aan de lijn gehad ofwel die
       scho_ de psycholoog van de instelling euh . maar
       blijkbaar communiceren die ook niet zoveel met elkaar
       en dat de ene maar moest gissen en dan maar gaan
       toetsten bij de andere . echt samen gaan zitten is er
       niet gelukt
M04:   [na lange pauze, zachtjes] ja . 't was beperkte tijd
       hè
V06:   [na lange pauze, zachtjes] maar goed

In addition to the mother's comparative formulation *"als ge dan die andere gasten in de
Eik ziet hadden wij het gevoel dat euh ze 't beschouwden als voor ons een luxeprobleem"*
(M01, 'when you see these other youngsters in *de Eik*, we had the feeling that they saw our

problem as a luxury problem'), note the comparative grading in the father's turn (V04). One can hear it as a kind of summary formulation of the family's problem: *"Bij ons was 't een probleem van gezag en toekomst van Sara en (niet) naleven van afspraken en 't milieu waar ze in zat terwijl de jongeren waar ze daar mee werd geconfronteerd euh d'er al meer hadden meegemaakt dan zij en"* ('In our case it was a problem of authority and Sara's future and (not) sticking to agreed rules and the circles she was moving in while the youngsters she was confronted with there had been through a lot more than she had'). While a social environment outside the 'proper' remit of the family context is part of what caused the problem (excerpt 4), that problem is to be graded less seriously than the problems of others in the centre (excerpts 3 and 5).

4. A case of introjected class friction?

The picture which surfaces from the account is that of educated middle class parents faced with a wayward adolescent daughter already in a downward educational spiral and who jeopardises her own future by hanging out with the 'wrong' group of friends. Can interview 2 also be interpreted as a case where, as Sherry Ortner (1991) calls it, the hidden injuries of introjected class conflict are being revealed: Class antagonisms which are re-played within a class?

> "[E]ach class views the others not only, or even primarily, as antagonistic groups but as images of their hopes and fears for their own lives and futures [...] If much of working-class culture can be understood as a set of discourses and practices embodying the ambivalence of upward mobility, much of middle-class culture can be seen as a set of discourses and practices embodying the terror of downward mobility [...] [F]or each class, the frictions are introjected into, and endlessly, replayed through, social relations internal to the class itself [...] there is the kind of chronic friction and explosiveness in middle-class parent-child relations that one sees in working-class gender relations[32] (1991: 175-176)

The excerpts analysed above certainly echo descriptions of the middle class as inclined towards exercising individual control over the roles which institutions can play in their lives when these provide certain services (the telephone call is one of their major instruments of organisation and coordination). The final three excerpts also match Ortner's description of the middle classes in articulating Sara's problem as one of control and authority, matched by a fear of downward mobility as indexed by representations of lower class affiliation: 'In our case it was a problem of authority and Sara's future (not) sticking to agreed rules and the circles she was moving in'. However, a more refined characterisation is called for in more than one respect.

Arguably, the description 'the more radical end of the middle classes' fits the picture better (I bring up the term here, provisionally, as a pointer to contradictory orientations in the data). Its use is testified by the parents' avoidance of explicit value labels

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[32] Here, Ortner refers to the the strains and tensions that follow from the symbolic alignment of working class women with middle class values.

and their adoption of a classificationary pragmatics which centres on 'social problems'.[33] In other circumstances one may well hear the middle class talk in less circumspect terms about *"uitschot", "krapuul", "het soortje",* etc. In contrast, the use of *"zware gevallen"* ('hard cases') in excerpt 4 is hedged with *"tussen aanhalingstekens"* (V01, 'between inverted commas') and references in excerpt 5 to other residents in the centre also come with an on-record recognition that this is the domain of problematic experiences, as in *"veel hardere problemen hadden"* (M02, 'faced tougher problems', *"een zwaardere problematiek hadden"* (M03, 'were facing a heavier problematic') and *"al meer hadden meegemaakt dan zij"* (V04, 'had been through a lot more than she had'). Especially the last of these three occurrences casts Sara's behaviour as unwarranted by her social-material circumstances (with connotations of love, care, stability and affluence). In addition, the references to a lack of resources in excerpt 5 suggest a degree of empathy with hard-pressed staff in the residential home and indexes a familiarity with the practical rationalities of institutions of social welfare: We understand that other, more urgent demands made upon the staff may have outweighed the need to communicate efficiently with us. Turning over the interpretative coin, one can also develop the analysis in the opposite direction. The use of *"zware gevallen"* ('hard cases'), however hedged, and *"'t milieu waar ze in zat"* (excerpt 5, V04, 'the circles in which she moved'[34]) are lexicalisations which point in more than one direction: Classificationary practices with an ancestry in traditional discourses of social class (e.g. *"milieu"* in Dutch used to be a synonym for *"sociale klasse"*) and/or re-appropriations of originally anti-classist lexicalisations which have re-entered language use[35]. There is a pragmatic ambiguity which surrounds the use of *"zware gevallen"* ('hard cases') in the parents' account - hovering between the polarities of 'a difficult problem to solve' and a judgemental rhetoric of irreversible social deficiency. But note again how the father's use of the term is bracketed with *"tussen aanhalingstekens"* ('between inverted commas') - signalling that it is used for want of a better one. So, although I am inclined to doubt that this is the case here (I lack the corroboration of a distributional analysis of talk), it may actually be the case that these parents would use more explicitly judgemental terminology and references, given a different occasion of telling and a different audience.

As a first conclusion, my suggestion is that the analysis reveals how practices of social classification play an important role in the parents' definition of the family crisis – both where they grade their daughter's problem through references to problem situations exterior to this family and where they classify their daughter's friends in a way which puts them outside the family's 'normal' social remit. In doing so, the parents are "doing class" while third person entities in their account are "being classed". We have also seen how

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[33] Note in this respect also the father's use of politically correct *"zelfdoding"* ('taking your own life', lit. 'self-killing') instead of *"zelfmoord"* ('suicide') in excerpt 3 above. ***"Zelfmoord"*** (in Dutch) casts the act in terms of 'murder' (lit. 'self-murder'). *"Zelfdoding"* is originally a social scientific category.

[34] The use of "zat" in Dutch (lit. 'sat') carries connotations of 'was caught up in'.

[35] Compare for instance also with a salient key-term in present-day socio-economic policy such as *"kansarmoede/kansarmen"* ('poverty of opportunity/the poor in opportunity'). Its origins are in social-scientific research; the term has now re-entered everyday language use as a euphemism (see also section 5).

there is an element of redemption of the self as a parent in these acts of classification (some of this happens at the expense of Sara - e.g. scaling down Sara's problem in comparison with others in the residential home) and how the parents' classificationary practice hovers between two poles: A recognition that social conditions generate problems which society must address; at the same time, this entails a threatening outsiderness which parents want their own children to steer clear of. On a point of detail, note that while Ortner's analysis is semiotically organised around a middle class/working class-polarity, I don't think we can simply conclude here that the 'outsiderness' in the parents' rhetoric (e.g. the group of friends) can be mapped onto 'working class'. On the one hand, I lack the complementary data needed to address this detail in full with reference to this particular case. On the other hand, this detail raises a more general question: What does one make of "social class" (both theoretically and ontologically) in the context of analyses of social practices in late modern/capitalist societies such as Belgium/Flanders?

5. Perspectives on class in late modernity

One can begin by observing that different eras and theoretical viewpoints have yielded different answers to the question of 'class'. In Marxist theory, class has been mostly an objective position determined by the structuring effects of relations of domination inherent in the modes of economic ownership and production (class membership revolves around polarities such as factory workers *versus* factory owners; landlords *versus* tenants). Class also occurs as a collective entity which is to be formed and mobilised, with a stress on ideological dominance and (r)evolutionary consciousness about one's position in class struggle. E.P. Thompson in his work stresses the relative counterfactuality of such a definition of the "working class". Instead, we must look at how "class is defined by men as they live their own history" (1963, 1991: 10), including how this involves not only the acceptance of social roles and relationships, but also the handling and channelling of grievances, etc. Central concepts in sociological theories of class (as in much variationist sociolinguistic work) are undoubtedly 'stratification' and 'status', with class often much less seen in conflictual terms and prioritising in particular socio-economic aspirations and mobility (mostly, though not exclusively, upward mobility) as a situational variable in relation to behavioural manifestations of self-confidence and uncertainty (self-confidence at the poles of the scale: Working class, upper-middle and upper class; uncertainty as the plight of the upwardly mobile and the lower middle class). The positive self-perception ascribed to white manual working class disappeared gradualy from in the eighties in successive redrawings of the political, socio-economic and social-scientific landscapes. First, the dominant themes became relative egality in wealth, as a result of decade-long collective bargaining and increasingly widespread access to educational resources and qualifications; both are accompanied by the spread of middle class outlooks among the working classes (as sections of employed manual labour were also moving into more service-oriented forms of self-employment). This decade also witnessed the surfacing of a deepening divide with a 'new' under-class (estimated percentages differ) of people who, for various reasons, missed out on welfare society (the origins of the rhetoric of *kansarmoede* ('poverty of opportunity') and its neo-liberal appropriations at the end of the 1990s can be found there; the same is probably true for the concept of the so-called

marginalen – lit. 'people at the fringe'). Later studies, in addition to focusing on contexts where class discourses appear to be generally absent (e.g. Ortner 1991, who is 'reading America' with its salience of individualist discourses of money), have directed attention to the surfacing of discourses of classlessness (e.g. Reay 1998 on individualist and consumerist discourses in Britain in the 1990s in a "terrain in which to be working-class is increasingly to be 'not good enough'" (1998: 267)). In historical retrospect, it may be concluded that the symbolic disappearance of working class as a positively-motivated collective orientation and the persistent presence of an amalgam of problem-ridden populations at the scale's negative end (seen primarily as targets of social-scientifically informed forms of socio-economic intervention) have both contributed to the euphemisation of social classificationary talk, resulting in pragmatic ambiguities of referential scope. The basic polarity underneath the account in interview 2 is thus: 'Us' versus 'those who are in trouble' - with the latter slipping into various directions with diverse configurations of attributes, which sometimes but not always include 'class'-attributes in the more traditional sense (abandoned children, the homeless, drug addicts, the poor, drop-outs, the long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities, anarchist activists, etc.). This development can be interpreted as indexing a socio-economic context where, despite claims that class has disappeared into anachronism, it continues to be played out covertly and indirectly. To what extent these pragmatic ambiguities also index an unspoken, implied middle class normativity is not so clear (cf. accounts of runaway adolescents reacting against unbridled middle-class material affluence, for instance, are also often hinted at).

It need not surprise us then that recent decades have also come with a number of important re-orientations in research: (i) from class as surveyable/interpretable positions in the modes of economic production to patterns of consumption and life-style 'splits'[36], (ii) from male-centred classifications on the basis of occupation to gendered and cross-generational practices in occupational, consumer and family contexts, (iii) from class as a position defined by macro-conditions (e.g. quantifiable collectivities) to the subjective micro-politics of class, including attention to interactional contexts where class is being invoked as an explanatory ground in accounts of "why things are the way they are". The appeal to a particular class of people or one of its displaced articulations is a type of "problematiser" with considerable salience in everyday micro-social politics. It often introduces a regretted and/or resented explanatory ground into depictions of states of affairs and, in many cases, one which is projected as self-sufficient, presenting itself as a commonsensical 'bottom line'. As Reay (1998: 272) argues: "What is required are ethnographic examinations of how class is 'lived' in gendered and raced ways to complement the macro versions that have monopolised our ways of envisaging social class for far too long." She observes how mothers in London primary schools, in a way strikingly similar to the parents in interview 2, draw on class imagery (but do not mention class) to make sense of the contemporary educational marketplace (utilising instead euphemisms which clearly carry class connotations - e.g. 'inner city', 'rough elements' and 'children from families who don't care' or collectivising references which set up a contrast - e.g. 'people like us' and 'the likes of me', which set up a more priviliged other).

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[36] A Flemish/Belgian example here is male adolescent intellectual middle class in the late 1970s aligning itself with working class rock music - e.g. heavy metal.

Similarly, Ortner (1991) in a set of "preliminary notes on class and culture", proposes a focus both on introjections of class friction and transformations of discourses of class in practices at schools, within families, in socially-recognised adolescent 'tribes', etc. Both studies seek to address "social class" in the light of the social, economic and interpretative complexities in the contemporary era. In my view, the latter is a matter of sustained macro-sociological enquiry - survey work, social geography - but also interpretative work - transformations, displacements, introjections, etc. - and it includes the question: To what extent is the scope of contemporary 'class analysis' limited to analyses of modernity (e.g. what to do for earlier periods?)[37]. It is also a matter of trying to understand how "older" (modern) versions of class polarity, far from having disappeared, as Reay (1998: 259) notes, inform subjectivities and continue to powerfully influence actions and attitudes, including how forms of social class reasoning inform domain-based discourses - e.g. education, social welfare, child protection, etc. It is this shift towards a historical understanding of contemporary subjectivities which brings within view a concept like hegemony. For Ortner (1991: 186), the displacement of class frictions into other practices/discourses is one way of studying "the relationships between whatever unit one undertakes to study and the larger social and cultural universe within which it operates", including the ways in which dominating/dominated parts of society/culture may be mutually constituting and are constituted by larger histories and structures that encompass them.

6. Hegemony and the permeability of sense-making contexts by class-repertoires

Hegemony centres on the continual restructuring of domination; it is process-oriented and avails itself of conceptual imagery which indicate a 'state of play' in which conflict-ridden equilibria of power are relatively (un)stable. In this view, domination 'from above' rarely goes unchallenged and resistance 'from below' is constantly attended to. Hegemonic analysis comes mostly with attention paid to the manufacture and reproduction of consent across and within societal domains (in this respect, it prioritises the production of 'culture') while also recognising the possibility and actuality of real change (analysed with an eye to understanding the formation of historically-shifting alliances which are rooted in group antagonisms). Hegemony thus invites attention to sustained contradictions, the polyvalence of practices - in the case of forms of resistance, their capacity to transform and incapacity to overcome the 'facts' of domination. Most of all, hegemony raises the question how inequality, power and ideology are 'lived' individually and in collective orientations.[38] For Williams (1973: 9-10), hegemony "saturates the society to such an extent and […] even constitutes the limits of common sense for most people under its sway". Important

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[37] Stallybrass & White (1996) provides an excellent attempt at understanding classificationary practices in terms of suppressed and desired otherness and their stated aim is to reach further into history than is presupposed by oppositions such as 'working class/middle class' or 'bourgeoisie/proletariat'.

[38] Discourse-sensitive readings on hegemony include Fairclough (1992: 92ff.), Howarth (2000: 89ff., 109ff.), Laclau & Mouffe (1985) and Williams (1973).

dimensions are structures of feeling and selective traditions (inclusion, exclusion, incorporation). The latter are defined as "the way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded. Even more crucially, some of the meanings and practices are reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture". Incorporation, on the other hand, has to do with the accommodation, incorporation and toleration of alternative meanings, practices and opinions "in a way that in practice they do not go beyond the limits of central and dominant definitions" and so that their "under-emphasis opens the way for retreat to an indifferent complexity".

   If one asks the question "why does the account in interview 2 surface the way it does?", one answer will thus complement the attention drawn to a set of situational specifics (radical end of the middle class, particular educational background, particular types of clerical jobs, previous experiences with institutions of social welfare through an adoption procedure, the adoption of a dignifying "line" in a shamefaced situation, rather strong hints of a gendered distribution of speaker roles in the talk, the account is addressed to a social scientist, etc.) with a stress on the permeability of the interview situation at various points with particular sense-making repertoires which revolve around classification and categories of people and which stand in an ambiguous relationship to classist discourses. Such ambiguities reflect inevitable tensions and contradictions between differentially acquired social and moral outlooks on societal realities. Above I have already drawn attention to how some of the ambivalences in the social classificationary practices of the parents (between damnation/remediation) can be seen to be echoed in some of the tensions which surround discourses of social problems in institutions. This is not at all surprising, given the listed set of situational specifics. In this way, the account in interview 2 also challenges preconceived notions about clients as 'private subjects' and as 'lay subjects', as is testified by the cross-overs between the voices of the private life-world, its micro-politics and the voices afforded by expert systems (law, social welfare, political sciences, institutional management). Note how (in another sense), the parents in interview 2 are also doing class by providing indices of succesful access to educational resources and working up situationally-credible displays of private positioning vis-à-vis institutionalised outlooks and vis-à-vis expert systems. Not only historical ancestry but also circulation will therefore be among the important elements to note in view of an ethnography of hegemony which focuses on the permeability of situational contexts (institutional, private, in the case of interview 2: Institutional ánd private) by particular sense-making repertoires and the contextualisation of such repertoires in actual accounts. The net result traceable in entextualisations will range from amplification, tactical slippage, backgrounding to categorical denial (why not?).

7. A final digression into professional discourses of child protection

At this point it is also worth turning to what the social worker on the case has to say. This is one way in which to address the question of distribution. It will also throw further light on the mutual interdependency of versions. An ambivalent/ambiguous relationship to explicitly classist discourses runs very much through the history of social work, including

that of practices of child care/protection. One can recall here how value-laden perceptions of class difference are at the origins of the charity work which predates the profession at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, mostly efforts by middle class women doing good and telling the working class how to live and raise their children properly. In as much as this is the case, social work nowadays is professionally committed to shaking off classist assumptions, but the theme is never far out of sight in extra-professional versions of what social work and child protection work is all about. Let me just give two brief examples here to show how class-like distinctions in the sense outlined in section 5 continue to enter perceptions. The General Poverty Report *("Algemeen Armoederapport",* 1994) contained the accusation by a number of 4th World organisations that the CBJs target people because they are poor. Two counsellors I interviewed mentioned (the topic was not a specific case) that some parents will invoke material deprivation as an "excuse" for not having to face up to certain other priorities in the ways they raise their children. Most child care workers will however insist that their work is not restricted to a particular class or walk of life; the key element has indeed become 'children'. Running through the history of social work and welfare is also the gradual establishment of an increasingly explicit discourse about children's rights with child-centred categories of work. Susan White observes in her ethnographic study of paediatrics (White 2002) that, whilst children or young people may be described as difficult, challenging, damaged, etc. they tend to be exempted from blame. "Either their problems are attributed to their medical or psychiatric condition, or to their parents' or carers' (mis)management, or some traumatic aspect of their biography", including "those whose chronological age places them very close to adulthood". Interesting further points of triangulation for an interpretation of interview 2 are therefore <a> the different reading which Sara's circle of friends receives as an explanatory element in the interview with the family's counsellor and <b> the counsellor's specific formulation of 'control' as a problem of the father:

Excerpt 6 - Interview with the family's counsellor (26/03/2002)
19:15 → 21:01

Co: mijnheer Dutré is nu wel een beetje een extreem voorbeeld van iemand die het allemaal wil [I: controleren] wil controleren een beetje een controlefreak en iedere keer opnieuw hé dat wil poneren en [I: ja ja ja] opnieuw afspreken zo typisch zo'n mensen komen we niet vaak tegen want ik denk dat dat ook eerder uitzondering dan regel is maar het gezagsprobleem op zich inderdaad dat dat is duidelijk aanwezig pedagogische onmacht mensen die het laten gebeuren hebben wel ik geef altijd het voorbeeld van jongeren die uitgaan op twaalf dertien jaar tot drie vier uur 's nachts tja dan moet ge niet verschieten dat die op vijftien zestien jaar helemaal euh de verkeerde kant opgaan en het gezag van hun ouders betwisten en zeggen ja je hebt gij mij geen regels te stellen want ik heb ze nooit gekregen of nooit in voldoende mate gekregen en daar komt het op neer erm of dat dat nu typisch is voor dat soort gezinnen [I: mhm] 'k weet het niet . 't zou eigenlijk in zo'n gezin niet echt zich niet echt mogen

voordoen ik ben misschien nu ook sectair aan 't praten
maar euh ik denk dat dat meespeelt ik denk dat ook de
persoonlijkheid van dat meisken haar achtergrond [I: ja
tuurlijk ja] een soort rebellie euh [I: ja ja ja] een
soort zwemen misschien met met 't milieu van waar dat ze
komt euh zich daar een stuk mee associëren bewust of
onbewust en en daardoor zich afzetten TEGEN tegen de
gevestigde orde [I: euhuh] ik dat je 't eerder een
beetje op dat vlak moet zoeken [I: ja ja ja] maar het
gezagprobleem op zich is inderdaad een probleem hé . en
komt er inderdaad bij gezinnen soms uit die het dan op
andere facetten wat wat gemakkelijker hebben bij sociaal
minder begoede gezinnen is het dan één van de vele
problemen die die het dan vervat ja

As the CBJ's brief is one of 'problematic parent-child relationships', not surprisingly the counsellor's categorisation of the case revolves around a juxtaposition of two 'other'-characterisations (these harmonise with White's observations above). At one end, Sara's problem is formulated as a traumatic aspect of her biography as a child adopted into this particular family, attracted as she is said to be by the social world she had been born into and rebelling against a controlling father by identifying herself with that world: *"Ik denk dat ook de persoonlijkheid van dat meisken haar achtergrond [I: ja tuurlijk ja] een soort rebellie euh [I: ja ja ja] een soort zwemen misschien met met 't milieu van waar dat ze komt euh zich daar een stuk mee associëren bewust of onbewust en en daardoor zich afzetten TEGEN tegen de gevestigde orde [I: euhuh] ik dat je 't eerder een beetje op dat vlak moet zoeken"* ('I think that also the personality of the girl her background a kind of rebellion a kind of enthusing perhaps about the milieu she came from to some extent associating herself consciously or unconsciously and and because of that rebelling AGAINST against the established order I think you'd rather look for an explanation there'). Note here the implicit logic of upward mobility through adoption, as well as Sara's 'lower class affiliation' being both individualised and psychologised in a way which puts the 'world of her friends' on a par with 'the world she was born into'.

At the other end is the characterisation of the father as *"een extreem voorbeeld van iemand die het allemaal wil [I: controleren] wil controleren een beetje een controlefreak* ('an extreme example of someone who wants to [I: control] control it all a bit of a control freak'). This gendered characterisation is matched by other characterisations earlier in the interview: *"eurm vader is dan ook iemand die het allemaal strikt wil geregeld zien en afgesproken zien en daar steeds opnieuw wil wil praten en euh regels opnieuw regels zetten eurm"* (10:57 → 11:08, 'erm the father is also someone who likes to see everything strictly arranged and discussed at length and wants to talk about things again and again and lay down rules again and again') and note how he is also seen as 'individually trapped' by his own educatedness: *"hij is dan ook iemand die nogal taalvaardig is het probeert te vatten en te doorgronden . en ergens verklaring te zoeken voor"* (15:24 → 15:35, 'he is also someone who is rather good at language tries to understand and analyse it all . and find some sort of explanation for'). Of equal interest is the atypicality claim in excerpt 6: *"'t zou eigenlijk in zo'n gezin niet echt mogen voordoen"* ('it shouldn't really be happening in this kind of family'). While the counsellor here touches on what he sees as a more general problem of 'too much freedom at too young an age' backfiring on parents, the problem of

parental authority in this case is projected as atypical for this kind of family, a claim voiced with admitted sectarianism: *"ik ben misschien nu ook sectair aan 't praten maar euh ik denk dat dat meespeelt"* ('perhaps I am being sectarian here but erm I think it does play a role'). He adds: In other families which are less well-off, parental authority is usually 'one of the many problems'. Similarly, when invited to react to the charge from fourth world organisations that CBJs target people because they are poor, the counsellor's rebuttal is half-hearted:

Excerpt 7 - 37:17

Co: oh dat zijn zo van die statements hé waar men in de pers mee uitpakt en da's gemakkelijk hé arme gezinnen worden geviseerd door de bijzondere jeugdbijstand . ik denk dat dit in het verleden zeker . een stuk het geval geweest is . dat men kinderen ging plaatsen vanuit de rechtbank justitie onder meer omdat ja kinderen arm waren en gezinnen gestigma_ gestigmatiseerd waren en daardoor voor ons is dat niet . zeker niet het uitgangspunt . eum maar het is natuurlijk ne factor die meespeelt en wat en wat waar we ook niet omheen kunnen

(Translation: oh these are the kind of statements which the press likes to play up and this is easy isn't it poor families are targeted by special youth care . I think in the past certainly . to some extent this must have been the case . that children were placed by the court by justice among other reasons because yes children were poor and families were stigma_ stigmatised and as a result for us this is not . certainly not the point of departure . erm but it is of course a factor which plays a role and which and which we cannot ignore)

Discourses of child protection found within institutions such as the CBJ and VCK often come with a difficult and uncomfortable balance between, on the one hand, an ideologically-motivated policy of steering clear of and actively fighting stigma and prejudice as well as a refusal to accept the irreversibility of any of the situations workers have to confront, and, on the other hand, tacit assumptions towards (and a certain throwing up of arms into the air) about certain families, populations, areas, neighbourhoods, etc. being predisposed in particular ways. Further comparative research is to reveal to what extent assumptions about predisposition go together with different kinds and degrees of individualisation when a case is being categorised.

This final exercise of triangulation reveals both agreements between the parents' and the counsellor's versions (e.g. the group of friends as part of a definition of the problem) and disagreements (e.g. devious acts of deceit in the parents' version occur as acts of rebellion in the counsellor's version). It also contains a number of strong hints of how versions may have shaped one another in successive contacts (e.g. further on in the interview the counsellor recounts how the case came to him, already shaped by prior contacts between the parents, the school and its psychologist; he adds how he knows little about the circle of friends, suggesting it is an aspect which the parents may have overrated). Mutual dependency is also revealed where the versions are in disagreement: For instance, one may wonder to what extent the parents' complaint about a lack of guidance and

feedback from the institution and the counsellor's perception of the father as excessively preoccupied with staying in control by talking things through have reinforced one another (whereas the parents construct the two-month period in the centre in terms of 'a sobering experience', the counsellor renders it as unlikely to be the kind of intervention that would induce a radical change in Sara's behaviour). At the same time, both versions involve an amount of positioning vis-à-vis available repertoires of social classification and this comes with a great deal of hedging, concessionary rhetoric and individualisation. An understanding of why these two parents articulate a family crisis in a particular way is clearly more than just a matter of how they respond to the discourses of the institutions of child care/protection. To understand their account as a 'situated articulation of a structured social experience', one must also pay attention to how speakers appear to come to terms with difficult (and painful) points of differentiation & contradiction: Caught up as they are in a dialogic between 'private lifeworld'-inherited, professional, education-inherited, moral-ethically-informed and streetwise/experience-based outlooks on social reality, and speaking as they are in an interview context where class cannot be done overtly and has to be worked up interactively in a particular way for it to be persuasive and credible. The position of the counsellor is not really different in this respect, nor for that matter is that of the researcher who comes to the interview with a set of expectations about themes important to his/her research and equiped with a particular interviewing style which has both moral and strategic dimensions to it (see for instance, turn I02 in excerpt 5). In this sense, hegemony is more than about representations of x, but also about the interactive conditions under which x becomes speakable, conditions which participants will also experience as enacted fields of power and public gaze. Although we are still far removed here from advocacy (simply more research is needed), It would seem to me that critique has to preserve a delicate balance, because for some, the gaps and contradictions deriving from the outlooks which simultaneously impinge on their situation are more consequential (and more painful) than for others (I am not making any *a priori* assumptions here about who is 'some' and who will be 'others').

8. Ethnographies of hegemony: One or two conclusions.

To conclude, let us briefly return to the concept of ethnographies of hegemony. Williams's insistence that hegemony comes with attention to the renewal, recreation, challenge and defence of its own internal structures is also echoed in his own criticism levelled against Marxist cultural analysis as usually much better at distinguishing the large features of different epochs of society than at distinguishing between different phases and different moments within them, i.e. processes which demand "a much greater precision and delicacy of analysis than the always striking epochal analysis which is concerned with main lineaments and features" (Williams 1973: 8). This criticism accords well with an ethnographic programme which propounds a simultaneous engagement with close-up observations of minute experiential detail and the themes of power, domination and social critique, especially ethnographic practice which also sees its role in terms of reconstructing

social theories of advanced capitalism (Burawoy 1991: 271ff.)[39]. However, although my recourse to the concept of hegemony yields what I believe to be more than an intuitively-sensible framework for capturing processes which merit attention in their full complexity, at this stage, I am hardly in a position to make any sweeping statements about the 'facts of domination' (candidate propositions supported by some of the literature include <a> the domination of middle-class versions of what constitutes good parenting and, <b> speaking from a more processual point of view, the apparent impossibility for discourses of social work and child protection to transcend classist pragmatics). My caution on this point is also informed by two further arguments: <I> I'm still at the outset of what is to be developed into a more substantial etnography and <ii> I am very much aware both of the attractions of and the risks involved in conceptually translating (and thereby dissolving) a relatively autonomous field of practice such as child protection into a polarised socio-political antagonism (the risk involved in that are of a theoretical hegemony of some kind; moreover, to succumb to such a unilateral translation would be a very un-ethnographic move to make). What I believe I can more or less confidently pass on to my readers at this stage is this: Note how a concern with "social class", although invested with considerable importance as a large-looming 'outward-directed question' (what to make of class in contemporary society?) is just as much the outcome of 'an inward-oriented', reflexive question: Viz. to try to come to terms with situatedness/interactiveness in the use of particular research techniques and how the use of interview data compels one to draw on an understanding of the biographical, institutional-organisational, larger historical and local interactional elements which are brought to bear on the interview.

Appendix: Translation of transcribed excerpts

Excerpt 1

```
        [after a long pause]
I01:    did you knock at the committee's door or
V01:    I had already
I02:    or was it a referral
V02:    contacted   them   earlier   to   see   what   possibilities   were
        there  .  and  told  the  euh  school  psychologists  that  we
        were  playing  with  this  idea  .  and  then  at  a  certain
        point  they  said  now  it's  getting  too  much  let's  see  what
        the  possibilities  are  and  erm  [M  to  youngster  daughter:
        Kaatje  .  could  you  bring  us  some  more  juice]  then  they
        contacted  the  CLB  ah  [ironic  laughter  because  he's  again
        using  the  wrong  abbreviation]  the  special  care  committee
        .  erm  .  but  yeah  .  it  didn't  look  like  they  were  going
        to  take  the  bull  by  the  horns  .  and  then  I  did  some
        HEAVY  telephoning  to  one  of  the  administrative  staff  of
        the  committee  to  make  the  effort  to  get  these  three
        parties  together  round  the  table  .  this  was  really  like
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[39] Burawoy (1991) refers to this as the 'extended case method'.

er . it took me about a dozen teleph_ telephone calls in a manner of speaking to get the point across this particular day with that man in that office meet with these persons yeah well by the time everyone was informed about this . very er yeah . [I03: uhum] it was perhaps somewhat outside their usual methods or outside the usual channels . [youngest daughter puts juice on the table] thanks

M01: thanks
V03: outside the usual channels . that that all went . but ok . we have er perhaps there was also some pressure from us to speed things up
I04: uhum
V04: so er he_ hence the er active service[40] to get these people these three together these three groups . you know school the Boterhoek the committee

Excerpt 2

I01: do you feel that somewhere you when you these different agencies get involved in this that somewhere you lost control . or that you eventually did
V01: no . lose control no . because I very much took the initiative [I02: yeah yeah] . but little little guidance . little feedback actually .
M01: but it was a very SHORT period wasn't it
V02: yes yes
M02: it wasn't even two months
I03: yes yes
M03: which means that er
V03: it went so fast . it went so fast especially because we wanted to make the best of the months before Sara turned eighteen . if we had let time tick away . then this would have been bad for everyone . then she would have been eighteen and said [claps hands] door closed finished I'm eighteen and I'm leaving or
M04: and now she has at last found a breathing-space
V04: yes . or that she then would have to be treated as technically an adult . when she's eighteen
I04: yes

Excerpt 3

V01: ok . what was positive . one day we went just before the Christmas holidays er when the decision had been taken where that the er would take place to visit the Eik one day
M01: yes that was really positive
V02: it was positive then that you knew well for once [appreciative]

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[40] 'Service' (as in tennis).

M03:   where she er
V03:   where we would end up
M04:   with who she would get in touch
V04:   er
M04:   er
V05:   I think that for her it was also a bit of a shock the er
        . what she experienced there . suffered er . youngsters
        who are brought in handcuffed er . a few months earlier
        a case of suicide . erm youths who are heavily addicted
        . parents who never turn around to look after their
        children, while we were there and did continue to
        support her [I02:yes] who were there pff [distancing
        tone] no more contact with the parents so I think this
        did er . switch on a little . switch on a little light
        [ironic smile]

Excerpt 4

        [after a long pause]
M01:   we   did   suggest   to   place   her   with   family   and   so   erm
        because Stan with friends or with family.
V01:   this   was   after   that   first   time   she   ran   away   erm   that   she
        didn't   want   to   go   to   you   know   that   crisis   centre   in
        Mechelen   .   and   then   (we   thought)   for   a   moment   with
        friends   but   that   and   with   with   family   but   that   we   didn't
        want   to   do   to   this   family   and   with   friends   but   then   she
        did   spend   these   first   two   nights   or   so   at   Hilde's   her
        friend   [M,   soft: mhm]   and   these   people   these   people   too
        were   knocked   backwards   .   erm   so   this   really   wasn't   a
        solution   either   and   then   she   came   back   home   and   fourteen
        days   later   or   three   weeks   later   then   again   erm   she
        stayed   away   for   four   days   on   end   that   was   this   period
        wasn't   it   [M,   softly: mhm]   and   endless   truancy   at   school
        [long   pause]   plus   in   erm   yes   and   what   is   making   the
        situation   worse   and   what   is   worrying   us   is   that   she   in
        er   circle   of   friends   of   between   inverted   commas   hard
        cases [M: mhm] so youngsters
M02:   though we no longer really know this
V02:   [now we no longer know   not so sure]
M03:   [now she is no longer in it so much   ]
V03:   sorry   .   yes   but   I   do   think   that   she's   still   with
        Miranda   that   she   is   still   of   who   was   it   with   she   went   to
        Aalst [she's always in a group of]
M04:   [it's no longer so intensive]
V04:   yes   yes   she's   got   a   steady   boyfriend   now   .   well   .   we'll
        see   [ironic]   erm   .   and   erm   .   he's   more   serious   than   she
        .   and   he's   a   moderating   influence   [M,   softly: mhm]   erm
        . yes
M05:   he's   encouraging   her   too   .   to   to   work   a   bit   harder   at
        school
V05:   [after   long   pause]   yes   [knocks   on   the   table]   touch   wood
I01:   mhm yes of course   mhm
06:            it's wait and see

Excerpt 5:

V01:   so I can very well imagine that they're understaffed I mean

M01:   but you too I mean had the feeling like yes our Sara wasn't such a big I mean for us at that moment she was a big problem but if you look at the other youths in the Eik we had the feeling that erm that they considered it as a luxury problem for us [I01: uhum]

V02:   yes

M02:   the others yes they were erm clearly more serious problems than ours weren't they

V03:   I felt that clearly with the staff from the Eik

I02:   that you somehow as a family did not really belong to their let's say their prototypical . clients

V04:   In our case it was a problem of authority and Sara's future and (not) sticking to agreed rules and the circles she was moving in while the youngsters she was confronted with there had been through a lot more than she had [I03: mm]and

M03:   indeed were facing more serious problems

V05:   I can very well imagine that inside the Eik they say well ok the others first [I04: yes yes]how they arrive at decisions in this erm how the decision-making happens there I have no idea [I05: mm] how they outline their policy there I don't know . we were always talking to a social worker or the scho_ resident psychologist er . but apparently they don't communicate all that much and one has to guess and then check with the other one . really sit down together we didn't succeed in

M04   [after a long pause, silently] yes . it was a limited period wasn't it

V06 [after a long pause, silently] oh well

Excerpt 6:

C: Mr Dutré is perhaps a bit of an extreme example of someone who wants to control [I: control] it all a bit of a control freak and every time again wants to make that clear and [I: yes yes yes] make new arrangements that typical these kind of people we rarely come across because I also think that's an exception rather than a rule but the problem of authority as such indeed that is clearly there pedagogical frustration people who have let it happen well I always give the example of youngsters who at the age thirteen who out until three four o'clock at night well then you can't be surprised that at the age of fifteen sixteen they go completely the wrong way and dispute the authority of their parents and say yes you can't dictate me anything because I was never given any rules or never got them sufficiently and that's what it comes down to whether this is typical for this kind of family [I: mhm] I don't know . it shouldn't

really occur in this kind of family perhaps I'm being sectarian now but er I think this play a role I think that also the personality of the girl her background a kind of rebellion [I: yes yes yes] a kind of enthusing perhaps about the milieu she came from to some extent associating herself consciously or unconsciously and and because of that rebelling AGAINST against the established order [uhum] I think you'd rather look for an explanation there [I: yes yes yes] but the problem of authority as such is indeed a problem . and sometimes it surfaces in families who in other respects can take things easy in families which socially speaking are less well-off it then becomes one of the many problems which which it contains yes

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